

# Motivating and Hindering Factors During the Reemployment Process: The Added Value of Employment Counselors' Assessment

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Because unemployment negatively affects people's well-being, it is of crucial importance that unemployed individuals move back to work. The process of getting reemployed, however, is difficult and complex. Therefore, many unemployed job seekers are assisted by employment counselors. The present study focuses on motivating and hindering factors in the reemployment process, examining the added value of the counselors' assessment of job seekers' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. The results of a 3-wave study with job seeker self-ratings and counselor-ratings indicated that perceived health problems is the most consistent predictor of job search and reemployment status. The findings further provide some convergent validity evidence for self- and counselor-rated situational-level motivators (i.e., attitude, social pressure, self-efficacy) and job search intensity. Although method effects did not seem to threaten the validity of the prediction of job search intensity and procrastination, employment counselors' assessments of job seekers' job search intensity and procrastination were significantly more strongly related to reemployment success than job seekers' self-ratings. Future research should therefore include other-reports, in addition to job seeker self-reports, to get a more complete view of people's job search behavior. Also reemployment counseling firms may want to use the expert knowledge of their employment counselors more systematically.

*Keywords:* job search, procrastination, health perception, unemployment, employment counseling

Job loss is a highly stressful life event with negative effects for psychological and physical well-being (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009). To deal with those negative effects, unemployed people may use various coping strategies (Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 1995; Leana & Feldman, 1988), such as seeking emotional support, devaluating the importance of having a job (i.e., symptom-focused, escape-oriented coping), and job seeking (i.e., problem-focused, control-oriented coping). Because unemployed people's mental and physical health improves after becoming reemployed (Ginexi, Howe, & Caplan, 2000; Paul & Moser, 2009), it is important that unemployed people move back to work. Although successful reemployment is affected by many situational variables outside people's control (e.g., labor demand, discrimination), previous theory has suggested that individuals can influence their reemployment chances by engaging in active, control-oriented coping. Supporting this suggestion, empirical research identified job search behavior as an important predictor of reemployment (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001).

Searching employment, however, is a complex and uncertain process that comes with obstacles, setbacks, and rejections. In

order to assist unemployed job seekers in this difficult process of getting reemployed, many countries offer individual and/or group-based employment counseling. Such counseling is thought to have the potential to lessen the emotional burden of unemployment and promote active job search (Eby & Buch, 1994; Guindon & Smith, 2002) and has been demonstrated to reduce anxiety, distress and depression levels, increase self-efficacy, adaptability and active job search, and positively affect reemployment probability and quality (e.g., Azrin, Flores, & Kaplan, 1975; Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & Van Ryn, 1989; Eden & Aviram, 1993; Koen, Klehe, & Van Vianen, 2013; Saam & Wodtke, 1995; Van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009; Vinokur, Price, & Schul, 1995; Vuori, Price, Mutanen, & Malmberg-Heimonen, 2005; Westaby, 2004). However, although employment counseling can be of help for unemployed job seekers, it is expensive. For example, in the United States, expenses for job training and employment services in 2011 were budgeted at 10 billion dollar (Office of Management and Budget, 2010). In addition, not all job seekers will likely benefit to the same extent from the same type of assistance.

Assessment and diagnosis of job seekers' attitudes, cognitions, motivation, and behavioral strategies is therefore of crucial importance. Such assessment may be conducted by administering validated inventories to job seekers (e.g., Wanberg, Zhang, & Diehn, 2010). In practice, however, assessment often occurs by employment counselors, who assess their clients in terms of job search and work-related attitudes, cognitions, motivation, and behavioral strategies (Noordzij, Van Hooft, Van Mierlo, Van Dam, & Born, 2013). This raises the important question of whether employment counselors can adequately assess job seekers' attitudes, cognitions, motivation, and behavioral strategies, and whether the counselors' assessments have better or incremental validity in predicting re-

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employment success compared to job seekers' self-assessments. This knowledge is important because it can help improving job seeker assessment and diagnosis, as well as subsequent counseling. As a first purpose, the present study therefore aims to contribute to the literature by examining the validity and added value of the counselor's assessment of unemployed job seekers in predicting reemployment success.

As a second purpose, we sought to contribute to the job search literature by increasing our understanding of not only the motivating factors but also the hindering factors in the process of getting reemployed. Previous theorizing and research on job seeking has mostly been based on motivation theories, emphasizing the importance of motivating factors for getting reemployed (e.g., employment commitment, financial need, self-efficacy, social pressure; see for reviews Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; Wanberg, 2012). Adopting the perspective of engaged scholarship (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006), discussions with employment counselors suggested that hindering factors may be of importance in improving our understanding of the reemployment process. Extending the scarce research on hindering factors in getting reemployed (e.g., barriers, Koen et al., 2013; job search constraints, Wanberg, 1997; Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002), we examined the hindering role of health problems and job search procrastination in finding reemployment.

### Study Context

The present study was conducted using a nationwide sample of unemployed job seekers and their employment counselors of a large private reemployment agency in The Netherlands. After becoming unemployed in The Netherlands, individuals have to

register at the public labor exchange and have to be capable and available for work to receive unemployment benefits. These unemployment benefits depend on the individual's working history and unemployment duration, being either 70% of their last salary (for individuals with a working history of at least 5 years and an unemployment duration of at most 5 years) or 70% of the statutory minimum wage (for individuals who are not eligible for the salary-related benefits). Individuals who cannot work because of sickness or disability mostly receive an income of 70% of their last salary (Social Security Administration, 2006). Unemployed individuals who need assistance with their job search (e.g., because they have not been able to find a job yet after a given unemployment duration, or because they are assessed to have low chances to find employment fast) are usually referred to a private reemployment agency, such as the one the present study was conducted with.

### Research Model and Hypotheses

Based on a synthesis of extant job search theorizing (Feather, 1992; Latack et al., 1995; Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987; Wanberg et al., 2002), empirical work on job seeking (Kanfer et al., 2001), motivation theories (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1991; Vallerand, 1997), and expert knowledge of employment counselors, we developed a research model of motivating and hindering factors in the process of getting reemployed (Figure 1). Consistent with our research aims, this model was used to (a) examine the validity and added value of the counselors' assessments in predicting reemployment success, and (b) investigate the added contribution and explanatory power of hindering factors such as health problems and job search procrastination.

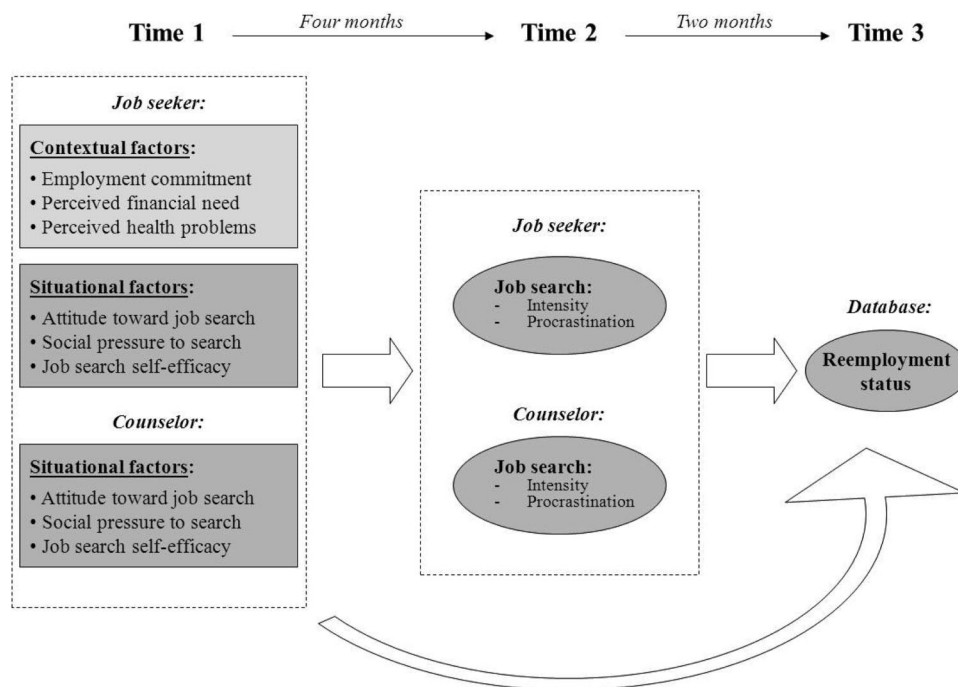


Figure 1. Overview of the research model.

## Job Search and Reemployment Status

Previous theorizing identified intensity of job search behavior as an important predictor of reemployment (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; Schwab et al., 1987). Job search intensity refers to time spent on preparatory (i.e., identifying possible job leads) and active (i.e., pursuing those job leads) job search activities in a specified period of time. The more time and effort unemployed individuals allocate toward their job search, the more likely they will generate (a greater number of) suitable job leads, and the more likely they will obtain interviews and job offers. Indeed, cumulative research suggests that people who spend more time on job seeking are more likely to obtain a job than others (Kanfer et al., 2001). However, the meta-analytically derived correlation for unemployed individuals was only .16. Moreover, in primary studies null-findings for the relationship between job search intensity and reemployment status are no exception (e.g., Saks, 2006; Song, Wanberg, Niu, & Xie, 2006; Taris, 2002; Van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009). As a consequence, some researchers questioned theoretical frameworks that propose job search as the major pathway to reemployment (e.g., Šverko, Galić, Seršić, & Galešić, 2008). However, rather than casting doubt to the theory, an alternative explanation for these meager findings may be the validity of the measurement of job search intensity, as all studies relied on self-report measures. This may have caused some self-report biases (e.g., reporting socially desirable to job search items because of fearing repercussions or because individuals feel that they have spent more time/effort on job seeking than they actually did). Therefore in the present study, unemployed individuals' job search intensity was assessed not only via self-report, but also by having employment counselors rate unemployed individuals' job search intensity.

Another explanation for the weak validity of job search intensity in predicting reemployment may be that intensity measures reflect a somewhat narrow operationalization of the broader job search behavior construct, which not only includes an intensity dimension but also a temporal and quality dimension (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg, 2012). Van Hooft, Wanberg, and Van Hooft (2013) emphasized the importance of job search quality in getting reemployed, because conducting a high-quality job search process evokes a learning process, leading job seekers to learn what employers want, resulting in job search products and behaviors (e.g., application letters, interview behaviors) of higher quality. They further suggested that a high-quality job search process can be characterized by strong self-regulation, which is needed to successfully navigate through the lengthy, uncertain, and complex process to reach the goal of finding employment.

Procrastination, defined as voluntarily delaying intended behaviors despite expecting to be worse off, is extremely prevalent (Steel, 2007), especially for tasks that are needed to obtain some valued goal, but are aversive (e.g., difficult, boring, uninteresting, evaluative), such as job seeking. Procrastination is a typical instance of failing self-regulation (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013; Steel, 2007). As such, job search procrastination (i.e., the voluntary and irrational delay of intended job search activities) can be viewed as an indication of low job search quality, undermining the reemployment process. Supporting this argument, Turban, Lee, Da Motta Veiga, Haggard, and Wu (2013) found that job search procrastination negatively related to number of job interviews in a sample of graduating students. Also in discussions with employ-

ment counselors, procrastination was mentioned to be a large problem hindering unemployed people's reemployment process. These findings indicate the importance of timeliness of job search activities in addition to their intensity. Procrastinating job search activities may leave job seekers with less preparation time and more rushing toward deadlines, likely resulting in lower quality job search products (e.g., lower quality application letters and job interviews; Turban et al., 2013; Van Hooft et al., 2013), or may result in missing application deadlines, thereby reducing the chance to obtain employment.

The first set of hypotheses relates to the predictive validity of self-ratings and counselor-ratings of job search intensity and procrastination in predicting reemployment status. Based on theoretical notions and empirical research described, unemployed people's self-reported job search intensity is expected to positively, and job search procrastination negatively relate to subsequent reemployment status (*Hypothesis 1a*). Extending previous research, it was expected that employment counselor's judgments of unemployed individuals' job search intensity positively, and their judgments of job search procrastination negatively relate to reemployment status (*Hypothesis 1b*). Furthermore, counselors' judgments likely do not suffer from social desirability bias, and may provide a partly different perspective on job seekers' search intensity and procrastination. For example, counselors see many job seekers and can therefore compare across job seekers, resulting in a more elaborate frame-of-reference to evaluate an individual job seeker's search intensity and procrastination. Also, given the irrationality of procrastination and associated self-delusional thoughts, bystanders such as employment counselors may possibly provide a more accurate account of unemployed individuals' job search procrastination than the individuals themselves. Although one could argue that counselors may have less complete views on job seekers' behaviors compared to the job seekers themselves, observers typically need only brief observations or thin slices of behavior in order to form valid judgments (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). Based on this reasoning, counselors' judgments were expected to demonstrate incremental validity in predicting reemployment status over the unemployed individuals' self-reports (*Hypothesis 2*).

## Prediction of Job Search Intensity and Procrastination

The second set of hypotheses relates to the predictors of job search intensity and procrastination. Job search is an example of behavior that, because of its difficulty and complexity and omnipresence of obstacles, setbacks, and rejections, requires substantial motivation and self-regulation over time. Motivation theories (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1991; Feather, 1992; Ryan & Deci, 2000) have therefore been prominent in job search theorizing. Integrating various motivational frameworks, Vallerand (1997) proposed a hierarchical model of motivation. Vallerand suggested that people are motivationally complex, which makes it necessary to distinguish between different levels of motivating factors that vary in type, stability, and level of generality. The present study includes what Vallerand labels as situational-level motivation (i.e., motivation toward a *specific behavior* within a *specific time frame*), because this reflects motivational factors most proximal to behavior. In addition, more distal contextual-level factors were included,

referring to more stable and somewhat broader motivational and hindering factors.

**Situational-level factors.** As displayed in Figure 1, three situational-level motivating factors were included: (a) personal attitude toward job search, (b) social pressure to engage in job search, and (c) self-efficacy regarding job search. These factors reflect the three important predictors outlined in the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1991), and also map upon the three basic human needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence as distinguished in self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Factors that affect satisfaction of these three basic needs are the most important in explaining motivation, because satisfying those basic needs is our main driving force, whereas factors that do not impact these needs should have minimal or no effects on motivation (Vallerand, 1997). In addition to their theoretical relevance, attitude, social pressure, and self-efficacy have been found to be important predictors of job search motivation in previous research in various countries, using various research designs, and various types of job seekers (e.g., Song et al., 2006; Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, & Blonk, 2004; Van Hooft & De Jong, 2009; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005; Zikic & Saks, 2009).

First, *attitude toward job search* is defined as the extent to which individuals have a positive or negative evaluation of engaging in job search within a given time frame (e.g., the next four months). According to SDT, people are motivated for behaviors that satisfy their basic needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. When people personally value the engagement in job seeking, it likely satisfies their need for autonomy, resulting in motivated performance of job search activities. Further, the TPB states that people with more positive attitudes toward job search will intend and invest more time in their job search than those with less positive evaluations of job search, because they expect more valued outcomes of their job seeking. Whereas personal value should positively relate to job search intensity, it likely negatively predicts job search procrastination. Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT; Steel, 2007; Steel & König, 2006) states that, all other factors being equal, the more people value a task, the higher its utility, resulting in less procrastination. Also, SDT states that the more self-determined or autonomous people's motivation, the more they act out of free choice and internalized motives, resulting in more positive outcomes in terms of action initiation, behavioral persistence, and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, to the extent that job search attitude reflects people's autonomous motivation or personal value toward job search, it should relate negatively to job search procrastination.

Second, *social pressure to search* refers to the amount of social pressure that people perceive to engage in job search within a given time frame. Although SDT suggests that social pressure may undermine people's need for autonomy, it may still be a motivating factor as it serves people's need for relatedness. For example, unemployed individuals are likely to engage in job seeking when this positively affects the relationship with significant others. Furthermore, the TPB suggests that unemployed individuals likely intend and spend more time on their job search the more social pressure from important others to do so they perceive. Similarly, to the extent that social pressure to search is an indication of the value that people (as pressured by important others) attach to job search,

TMT suggests it should negatively relate to job search procrastination.

Third, *job search self-efficacy* is defined as people's confidence in their competence to perform various job search activities. Because humans want to feel competent and effective in dealing with their environment, activities that satisfy the need for competence generate strong interest and motivation (cf. SDT). Also the TPB, social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991), and Kanfer et al.'s (2001) meta-analytic findings, suggest that unemployed people are more likely to spend time and effort on their job search when they have confidence in their competence to perform job search activities. In contrast, people with little confidence are expected to be more likely to perceive job search as difficult, complex and aversive, and therefore more likely to procrastinate and refrain from job search activities. Also TMT suggests that activities with a low expectancy (i.e., as a result of low self-efficacy on a task) have a low utility for the individual, and are therefore more likely to be procrastinated.

In sum, it is expected that (a) attitude toward job search, (b) social pressure to search, and (c) job search self-efficacy are positively related to job search intensity (*Hypothesis 3*) and negatively to job search procrastination (*Hypothesis 4*). These three situational-level motivating factors were assessed by self-reports and by employment counselor ratings. Also, for job search intensity and procrastination, both self-report and counselor ratings were available. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 and 4 can be tested in four different ways: *common-source* by using (a) only the job seekers' measures, or (b) only the counselors' measures, or *multisource* by using (a) the job seekers' predictor measures and the counselors' job search intensity/procrastination measure, or (b) the counselors' predictor measures and the job seekers' job search intensity/procrastination measure. In testing the hypotheses, common- and multisource correlations will be compared because this may provide valuable information on the extent to which method effects influence the hypothesized relationships.

**Contextual-level factors.** Motivation theories such as Vallerand's (1997) hierarchical model suggest that situational-level factors are the most proximal predictors of behavior, and mediate the effects of contextual-level motivation. Similarly, the TPB is posed to be a complete theory of behavior (Conner & Armitage, 1998), suggesting that the influence of other variables on behavior is mediated by attitude, social pressure, and self-efficacy. In contrast to these theoretical perspectives, empirical research demonstrated the added value of including contextual-level motivators in predicting job search intensity (e.g., Creed, Doherty, & O'Callaghan, 2008; Van Hooft et al., 2004; Zikic & Saks, 2009). In addition, discussions with employment counselors highlighted the importance of hindering factors in the reemployment process such as health problems. In addition to health problems, employment commitment and financial need were included as contextual-level factors, based on expectancy-value theory (EVT; Feather, 1992), Schwab et al.'s (1987) job search and evaluation model, and Kanfer et al.'s (2001) model and meta-analytic findings.

*Employment commitment* is an attitude describing the importance or centrality that individuals place on employed work (Kanfer et al., 2001). EVT states that people's motivational force to perform a behavior is determined at least partly by the subjective value they attach to the outcome of the behavior. Thus, the more positively people view having a job, the more motivated they will

be to mobilize energy and invest time and effort in their job search in order to obtain a job. Studies on EVT and job seeking (e.g., Feather & O'Brien, 1987; Kinicki, 1989; Van Hooft et al., 2004; Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, & Feather, 2005), as well as Kanfer et al.'s (2001) meta-analysis found support for employment commitment in predicting job search intensity. *Perceived financial need* is defined as people's subjective sense of how adequately their current income and monetary assets meet their personal and family needs (Ullah, 1990). As noted by Ullah (1990), it is not so much the actual financial situation, but the subjective perceived financial need that is an important antecedent of job search intensity. Schwab et al.'s (1987) job search model poses that unemployed individuals experiencing economic hardship, more than others have a need to find a job. The role of financial need as predictor of job search intensity was supported by cumulative empirical research (Kanfer et al., 2001).

Unemployed individuals with strong employment commitment and high financial need are thus theorized to be highly motivated to search for a job. In addition to affecting behavior directly, strong motivation can also help overcoming self-regulatory depletion (Muraven & Slessareva, 2003). Because job seeking is a task that requires strong self-regulation, depletion of self-regulatory resources is likely, resulting in self-regulatory failures such as job search procrastination. Strong motivation, either internally (e.g., employment commitment) or externally (e.g., financial need) may help job seekers overcome depletion, thus reducing job search procrastination as it creates incentives to use one's self-control resources.

As a last contextual-level hindering factor, *perceived health problems* was included. Employment counselors emphasized the importance of health problems as they observed that low perceived health (rather than actual health problems) is a very salient hindering factor for unemployed people in the process of getting back to work. Although stress and health have often been studied in the unemployment literature, these variables are usually included as outcomes. Summarizing these relationships, McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) and Paul and Moser (2009) found support for the assumption that unemployment leads to reduced mental health. The role of health (perceptions) as predictor of job search and reemployment, however, is less clear. Among the few exceptions of studies examining the (de)motivating role of health perceptions is a panel study by Taris (2002). Based on life span developmental theory, Taris hypothesized that mental ill-health induces feelings of powerlessness, which lead to lowered capacity to actively shape and influence one's environment, that is, to change the state of unemployment by actively engaging in job search. However, the few (longitudinal) studies that tested the predictive power of mental health for job search intensity (e.g., Šverko et al., 2008; Taris, 2002; Vinokur & Schul, 2002; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010) and reemployment (e.g., Böckerman & Iilmakunnas, 2009; Ginexi et al., 2000; Wanberg, Zhang, & Diehn, 2010) have reported mixed findings. The present study extends this research by investigating the role of *general perceived health problems* (which includes both mental and physical health) in predicting job search intensity and procrastination. Individuals who perceive more health problems, will be less inclined to spend time on their job search than those who perceive no health problems, because they will perceive a lower capacity to shape their environment, and may also have lower energy levels to devote to job search. Furthermore, health

problems likely result in shifting one's priority to short-term mood regulation over long-term goal-striving, resulting in procrastination (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013; Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001).

In sum, it was expected that unemployed job seekers' (a) employment commitment, and (b) perceived financial need, positively and (c) perceived health problems negatively related to job search intensity (*Hypothesis 5*). Furthermore, (a) employment commitment, and (b) perceived financial need, were expected to negatively and (c) perceived health problems positively relate to job search procrastination (*Hypothesis 6*).

## Prediction of Reemployment Status

As posed by Kanfer et al. (2001), individual differences in attitudes, cognitions, and motives exert their influence on complex outcomes such as reemployment status mainly through motivational processes such as job search behavior. Therefore, job search intensity and procrastination are expected to mediate the relationship of contextual-level and situational-level motivators with reemployment status (*Hypothesis 7*). Reemployment status, however, is not solely determined by people's job search intensity and procrastination. Aside from organizational needs, other characteristics of applicants may impact organizational hiring decisions. Individuals with higher job search self-efficacy and less health problems, for example, may be more likely to make a good impression during job interviews, and therefore more likely to find a job, regardless their job search behaviors. Therefore, partial rather than full mediation of job search intensity and procrastination is expected.

Last, trying to capture the expert knowledge of the employment counselors, they were asked to estimate the unemployed individual's chance to find employment. Counselors usually have strong networks of potential employers in their area (Noordzij et al., 2013), likely resulting in up-to-date knowledge about labor demand, industry hiring, and employment trends in the local labor market. Furthermore, counselors likely are aware of both functionally relevant as well as irrelevant evaluation criteria of recruiters (e.g., education, age). Assuming that employment counselors base their judgment on such relevant field experience, it was hypothesized that employment counselors' estimated chance of reemployment positively relates to reemployment status (*Hypothesis 8*).

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

Data were collected at a large nationwide reemployment agency in The Netherlands. The sample consisted of unemployed individuals who needed assistance with their job search and were referred to a private reemployment agency. Upon the referral to the agency where the data were collected, all job seekers are assigned to an employment counselor. The employment counselor plans an intake-meeting with the client job seeker to draw up a reemployment plan. Follow-up counseling involves individual coaching sessions with job search assignments as well as workshops and training sessions. Employment counselors were requested to administer the Time 1 job seeker questionnaire at the start of the intake-meeting to job seekers that newly registered during the

study period, and to complete the Time 1 employment counselor questionnaire directly after the intake-meeting. To ensure confidentiality, both questionnaires were to be put in a stamped and addressed envelop with the university logo, which could be sealed and sent directly to the university. Of the 236 participating job seekers, 44.1% were men, age ranged from 21 to 61 ( $M_{\text{age}} = 43.5$ ,  $SD = 9.52$ ), and 8.1% held a college/university degree.

Time 2 data were collected four months later, using structured telephone interviews by a trained university research assistant for the job seeker measurement, and e-mail questionnaires for the counselor measurement. On the Time 1 questionnaire, 225 participants filled in their phone numbers. Of these, 194 (82.2%) completed the phone interview. For 217 job seekers counselor e-mail addresses were available. Of these, for 125 job seekers (53.0%) counselors filled in the electronic Time 2 questionnaire. To check for selective nonresponse, first the job seeker respondents in the Time 2 sample were compared with the job seeker nonrespondents ( $n = 194$  vs.  $n = 42$ ). Logistic regression with gender, age, level of education, and the psychological predictor variables measured at Time 1 among the job seekers and among their employment counselors showed some signs of nonrandom attrition for perceived health problems. A separate  $t$  test demonstrated that those higher on health problems were more likely to remain in the sample,  $t(228) = 2.00$ ,  $p < .05$ . The two groups did not differ in Time 3 reemployment status, 30.4% among respondents and 31.0% among nonrespondents,  $\chi^2(1, N = 236) = 0.01$ ,  $p = .95$ . Second, the job seekers in the Time 2 sample were compared with the job seekers for who no counselor data were available at Time 2 ( $n = 125$  vs.  $n = 111$ ). Logistic regression with the same variables showed some signs of nonrandom attrition for gender. A separate  $\chi^2$ -test demonstrated that counselors were marginally more likely to participate for male job seekers,  $\chi^2(1, N = 236) = 3.30$ ,  $p < .10$ . The two groups did not differ in Time 3 reemployment status, 28.8% among respondents and 32.4% among nonrespondents,  $\chi^2(1, N = 236) = 0.37$ ,  $p = .55$ .

## Measures Job Seekers

All items were administered in Dutch. Unless stated otherwise, items were completed by using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**Situational-level factors.** Consistent with previous research on job seeking (Van Hooft et al., 2004; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey, 1996) *attitude toward job search* was operationalized as instrumental job search attitude, assessed with three items asking the respondents to indicate whether they regarded it *sensible, wise, and useless* (reverse scored) to search for employment in the next four months ( $\alpha = .73$ ), and *social pressure to search* was assessed with two items asking the respondents to indicate whether *their significant other, respectively, most people who are important to them* think they should search for employment in the next four months ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Van Hooft et al.'s (2004) 7-item scale was used to measure *job search self-efficacy* (e.g., "I have confidence in my abilities to complete a good job-application";  $\alpha = .80$ ).

**Contextual-level factors.** *Employment commitment* was assessed with Van Hooft et al.'s (2004) six-item scale adapted from Vinokur and Caplan (1987). Sample items include: "Work is an important part of life" and "Work means more to me than just

money" ( $\alpha = .88$ ). *Perceived financial need* was assessed with four items (cf. Van Hooft & Crossley, 2008) based on Blau (1994) and Vinokur and Caplan (1987). A sample item is: "It is difficult for me to live on my current income right now" ( $\alpha = .78$ ). *Perceived health problems* was assessed with Buunk, Buist, Verschuren, and Vinkenburg's (1994) four-item scale. Sample items include "How do you experience possible health problems?" (response options ranging from 1 = *very serious* to 5 = *totally not serious*) and "What are your health prospects according to your G.P.?" (response options ranging from 1 = *bad* to 5 = *good*). Items were coded such that high scores indicated more health problems ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

**Job search intensity and procrastination.** Client-reported *job search intensity* was assessed at Time 2 by a 9-item index of job search activities based on Blau (1994). Participants were asked to indicate how much time they had spent on preparatory and active job search activities in the last four months. The activities were: preparing/revising resume, reading classified/help wanted advertisements, looking for jobs on the Internet, talking with friends/relatives about job leads, speaking with previous employers or business acquaintances about job leads, contacting employment agencies, making inquiries to prospective employers, sending out application letters, and preparing and going on job interviews ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Response options ranged from 1 = *no time at all* to 5 = *very much time*. Previous research (see Kanfer et al., 2001) mostly assessed job search intensity with either such index measures or with a job search effort measure or actual time spent on job search measure. As a validity check for our job search intensity measure, we administered two items asking for the amount of effort spent on job search and the number of hours per week devoted to job search. Responses to both items were highly correlated with the scores on the job search intensity index measure,  $r = .56$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $r = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively.

The extent to which clients had delayed or procrastinated their job search activities (*job search procrastination*) was assessed at Time 2 with one item based on Steel's (2007) definition of procrastination and McGregor and Elliot's (2002) and Steel, Brothen, and Wambach's (2001) procrastination measure: "How often have you procrastinated intended job search activities in the last four months?" (1 = *never* to 5 = *often*). A single-item measure for procrastination was adopted to avoid asking too many seemingly repetitious questions and to keep the telephone interview as short as possible. In addition, previous research demonstrated that one-item measures can be acceptable when time or space constraints prevent the use of scales, and may correlate highly with multi-item scales (Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997). Also for procrastination, previous research has supported the validity of single-item measures (Steel et al., 2001). Furthermore, some validity evidence for our T2 job search procrastination measure was found in that it correlated moderately ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with an 8-item general trait procrastination measure based on Lay's (1986) General Procrastination (GP) scale, administered at Time 1. This correlation illustrates that those with a stronger general tendency to engage in procrastination are also more likely to procrastinate on their job search, and is similar in size to previous findings on the relation between measures of trait procrastination and actual procrastinatory behavior (e.g., Ferrari & Tice, 2000; Lay & Brokenshire, 1997). As such, it should be noted that the GP scale and the job search procrastination measure reflect theoretically related, but

different constructs. That is, job search procrastination is a domain-specific behavioral manifestation of general trait procrastination as assessed by the GP scale.

### Measures Employment Counselors

**Situational-level factors.** Because of work load and time constraints the counselor surveys had to be very short. Although the use of one- and two-item measures is not optimal, we decided to assess the TPB-variables with one or two-item scales because previous research has demonstrated that such short TPB-measures are valid (Wanberg et al., 2005). Core items were selected based on reliability and factor-analyses of previous data, and slightly adapted to fit the counselor perspective. *Attitude toward job search* and *social pressure to search* were each assessed with one core item (i.e., “This client thinks it is wise to search for employment in the next four months” and “Most people who are important for this client think that he or she should search for employment in the next 4 months,” respectively). *Job search self-efficacy* was assessed with two core items (e.g., “This client feels confident in being able to use social contacts to locate job openings”;  $\alpha = .74$ ).

**Estimation of reemployment probability.** At Time 1, counselors were asked to estimate the reemployment chance for their clients, using a percent score (0–100%). Two items were used, asking the counselors to provide an estimate of the *chance that the particular client would find employment within 6 months* and *within 1 year* ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

**Job search intensity and procrastination.** Time 2 counselor-ratings of their clients’ *job search intensity* were collected using nine similar items (i.e., job search activities) as were used with the job seeker self-ratings ( $\alpha = .90$ ). Items were slightly adapted to fit the perspective of the employment counselor (e.g., “In the last four months, how much time did your client spent on. . .”). Some validity evidence for this measure was found, as this job search intensity index measure was highly correlated with counselor-ratings on two additional items asking for the amount of effort their clients spent on job search,  $r = .72, p < .001$ , and the number of hours per week their clients devoted to job search,  $r = .78, p < .001$ .

Time 2 counselor-rating of their clients’ *job search procrastination* was assessed with a similar item as was used with the job seekers, adapted to fit the perspective of the counselor (i.e., “How often has your client procrastinated intended job search activities in the last four months?”, with response options ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *often*). Some validity evidence for this measure was found, as it correlated moderately ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) with the client’s self-report general trait procrastination measure administered at Time 1.

### Measures Retrieved From the Reemployment Agency’s Databases

**Database search activity.** As part of the reemployment counseling program, job seekers were offered to make use of the reemployment agency’s electronic vacancy database. Individuals could register at the database and search for vacancies. Registration and search activity in this database can be viewed as a more or less objective indication of people’s job search activity, and was used as a validity check for self- and counselor-rated job search

intensity. Of the 236 participants, 79 (33.5%) registered with the vacancy database within four months after their intake-meeting. Among those who registered, it was recorded how many times they logged in into the vacancy database during the four months after their intake-meeting. The number of times that participants logged in ranged from 0 to 111 ( $M = 5.24, SD = 3.00$ ). As its distribution was highly skewed, the number of times that participants logged in was transformed into deciles. Database search activity was then coded 0 for those that did not register, and for those that did register from 1 to 10 based on the deciles scores.

**Reemployment status.** Reemployment status (0 = still unemployed and 1 = reemployed) was retrieved from the agency’s database for all participants 6 months after their intake-meeting (Time 3).

## Results

Table 1 presents descriptives and correlations. Supporting the convergent validity of our measures, self-rated and counselor-rated attitude toward job search, social pressure to search, and job search self-efficacy were significantly positively correlated ( $r$ s of .30, .24, and .39, respectively, all  $p$ s  $< .001$ ). Also, both self-rated and counselor-rated job search intensity were positively correlated,  $r = .34, p < .001$ , and both ratings correlated positively to database search activity,  $r = .24$  and  $.31$  (both  $p$ s  $< .001$ ), respectively. Self-rated and counselor-rated job search procrastination, however, were not significantly correlated.

### Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1, stating that self-rated job search intensity and procrastination predict reemployment status, was tested with two hierarchical logistic regression analyses. Gender, age, and education were controlled for because previous research has indicated that these may relate to job search intensity and reemployment status (Kanfer et al., 2001). The first analysis demonstrated that, after controlling for gender, age, and education, self-rated job search intensity and procrastination did not improve model fit,  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 2.45, p = .29$  (Hypothesis 1a not supported). In contrast, the second analysis showed that counselor-rated job search intensity and procrastination significantly improved model fit over gender, age, and education,  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 23.83, p < .001$ . The odds ratio was significant for job search intensity,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 3.03, p < .01$ , indicating that for a one-unit increase on counselors’ job search intensity ratings their client job seekers were over three times more likely to find a job, and marginally significant for job search procrastination,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.64, p < .10$ , indicating that for a one-unit increase on counselors’ job search procrastination ratings their client job seekers were 36% less likely to find a job (Hypothesis 1b largely supported).

To compare the predictive validity of the self- and counselor-ratings, William’s  $t_2$  statistic was used to test differences between correlations. The results demonstrated that counselor-ratings of job search intensity and procrastination correlated significantly stronger with reemployment status ( $r = .34$  and  $r = -.31$ ) than the self-ratings ( $r = .11$  and  $r = -.05$ ),  $t_2 = 2.43, p < .05$ , and  $t_2 = 2.12, p < .05$ . To formally Test Hypothesis 2, stating that counselors’ judgments demonstrate incremental validity in predicting reemployment status over self-reports, a hierarchical logistic re-

Table 1  
Descriptives and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Time 1: Job seeker																				
1. Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	0.44	0.50																		
2. Age (years)	43.49	9.52	.10																	
3. Education (0 = low, 1 = medium, 2 = high)	1.47	0.65	-.09	-.15*																
4. Attitude toward job search	4.05	0.71	.02	-.11	.04															
5. Social pressure to search	3.18	1.12	.24**	.01	-.01	.43**														
6. Job search self-efficacy	3.45	0.66	.01	.04	.26**	.30**	.14*													
7. Employment commitment	3.75	0.71	.12	.02	.06	.33**	.38**	.33**												
8. Perceived financial need	3.38	0.86	.20**	-.15*	-.05	-.07	.00	-.17*	-.04											
9. Perceived health problems	2.32	0.98	.04	.02	-.15*	-.37**	-.20**	-.33**	-.20**	-.23**										
Time 1: Employment counselor																				
10. Attitude toward job search	3.86	0.92	.02	-.04	-.03	.30**	.23**	.20**	.18**	.00	-.28**									
11. Social pressure to search	3.42	0.94	.03	-.09	.04	.24**	.24**	.17*	.14*	-.05	-.26**	.66**								
12. Job search self-efficacy	3.30	0.94	-.06	-.08	.09	.15*	.07	.39**	.09	-.02	-.27**	.41**	.42**							
13. Estimated chance of reemployment (%)	51.07	24.20	.02	-.31**	.06	.36**	.22**	.34**	.12	.00	-.45**	.50**	.45**	.48**						
Time 2: Job seeker																				
14. Job search procrastination	2.01	1.19	.03	-.10	.00	-.06	-.03	-.21**	-.11	.01	.01	-.04	.01	-.04	.02					
15. Job search intensity	2.47	0.64	-.06	-.12	.13	.19*	.06	.34**	.15*	-.05	-.28**	.21**	.28**	.36**	.32**	-.10				
Time 2: Employment counselor																				
16. Job search procrastination	2.82	1.12	-.09	.12	-.03	-.10	-.20*	-.42**	-.29**	-.05	.21*	-.07	-.18	-.19*	-.28**	-.04	-.15			
17. Job search intensity	2.50	0.74	.04	-.06	.21*	.32**	.24**	.31**	.35**	-.05	-.28**	.21*	.24**	.27**	.32**	.00	.34**	-.47**		
Time 2: Database agency																				
18. Database search activity	1.75	3.02	-.02	.03	.14*	.03	-.11	.10	-.01	-.09	-.14*	.01	.09	.03	.16*	-.01	.24**	-.06	.31**	
Time 3: Database agency																				
19. Reemployment status (0 = still unemployed, 1 = reemployed)	0.31	0.46	-.03	-.21**	.03	.16*	.09	.10	.06	.10	-.26**	.11	.16*	.18**	.26**	-.05	.11	-.31**	.34**	.05

Note. Because of incidental missing values *N* varies between 222–236 for Time 1, and Time 2 and 3 database variables, between 179–187 for Time 2: Job seeker variables, and between 115–121 for Time 2: Employment counselor variables. Scores for Variables 4–12 and 14–17 ranged from 1 to 5, and for Variable 18 from 0 to 10. Correlations relevant for Hypothesis 3 are underlined and correlations relevant for Hypothesis 4 are double underlined.  
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .



gression analysis was performed. The results show that, after controlling for gender, age, education, self-rated job search intensity, and self-rated job search procrastination, adding counselor-rated intensity and procrastination significantly improved model fit,  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 14.16, p < .01$ . Whereas the odds ratio of counselor-rated job search intensity was significant,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 3.10, p < .05$ , the odds ratio of counselor-rated job search procrastination was not,  $\text{Exp}(B) = 0.64, p = .12$  (Hypothesis 2 partially supported).

Hypothesis 3 stated that (a) attitude toward job search, (b) social pressure to search, and (c) job search self-efficacy positively relate to job search intensity. Because these variables were rated by both the job seekers and their counselors, Hypotheses 3a–c could be tested by four correlations each. As displayed in Table 1 (see underlined correlations), all correlations were positive and significant except for the correlation between self-rated social pressure and self-rated job search intensity (Hypothesis 3a and c fully supported, Hypothesis 3b largely supported). To assess the role of method effects, we tested whether common-source correlations differed from multisource correlations, using William's  $t_2$  statistic. Results indicate that common-source correlations were not significantly higher than multisource correlations,  $t_2$ -values varied between  $-1.90$  and  $1.05$ , all  $ps > .05$ . One difference (i.e., of job seeker self-rated social pressure with self-rated and counselor-rated search intensity) was marginally significant. However, this difference was such that the multisource correlation was higher than the corresponding common-source correlation. Thus, common-source correlations did not produce stronger results than multisource correlations.

Hypothesis 4 stated that (a) attitude toward job search, (b) social pressure to search, and (c) job search self-efficacy are negatively related to job search procrastination. Because these variables were rated by both job seekers and their counselors, Hypotheses 4a–c could be tested by four correlations each. The double underlined correlations in Table 1 show that no attitude—procrastination correlation was significant (Hypothesis 4a not supported), one of the four social pressure to search—procrastination correlations was significantly negative (limited support for Hypothesis 4b), and three of the four job search self-efficacy—procrastination correlations were significantly negative (Hypothesis 4c largely supported). To assess the role of method effects, common-source and multisource correlations were compared, using William's  $t_2$  statistic. Results indicate that common-source correlations were not significantly higher than multisource correlations,  $t_2$ -values varied between  $-2.33$  and  $1.62, ps > .05$  for all but one difference. The one significant difference (i.e., of job seeker self-rated self-efficacy with self-rated and counselor-rated procrastination) was such that the multisource correlation was higher than the corresponding common-source correlation,  $t_2 = -2.33, p < .05$ . Thus, common-source correlations did not produce stronger results than multisource correlations.

Hypothesis 5 stated that (a) employment commitment, and (b) perceived financial need positively, and (c) perceived health problems negatively relate to job search intensity. The correlations in Table 1 show support for Hypothesis 5a and 5c, as employment commitment and perceived health problems correlated significantly with both self-rated ( $rs$  of  $.15, p < .05$ , and  $-.28, p < .01$ , respectively) and counselor-rated job search intensity ( $rs$  of  $.35$  and  $-.28$ , respectively; both  $ps < .01$ ), but not for Hypothesis 5b,

as perceived financial need was not significantly correlated with job search intensity.

The prediction of job search intensity (i.e., Hypothesis 3 and 5) was further analyzed with hierarchical regression (Table 2). After controlling for gender, age, and education, the contextual-level predictors were added in Step 2. For both self- and counselor-rated job search intensity, the contextual-level predictors accounted for a significant proportion of variance. The betas indicate that perceived health problems explained unique variance in both self- and counselor-rated job search intensity, and employment commitment explained unique variance in counselor-rated job search intensity only. The betas of perceived financial need were not significant. In Step 3 of the analyses, the situational-level predictors were added. These were found to explain a significant proportion of additional variance in self-rated, but not in counselor-rated job search intensity. Both in the common-source and in the multisource analysis of self-rated job search intensity, the betas indicate that self-efficacy was the only situational-level predictor that accounted for unique variance in job search intensity. Despite their significant zero-order correlations with self-rated job search intensity, both attitude and social pressure mostly failed to predict unique variance in job search intensity. Furthermore, the regression analyses in Table 2 also suggest that using common-source data does not lead to stronger relations than multisource data.

Hypothesis 6 stated that (a) employment commitment, and (b) perceived financial need negatively, and (c) perceived health problems positively relate to job search procrastination. The correlations in Table 1 indicate support for Hypothesis 6a and 6c for counselor-rated job search procrastination only, as employment commitment and perceived health problems correlated significantly with counselor-rated job search procrastination ( $rs$  of  $-.29, p < .01$ , and  $.21, p < .05$ , respectively).

The prediction of job search procrastination (i.e., Hypothesis 4 and 6) was further analyzed with hierarchical regression (Table 3). After controlling for gender, age, and education, the contextual-level predictors were added in Step 2. The contextual-level predictors explained a significant proportion of variance in counselor-rated job search procrastination only, with employment commitment marginally negatively and perceived health problems marginally positively related to counselor-rated job search procrastination. In Step 3 of the analyses, the situational-level predictors were added. Self-rated job search self-efficacy was the only consistent significant predictor, being negatively related to both self-rated and counselor-rated job search procrastination. Last, similar to the job search intensity regressions, the job search procrastination regressions in Table 3 also suggest that using common-source data does not systematically lead to stronger relations than multisource data.

The relationship of contextual- and situational-level factors with reemployment status, and the mediating role of job search intensity and procrastination (Hypothesis 7) was tested with hierarchical logistic regression. For multicollinearity and power reasons reemployment status was regressed on the self-rated and counselor-rated predictors in two separate analyses. In Step 1 reemployment status was regressed on the demographics, contextual-level, and situational-level predictors,  $\chi^2_{\text{job seeker predictors}}(9) = 22.88, p < .01$  versus  $\chi^2_{\text{counselor predictors}}(9) = 18.27, p < .05$ . Of the demographics, age was significant in the job seeker analysis, indicating that every extra year of age results in a 5% reduction in the chance to get

Table 2.  
Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Time 2 Job Search Intensity as Rated by the Job Seeker and the Employment Counselor on Job Seeker and Employment Counselor Predictors

Predictor	Time 2 Job search intensity (job seeker self-rated)			Time 2 Job search intensity (employment counselor-rated)		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3 Common-source	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3 Multi-source Common-source
<b>Demographics</b>						
Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	-.05	-.06	-.05	.09	.04	.01
Age (years)	-.09	-.09	-.06	-.03	-.03	-.01
Education (0 = low, 1 = medium, 2 = high)	.10	.05	.05	.22*	.19*	.21*
<b>Time 1 Contextual-level predictors:</b>						
Employment commitment		.11	.11		.25*	.15
Perceived financial need		.02	.03		.05	.05
Perceived health problems		-.27**	-.18*		-.23*	-.11
<b>Time 1 Situational-level predictors (job seeker self-rated)</b>						
Attitude towards job search			.00			.21†
Social pressure to search			-.06			.04
Job search self-efficacy			.29**			.13
<b>Time 1 Situational-level predictors (counselor-rated)</b>						
Attitude towards job search			-.07			-.05
Social pressure to search			.14			.12
Job search self-efficacy			.28**			.16
$\Delta R^2$		.09	.10		.14	.05
$\Delta F(df_1, df_2)$		5.49 (3, 162)**	6.51 (3, 159)**		6.53 (3, 101)**	2.02 (3, 98)
Multiple R	.15	.34	.43	.23	.44	.49
$F(df_1, df_2)$	1.31 (3, 168)	3.46 (6, 162)**	3.91 (9, 159)**	1.93 (3, 104)	4.13 (6, 101)**	3.51 (9, 98)**
$R^2$	.02	.11	.18	.05	.20	.24

Note. Because of incidental missing values  $N = 169$  in the regression of job seeker self-rated job search intensity and 108 in the regression of counselor-rated job search intensity.

†  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 3  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis of Time 2 Job Search Procrastination as Rated by the Job Seeker and the Employment Counselor on Job Seeker and Employment Counselor Predictors*

Predictor	Time 2 Job search procrastination (job seeker self-rated)			Time 2 Job search procrastination (employment counselor-rated)		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3 Common-source	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3 Multi-source
<b>Demographics</b>						
Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	-.03	-.01	-.01	-.13	-.09	-.03
Age (years)	-.09	-.09	-.10	.15	.13	.19 <sup>†</sup>
Education (0 = low, 1 = medium, 2 = high)	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.04	-.03	.08
<b>Time 1 Contextual-level predictors</b>						
Employment commitment		-.13	-.13		-.19 <sup>†</sup>	-.04
Perceived financial need		-.06	-.07		-.09	-.12
Perceived health problems		.05	.00		.18 <sup>†</sup>	.09
<b>Time 1 Situational-level predictors (job seeker self-rated)</b>						
Attitude towards job search			-.05			.11
Social pressure to search			.05			-.14
Job search self-efficacy			-.20*			-.41**
<b>Time 1 Situational-level predictors (counselor-rated)</b>						
Attitude towards job search						.24 <sup>†</sup>
Social pressure to search						-.18
Job search self-efficacy						-.15
$\Delta R^2$		.02	.04		.09	.13
$\Delta F(df_1, df_2)$		1.11 (3, 162)	2.09 (3, 159)		3.31 (3, 100)*	5.39 (3, 97)**
Multiple R	.09	.17	.26	.19	.35	.50
$F(df_1, df_2)$	0.49 (3, 165)	0.80 (6, 162)	1.24 (9, 159)	1.33 (3, 103)	2.36 (6, 100)*	3.58 (9, 97)**
$R^2$	.01	.03	.07	.04	.12	.25

Note. Because of incidental missing values  $N = 169$  in the regression of job seeker self-rated job search procrastination and 107 in the regression of counselor-rated job search procrastination.  
<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

reemployed. Of the contextual-level predictors, perceived health problems was significant in both analyses, with odds ratios indicating that job seekers were 44% versus 48% less likely to be reemployed for each one-unit increase in perceived health problems. Perceived financial need was significant in the job seeker analysis only, with the odds ratio indicating that job seekers were 56% more likely to be reemployed for each one-unit increase in perceived financial need. None of the situational-level predictors was statistically significant at the 5% level. In Step 2 job search intensity and procrastination were added, demonstrating a significant improvement of model fit for the counselor-ratings,  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 11.23, p < .01$ , with perceived health problems and job search intensity as significant predictors, but not for the self-ratings,  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 0.60, p = .74$ . Applying Baron and Kenny's (1986) steps for mediation, using specific procedures for dichotomous outcomes (Herr, 2006; MacKinnon & Dwyer, 1993), only very limited support was found for the proposed mediating role of job search. Specifically, counselor-rated job search intensity partially mediated the relationship between perceived health problems and reemployment status, Sobel  $z = -1.87, p = .06$ .

Last, as indicated by the significant correlation between Time 1 estimated chance of finding employment and Time 3 reemployment status ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ; Table 1), counselors were able to reasonably predict who would find employment (Hypothesis 8 supported). This estimation did not predict unique variance in reemployment status after the demographics, contextual-, and situational-level motivators were taken into account. This may indicate that counselors base their estimation on a combination of these predictors. Regression analysis of Time 1 estimated chance of employment on the demographics, contextual-, and situational-level factors revealed that especially age ( $\beta = -.34$  vs.  $-.30$  in the analysis with self- vs. counselor-rated predictors), perceived health problems ( $\beta = -.34$  vs.  $-.32$ ), attitude toward search ( $\beta = .12$  vs.  $.26$ ), and job search self-efficacy ( $\beta = .25$  vs.  $.26$ ) predicted significant variance in the counselors' estimated chance of employment (adjusted  $R^2 = .37$  vs.  $.48$ ).

## Discussion

The present study was designed to examine the motivating and hindering factors in the process of getting reemployed, focusing on the added value of the employment counselor's perspective. Based on motivation theories, the job search literature, and expert knowledge of employment counselors, a model of contextual-level (i.e., employment commitment, perceived financial need, perceived health problems) and situational-level (i.e., attitude toward search, social pressure to search, job search self-efficacy) motivating and hindering factors was developed. Using both job seeker self-reports and counselor-reports, the validity of the model was tested in predicting both the intensity and procrastination of unemployed people's job search behaviors as well as subsequent reemployment status.

### Validity of Job Seeker Self-Reports Versus Counselor-Reports

Results show that self-reported and counselor-reported job search intensity were moderately positively correlated with one another and with database search activity, providing support for

the convergent validity of job search intensity measures based on an index (cf. Blau, 1994) of specific job search activities. Although the intercorrelations were significantly positive, effect sizes were only moderate. The size of these correlations resembles what is typically found in the multisource ratings and 360°-feedback literature (e.g., Conway & Huffcutt, 1997), suggesting that self- and counselor-reports share some common variance but may not refer to the exact same underlying construct. For example, job seekers and counselors may rely on different frames-of-reference regarding what an intensive job search looks like. Alternatively, the only moderate correlations may be due to bias and/or deficiency in either the self-report or the counselor-report or database measure. Specifically, whereas self-reported job search intensity may suffer from social desirability and self-serving bias, counselor-reported job search intensity may suffer from halo effects or from biases because counselors might have had too few chances to actually observe job seekers' search activities. Furthermore, the database measure could be regarded a somewhat deficient measure of job search intensity, as it only included job search activity on the agency's vacancy database (and not all other search activities). Therefore, similar to what has been noted in the 360°-feedback literature (e.g., Borman, 1997), the ultimate test which measure is best, is a matter of predictive validity. Nevertheless, the medium-sized correlations do demonstrate that self-reports on job search intensity possess some convergent validity.

Regarding predictive validity, the findings show that job search intensity was significantly stronger related to reemployment status when rated by counselors ( $r = .34$ ) than when self-rated by job seekers ( $r = .11$ ). Furthermore, counselor-rated job search intensity correlated stronger to reemployment status than what is typically found in the literature for self-reported job search intensity (i.e., meta-analytic correlation of  $.16$ ; Kanfer et al., 2001). Moreover, counselor-rated job search intensity explained unique incremental variance in reemployment status after self-rated job search measures (i.e., intensity and procrastination) were controlled for. These findings suggest that in terms of predictive validity it may be useful to complement unemployed people's self-ratings of search intensity with counselor assessments of unemployed people's job search intensity.

At first sight, one could argue that in this context it is surprising that counselor-ratings have higher validity, because counselors have less opportunity to observe the job seekers' behaviors than the job seekers themselves. However, observers typically need only brief observations or thin slices of behavior in order to form valid judgments (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). Furthermore, the lower validity of self-rated job search intensity is in line with other literatures that compared self- and other-ratings. For example, self-ratings of job performance are typically found to be less valid than performance ratings by supervisors or peers (e.g., Atkins & Wood, 2002; Conway, 1996). Explanations for the higher validity of counselor-ratings may relate to the fact that these suffer less from social desirability and self-serving biases. In addition, counselors see a wide number of job seekers, who they can compare in terms of job search intensity, allowing them to develop an elaborate frame-of-reference and comparison standard for evaluating individual job seekers' behavior.

These findings have important implications for both theory and future research. In theorizing on job loss and reemployment, the concept of job search intensity plays a crucial role (e.g., Feather,

1992; Kanfer et al., 2001; Latack et al., 1995; Leana & Feldman, 1988; Saks, 2005; Schwab et al., 1987; Wanberg, 2012; Wanberg et al., 2002). Previous empirical findings, however, have not unequivocally supported the theoretical position that a more intense job search leads to a higher probability of getting reemployed. Whereas some scholars have argued that previous theorizing overstated the importance of job search in the process of getting reemployed, the present findings suggest that self-report measures of job search intensity may offer a rather conservative test of the theory. Future research should therefore make an effort to collect other-ratings of unemployed people's job search intensity. In addition to counselor-ratings, ratings by others (e.g., partner, other family members, friends) can be included to obtain a more complete view on people's job search behavior.

In addition to job search intensity, also the situational-level motivators (i.e., attitudes toward job search, social pressure to search, and job search self-efficacy) were reported by both the job seekers themselves and their counselors. This design allowed us to examine to what extent method effects may influence the conclusions we draw in typical job seeking studies. That is, empirical work testing job search theories has relied exclusively on self-reports of job seekers to assess both motivating factors and intensity of job search behavior. The validity of designs relying solely on self-reports has often been questioned and mentioned as a limitation, because self-reports may induce common method variance, inflation bias, social desirability responding, acquiescence, consistency bias, self-serving bias, and recall bias (e.g., Blau, 1994; Côté, Saks, & Zikic, 2006; Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999, 2002; Turban, Stevens, & Lee, 2009; Van Hooft et al., 2004; Wanberg, 1997; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Various scholars have therefore called for research on job seeking to include different methods such as other-reports and objective data (e.g., Van Hooft & De Jong, 2009; Van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2005; Wanberg et al., 1996). In response to these calls, the present study included counselor ratings in addition to job seeker self-reports, which allowed for assessment of convergent validity of self-reports and examination of the influence of method effects by comparing common-source and multisource correlations.

Although common-source bias, resulting from measuring both predictors and outcomes with the same source (i.e., job seeker), may pose a threat to the validity of conclusions drawn from research using self-reports (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), the present study did not find evidence for this. Specifically, common-source correlations between situational-level motivators and job search were not higher, and some cases even lower, than their multisource counterparts. These findings suggest that common-source bias was not a threat in the present study. It should be noted, though, that the self-report part of the study design already incorporated several procedural remedies to control for common-method bias (cf. Podsakoff et al., 2003). Specifically, measurement of predictors and outcomes was separated both methodologically and temporally (i.e., self-report motivators were assessed using paper-and-pencil questionnaires, whereas self-report job search was assessed in a phone interview four months later). Altogether, based on the present study, one may conclude that when examining the predictors of job search intensity, method effects do not seem to pose a substantial threat to job search studies that used self-reports, when there is some temporal and methodological separation of predictor and outcome measure-

ment. However, when examining the predictors of reemployment status, counselor-reports of job search intensity and job search procrastination demonstrated higher predictive validity than job seeker self-reports.

### The Added Value of Hindering Factors

Aside from job search intensity, previous research usually reported meager results for predictors of reemployment success (Wanberg et al., 2002). Discussions with employment counselors suggested that in addition to motivating factors, hindering factors such as procrastination and health problems are crucial in the reemployment process. The present study found support for the importance of these relatively understudied variables.

Job search procrastination, when rated by counselors, was found to correlate significantly negatively to reemployment status, and predict a marginally significant unique proportion in the variance of reemployment status beyond gender, age, education, and counselor-rated job search intensity. Thus, job seekers who were observed to more often irrationally delay their intended job search activities were less likely to have found reemployment. This finding supports general theorizing on the detrimental effects of procrastination (e.g., Steel, 2007; Van Eerde, 2000), and extends the limited previous research on job seeking and procrastination (Lay & Brokenshire, 1997; Senécal & Guay, 2000; Turban et al., 2013; Van Hooft et al., 2005). Specifically, our findings suggest that procrastination is an important hindering factor in the job search process of unemployed individuals, reducing the chances to obtain reemployment. In addition, this finding illustrates the importance of examining other dimensions of the job search construct in addition to intensity (cf. Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2013; Wanberg, 2012). As procrastination implies lack of timeliness and failing self-regulation, it may be interpreted as indicator of low job search quality—an important but understudied dimension of job search. Future research should make an effort to incorporate more elaborate job search procrastination measures, as well as other indicators of job search quality and self-regulation in the job search process.

Perceived health problems was found to be the most consistent predictor of both job search intensity and reemployment status, indicating that unemployed individuals who perceive less physical and mental health problems were more likely to engage in an intense job search, and were more likely to be reemployed six months later. This finding emphasizes the importance of perceived health and health problems during unemployment not only as outcome but also as predictor of job seeking, and extends Taris' (2002) findings regarding mental health to general health perceptions. Theoretical models of contextual-level motivators of job search should incorporate perceived health problems as an important hindering factor in the process of getting reemployed. Future research should examine the degree to which these perceptions are based on actual mental/physical health problems, and to what extent these perceptions can be altered to enhance job search motivation.

More generally, the findings on procrastination and perceived health problems exemplify the importance of engaged scholarship (cf. Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). For example, perceived health problems was included in the model based on discussions with employment counselors, who noted that *perceptions* of ill-health

rather than actual ill-health often seem a hindering factor to job search. Thus, future research should make an effort to incorporate expert knowledge of counselors (and other parties involved) to inform and improve theorizing with regard to job loss, unemployment, and job search.

### Limitations

A first limitation is sample attrition, which is a common problem in longitudinal and multisource studies. Attrition among the unemployed job seekers was not related to any of the study variables, except for a small difference on perceived health problems. However, unobserved attributes (e.g., personality, values) may have differed between participating and nonparticipating job seekers. Attrition also occurred for the Time 2 counselor measurement, which was mainly caused by a reorganization going on during the study, resulting in counselors leaving the agency and increased caseloads for those remaining. Although this attrition was not related to the study variables (except for a small gender difference), some caution is warranted in generalizing our findings.

Second, although rated independently by two sources (self and counselor), job search intensity and procrastination were assessed at only one occasion. This may have led to some retrospective bias. Future research should therefore try to assess the different dimensions of job search at multiple points in time to get a more accurate picture of the unemployed individual's behavior (e.g., Wanberg et al., 2005).

Third, some study variables (e.g., job search procrastination, counselor-rated attitude and social pressure) were assessed with one item in order to keep the questionnaires as concise as possible. Using these single-item measures may have led to underestimations of the theoretical relationships for these constructs. Although single-item measures can be as valid as multi-item scales (Steel et al., 2001; Wanous et al., 1997), and some convergent validity evidence was found for our single-item measures (e.g., job search procrastination correlated with a multi-item trait procrastination measure; counselor-rated attitude and social pressure correlated with respective multi-item self-reports), future research should nevertheless seek to replicate our findings with multi-item scales. For example, job search procrastination can be assessed for an index of search activities, and perceived social pressure can be assessed by covering a broader range of referents that may pressure the individual.

Fourth, social desirability responding may have affected the findings. For example, job seekers could have been concerned that their scores might lead to sanctions, resulting in biased reports on for example search behaviors. However, to minimize such biases we made sure in our communications to the participants at both Time 1 and 2 that their answers would be treated confidentially, and would not be given to the reemployment agency or any other party, and would only be used in anonymous form for academic purposes. Nevertheless, social desirability may still have led to underestimation of the relationship between self-report job search measures and reemployment status. Being one of the main purposes of the present study, we sought to examine the validity of such self-report job search measures, and found that self-report job search intensity and procrastination measures may be less valid than counselor-reports on these variables. One potential explanation

for this finding may be social desirability responding. Other explanations, however, relate to differences in frame-of-reference, self-serving biases, and self-delusional thoughts.

Fifth, the present study sought to improve our understanding of the predictors of reemployment status, by including hindering (in addition to motivating) factors, such as perceived health problems and job search procrastination. Although these variables were found to be important, much variance in reemployment status was still left unexplained. Expanding the measurement of hindering factors seems a viable avenue for future research to improve our understanding of the reemployment process. Extending this and previous studies (Koen et al., 2013; Wanberg, 1997; Wanberg et al., 2002) a qualitative study may be a first step to more comprehensively map factors that potentially hinder people's job search. Another explanation for the unexplained variance in reemployment status may relate to the omission of job seeker assets (e.g., human capital, reservation wage, work experience, social capital, employability, specific skills that are in high demand) from the model, possibly introducing omitted-variable bias. Future research should therefore control for a broader range of job seeker assets (in addition to age and education) as these may determine unemployed people's employment prospects. In addition, a viable avenue for future research is to more comprehensively examine the dimensions of job search behavior (i.e., intensity-effort, time-persistence, and content-quality; Kanfer et al., 2001). Although the present study went beyond job search intensity by including job search procrastination as indication of the quality of people's job search, the concept of job search quality is a much more encompassing and promising construct (e.g., Van Hooft et al., 2013), in need of further research attention.

Last, only reemployment status was included as a final outcome. Future research should include other, nondichotomous outcomes such as job search duration. Furthermore, the findings on the positive role of financial need in predicting reemployment status may suggest that those with strong economic hardship may accept a job more easily, without considering its quality. Underemployment, however, has negative consequences for people's job attitudes and well-being (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011), indicating the importance of considering the quality of the newfound job. Previous research suggested that reemployment quality may be predicted by other variables than job search intensity (e.g., Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Future research should therefore include objective and subjective indicators of reemployment quality, such as salary, number of contract hours, type of contract (temporary, permanent), underemployment, fit, job satisfaction, or commitment, and examine the predictive validity of the counselor's perspective for these other outcomes.

### Practical Implications and Conclusion

Regarding practice, the findings suggest that in addition to job seeker self-assessments of attitudes, motivation, and behaviors (e.g., Wanberg, Zhang, & Diehn, 2010), reemployment counseling may benefit from including the counselor's perspective. Counselors could rate their clients' job search intensity, job search procrastination, and estimated chance to get reemployed, because these three variables (along with perceived health problems) correlated most strongly with reemployment status. Based on a diagnosis combining the job seeker and counselor perspectives, reem-

ployment counseling may be fine-tuned and potentially made more cost efficient. For example, one may decide not to use expensive interventions for those with low levels of counselor-rated job search procrastination and high levels of counselor-rated job search intensity and estimated chances to get reemployed as those will likely be able to find reemployment. In practice, counselor assessments are already used (Noordzij et al., 2013), although often in a rather unsystematic way. The present study suggests that formalizing such counselor assessments, using structured and validated measures may be helpful in furthering the counseling process. However, before implementing such assessments and adapting the subsequent counseling process based on the assessments, future research is needed to replicate our findings, to rule out alternative explanations (e.g., self-fulfilling prophecies), and verify whether and how such methods ultimately improve reemployment counseling effectiveness.

More generally, the present study extends previous research on the beneficial role of reemployment counseling (e.g., Caplan et al., 1989; Koen et al., 2013; Van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009; Vuori et al., 2005; Westaby, 2004), further demonstrating the importance of employment counselors in the reemployment process. This has important policy implications, as reemployment counseling is often thought expensive and ineffective.

In conclusion, the present findings provide convergent validity evidence for self- and counselor-rated situational-level motivators and job search intensity, and suggest that method effects do not threaten the validity of the typical job search study. However, counselor-ratings of job search intensity and procrastination showed stronger validity in predicting reemployment success than self-ratings. Future research should therefore include other-reports in addition to self-reports to get a more accurate view of the predictors of job search and reemployment. Especially incorporating the counselors' view may help to increase our understanding of the job search process. Including their expert knowledge in our research models seems to be a fruitful avenue for future research. Also reemployment counseling firms may want to use the expert knowledge of their counselors more systematically.

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