

# Job Search and Employment Success: A Quantitative Review and Future Research Agenda

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Job search is an important activity that people engage in during various phases across the life span (e.g., school-to-work transition, job loss, job change, career transition). Based on our definition of *job search* as a goal-directed, motivational, and self-regulatory process, we present a framework to organize the multitude of variables examined in the literature on job seeking and employment success. We conducted a quantitative synthesis of the literature to test relationships between job-search self-regulation, job-search behavior, and employment success outcomes. We also quantitatively review key antecedents (i.e., personality, attitudinal factors, and contextual variables) of job-search self-regulation, job-search behavior, and employment success. We included studies that examined relationships with job-search or employment success variables among job seekers (e.g., new labor market entrants, unemployed individuals, employed individuals), resulting in 378 independent samples ( $N = 165,933$ ). Most samples (74.3%,  $k = 281$ ) came from articles published in 2001 or later. Findings from our meta-analyses support the role of job-search intensity in predicting quantitative employment success outcomes (i.e.,  $r_c = .23$  for number of interviews,  $r_c = .14$  for number of job offers, and  $r_c = .19$  for employment status). Overall job-search intensity failed to predict employment quality. Our findings identify job-search self-regulation and job-search quality as promising constructs for future research, as these predicted both quantitative employment success outcomes and employment quality. Based on the results of the theoretical and quantitative synthesis, we map out an agenda for future research.

**Keywords:** job search, self-regulation, meta-analysis, unemployment, turnover

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Google the term *job search*, and you will get more than 5 billion hits. Amazon lists more than 7,000 books devoted to job search. The popular book *What Color is Your Parachute?* (Bolles, 2016) has sold more than 10 million copies in 26 countries (Safani, 2010). The strong interest in job search stems from the fact that most adults search for employment at some point: when they graduate, lose their job, or desire a job change. Finding suitable

employment is of utmost importance not only for financial reasons (i.e., the manifest function of employment), but also because employment has additional latent functions such as providing meaning, structure, social involvement, status, identity, personal development, and career growth (e.g., Jahoda, 1982). Nevertheless, job search and finding employment can be difficult and nonintuitive. In-depth understanding of the factors that play a role in a successful job search is therefore warranted.

Formally defined, *job search* is a goal-directed, self-regulatory process in which cognition, affect, and behavior are devoted to preparing for, identifying, and pursuing job opportunities. In 2001, Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz provided a quantitative review of the job-search literature. They found that job-search intensity significantly predicts finding employment, and that personality and motivational variables relate to engagement in job search. Although Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz (2001) suggested the importance of conceptualizing job search as a self-regulatory process, the dearth of studies assessing trait self-regulation and self-regulatory job-search constructs precluded a synthesis of the self-regulatory perspective.

Because of the pervasiveness of job search throughout the life span and the relevance of work to individual well-being, job search

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has generated continued research attention. Since 2000, the job-search literature has burgeoned with developments in theory, conceptualization, and measurement. These advances suggest four reasons for a reconsideration and extension of prior meta-analytic findings. First, although Kanfer et al.'s (2001) conceptualization spurred several narrative reviews (e.g., Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012; Klehe & Van Hooft, 2018; Van Hooft, Wanberg, & Van Hooft, 2013; Wanberg, 2012) and numerous empirical studies investigating job search from a self-regulation perspective, this work has occurred in disparate research streams that do not readily permit a clear understanding of how to classify and position diverse self-regulatory concepts within the broader nomological net of job search–employment success constructs. Such a framework is necessary to fully evaluate recent findings and develop new research directions. Second, empirical studies have not always found support for job-search intensity in predicting employment success, leading scholars to call for a more nuanced understanding of the job-search construct space (e.g., Koen, Klehe, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010; Šverko, Galić, Seršić, & Galešić, 2008). Van Hooft et al. (2013) suggested a theoretical distinction between job-search intensity and job-search quality, and a growing number of studies distinguish between different aspects of job search (i.e., preparatory vs. active; formal vs. informal). However, quantitative integration of findings using such more fine-grained conceptualizations of job search is lacking. Third, research has focused increasing attention on the criterion space, broadening the conceptualization of employment success. Specifically, one important

new criterion in a changing employment landscape is employment quality. However, primary research has not clarified if and how employment quality is predicted by job-search constructs (Boswell et al., 2012; Virick & McKee-Ryan, 2018), indicating a need for quantitative synthesis. Evidence on the job search–employment quality relationships has not only theoretical but also practical value, given the importance of employment quality for well-being and sustained career development. Fourth, the nature of job search has changed immensely since 2000. Technological advances now provide most job seekers with a wide variety of job information sources (e.g., online job boards, organizational websites, social media), and have changed recruitment and selection practices in many industries (Ployhart, Schmitt, & Tippins, 2017). What remains unclear, however, is whether these developments have altered the underlying psychological processes associated with job search and employment success as compared with the pre-Internet era.

This study leverages recent advances to build and meta-analytically evaluate a comprehensive organizing framework grounded in motivation and self-regulation theory (see Figure 1) relating diverse antecedents, job-search processes, and employment success outcomes, and to guide future research aimed at improving employment success in career transitions. In concert with the progress over the last 2 decades, more than 60% of the variables in our synthesis are new or were insufficiently studied to be included in Kanfer et al.'s (2001) study. The current wealth of data also allows us to conduct meta-analytic path analyses delin-

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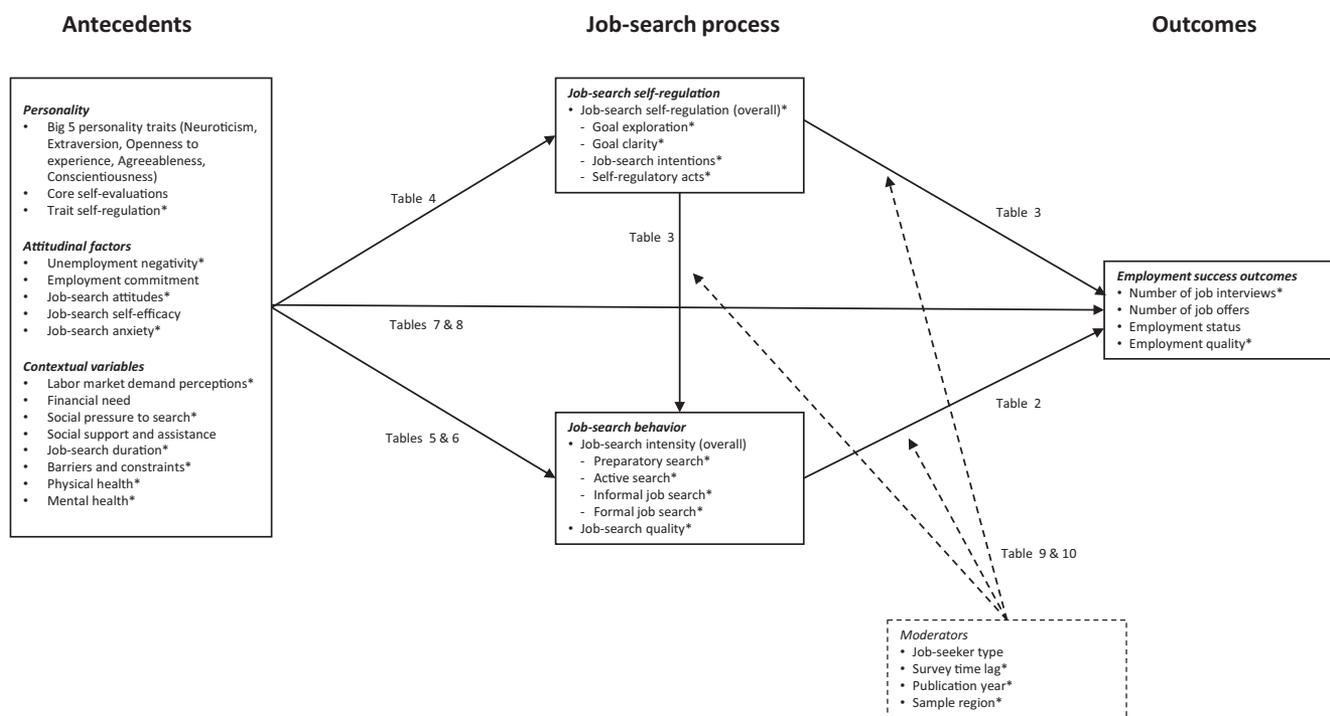


Figure 1. Summary figure of meta-analytic relationships examined in this study. Constructs not included in Kanfer et al. (2001) are indicated with an asterisk. Job-search self-regulation (overall) is a composite of goal exploration, goal clarity, job-search intentions, and self-regulatory acts. Job-search intensity (overall) includes broad intensity and effort measures as well as specific preparatory, active, informal, and formal job-search measures.

eating key employment success pathways, and to conduct moderator analyses addressing the role of type of job seeker, research design, publication year, and sample region.

Our study makes three major contributions. First, we advance theory by providing a classification and quantitative synthesis of the extensive array of antecedents of job search and employment success, quantifying the importance of the self-regulatory perspective, and examining the robustness of the self-regulation—job search—employment success relations through moderator analyses. Second, our analyses permit identification of specific research gaps, and promising future research directions. Third, our results have practical implications for career counselors (Saks, 2005, 2018), the design of effective job-search interventions (Liu, Huang, & Wang, 2014), and the development of profiling models and inventories to identify individuals who need help finding a job (e.g., Englert, Doczi, & Jackson, 2013; Wanberg, Zhang, & Diehn, 2010).

### Job Search as a Motivational Self-Regulatory Process: An Organizing Framework of Constructs and Relationships

Kanfer et al. (2001) conceptualized *job search* as a volitional pattern of action that reflects a self-regulatory process. Because job search is largely self-managed and often lengthy and competitive in nature, job seekers must engage in self-regulation. For example, job seekers must make decisions about their employment goals and strategy, and plan, organize, and execute search behaviors that are consistent with these goals and strategy. At the same time, because job search is characterized by uncertainty, financial strain, and multiple setbacks, it is stressful for many individuals (Song, Uy, Zhang, & Shi, 2009; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010). Self-regulation is essential for sustaining motivation and effort, especially as obstacles occur and as the search continues over time. The application of self-regulation theories (e.g., Bandura, 1991; Carver & Scheier, 1982; Kanfer & Heggestad, 1997) and process-oriented perspectives stimulated a new level of theoretical sophistication in the study of job search. We extend previous personality, motivation, and behavior-oriented depictions of the job-search process (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002) by developing a framework that integrates these theoretical and conceptual advancements with extant job-search models (see Figure 1; for definitions, see Table 1).

Two features of our framework warrant attention. First, we distinguish between distal antecedents and proximal process variables in modeling the job-search process. *Antecedents* can be stable or malleable, and include personality, attitudinal, and contextual factors. These antecedents may instigate a job-search episode, shape the job-search process, and may relate to employment success directly to the extent that they affect hireability. *Process variables* include job-search self-regulation and job-search behaviors, which may change during the job-search process. Drawing upon self-regulation theories and advances in the job-search literature we delineate the components of job-search self-regulation and job-search behavior. Second, our model includes self-regulation both as a distal antecedent, reflecting individual differences in self-regulatory ability (i.e., trait self-regulation), and as a process variable (i.e., job-search self-regulation) functioning as proximal antecedent of job-search behavior and employment suc-

cess. Because of the self-managed, lengthy, and stressful nature of job search requiring handling obstacles and setbacks, we pose that these self-regulation constructs explain why some people are more successful than others in initiating and maintaining job-search behavior. In the next sections, we specify the theoretical rationales for the proposed relationships in Figure 1.

### Job-Search Behavior → Employment Success

The salient role of job-search behavior in securing employment is well-engrained in extant theory on job seeking (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987) and in job-seeking research in specific contexts, such as schoolwork transitions (Saks, 2005, 2018), coping with job loss (Leana & Feldman, 1988; Wanberg et al., 2002), and employee turnover (Boswell & Gardner, 2018; Mobley, 1977). Job-search behavior can be evaluated along two major dimensions. *Job-search intensity* refers to the effort and time that people devote to job-search activities as well as the scope of these activities. Sample activities include talking to others (e.g., friends, ex-colleagues) to seek input about jobs and search strategies, examining online job postings, visiting employment agencies, and submitting applications. *Job-search quality* concerns the thoroughness with which job-search activities are performed. It indicates the extent to which the job search is conducted in a systematic and well-prepared manner, with behaviors (e.g., networking, interview behavior) and products (e.g., resumes, application letters) that meet or exceed potential employers' expectations (Van Hooft et al., 2013).

Although early studies conceptualized employment success primarily as securing a job (i.e., *employment status*), recent work more broadly assessed employment success along multiple dimensions, including *number of interviews*, *number of job offers*, and *employment quality*. The assumption behind the traditionally studied job-search intensity—employment success relation is that the more time individuals put into their job search and the greater the scope of their efforts, the more information and options they generate, resulting in more interviews and job offers, and a higher likelihood of obtaining a (new) job. Early evidence mostly supported this assumption, with meta-analytic correlations of .28 ( $k = 11$ ) for job offers and .21 ( $k = 21$ ) for employment status (Kanfer et al., 2001). Accordingly, we expect that job-search intensity is positively associated with the number of interviews, job offers, and employment status. For the job-search intensity—employment quality relation extant theory provides contrasting perspectives. Higher job-search intensity implies using more sources, providing more job leads and more accurate and complete information about these job leads, which leads to more job offers, allowing people to choose the best-fitting offer (Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Schwab et al., 1987). However, an intense job search may also negatively affect employment quality, such as when people take one of the first jobs offered without looking for better alternatives (e.g., Schwab et al., 1987). These contrasting theoretical perspectives and the lack of meta-analytic evidence make the role of job-search intensity on employment quality unclear.

Job-search theories have identified distinct aspects of job-search intensity. Stage theories suggest that job search occurs in sequential phases: a preparatory phase in which individuals screen for potential jobs, and an active phase in which individuals communicate their availability (e.g., Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phil-

Table 1  
Operational Definitions and Sample Measures

Construct	Definition	Sample measures and items	M reliability
Personality			
Neuroticism	Lack of emotional stability, susceptibility to fear, sadness, anxiety, depression, angry hostility, insecurity, and impulsiveness (McCrae & Costa, 1987); coping poorly with stress (Costa & McCrae, 1992); trait negative affectivity, indicating disposition toward experiencing negative emotions and moods across situations and over time (Côté, Saks, & Zikic, 2006; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988).	NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992), Strain-free negative affectivity scale—Revised (Fortunato & Goldblatt, 2002; e.g., “If I were given a difficult project to work on, I would worry about it a lot”). Negative affect scale of the PANAS (Watson et al., 1988) when referring to feeling negative emotions in general.	.82
Extraversion	Tendency to be sociable, open to others, assertive, active, and to like excitement (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1987).	NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992).	.81
Openness to experience	Tendency to seek out new situations and challenges, being curious about inner and outer worlds, and willing to entertain novel ideas (Costa & McCrae, 1992).	NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992).	.83
Agreeableness	Tendency to be altruistic, kind, likable, cooperative, helpful, and compliant (Costa & McCrae, 1992).	NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992).	.80
Conscientiousness	Tendency to be purposeful, determined, disciplined, dutiful, reliable, orderly, punctual, and responsible (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1987).	NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992).	.83
Core self-evaluations	Fundamental evaluations about personal worthiness, competence, and capabilities (Brown, Ferris, Heller, & Keeping, 2007). This category also included separate assessments of locus of control, optimism, and self-esteem (cf. Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003; Judge, 2009), and psychological capital in terms of general efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009).	Core Self-Evaluations Scale (Judge et al., 2003; e.g., “Overall, I am satisfied with myself”), Psychological Capital Questionnaire (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; e.g., “I am confident about helping to set targets/goals in my work area”), Rotter’s (1966) Internal-External Scale, Career Adapt-Abilities (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; e.g., “Taking responsibility for my actions”), Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985; e.g., “I am always optimistic about the future”), Rosenberg’s (1965) self-esteem scale (e.g., “I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others”).	.81
Trait self-regulation	Self-regulatory traits enable an individual to “guide his/her goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances (contexts)” (Karoly, 1993, p. 25). Guided by this construct definition, and because of insufficient number of studies to assess individual constructs separately, this category includes assessments of trait self-control, action-state orientation, proactive personality, learning goal orientation, and procrastination (reverse-scored).	Action-state orientation scale (Kuhl, 1994; e.g., “When I have a lot of important things to do and they must all be done soon: (1) I often don’t know where to begin, (2) I find it easy to make a plan and stick with it”). General procrastination scale (Lay, 1986; e.g., “I generally delay before starting on work I have to do”, reverse scored). Proactive personality scale (Bateman & Grant, 1993; e.g., “If I see something I don’t like, I fix it”). VandeWalle’s (1997) learning goal (e.g., “I am willing to select a challenging work assignment that I can learn a lot from”) and avoid orientation (reverse scored) scales.	.81
Attitudinal factors			
Unemployment negativity	Negative appraisal of and negative emotions about job loss/unemployment, in terms of perceived disruption of well-being, careers, daily routines, and relations with friends and family.	Wanberg and Marchese’s (1994) unemployment negativity scale (e.g., “How negative or positive has the unemployment experience been?”). Blau et al.’s (2013) unemployment stigma scale (e.g., “Because I am unemployed I feel like I don’t belong anymore”). Schaufeli and Van Yperen’s (1993) non-work orientation scale (e.g., “Receiving unemployment benefits is a proper way to earn a living”) (reverse scored).	.83

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Sample measures and items	M reliability
Employment commitment	Attitude toward the importance or centrality placed on employed work (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001).	Work involvement scale (Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979; e.g., "Having a job is very important to me"; Rowley & Feather, 1987; e.g., "Even if I won a great deal of money in the lottery, I would want to continue working somewhere"). Protestant Ethic Scale (Mirels & Garrett, 1971; e.g., "There are few satisfactions equal to the realization that one has done his best at a job"). Valence of work scale (Feather & Davenport, 1981; e.g., "Should a job mean more to a person than just money?"; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; e.g., "To what extent is work a source of satisfaction in your life?"). Importance of obtaining one's preferred position scale (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983; e.g., "How important is it to you at this time to work at the job you prefer?").	.75
Job-search attitudes	The extent to which a person has a positive instrumental or affective evaluation of job-search behavior (Van Hoof, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, & Blonk, 2004) or the personally perceived importance or pleasantness of job-search activities.	Instrumental job-search attitudes scale (e.g., Van Hoof et al., 2004; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; e.g., "It is wise for me to search for a [new] job in the next four months"). Affective job-search attitudes scale (Van Hoof et al., 2004; e.g., "I enjoy looking for a [new] job"). Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation scales of the Job Search Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, De Witte, & Deci, 2004; e.g., "I'm searching because I find it fun to look around on the job market", and "I am looking for a job because work is personally meaningful for me").	.78
Job-search anxiety	The extent to which people experience job seeking as stressful or threatening.	Saks and Ashforth's (2000) job-search anxiety measure based on the State version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (e.g., "How do you feel about conducting a job search? Anxious. Tense. Nervous"). Appraised threat (Caska, 1998; i.e., "I feel threatened by the thought of having to find a job"). Measure of Anxiety in Selection Interviews (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004; e.g., "In job interviews, I get very nervous about whether my performance is good enough").	.91
Job-search self-efficacy	Self-reported confidence about successfully accomplishing specific job-search activities (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985).	Task-specific self-esteem scale (Ellis & Taylor, 1983; e.g., "I am confident of my ability to make a good impression in job interviews"). Self-efficacy expectations for job search scale (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985; e.g., "How confident are you of your ability to successfully . . . find out where job openings exist?"). Job-search self-efficacy measure (Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; e.g., "How confident do you feel about being able to . . . complete a good job application or resume"). Networking comfort scale (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000; e.g., "I am comfortable asking my friends for advice regarding my job search").	.84

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Sample measures and items	M reliability
Contextual variables Labor market demand perceptions	Expectations of perceived availability and difficulty in obtaining a (suitable) job and perceived control over job-search outcomes. This includes measures related to perceived control over job-search outcomes, perceived job alternatives, outcome expectancies, reemployment efficacy, labor market demand perceptions, and perceived or actual unemployment rates in one's region/occupational category.	Perceived control over job search outcomes (Saks & Ashforth, 1999; e.g., "Finding a job is totally within my control"). Situational control (Wanberg, 1997; i.e., "What are the chances that you will obtain another job if you look?"). Self-reported labor market demand (Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002; e.g., "There are plenty of jobs open in my field or type of work"). Perceived unemployment rate for one's occupational category (Leana & Feldman, 1995). Actual occupational unemployment rates (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, & Ahlburg, 2005). Employment outlook, Internal/external search instrumentality, Method instrumentality, and Certainty of career exploration outcomes scales (Stumpf et al., 1983; e.g., "How certain are you that you will begin work upon graduation? . . . At the specific job you prefer"). Perceived reversibility of job loss (Leana & Feldman, 1990; e.g., "In the near future I will obtain a job as good as the one I have now"). Perceived job alternatives (e.g., Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994; "Give your best estimate of your present alternative employment opportunities"). Economic hardship scale (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; e.g., "How difficult is it for you to live on your total household income right now?"). Blau's (1994) financial need scale (e.g., "It is difficult to afford much more than the basics on my current salary"). The extent to which weekly UI amount replace wages earned before unemployment (Wanberg et al., 2002) (reverse-scored). Household assets and family income (Gowan, Riordan, & Gatewood, 1999) (reverse-scored).	.77
Financial need	Economic hardship in terms of actual financial need (e.g., unemployment insurance benefits, financial resources) or perceived financial need (i.e., subjective sense of how adequately current income and monetary assets meet personal and family needs).	Subjective norms regarding job seeking scale (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; e.g., "How hard do most people who are important to you think you should search for a job in the next four months?"). Introjected regulation and external regulation scales of the Job Search Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004; e.g., "I am looking for a job because I would feel guilty if I were not", and "I am looking for a job because I need the money"). Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona & Russell, 1987; e.g., "I have relationships where my competence and skill are recognized"). Feather and O'Brien's (1987) support scale (e.g., "When you have any kind of personal problem, how often do your parents give you their support and guidance?"). Social support for job search activity scale (Rife, 1995; e.g., "Others encourage me to continue searching for a job even when I feel down"). Receiving career counseling or career assessment (Gowan & Nassar-McMillan, 2001), guidance course (Vuori & Vesalainen, 1999), job search workshop or resume writing workshop (Gowan & Nassar-McMillan, 2001).	.82
Social pressure to search	Perceptions of the extent to which others/society thinks one should engage in job seeking.	This aggregated category includes:	.81
Social support and assistance	1. General social support (instrumental and emotional support from others that people perceive useful in coping with stressful events; Kessler, Price, & Wortman, 1985).		

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Sample measures and items	M reliability
Job-search duration	<p>2. Job-search social support (advice, help, and encouragement directed from others toward the job seeker to help them in their job search).</p> <p>3. Job-search assistance (the extent to which job seekers have received training or assistance to help them with their job search).</p> <p>How long individuals had been unemployed or how long they had been searching for a job at the start of the study.</p>	<p>Unemployment duration (Feather &amp; O'Brien, 1987; "Approximately how long [in weeks] have you been looking for work?").</p> <p>Job-search constraints scale (Wanberg et al., 1999; e.g., "How much do each of the following interfered with your ability to look for a job? . . . Not having enough money to search for a job?"). Reemployment constraints scale (Wanberg et al., 2002; e.g., "I have a reliable vehicle or a way to get to work and interviews", reverse-scored). Perceived personal control over external resources scale (Van Hoof et al., 2005; e.g., "I have sufficient resources to perform an adequate job search", reverse-scored).</p>	.84
Barriers and constraints	<p>Situational factors or environmental demands that might limit or restrict job-search efforts and job attainment (Wanberg, Bunce, &amp; Gavin, 1999; Wanberg et al., 2002) versus perceived control over environmental constraints and external resources (Van Hoof et al., 2005), such as availability of social contacts, facilities such as newspapers and internet, time, monetary resources to engage in job-seeking activities, transport, perceived discrimination, or relocation difficulty.</p>		
Physical health	<p>Subjective and objective physical health indicators including psychosomatic complaints, doctor visits, and self-reported health.</p>	<p>SF-36 Health Survey: Physical health subscale (Ware &amp; Sherbourne, 1992), assessing limitations in performing life roles due to physical health, bodily pain (e.g., Šverko, Galić, Seršić, &amp; Galešić, 2008). Price, Choi, and Vinokur (2002): "In general, would you say your health is excellent, good, fair, or poor?"</p> <p>General Health Questionnaire (GHQ; Goldberg, 1972; "Have you recently been feeling unhappy and depressed?"). SF-36 Health Survey: Psychological health subscale. DASS ("I find it difficult to relax over the last week"; e.g., Crossley &amp; Stanton, 2005). Hopkins Symptoms Checklist (Derogatis, Lipman, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, &amp; Covi, 1974; "How often over the last 2 weeks have you been feeling blue, crying easily?").</p>	.90
Mental health	<p>Psychological well-being and distress, assessed in more state-like forms (e.g., depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms, social withdrawal).</p>		.86
Job-search self-regulation (overall)	<p>Self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions regarding job search that are planned and cyclically adapted to the attainment of one's employment goals, involving establishment and specification of job-search goals, planning of the job-search activities, and self-control of attention, thoughts, affect, and behavior regarding job search (cf. Karoly, 1993; Zimmerman, 2000).</p>	<p>This overall category includes all measures listed under goal exploration, goal clarity, job-search intentions, and self-regulatory acts below.</p>	.82
Goal exploration	<p>The extent of career exploration and information acquired about occupations, jobs, and organizations, as well as self-assessment and introspection/retrospection (Stumpf et al., 1983).</p>	<p>The subscales on amount of information, environmental exploration, and self-exploration of the Career Exploration Survey (Stumpf et al., 1983; e.g., "How much information do you have on what one does in the career area(s) you have investigated?"; "To what extent have you behaved in the following ways over the last 3 months? Investigated career possibilities.").</p>	.85

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Sample measures and items	M reliability
Goal clarity	The extent to which job seekers have clear job-search objectives, clear ideas about the type of career, work, or job desired, and clear goals and plans for their career (Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Wanberg et al., 2002).	The focus subscale of the Career Exploration Survey (Stumpf et al., 1983; e.g., "How sure are you . . . that you know the type of organization you want to work for?"). Wanberg et al.'s (2002) job-search clarity scale (e.g., "I have a clear idea of the type of job that I want to find"). Gould's (1979) career planning scale (e.g., "I have a plan for my career").	.81
Job-search intentions	The extent to which people are willing to try hard to perform the job-search behaviors, or the effort they are planning to exert engaging in job-search behavior (Van Hooff et al., 2004).	Job-search intention index (Van Hooff et al., 2004; e.g., "How much time do you intend to spend on [a job search activity] in the next four months?"). Vinokur and Caplan's (1987) intention item ("In the next four months, how hard do you intend to try to find a job where you'd work over 20 hours a week?").	.84
Self-regulatory acts	Acts and strategies to control thoughts, attention, behavior, and affect related to the job search, and/or to sustain search effort (e.g., forming implementation intentions on when and how to search for work; Van Hooff et al., 2005; managing disruptive anxiety and worry; Wanberg et al., 1999; effective dealing with setbacks during the job search process; Vuori & Vinokur, 2005).	Emotion and motivation control scale (Wanberg et al., 1999; e.g., "I make myself concentrate on what more I can do to get a job."). Implementation intention scale (Van Hooff et al., 2005; e.g., "I have already decided how to organize my job search). Metacognitive activities in job search scale (Turban, Stevens, & Lee, 2009; e.g., "To what extent did you engage in the following activities during the prior 3 months: monitored my progress toward finding a job; thought about how to improve my skills at finding a job.").	.79
Job-search behavior (overall)	The frequency and scope of job search activity, including both preparatory and active job-search behaviors (Wanberg et al., 2000). The amount of energy, time, and persistence that job seekers devote to their job search (Kanter et al., 2001).	This overall category includes all measures listed under job-search measure type below, and generic job-search intensity measures such as Blau's (1994) combined preparatory and active job-search scale, Kopelman et al.'s (1992) job search behavioral index (e.g., "Have you read a book about getting a new job in the last year?"), and Kinicki and Latack's (1990) proactive search scale (e.g., "Devote a lot of time to look for a new job"). Active job-search behavior scale (Blau, 1994; e.g., "How often in the last 6 months did you . . . sent out resumes to potential employers?").	.83
Active job search	The active pursuit of specific job opportunities, by sending out resumes to specific prospects, honing prospects, and interviewing with prospective employers (Blau, 1994).	Active job-search behavior scale (Blau, 1994; e.g., "How often in the last 6 months did you . . . sent out resumes to potential employers?").	.75
Preparatory job search	The gathering of job-search information and potential job leads through various sources (e.g., relatives, newspapers, internet, previous employers, current colleagues) (Blau, 1994), without active application.	This category includes all measures listed under informal and formal job search below, and Blau's (1994) preparatory job-search behavior scale (e.g., "How often in the last 6 months did you . . . read the help wanted/classified ads in a newspaper, journal, or professional association?").	.80
Informal job search	The total number of times that people used informal sources in their job search. Informal sources include contacts that serve main purposes other than finding a job (i.e., current/former employees, friends/relatives, previous employers) (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994; Saks, 2006). The frequency and thoroughness of using networking in job search (e.g., contacting other people to get information, leads, or advice about job opportunities and the job search process) (Wanberg et al., 2000).	The number of informal sources used in the job search (Barber et al., 1994). Wanberg et al.'s (2000) networking intensity scale (e.g., "How often have you done each of the following in the last two weeks? Spoke with previous employers or business acquaintances about their knowing of potential job leads.").	.80

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Sample measures and items	M reliability
Formal job search	The total number of times that people used formal sources in their job search. Formal sources refer to intermediaries mainly serving job finding and recruitment purposes (i.e., employment agencies, internet, television/radio/newspaper ads campus recruitment, university placement) (Barber et al., 1994; Saks, 2006).	The number of formal recruitment sources people used in their job search (Barber et al., 1994). Van Hoyer et al.' (2009) scales on formal job search behaviors (e.g., "In the past three months or until you found a job, how much time have you spent on: Visiting job sites or employer recruitment sites?").	
Job-search quality	The extent to which job-search behaviors (e.g., networking, interview behavior) and job-search products (e.g., application letters, resumes) are of high level such that these meet/exceed the expectations of the demanding parties in the labor market (Van Hooft, Wanberg, & Van Hoyer, 2013) or the extent to which the job search is conducted in a systematic and well-prepared manner.	Job-search strategy measure (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; e.g., My approach to gathering job-related information could be described as random", reverse scored). Interview preparation measure (Caldwell & Burger, 1998; e.g., "Tried to contact someone in the company to see if they could provide you with any background"). Interview quality self-ratings (e.g., Crossley & Stanton, 2005) or recruiter-ratings (e.g., Ellis & Taylor, 1983).	.70
Employment success			
Number of interviews	The number of first or follow-up job interviews received (in a specified period) during the job search.	The number of interviews participants had with different employers (Saks, 2006). The number of follow-up interviews relative to number of initial interviews (Keenan & Scott, 1985). Total numbers of interviews divided by duration of search (Brasher & Chen, 1999).	
Number of job offers	The number of job offers received (in a specified period) during the job search.	Total number of job offers that participants received (Saks, 2006). Total number of offers divided by duration of search (Brasher & Chen, 1999).	
Employment status	The employment status some point after the start of the job-search spell in terms of whether job seekers had found a (new) job or not.	Reemployment status (0 = still unemployed; 1 = employed). Voluntary turnover (0 = still in the same job; 1 = found a new job). Job attainment (0 = did not find a job; 1 = found a job).	.83
Employment quality	Perceived quality of the new job. We included in this category quality perceptions in terms of job improvement, absence of underemployment, perceived person-job or person-organization fit, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions to stay, based on conceptual arguments and meta-analytical findings on their strong interrelations (Hararira, Manapragadab, & Viswesvaran, 2017; Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Maynard, Joseph, & Maynard, 2006; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).	Comparison of new job to the job held before unemployment on nearness to home, working hours, wages, fringe benefits (job improvement; Wanberg et al., 1999). Underemployment in terms of lower pay, hierarchical level, or skill utilization as compared to the old job (McKee-Ryan, Vitrick, Prussia, Harvey, & Lilly, 2009) (reversed-scored). P-J and P-O subjective fit perceptions scales (Saks & Ashforth, 2002; e.g., "To what extent does the job fulfill your needs?"; and "To what extent are the values of the organization similar to your own values?"). Job satisfaction measures such as the Faces Scale (Kunin, 1955) and Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983; e.g., "All in all I am satisfied with my job"). Affective Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990; e.g., "I think I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one", reverse scored). Intended length of time to remain with the employer (Ellis & Taylor, 1983), Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1983; e.g., "I often think about quitting") (reverse scored). Colarelli's (1984) Intention to Quit Scale (e.g., "If I have my own way, I will be working for the same organization one year from now").	

Note. Mean reliabilities are per construct across measures; blank cells in this column indicate that mean reliabilities could not be calculated because the construct measures are exclusively or mainly count measures (e.g., number of interviews) or refer to single-item zero-one indicators (e.g., has a job/has no job).

lips, 1994; Soelberg, 1967). Based on this distinction, Blau (1993, 1994) developed a two-dimensional job-search intensity measure, with *preparatory job search*, involving preapplication activities to gather potential job options and acquire information about job options through various sources, and *active job search*, involving the actual pursuit of generated and selected job opportunities. Another distinction concerns the type of sources (Schwab et al., 1987). *Formal job search* involves the use of public sources such as Internet, newspapers, campus recruitment, and employment agencies, whereas *informal job search* involves the use of private sources such as friends, relatives, and business contacts. Although these four components of job-search intensity are all expected to show positive relations with number of interviews, job offers, and employment status, stage theories suggest stronger relations for active job search as compared with preparatory job search. Furthermore, the recruitment literature (e.g., Barber, 1998; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000) and descriptive reports that many people find jobs through their networks (e.g., Franzen & Hangartner, 2006) imply stronger relations for informal job search as compared with formal job search.

In addition to job-search intensity, scholars have emphasized the importance of *job-search quality* in predicting employment success. For example, Wanberg et al. (2002) emphasized the importance of carefully constructed resumes and job applications, and Koen et al. (2010) concluded that searching smart (rather than hard) is important for employment success. Van Hooft et al. (2013) theorized that a high-quality job search involves adjusting behaviors and products (e.g., resume, cover letter, interview behavior) to potential employers. Based on this reasoning, we expect that job-search quality will positively relate to interviews and job offers and result in higher likelihood of obtaining employment. Further, because high-quality job search involves learning what employers want, it increases people's knowledge and information about jobs and organizations in one's field, resulting in better identification of suitable job leads and increased chances of landing a higher quality job.

### Job-Search Self-Regulation → Job-Search Behavior and Employment Success

Based on generic self-regulation definitions (Karoly, 1993; Zimmerman, 2000), we define *job-search self-regulation* as involving (1) self-generated cognitions and actions directed toward establishing and clarifying job-search goals; (2) translating goals into plans; and (3) initiating, maintaining, and adapting job search to attain employment goals. Linked to this definition and self-regulation phase models (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Kanfer & Bufton, 2018; Karoly, 1993; Van Hooft et al., 2013; Zimmerman, 2000), we identify four major job-search self-regulation variable classes: *goal exploration* and *goal clarity* (referring to the goal establishment process), *job-search intentions* (referring to the translation of goals into plans), and *self-regulatory acts* or goal-striving activities that facilitate initiation, monitoring, and maintenance of job-search behaviors.

**Goal exploration and goal clarity.** Establishing goals is a key mechanism in a self-regulatory process such as job seeking. Job-search studies have operationalized goal establishment in terms of goal exploration or goal clarity. *Goal exploration* involves environmental exploration, introspection, and self-assessment pro-

cesses to gather career-relevant information, which improves goal development and decision making during the job-search process (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983; Werbel, 2000; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Because goal exploration focusses on gathering broader career-relevant information regarding one's self and one's environment, it provides important input for subsequent job-search behavior. *Goal clarity* represents the precision of job-search objectives for the type of career, work, or job desired (Côté, Saks, & Zikic, 2006; Wanberg et al., 2002).

Self-regulation theories (Bandura, 1991; Carver & Scheier, 1982; Kanfer & Kanfer, 1991) describe goals as the basis for discrepancy detection and subsequent motivation to reduce discrepancies, and as self-motivating mechanism to improve performance. For proper self-regulation to occur, people should develop goals that are specific and clear rather than abstract and vague. Specific, clear job-search goals result in more effort and persistence, and a higher probability of performing well (Latham, Mawritz, & Locke, 2018), because they assist in the initiation and maintenance of intended behaviors by focusing attention, helping to prioritize, facilitating progress monitoring and detecting discrepancies between the present and desired state, and providing direction to behavioral adjustments (Inzlicht, Legault, & Teper, 2014; Locke & Latham, 2002; Van Hooft, 2018b). Goal exploration and clarity are therefore expected to instigate more intense and higher quality job search, to positively affect the generation of interviews and offers by inducing targeted and prepared applications and increase employment quality by improving self-awareness and decision making.

**Job-search intentions.** *Job-search intentions* refer to the planning phase in the self-regulatory process, indicating the effort people plan to exert in job search and the willingness to try hard to perform job-search behaviors (e.g., Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, & Blonk, 2004). The cognitive process of intention formation facilitates the translation of attitudes and goals into actual job-search behaviors. Although the role of intentions in predicting behavior has a strong theoretical base (Ajzen, 1991), and received wide empirical support (Sheeran, 2002), critics have noted that automatic/unconscious processes (i.e., habits and routines, implicit goals and needs) exert greater influence on behavior than conscious intentions (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Triandis, 1980). However, research indicated that automatic/unconscious processes are most relevant for routine and frequent behaviors, while in complex, difficult, or novel contexts, behavior is guided more by conscious processes (Ouellette & Wood, 1998). Because job search involves novel and complex behaviors that occur in ambiguous and changing environments, conscious processes such as intention formation are important mechanisms in explaining behavior and outcomes. Therefore, we expect that stronger job-search intentions relate to more intense and higher quality job search, and increased employment success.

**Self-regulatory acts.** Obstacles and setbacks can cause job seekers to get distracted, lose motivation, and experience disruptive anxiety (Kreemers, Van Hooft, & Van Vianen, 2018; Song et al., 2009; Wanberg, Basbug, et al., 2012). *Self-regulatory acts* are techniques that job seekers can use during goal striving to focus attention, sustain motivation, manage moods and emotions, and enact and maintain intended job-search behaviors. When job seekers implement such techniques to initiate intended job-search behaviors and shield their goal striving from disruptions, they

more likely engage in job-search activities and with higher quality (Van Hooft et al., 2013). Job-search studies examined various constructs that refer to self-regulatory acts. For example, motivation and emotion control (Wanberg, Bunce, & Gavin, 1999; Wanberg, Zhu, et al., 2012) help to deal with setbacks and cognitive and emotional distractions in order to avoid self-defeating cognition and maintain attention and motivation directed to job search. Identifying possible setbacks in advance and planning how to deal with these allows job seekers to sustain their mood and motivation (Vuori & Vinokur, 2005). Implementation intentions entail specific plans for when, where, and how job-search intentions will be enacted (Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, & Blonk, 2005), and are thus a self-regulatory act that facilitates the initiation and maintenance of job-search behaviors. It makes such behaviors more automatic, requiring less conscious control to perform and maintain. Metacognitive activities in job search (Turban, Stevens, & Lee, 2009) encompass multiple self-regulatory acts, including monitoring progress, analyzing performance, and reflecting for improvement. Metacognitive activities can facilitate the job-search process and improve search outcomes by stimulating learning during the job search, such that job seekers discover which behaviors are effective and what employers are seeking. Altogether, self-regulatory acts are expected to positively relate to job-search intensity and quality, and to employment success outcomes.

### Antecedents of the Job-Search Process

Prior theory and research has identified many individual differences that relate to job-search self-regulation, job-search behavior, and employment success. We classified the wide array of antecedents into personality, attitudinal, and contextual variable categories. As noted with an asterisk in Figure 1, many new antecedents are available for analysis since Kanfer et al.'s (2001) review. Based on motivation and self-regulation theories, extant job-search models, and empirical findings, we develop general expectations regarding how these antecedents relate to involvement in the job-search process and its outcomes.

**Personality.** Job-seeker personality likely shapes the job-search process and its outcomes because job search is a goal-directed process occurring in ambiguous contexts with many difficulties which require adaptation and self-management. Regarding the Big Five, we expect more engagement and success in the job-search process for people who are lower on *neuroticism* (because they are less anxious, self-conscious, and hostile in novel situations and after setbacks), and higher on *extraversion* (because they are socially interactive and energetic), *openness to experience* (because they are adaptive and open to try new methods and strategies), and *conscientiousness* (because they are organized, planful, achievement-striving, and persistent; Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Job search theorizing has failed to identify a clear and consistent role for *agreeableness*, but we can expect small positive relations with job search and employment success based on Kanfer and colleagues' (2001) findings. More recently, the job-search literature has identified other relevant personality aspects such as core self-evaluations and motivational/self-regulatory traits (e.g., Lopez-Kidwell, Grosser, Dineen, & Borgatti, 2013; Van Hooft et al., 2005; Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005). *Core self-evaluations* (CSE) indicate self-perceptions of worth and control

and confidence in the ability to cope, which relate to higher motivation, better coping with stress and setbacks, and more constructive responding to feedback (Judge, 2009). Therefore, CSE should positively relate to the job-search process and its outcomes. *Trait self-regulation* refers to the ability to guide goal-directed actions over time, across difficult and changing circumstances (cf. Karoly, 1993), as indicated by dispositions such as trait self-control, action (vs. state) orientation, and low trait procrastination. Based on our theorizing, self-regulatory traits should positively relate to the job-search process and its outcomes.

**Attitudinal factors.** Attitudinal factors refer to evaluative and affective beliefs, cognitions, and judgments regarding unemployment, employment, and job search. Based on theoretical accounts (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005; Van Hooft, 2018a) we focus on the attitudinal factors *unemployment negativity*, *employment commitment*, *job-search attitudes*, *job-search self-efficacy*, and *job-search anxiety* (see Table 1 for definitions). Attitudes toward one's current situation, the job-search process, and its outcomes are relevant to the engagement in and quality of job search. This is because job seeking demands effort and resources over time until employment is found (Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2013). Based on motivation and self-regulation theories (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1986, 1991; Carver & Scheier, 1982; Feather, 1992) higher negativity about one's current state, stronger commitment to employment, and positive evaluations of (and less anxiety about) job search should positively predict involvement in the job-search process and its outcomes. Motivation and self-regulation theories further pose that motivational and self-regulatory systems importantly depend on people's self-efficacy. Meta-analyses have supported the positive role of job-search self-efficacy in predicting job-search intensity and employment outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2014). Therefore, job-search self-efficacy is expected to positively relate to the job-search process and its outcomes.

**Contextual variables.** Job seekers are embedded in a broader socioeconomic context that brings both opportunities and constraints that might affect their job search. The job-search literature has been criticized for its lack of examination of contextual factors (e.g., Saks, 2005). However, researchers have increasingly examined antecedents that portray the situation of individuals beyond their personality, attitudes, or demographics. Although Kanfer and colleagues' (2001) framework included two such antecedents (i.e., financial need, social support), more recent theoretical accounts and reviews have expanded the number of potentially relevant contextual factors (e.g., Boswell et al., 2012; Van Hooft, 2018a; Wanberg et al., 2002). We integrated extant theory and models to classify these contextual factors into eight antecedents (see Figure 1).

First, as an indicator of the availability of suitable jobs at the labor market, primary research measured job seekers' *labor market demand perceptions* under a variety of construct labels (see Table 1). Motivational and behavioral coping theories (e.g., Feather, 1992; Leana & Feldman, 1988; Wanberg, 1997) suggest that job seekers are more motivated to mobilize energy and engage in job search when they have positive labor market demand perceptions. However, control theory (Klein, 1989) and economic rational choice theory (McFadyen & Thomas, 1997) suggest a compensatory mechanism, such that people who hold positive labor market demand perceptions invest less in job seeking because they per-

ceive less effort is needed to obtain success. Given these contrasting motivational effects, labor market demand perceptions may have no overall relationships with the job-search process and its outcomes.

*Financial need* or economic hardship is mostly posed to heighten the felt urgency to find a job, thereby increasing motivational engagement in the job-search process and speed of acquiring employment (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Schwab et al., 1987; Wanberg et al., 2002). However, financial need may also heighten stress and push people into job search without enough forethought and reflection (Van Hooft et al., 2013), leading them to accept a job with less consideration to its quality. Thus, we expect financial need to relate positively to job-search intensity and employment status, but negatively to employment quality.

Motivational theories such as the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Van Hooft, 2018a) suggest that involvement in the job-search process is positively influenced by not only people's personal attitudes, but also their perceived *social pressure to search*. However, self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) suggests that perceived social pressure to search inhibits persistence and quality-related aspects of the job search, reducing the likelihood of securing high-quality employment (Van Hooft et al., 2013; Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018). Similar to financial need, we therefore expect social pressure to positively relate to job-search intensity and employment status, but negatively to employment quality.

*Social support and assistance* include factors such as general social support, job-seeking support, and assistance with the job-search process (e.g., receiving counseling or training). Coping theories (e.g., Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 1995; Leana & Feldman, 1988) suggest that social support is an important coping resource that can stimulate engagement in the job-search process by providing encouragement, emotional support after setbacks, information, advice, and feedback (Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2013). Previous meta-analytic findings suggest that social support is an important component of effective training interventions, and positively relates to job-search intensity and employment status and (Kanfer et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2014). Therefore, we expect social support and assistance to positively relate to involvement in the job-search process and its outcomes.

*Job-search duration* refers to how long people have been searching for a job at the start of a study. Because job search is a dynamic process changing over time (e.g., Barber et al., 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2000; Wanberg, Zhu, et al., 2012), variations in job-search duration may have implications for subsequent job seeking. For example, longer job-search processes deplete motivation (e.g., due to repeated rejections; Wanberg, Basbug, et al., 2012), resulting in reduced involvement in job search and lower employment success.

*Barriers and constraints* involve situational factors or environmental demands that constrain job seekers' possibilities to perform job-search activities or limit their employment options (Wanberg et al., 1999, 2002), such as lack of transportation or monetary resources, care responsibilities, or relocation difficulties. Because these factors undermine motivation, we expect negative relations with involvement in the job-search process and its outcomes.

*Physical and mental health* should positively relate to involvement in the job-search process and its outcomes. Physical and mental ill-health results in lower energy levels and reduced avail-

ability, leading to lowered motivation and capacity to actively shape and influence one's environment and engage in an active job search (Taris, 2002; Van Hooft, 2014). Also, employers are less likely to hire applicants who have health problems, resulting in reduced employment success probabilities (Van Hooft, 2014).

## Moderators

We present moderator analyses exploring the effects of job-seeker type, survey time lag, publication year, and sample region on the relationships between job-search self-regulation, job-search intensity, and employment success. This examination is theoretically positioned to address the debate on the importance of job-search intensity to employment outcomes. On one hand, the relevance of job search for employment success is well-engrained in extant theory, and previous meta-analyses support the idea that  $p$  who put more time into their search more likely find work (e.g.,  $r_c = .21$  between job-search intensity and employment status; Kanfer et al., 2001). On the other hand, null findings in primary studies have led scholars to question the importance of job-search intensity for employment success, such as Šverko et al. (2008) who argued that the relation between job-search intensity and employment outcomes is weak, and called for further research to examine why "job searching does not pay more" (p. 415).

First, the extent to which job-search self-regulation and intensity relate to employment success may vary by job-seeker type. Previous research mostly focused on three types: new entrants, unemployed, and employed job seekers (Boswell et al., 2012). These groups may differ in their reasons for job search, the context surrounding their job search, their time for job seeking, the challenges they face, and the consequences of finding employment. However, studies examining various groups simultaneously found functional similarities in motivational and self-regulatory processes across groups (Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2004; Wanberg, Basbug, et al., 2012). Regarding the importance of job-search intensity for employment success between job-seeker types, conflicting ideas have been raised. Lee and Mitchell's (1994) unfolding model suggested that turnover is not always preceded by a job search, suggesting weaker job-search intensity-employment success relations among employed job seekers. However, empirical research indicated that turnover preceded by a job search was more common (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996, 2008). Moreover, although there were few studies to examine, Kanfer et al. (2001) found that job-search intensity related more strongly to employment outcomes for employed than for unemployed job seekers and new entrants.

Second, the study design characteristic survey time lag (i.e., time between measurement of predictor and outcome) may affect the strength of the relationships. Testing for differences between cross-sectional and time-lagged designs is important because the timing between measuring job-search intensity and employment success in primary studies may limit the possibility to find strong relationships. That is, when assessing employment success shortly after job-search intensity, people's search efforts are unlikely to have resulted in job offers or job attainment yet. When assessing employment success too long after job-search intensity, search efforts may have changed and therefore no longer predict employment outcomes.

Last, we explore whether publication year and sample region moderate relationships between job-search self-regulation, job-search intensity, and employment success. We examine whether results in pre-2000 studies differ from those in studies from 2000 onward. This cut-off was opted to examine whether findings differ between the period covered by Kanfer et al. (2001) and the period thereafter. Further, technological factors such as the Internet and social media have dramatically changed recruitment practices since the start of the millennium. Job-search activities such as visiting online job boards and organizational websites, using social networking websites, and submitting online applications have become important components of present-day job search (e.g., Lin, 2010; Nikolaou, 2014; Stevenson, 2009). This has led to adaptations of job-search measures by including job-search activities using digital media (e.g., Saks, 2006; Van Hooft et al., 2004; Van Hooft, Van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009; Wanberg et al., 2002). An important question, however, is whether underlying psychological processes have altered since the widespread use of Internet in job search. Our publication year moderator analyses allow for an empirical examination of this question. Regarding sample region, we compare studies from North America (i.e., the United States and Canada) with studies from Europe and the rest of the world. This will provide some indication on the extent to which our findings are generalizable to non-North American cultures.

## Method

### Literature Search

We conducted an extensive literature search to identify published scholarly work in English peer-reviewed journals up to April 2019. We searched abstracts in ABI/INFORM Global, PsycINFO, ProQuest, ERIC, and Google Scholar using the keywords *job search*, *job seeking*, *job hunting*, *job seeker*, *reemployment*, *reemployed*, *lay-off*, *laid-off*, and *job loss*. We also manually searched peer-reviewed journals in psychology and management (i.e., *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personnel Psychology*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*). We consulted reference lists of prior review articles on job search and searched for articles that cited Kanfer et al. (2001) or a job-search behavior measure study (i.e., Becker, 1980; Blau, 1993, 1994; Kinicki & Latack, 1990; Kopelman, Rovenpor, & Millsap, 1992). To get unpublished work, we searched for dissertations in ProQuest using the same keywords, and we searched the conference programs of the last 5 years of the Academy of Management, Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, and European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology and e-mailed authors of relevant conference submissions. Last, we e-mailed all authors whose name appeared at least two times in our database to ask for unpublished work.

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles had to meet five criteria for inclusion. First, articles had to report on an empirical investigation. Second, articles had to report on a sample of actual or potential job seekers (e.g., unemployed or employed individuals, graduating students, retirees, re-

entrants, temporary workers) or previous job seekers (i.e., studies on reemployment quality among new job incumbents). Third, samples had to be independent. We screened for duplicate effects (cf. Wood, 2008). When a (sub)sample was used in two or more articles, we coded effects only once using the largest sample (cf. Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012). Fourth, articles had to report a univariate statistic on a relationship of a predictor or outcome and at least one of our job-search variable categories (job-search self-regulation, job-search behavior, employment success) at the individual level. We excluded relationships with employment status as outcome when these referred to a cross-sectional comparison between employed and unemployed people, because then our outcome variable (i.e., employment status) already occurred before the measurement of our predictor variables (e.g., self-efficacy) and as such may have influenced the predictor variables. We thus excluded studies that were qualitative, reported only multivariate statistics, reported only group-level statistics, or were recruitment studies that examined attraction or pursuit intentions toward one specific real or fictitious organization/vacancy rather than job search more generally. Fifth, articles had to report sample size information. When the exact sample size for a correlation was not provided, we made a reasonable estimate (e.g., when a correlation table reports sample sizes varying between  $x$  and  $y$ , we used the average of  $x$  and  $y$ ).

Our search using these inclusion criteria resulted in a final sample of 341 eligible articles, unpublished papers, and dissertations, with 378 independent samples ( $N = 165,933$ ). Included studies were conducted between 1978 and 2019, with most samples (i.e., 74.3%,  $k = 281$ ,  $N = 140,953$ ) coming from studies after 2000. Designs were either cross-sectional (36.5%) or using two or more waves (63.2%). Samples originated from a broad range of countries, with 58.6% from North America (i.e., 52.4% United States and 6.2% Canada), 22.2% from Europe (e.g., 7.6% Netherlands, 3.5% Belgium), 10.0% from Asia (e.g., 4.6% China), 5.9% from Australia, 0.8% from Africa, and the remaining samples coming from either international samples or unconfirmed samples. Of the included samples, 27.7% studied school-leavers/graduating students, 41.1% unemployed job seekers, 24.2% employed job seekers, and 7.0% a mixture of job-seeker types.

### Coding Procedure

An initial code book was developed, and a selection of articles was coded by the first and fifth author to establish the validity of the coding book. Coding decisions were discussed among the authors, discrepancies were resolved, and the coding book was further specified. Using the adapted coding book all articles were coded by the first, second, or fifth author. We coded each independent sample for job-seeker type, publication year, sample region, and categorized independent and dependent variables based on variable definitions specified in the coding book. For each relationship, we coded reliability estimates, sample size, time lag between the measurement of independent and dependent variable, and correlation coefficient (or another univariate statistic if the correlation was not reported). For some correlations, reverse coding was necessary to preserve construct meaning.

Based on our framework (see Figure 1), we coded the following relationships: (1) antecedents with job-search self-regulation variables, with job-search behavior variables, and with employment

success outcomes, (2) job-search self-regulation with job-search behavior variables, and with employment success outcomes, and (3) job-search behavior variables with employment success outcomes. We aggregated related measures into construct categories based on theoretical grounds. In two cases it made theoretical sense to examine both aggregated categories and narrower facets. First, we examined self-regulation as an overall category and at a more specific facet level (goal exploration, goal clarity, job-search intentions, and self-regulatory acts). Second, we specified the overall aggregated job-search intensity category into preparatory and active job search (cf. Blau, 1994) and informal and formal job search (cf. Saks, 2006). Our overall category for job-search intensity includes the same measures included in the facet categories and some overall measures that could not be broken into facets. When authors studied multiple facets of job-search intensity, we used the average of correlations from one study when computing overall job-search intensity. When similar constructs were measured with different scales, we coded the correlations separately, but used the same variable code. When a sample had multiple measures in the same variable category, we used the average correlation across the multiple measures to ensure statistical independence (e.g., Nye, Su, Rounds, & Drasgow, 2012; Schmidt & Hunter, 2014). Similarly, when a sample had multiple measures across occasions, we took the average across occasions. Study-level coded information is available in the [online supplemental material](#).

A random selection of 20% of the articles were coded independently by two of the authors. The intercoder agreement for the variable coding was  $\kappa = .89$  (2,582 cases;  $p < .001$ ). As an additional data quality check, two authors who were not involved in the coding process reviewed all raw effect sizes in the final analyses. They examined the primary studies in question to recheck effect sizes that looked like outliers or possibly incorrect.

### Meta-Analytic Procedures

We estimated sample-weighted average effect sizes and variability of effects based on the random-effects psychometric meta-analytic procedures (Schmidt & Hunter, 2014). The corrected correlations and variability estimates that we report address sampling error and internal consistency reliability. When studies did not report internal consistency reliability, we used the mean of reliability estimates of other primary studies (see Table 1). No corrections were applied to address variable base rates for employment status, because this is a truly dichotomous variable (e.g., Williams & Peters, 1998). Based on previous research (Frazier, Fainshmidt, Klinger, Pezeshkan, & Vracheva, 2017; Oh et al., 2014), we set the cutoff for the minimum number of primary studies to warrant interpretation of the meta-analytic correlations at three in the main analyses and two in the moderator analyses. We report 80% credibility intervals around reliability corrected correlations (Whitener, 1990). The width of credibility intervals represents the extent to which relationships vary across studies; wider credibility intervals suggest that moderators of the relationship at the sample level may exist. Our path models were fit based on procedures developed by Viswesvaran and Ones (1995). The inputs for the path models were based on the correlation matrix among job-search self-regulation, job-search intensity, job-search quality, and the employment outcomes, using the corrected correlations shown in Tables 2 and 3. Sample size was based on the harmonic mean of the sample

sizes for each meta-analytic correlation. We allowed all variables to freely covary in a partial mediation model.

To evaluate the possibility of publication bias, we used two techniques (Duval & Tweedie, 2000; Ferguson & Brannick, 2012). First, we tested whether publication status moderates effect sizes by meta-regressing (i.e., inverse standard error weighted regression) observed effect sizes on an indicator of whether it was from a published or unpublished paper. Second, we used the trim-and-fill technique (Burnette, O'Boyle, VanEpps, Pollack, & Finkel, 2013) in Stata 16.0 (StataCorp, 2019), which evaluates whether the distribution of effect sizes is symmetric. Neither test definitively proves publication bias, but both serve as evidence that future studies should be conducted to evaluate the possibility. Because of the large number of meta-analytic results and the limitations of interpreting results with small  $k$ s, we focus the publication bias tests on aggregated categories (i.e., job-search intensity and job-search self-regulation). All analyses and reported results are in terms of the observed (uncorrected) correlations.

## Results

Tables 2 through 8 present the meta-analytic results of the relationships depicted in Figure 1. Tables report number of samples ( $k$ ), number of individuals ( $N$ ), uncorrected mean sample-weighted correlations ( $r$ ), reliability-corrected mean sample-weighted correlations ( $r_c$ ), residual standard deviation of the  $r_c$ s ( $SD_{r_c}$ ) after correcting for sampling error and reliability variance and 80% credibility intervals. We added Kanfer et al.'s (2001) findings for comparison.

### Relationships of Job-Search Behavior With Employment Success Outcomes

Table 2 presents the meta-analytic results for the relationships of job-search intensity and job-search quality with the employment success outcomes. Overall job-search intensity was positively related to number of interviews ( $r_c = .23$ ), number of job offers ( $r_c = .14$ ), and employment status ( $r_c = .19$ ). None of the credibility intervals included zero, meaning that these relationships were consistently positive across studies. In contrast, the results for overall job-search intensity with employment quality showed a relationship close to zero ( $r_c = .06$ ).<sup>1</sup>

We further analyzed four components of job-search intensity: active, preparatory, informal, and formal job search. Of these four components active job search had the strongest and most consistent positive relationships with the outcomes (see Table 2). Specifically, active job search was associated with securing more interviews ( $r_c = .44$ ) and job offers ( $r_c = .22$ ), and positively related to employment status ( $r_c = .24$ ), and employment quality

<sup>1</sup> For Table 2, our meta-regressions did not show significant effects for published versus unpublished results in predicting number of interviews, number of job offers, or employment status. There was a significant difference between published and unpublished studies for employment quality ( $b = -.08$ ;  $z = -2.62$ ,  $p < .01$ ): Published studies ( $k = 34$ ) had smaller effect sizes than unpublished studies ( $k = 6$ ). The trim-and-fill procedure found no evidence for asymmetry in predicting number of job offers or employment status. The results for number of interviews did suggest some asymmetry ( $r_{\text{observed}} = .21$ ;  $r_{\text{imputed}} = .17$ ) as did the results for employment quality ( $r_{\text{observed}} = .05$ ;  $r_{\text{imputed}} = .04$ ).

Table 2  
 Relationships of Job-Search Behavior With Employment Success Outcomes

Job-search behavior	Kanfer et al. (2001)		<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>rc</sub></i>	80% credibility interval
	<i>k</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>						
Overall job-search intensity <sup>a</sup> with								
Number of interviews			26	17,380	0.21	0.23	0.08	[0.13, 0.33]
Number of job offers	11	0.28	29	7,995	0.13	0.14	0.11	[0.01, 0.28]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	21	0.21	87	41,114	0.17	0.19	0.11	[0.05, 0.32]
Employment quality			40	11,090	0.05	0.06	0.08	[-0.03, 0.16]
Active job search with								
Number of interviews			7	1,044	0.39	0.44	0.13	[0.27, 0.62]
Number of job offers			12	2,295	0.19	0.22	0.10	[0.09, 0.35]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			19	3,985	0.21	0.24	0.17	[0.03, 0.45]
Employment quality			8	2,695	0.13	0.16	0.06	[0.08, 0.24]
Preparatory job search with								
Number of interviews			6	892	0.17	0.19	0.00	[0.19, 0.19]
Number of job offers			7	2,206	0.13	0.15	0.09	[0.03, 0.27]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			23	6,805	0.07	0.08	0.11	[-0.06, 0.22]
Employment quality			15	4,632	0.04	0.05	0.11	[-0.10, 0.19]
Informal job search with								
Number of interviews			4	620	0.16	0.18	0.00	[0.18, 0.18]
Number of job offers			6	2,081	0.11	0.13	0.13	[-0.04, 0.29]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			15	4,354	0.02	0.02	0.08	[-0.07, 0.12]
Employment quality			11	4,187	0.01	0.01	0.10	[-0.12, 0.14]
Formal job search with								
Number of interviews			4	560	0.14	0.18	0.12	[0.03, 0.33]
Number of job offers			5	1,851	0.15	0.17	0.13	[0.01, 0.33]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			4	1,589	-0.08	-0.08	0.05	[-0.15, -0.02]
Employment quality			5	3,243	-0.01	-0.01	0.02	[-0.04, 0.02]
Job-search quality with								
Number of interviews			8	1,227	0.18	0.22	0.09	[0.10, 0.33]
Number of job offers			10	1,700	0.13	0.16	0.12	[0.00, 0.32]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			8	1,581	0.15	0.18	0.08	[0.07, 0.28]
Employment quality			3	801	0.14	0.19	0.00	[0.19, 0.19]

Note. For reasons of comparison, we provide mean-corrected sample-weighted correlations ( $r_c$ ) that were reported by Kanfer et al. (2001); blank cells indicate that the researchers did not report an  $r_c$  for that relationship. The  $r_c$  between overall job-search intensity and job-search quality was 0.36 ( $k = 12$ ,  $N = 2,498$ ,  $r = .27$ ,  $SD_{rc} = .26$ , 80% credibility interval [0.02, 0.69]), indicating that job-search intensity and job-search quality are positively related but are sufficiently distinct empirically.

<sup>a</sup>This overall category includes preparatory and active job-search measures, informal and formal job-search measures, and generic job-search intensity measures. <sup>b</sup>0 = did not find a new job; 1 = found a new job.

( $r_c = .16$ ). Preparatory job search was related to more interviews ( $r_c = .19$ ) and to more job offers ( $r_c = .15$ ) only. Informal and formal job search both were related to more interviews ( $r_c = .18$  for both). Formal job search was also related to more job offers ( $r_c = .17$ ) but had a small negative relationship with employment status ( $r_c = -.08$ ). Thus, whereas all four components related positively to job interviews and/or job offers, only active job search had consistent positive relations with all outcomes including employment status and employment quality.

Job-search quality was expected to have positive relationships with all four employment success outcomes. As Table 2 shows, relatively few studies were available to examine these relationships ( $k$ s vary from between 3 and 10). Nevertheless, the available data indicate consistent positive relationships of job-search quality with number of interviews ( $r_c = .22$ ), number of job offers ( $r_c = .16$ ), employment status ( $r_c = .18$ ), and employment quality ( $r_c = .19$ ).

### Relationships of Job-Search Self-Regulation With Job-Search Behavior and Employment Success Outcomes

Table 3 reports findings for the relationships of job-search self-regulation with job-search behavior and employment success

outcomes. Overall job-search self-regulation was positively related to overall job-search intensity ( $r_c = .40$ ) and job-search quality ( $r_c = .30$ ). Overall job-search self-regulation further showed small positive relations with job offers ( $r_c = .10$ ), employment status ( $r_c = .16$ ), and employment quality ( $r_c = .11$ ).<sup>2</sup>

We separately analyzed the four self-regulation components: Goal exploration, goal clarity, job-search intentions, and self-regulatory acts. Both goal exploration and goal clarity were consistently positively associated with overall job-search inten-

<sup>2</sup> For Table 3, our meta-regressions did not show significant effects for published versus unpublished results in predicting job-search intensity, job-search quality, number of interviews, employment status, or employment quality. There was a significant difference between published and unpublished studies for number of job offers ( $b = -.17$ ;  $z = -2.75$ ,  $p < .01$ ): Published studies ( $k = 13$ ) had significantly smaller effect sizes relative to unpublished studies ( $k = 2$ ). The trim-and fill procedure found no evidence for asymmetry in predicting employment quality. Small amounts of asymmetry were found for job-search quality ( $r_{observed} = .23$ ;  $r_{imputed} = .24$ ) and employment status ( $r_{observed} = .14$ ;  $r_{imputed} = .13$ ). The effects of potential asymmetry for job-search intensity ( $r_{observed} = .34$ ;  $r_{imputed} = .25$ ), number of interviews ( $r_{observed} = .14$ ;  $r_{imputed} = .06$ ), and number of job offers ( $r_{observed} = .09$ ;  $r_{imputed} = .04$ ) were larger.

Table 3  
Relationships of Job-Search Self-Regulation With Job-Search Behavior and Employment Success Outcomes

Job-search self-regulation	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>r<sub>c</sub></sub></i>	80% credibility interval
Overall job-search self-regulation <sup>a</sup> with						
Job-search intensity <sup>b</sup>	69	23,180	0.33	0.40	0.18	[0.17, 0.63]
Job-search quality	10	2,106	0.23	0.30	0.02	[0.27, 0.32]
Number of interviews	15	2,862	0.14	0.15	0.13	[-0.01, 0.32]
Number of job offers	15	2,795	0.09	0.10	0.07	[0.01, 0.19]
Employment status <sup>c</sup>	40	13,384	0.14	0.16	0.06	[0.07, 0.24]
Employment quality	18	3,584	0.09	0.11	0.08	[0.01, 0.21]
Goal exploration with						
Job-search intensity <sup>b</sup>	14	6,061	0.33	0.38	0.13	[0.22, 0.55]
Job-search quality	6	1,147	0.39	0.49	0.12	[0.34, 0.64]
Number of interviews	2	202	0.21	0.23		
Number of job offers	3	315	0.21	0.23	0.00	[0.23, 0.23]
Employment status <sup>c</sup>	8	2,338	0.13	0.14	0.00	[0.14, 0.14]
Employment quality	5	658	0.12	0.14	0.00	[0.14, 0.14]
Goal clarity with						
Job-search intensity <sup>b</sup>	18	8,478	0.21	0.26	0.13	[0.10, 0.42]
Job-search quality	3	754	0.20	0.26	0.04	[0.21, 0.30]
Number of interviews	6	1,566	0.05	0.06	0.05	[-0.01, 0.12]
Number of job offers	7	1,322	0.07	0.08	0.08	[-0.03, 0.18]
Employment status <sup>c</sup>	11	3,297	0.15	0.17	0.06	[0.10, 0.24]
Employment quality	8	2,145	0.10	0.12	0.05	[0.05, 0.19]
Job-search intentions with						
Job-search intensity <sup>b</sup>	35	9,573	0.43	0.51	0.13	[0.34, 0.67]
Job-search quality	2	404	0.21	0.28		
Number of interviews	2	227	0.13	0.15		
Number of job offers	1	104	0.08	0.09		
Employment status <sup>c</sup>	20	6,407	0.17	0.18	0.07	[0.10, 0.27]
Employment quality	5	368	0.01	0.01	0.00	[0.01, 0.01]
Self-regulatory acts with						
Job-search intensity <sup>b</sup>	16	5,119	0.36	0.45	0.19	[0.20, 0.69]
Job-search quality	4	870	0.22	0.29	0.00	[0.29, 0.29]
Number of interviews	6	1,000	0.27	0.30	0.11	[0.16, 0.45]
Number of job offers	6	1,300	0.10	0.11	0.05	[0.04, 0.18]
Employment status <sup>c</sup>	12	5,378	0.06	0.08	0.00	[0.08, 0.08]
Employment quality	3	755	0.10	0.12	0.13	[-0.05, 0.28]

Note. None of the relationships reported in this table were included in Kanfer et al. (2001).

<sup>a</sup> This overall category includes goal exploration, goal clarity, job-search intentions, and self-regulatory acts measures. <sup>b</sup> This is an overall category that includes preparatory and active job-search measures, informal and formal job-search measures, and generic job-search intensity measures. <sup>c</sup> 0 = did not find a new job; 1 = found a new job.

sity ( $r_c = .38$  and  $r_c = .26$ , respectively) and job-search quality ( $r_c = .49$  and  $r_c = .26$ , respectively). Goal exploration was also positively related to number of job offers ( $r_c = .23$ ), employment status ( $r_c = .14$ ), and employment quality ( $r_c = .14$ ). Goal clarity only showed consistent positive relationships with employment status and employment quality ( $r_c$ s = .17 and .12, respectively).

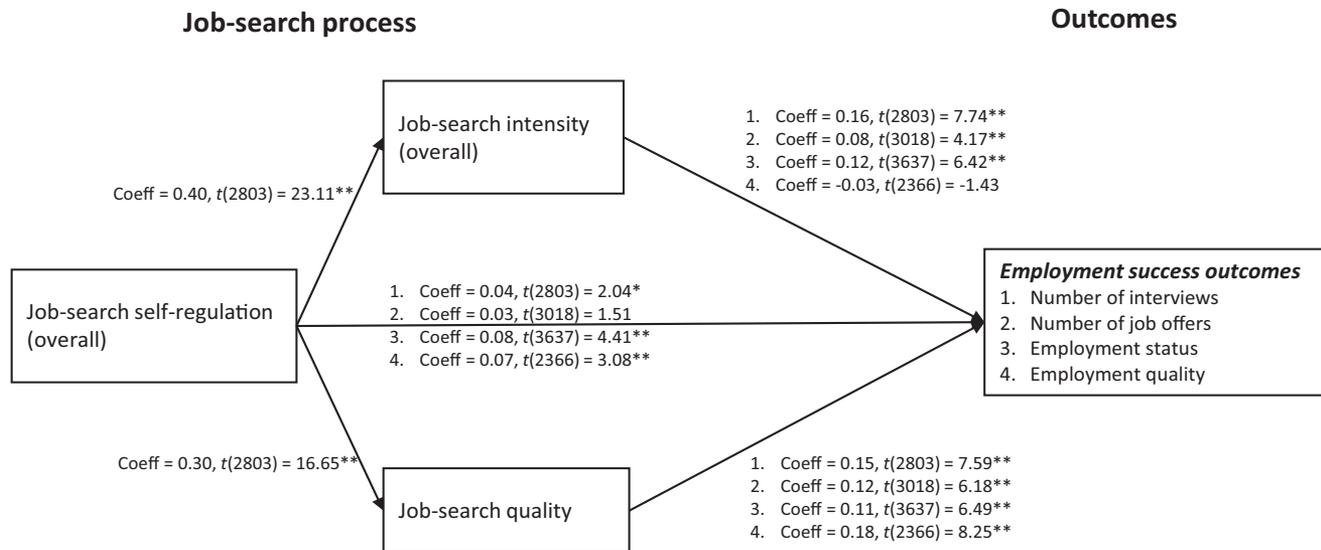
Job-search intentions was strongly positively related to overall job-search intensity ( $r_c = .51$ ). Regarding job-search quality, number of interviews, and number of job offers, fewer than three studies were available. Further, job-search intentions were positively related to employment status ( $r_c = .18$ ) but not meaningfully to employment quality ( $r_c = .01$ ).

For self-regulatory acts, we found positive associations with overall job-search intensity ( $r_c = .45$ ) and job-search quality ( $r_c = .29$ ). Regarding employment success outcomes, the studies available show a positive association with number of interviews ( $r_c = .30$ ), and small positive associations with number of job offers ( $r_c = .11$ ) and employment status ( $r_c = .08$ ).

### Pathways to Employment Success Outcomes

Given the centrality of self-regulation in job-search theorizing, we tested the role of job-search intensity and job-search quality as key mechanisms through which job-search self-regulation predicts the four employment success outcomes. Figure 2 presents the meta-analytic path models and the indirect effects generated from structural equation models with bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals based on 5,000 iterations for each outcome.

In predicting number of interviews, number of job offers, and employment status we found nonzero total indirect effects, with specific indirect effects through job-search intensity and job-search quality. Combined with the direct effects (see direct paths from job-search self-regulation to employment success outcomes in Figure 2), these findings suggest that job-search intensity and job-search quality partially explain the positive relationships of job-search self-regulation with number of interviews and employment status, and fully explain the positive relationship of job-search self-regulation with number of job offers. In predicting



Total and specific indirect effects with 95% bootstrap confidence intervals:

1. Total indirect effect = 0.11, 95% C.I. [0.09, 0.13]; through job-search intensity = 0.06, 95% C.I. [0.05, 0.08] and through job-search quality = 0.05, 95% C.I. [0.03, 0.06].
2. Total indirect effect = 0.07, 95% C.I. [0.05, 0.09]; through job-search intensity = 0.03, 95% C.I. [0.02, 0.05] and through job-search quality = 0.04, 95% C.I. [0.02, 0.05].
3. Total indirect effect = 0.08, 95% C.I. [0.07, 0.10]; through job-search intensity = 0.05, 95% C.I. [0.03, 0.06] and through job-search quality = 0.03, 95% C.I. [0.02, 0.05].
4. Total indirect effect = 0.04, 95% C.I. [0.02, 0.06]; through job-search intensity = -0.01, 95% C.I. [-0.03, 0.00] and through job-search quality = 0.05, 95% C.I. [0.02, 0.06].

*Figure 2.* Results of the meta-analytic path analyses and indirect effects analyses estimating the relationships between job-search self-regulation, job-search behavior, and employment success outcomes. Coefficients of job-search self-regulation, job-search intensity, and job-search quality were estimated with each of the four employment success outcomes in four separate path models and four separate indirect effects analyses (labeled 1 to 4). \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

employment quality, we found a nonzero total indirect effect, with specific indirect effects through job-search quality, but not job-search intensity. Combined with the significant direct effect (see Figure 2), these findings suggest that job-search quality partially explains the positive relationship of job-search self-regulation with employment quality.

### Antecedent Variables

Next, we analyzed the relationships of the antecedent variables—personality, attitudes, and context—with the job-search and employment success variables (see Tables 4 through 8). In the following text, we summarize the main findings, focusing on substantively larger relationships (with 80% credibility intervals not including zero and  $k \geq 3$ ). Analyses regarding demographic antecedents are available in the [online supplemental material](#).

**Antecedent variables with job-search self-regulation.** Table 4 shows the relationships of personality, attitudinal, and contextual variables with overall job-search self-regulation. Regarding personality factors, especially trait self-regulation ( $r_c = .30$ ), conscientiousness ( $r_c = .29$ ), and extraversion ( $r_c = .21$ ) had notable relationships with job-search self-regulation. Regarding attitudinal variables, the largest relationships were found for job-search attitudes ( $r_c = .46$ ), employment commitment ( $r_c = .32$ ),

and job search self-efficacy ( $r_c = .30$ ). Contextual variables tended toward inconsistent relationships with job-search self-regulation, except for social pressure to search ( $r_c = .47$ ) and labor market demand perceptions ( $r_c = .20$ ).

**Antecedent variables with job-search intensity and job-search quality.** Table 5 displays results for the relationships of personality, attitudinal, and contextual variables with overall job-search intensity. Among personality factors, trait self-regulation ( $r_c = .22$ ) and openness ( $r_c = .12$ ) were the only substantive correlates of job-search intensity. For attitudinal variables, job-search attitudes ( $r_c = .33$ ), job search self-efficacy ( $r_c = .30$ ), and employment commitment ( $r_c = .28$ ) were consistent positive predictors of job-search intensity, similar to the results for job-search self-regulation. Contextual variables tended toward inconsistent relationships, except for social pressure to search ( $r_c = .27$ ) and financial need ( $r_c = .13$ ).

Table 6 presents the results for the relationships of personality, attitudinal, and contextual variables with job-search quality. The number of studies for these relationships is mostly small (ranging from zero to 13), indicating an important area for future research. Tentative findings suggest core self-evaluations ( $r_c = .26$ ), extraversion ( $r_c = .23$ ), trait self-regulation ( $r_c = .22$ ), conscientiousness ( $r_c = .18$ ), job-search self-efficacy ( $r_c = .34$ ), low job-search anxiety ( $r_c = -.24$ ), employment commitment ( $r_c = .19$ ), and positive labor market demand

Table 4  
Relationships of Antecedent Variables With Overall Job-Search Self-Regulation

Variable	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>rc</sub></i>	80% credibility interval
Personality correlates of job-search self-regulation <sup>a</sup>						
Neuroticism	7	2,354	0.07	0.08	0.22	[-0.21, 0.37]
Extraversion	8	2,798	0.17	0.21	0.12	[0.06, 0.37]
Openness to experience	5	1,478	0.08	0.11	0.04	[0.05, 0.16]
Agreeableness	3	1,002	0.11	0.14	0.13	[-0.02, 0.31]
Conscientiousness	17	6,372	0.23	0.29	0.10	[0.15, 0.42]
Core self-evaluations	31	12,392	0.05	0.07	0.29	[-0.30, 0.44]
Trait self-regulation	16	3,792	0.23	0.30	0.21	[0.04, 0.57]
Attitudinal correlates of job-search self-regulation <sup>a</sup>						
Unemployment negativity	8	1,911	0.12	0.14	0.20	[-0.11, 0.40]
Employment commitment	21	8,001	0.26	0.32	0.12	[0.17, 0.47]
Job-search attitudes	24	8,416	0.38	0.46	0.16	[0.25, 0.66]
Job-search self-efficacy	46	17,990	0.26	0.30	0.21	[0.03, 0.57]
Job-search anxiety	2	311	0.08	0.09		
Contextual correlates of job-search self-regulation <sup>a</sup>						
Labor market demand perceptions	23	9,373	0.15	0.20	0.10	[0.06, 0.33]
Financial need	21	11,619	0.09	0.11	0.15	[-0.09, 0.31]
Social pressure to search	20	7,924	0.39	0.47	0.23	[0.17, 0.77]
Social support and assistance	16	5,319	0.15	0.18	0.20	[-0.07, 0.44]
Job-search duration	19	8,404	-0.08	-0.09	0.10	[-0.22, 0.04]
Barriers and constraints	22	12,187	-0.15	-0.20	0.20	[-0.46, 0.06]
Physical health	1	651	-0.04	-0.05		
Mental health	11	5,946	0.13	0.16	0.15	[-0.03, 0.35]

Note. None of the relationships reported in this table were included in Kanfer et al. (2001).

<sup>a</sup> This overall category includes goal exploration, goal clarity, job-search intentions, and self-regulatory acts measures.

perceptions ( $r_c = .26$ ) as most promising antecedents of job-search quality.

**Antecedent variables with employment status and employment quality.** Tables 7 and 8 show results for the relationships of personality, attitudinal, and contextual variables with employment status and quality. For employment status all corrected correlations were  $\leq .20$ . The personality factors trait self-regulation ( $r_c = .08$ ), extraversion ( $r_c = .06$ ), and openness ( $r_c = .05$ ) showed small, but consistent positive relationships. Main attitudinal correlates were unemployment negativity ( $r_c = .15$ ), job-search attitudes ( $r_c = .12$ ), and employment commitment ( $r_c = .10$ ). The contextual variables physical health ( $r_c = .18$ ), barriers and constraints ( $r_c = -.14$ ), and social pressure to search ( $r_c = .13$ ) showed consistent correlations  $\geq .10$ . For employment quality, the personality factors showed somewhat stronger relations. Specifically, neuroticism ( $r_c = -.19$ ), trait self-regulation ( $r_c = .19$ ), core self-evaluations ( $r_c = .18$ ), and agreeableness ( $r_c = .16$ ) were consistently related to employment quality. The attitudinal factors job-search anxiety ( $r_c = -.34$ ), job-search self-efficacy ( $r_c = .17$ ), and unemployment negativity ( $r_c = -.13$ ) showed consistent correlations  $\geq .10$ . The contextual variables mental health ( $r_c = .15$ ), financial need ( $r_c = -.14$ ), labor market demand perceptions ( $r_c = .11$ ), and barriers and constraints ( $r_c = -.11$ ) showed consistent correlations  $\geq .10$ .

### Moderator Analyses

We examined job-seeker type, survey lag, publication year, and region as moderators in the relationships of job-search self-regulation with job-search intensity and employment success (see Table 9), and of job-search intensity with employment success (see Table 10).

**Job-seeker type.** Job-search self-regulation was substantially related to job-search intensity across all three job-seeker types ( $r_c$  varies between .34 and .45; see Table 9). However, while job-search self-regulation positively related to all four employment success outcomes for new entrants ( $r_c$ s between .13 and .24), correlations were less consistent for unemployed individuals ( $r_c$ s between  $-.01$  and .13), with only the correlation with employment status being consistently positive. For employed individuals, job-search self-regulation related positively to employment status ( $r_c = .20$ ), but not meaningfully to employment quality ( $r_c = .03$ ). Table 10 shows that whereas job-search intensity was more substantially related to interviews for unemployed individuals ( $r_c = .31$ ) relative to new entrants ( $r_c = .21$ ), it was more substantially related to job offers for new entrants ( $r_c = .19$ ) relative to unemployed individuals ( $r_c = .10$ ). Correlations of job-search intensity with employment status and quality were strongest for employed individuals ( $r_c = .21$  and  $r_c = .18$ ), followed by new entrants ( $r_c = .16$  and  $r_c = .14$ ), and weakest for unemployed individuals ( $r_c = .14$  and  $r_c = .03$ ).

**Survey time lag.** We differentiated designs in which job-search self-regulation or job-search intensity were measured at the same time as the outcome, versus designs in which they were measured before the outcome. Moderator analyses (see Tables 9 and 10) show that timing of measures had a small but consistent effect, such that relationships were slightly stronger in time-lagged rather than cross-sectional designs.

**Publication year.** As displayed in Tables 9 and 10, the correlations among job-search self-regulation, job-search intensity, and the employment success outcomes for the pre-2000 and 2000+ period are roughly similar, except for the relationships with job offers. In recent studies, job-search self-regulation and job-

Table 5  
Relationships of Antecedent Variables With Overall Job-Search Intensity

Variable	Kanfer et al. (2001)		k	N	r	r <sub>c</sub>	SD <sub>r<sub>c</sub></sub>	80% credibility interval
	k	r <sub>c</sub>						
Personality correlates of job-search intensity <sup>a</sup>								
Neuroticism	14	-0.07	31	12,625	-0.05	-0.06	0.11	[-0.20, 0.08]
Extraversion	7	0.46	29	17,604	0.06	0.08	0.12	[-0.07, 0.23]
Openness to experience	4	0.27	21	14,100	0.10	0.12	0.06	[0.04, 0.20]
Agreeableness	4	0.15	14	6,835	0.05	0.07	0.05	[0.01, 0.14]
Conscientiousness	11	0.38	32	21,201	0.04	0.05	0.11	[-0.09, 0.19]
Core self-evaluations			112	37,771	0.06	0.07	0.14	[-0.11, 0.25]
Trait self-regulation			37	10,096	0.18	0.22	0.15	[0.03, 0.41]
Attitudinal correlates of job-search intensity <sup>a</sup>								
Unemployment negativity			24	6,243	0.14	0.17	0.21	[-0.09, 0.44]
Employment commitment	16	0.29	49	19,622	0.22	0.28	0.12	[0.13, 0.43]
Job-search attitudes			27	8,333	0.26	0.33	0.16	[0.12, 0.53]
Job-search self-efficacy	28	0.27	87	24,712	0.25	0.30	0.15	[0.11, 0.50]
Job-search anxiety			9	1,367	0.14	0.16	0.17	[-0.06, 0.38]
Contextual correlates of job-search intensity <sup>a</sup>								
Labor market demand perceptions			84	41,793	0.07	0.09	0.18	[-0.15, 0.32]
Financial need	14	0.21	53	21,503	0.11	0.13	0.11	[0.00, 0.27]
Social pressure to search			30	10,293	0.22	0.27	0.14	[0.09, 0.46]
Social support and assistance	15	0.24	37	10,167	0.13	0.15	0.13	[-0.02, 0.32]
Job-search duration			54	22,934	-0.04	-0.04	0.11	[-0.19, 0.10]
Barriers and constraints			38	26,863	-0.11	-0.14	0.12	[-0.29, 0.02]
Physical health			7	1,928	0.06	0.07	0.20	[-0.19, 0.33]
Mental health			43	13,638	-0.05	-0.05	0.13	[-0.21, 0.11]

Note. For reasons of comparison, we provide mean-corrected sample-weighted correlations (r<sub>c</sub>) that were reported by Kanfer et al. (2001); blank cells indicate that the researchers did not report an r<sub>c</sub> for that relationship.

<sup>a</sup>This overall category includes preparatory and active job-search measures, informal and formal job-search measures, and generic job-search intensity measures.

search intensity seem to relate less strongly to job offers (r<sub>c</sub> = .09 and .13, respectively) compared with pre-2000 studies (r<sub>c</sub> = .22 and .26, respectively), although the pre-2000 estimates were based on only two to three studies.

**Sample region.** Distinguishing between North American, European, and other studies, Table 9 and 10 show similar patterns, suggesting comparable relationships among job-search self-regulation, job-search intensity, and employment success outcomes across regions.

Table 6  
Relationships of Antecedent Variables With Overall Job-Search Quality

Variable	k	N	r	r <sub>c</sub>	SD <sub>r<sub>c</sub></sub>	80% credibility interval
Personality correlates of job-search quality						
Neuroticism	3	432	-0.09	-0.12	0.09	[-0.24, -0.01]
Extraversion	4	537	0.17	0.23	0.14	[0.04, 0.41]
Openness to experience	2	206	0.06	0.09		
Agreeableness	2	206	0.00	0.00		
Conscientiousness	3	311	0.14	0.18	0.00	[0.18, 0.18]
Core self-evaluations	7	1,246	0.20	0.26	0.14	[0.08, 0.44]
Trait self-regulation	7	1,812	0.16	0.22	0.02	[0.19, 0.24]
Attitudinal correlates of job-search quality						
Unemployment negativity	4	636	-0.07	-0.11	0.23	[-0.40, 0.18]
Employment commitment	4	1,018	0.15	0.19	0.00	[0.19, 0.19]
Job-search attitudes	0					
Job-search self-efficacy	13	1,873	0.26	0.34	0.11	[0.20, 0.48]
Job-search anxiety	4	621	-0.19	-0.24	0.06	[-0.32, -0.16]
Contextual correlates of job-search quality						
Labor market demand perceptions	4	785	0.17	0.26	0.21	[0.00, 0.52]
Financial need	5	1,455	-0.10	-0.12	0.11	[-0.27, 0.02]
Social pressure to search	0					
Social support and assistance	2	437	0.06	0.08		
Job-search duration	5	1,039	0.00	0.00	0.11	[-0.14, 0.13]
Barriers and constraints	1	217	-0.26	-0.36		
Physical health	0					
Mental health	5	910	0.01	0.02	0.13	[-0.15, 0.18]

Note. None of the relationships reported in this table were included in Kanfer et al. (2001).

Table 7  
Relationships of Antecedent Variables With Employment Status

Variable	Kanfer et al. (2001)		<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>r<sub>c</sub></sub></i>	80% credibility interval
	<i>k</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>						
Personality correlates of employment status								
Neuroticism	9	-0.09	10	3,928	-0.03	-0.03	0.06	[-0.11, 0.05]
Extraversion	1		7	7,486	0.05	0.06	0.02	[0.03, 0.09]
Openness to experience	1		3	4,963	0.04	0.05	0.01	[0.03, 0.06]
Agreeableness	1		2	817	-0.02	-0.02		
Conscientiousness	5	0.13	9	7,396	0.01	0.01	0.04	[-0.05, 0.06]
Core self-evaluations			53	20,695	0.04	0.05	0.07	[-0.04, 0.13]
Trait self-regulation			15	3,446	0.07	0.08	0.06	[0.01, 0.15]
Attitudinal correlates of employment status								
Unemployment negativity			4	573	0.13	0.15	0.00	[0.15, 0.15]
Employment commitment	2	0.19	19	7,002	0.09	0.10	0.02	[0.08, 0.12]
Job-search attitudes			9	3,765	0.10	0.12	0.00	[0.12, 0.12]
Job-search self-efficacy	11	0.09	36	12,083	0.09	0.10	0.09	[-0.02, 0.21]
Job-search anxiety			2	512	-0.17	-0.20		
Contextual correlates of employment status								
Labor market demand perceptions			37	21,018	0.08	0.09	0.08	[-0.01, 0.20]
Financial need	7	-0.11	27	14,265	0.00	0.00	0.05	[-0.06, 0.06]
Social pressure to search			10	4,402	0.12	0.13	0.10	[0.00, 0.26]
Social support and assistance	3	0.30	19	6,882	0.06	0.06	0.00	[0.06, 0.06]
Job-search duration			25	11,102	-0.10	-0.10	0.11	[-0.24, 0.05]
Barriers and constraints			21	24,915	-0.13	-0.14	0.05	[-0.21, -0.08]
Physical health			8	3,264	0.17	0.18	0.05	[0.11, 0.25]
Mental health			27	13,352	0.06	0.06	0.06	[-0.01, 0.13]

Note. For reasons of comparison, we provide mean-corrected sample-weighted correlations (*r<sub>c</sub>*) that were reported by Kanfer et al. (2001); blank cells indicate that the researchers did not report an *r<sub>c</sub>* for that relationship.

**Discussion**

The ubiquity of job search and its potentially powerful consequences for personal and societal well-being has stimulated an immense amount of research in the last 2 decades, as illustrated by

the 281 samples and 140,953 participants included in studies since 2001. Our quantitative review integrates this and previous research to examine the relationships between personality, attitudinal, and contextual antecedents, job-search process variables, and employ-

Table 8  
Relationships of Antecedent Variables With Employment Quality

Variable	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>r<sub>c</sub></sub></i>	80% credibility interval
Personality correlates of employment quality						
Neuroticism	4	524	-0.16	-0.19	0.00	[-0.19, -0.19]
Extraversion	6	1,429	0.08	0.08	0.09	[-0.03, 0.20]
Openness to experience	4	443	0.06	0.08	0.00	[0.08, 0.08]
Agreeableness	3	376	0.13	0.16	0.08	[0.07, 0.26]
Conscientiousness	7	2,098	0.05	0.06	0.00	[0.06, 0.06]
Core self-evaluations	24	4,054	0.15	0.18	0.09	[0.06, 0.30]
Trait self-regulation	10	2,154	0.15	0.19	0.07	[0.09, 0.28]
Attitudinal correlates of employment quality						
Unemployment negativity	3	737	-0.10	-0.13	0.07	[-0.22, -0.04]
Employment commitment	4	1,500	0.05	0.06	0.00	[0.06, 0.06]
Job-search attitudes	7	1,235	0.10	0.13	0.12	[-0.03, 0.28]
Job-search self-efficacy	22	4,767	0.15	0.17	0.06	[0.10, 0.25]
Job-search anxiety	4	812	-0.27	-0.34	0.15	[-0.53, -0.15]
Contextual correlates of employment quality						
Labor market demand perceptions	8	1,905	0.09	0.11	0.04	[0.06, 0.17]
Financial need	15	5,358	-0.12	-0.14	0.11	[-0.28, 0.00]
Social pressure to search	5	368	-0.06	-0.07	0.00	[-0.07, -0.07]
Social support and assistance	10	2,715	0.08	0.10	0.10	[-0.03, 0.23]
Job-search duration	11	3,786	-0.01	-0.01	0.08	[-0.12, 0.09]
Barriers and constraints	3	1,300	-0.09	-0.11	0.07	[-0.20, -0.03]
Physical health	0					
Mental health	9	3,054	0.13	0.15	0.02	[0.12, 0.18]

Note. None of the relationships reported in this table were included in Kanfer et al. (2001).

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Table 9

*Moderators of the Job-Search Self-Regulation With Job-Search Intensity and Employment Success Relationships*

Job-search self-regulation	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>rc</sub></i>	80% credibility interval
Job-seeker type as moderator <sup>a</sup>						
New labor market entrants						
Job-search intensity	19	4,309	0.29	0.34	0.16	[0.13, 0.56]
Number of interviews	9	1,323	0.22	0.24	0.13	[0.08, 0.41]
Number of job offers	10	1,774	0.12	0.13	0.00	[0.13, 0.13]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	7	1,890	0.15	0.16	0.03	[0.12, 0.20]
Employment quality	6	1,093	0.15	0.17	0.07	[0.08, 0.26]
Unemployed individuals						
Job-search intensity	30	11,001	0.32	0.39	0.19	[0.15, 0.64]
Number of interviews	5	1,432	0.06	0.06	0.06	[-0.01, 0.14]
Number of job offers	3	801	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	[-0.01, -0.01]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	21	7,205	0.11	0.13	0.07	[0.04, 0.22]
Employment quality	8	2,254	0.07	0.08	0.08	[-0.02, 0.19]
Employed individuals						
Job-search intensity	11	5,770	0.39	0.45	0.16	[0.25, 0.66]
Number of interviews	0					
Number of job offers	0					
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	11	4,163	0.19	0.20	0.02	[0.17, 0.23]
Employment quality	4	237	0.03	0.03	0.00	[0.03, 0.03]
Survey time lag as moderator <sup>a</sup>						
Simultaneous measures						
Job-search intensity	44	16,423	0.32	0.39	0.19	[0.15, 0.63]
Number of interviews	4	1,377	0.10	0.11	0.14	[-0.06, 0.28]
Number of job offers	4	1,006	0.04	0.05	0.10	[-0.08, 0.18]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	4	928	0.09	0.10	0.11	[-0.04, 0.24]
Employment quality	0					
Outcome measured after predictor						
Job-search intensity	26	7,310	0.36	0.44	0.15	[0.25, 0.63]
Number of interviews	11	1,485	0.17	0.19	0.11	[0.05, 0.34]
Number of job offers	11	1,789	0.12	0.13	0.00	[0.13, 0.13]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	38	12,905	0.14	0.16	0.06	[0.08, 0.24]
Employment quality	18	3,584	0.09	0.11	0.08	[0.01, 0.21]
Publication year as moderator <sup>a</sup>						
Pre-2000						
Job-search intensity	8	1,387	0.35	0.43	0.12	[0.28, 0.59]
Number of interviews	3	325	0.16	0.18	0.00	[0.18, 0.18]
Number of job offers	2	202	0.20	0.22	0.00	[0.22, 0.22]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	9	1,387	0.18	0.20	0.15	[0.02, 0.39]
Employment quality	2	274	0.08	0.10	0.00	[0.10, 0.10]
2000 and later						
Job-search intensity	61	21,793	0.33	0.40	0.18	[0.17, 0.63]
Number of interviews	12	2,537	0.14	0.15	0.14	[-0.03, 0.33]
Number of job offers	13	2,593	0.08	0.09	0.07	[0.00, 0.18]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	31	11,998	0.13	0.15	0.04	[0.10, 0.21]
Employment quality	16	3,310	0.09	0.11	0.09	[0.00, 0.22]
Sample region as moderator <sup>a</sup>						
North America						
Job-search intensity	36	11,336	0.30	0.36	0.20	[0.10, 0.62]
Number of interviews	10	2,270	0.14	0.15	0.13	[-0.01, 0.32]
Number of job offers	9	2,091	0.09	0.10	0.09	[-0.02, 0.22]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	20	6,094	0.16	0.18	0.08	[0.07, 0.28]
Employment quality	12	3,023	0.10	0.11	0.09	[0.00, 0.22]
Europe						
Job-search intensity	16	6,395	0.35	0.42	0.15	[0.23, 0.61]
Number of interviews	1	79	-0.10	-0.12	0.00	[-0.12, -0.12]
Number of job offers	2	192	0.15	0.17	0.00	[0.17, 0.17]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	15	5,384	0.13	0.15	0.03	[0.11, 0.19]
Employment quality	4	237	0.03	0.03	0.00	[0.03, 0.03]
Other						
Job-search intensity	12	3,512	0.32	0.39	0.07	[0.30, 0.48]
Number of interviews	4	513	0.17	0.19	0.12	[0.04, 0.34]
Number of job offers	4	512	0.07	0.07	0.00	[0.07, 0.07]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	4	1,783	0.10	0.11	0.04	[0.06, 0.16]
Employment quality	2	324	0.10	0.13	0.11	[-0.01, 0.27]

Note. None of the relationships reported in this table were included in Kanfer et al. (2001).

<sup>a</sup> Relationships are displayed for overall job-search self-regulation with overall job-search intensity and the four employment success outcomes. <sup>b</sup> 0 = did not find a new job; 1 = found a new job.

Table 10  
Moderators of the Overall Job-Search Intensity With Employment Success Relationships

Job-search intensity	Kanfer et al. (2001)		<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>rc</sub></i>	80% credibility interval
	<i>k</i>	<i>r<sub>c</sub></i>						
Job-seeker type as moderator <sup>a</sup>								
New labor market entrants								
Number of interviews			16	13,126	0.19	0.21	16	[0.13, 0.29]
Number of job offers			19	3,390	0.18	0.19	19	[0.04, 0.34]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	5	0.24	13	2,155	0.14	0.16	13	[0.04, 0.28]
Employment quality			14	1,539	0.11	0.14	14	[0.08, 0.19]
Unemployed individuals								
Number of interviews			9	4,053	0.27	0.31	9	[0.21, 0.40]
Number of job offers			8	4,297	0.09	0.10	8	[0.01, 0.20]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	14	0.20	41	15,200	0.13	0.14	41	[−0.01, 0.29]
Employment quality			20	5,764	0.03	0.03	20	[−0.08, 0.14]
Employed individuals								
Number of interviews			0				0	
Number of job offers			0				0	
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	2	0.38	29	22,243	0.19	0.21	29	[0.10, 0.33]
Employment quality			2	243	0.16	0.18	2	[0.18, 0.18]
Survey time lag as moderator <sup>a</sup>								
Simultaneous measures								
Number of interviews			20	16,311	0.20	0.23	0.08	[0.12, 0.33]
Number of job offers			20	5,934	0.12	0.13	0.09	[0.01, 0.25]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			22	9,863	0.15	0.17	0.11	[0.03, 0.30]
Employment quality			17	5,678	0.05	0.06	0.08	[−0.05, 0.16]
Outcome measured after predictor								
Number of interviews			11	1,585	0.27	0.30	0.04	[0.25, 0.35]
Number of job offers			12	2,411	0.16	0.18	0.12	[0.03, 0.33]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			69	31,659	0.17	0.19	0.10	[0.06, 0.32]
Employment quality			25	5,768	0.06	0.07	0.07	[−0.01, 0.16]
Publication year as moderator <sup>a</sup>								
Pre-2000								
Number of interviews			1	123	0.14	0.16		[0.01, 0.51]
Number of job offers	11 <sup>c</sup>	0.28	3 <sup>c</sup>	495	0.23	0.26	0.19	[0.09, 0.29]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>	21	0.21	25	5,920	0.17	0.19	0.08	[0.05, 0.05]
Employment quality			6	1,375	0.04	0.05	0.00	
2000 and later								
Number of interviews			25	17,257	0.21	0.23	0.08	[0.13, 0.33]
Number of job offers			26	7,500	0.12	0.13	0.09	[0.02, 0.25]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			62	35,195	0.17	0.18	0.11	[0.04, 0.32]
Employment quality			34	9,715	0.05	0.06	0.08	[−0.04, 0.17]
Sample region as moderator <sup>a</sup>								
North America								
Number of interviews			17	13,852	0.19	0.21	0.06	[0.13, 0.29]
Number of job offers			18	3,397	0.16	0.17	0.08	[0.07, 0.28]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			52	15,022	0.21	0.24	0.13	[0.07, 0.40]
Employment quality			24	8,139	0.06	0.07	0.07	[−0.02, 0.17]
Europe								
Number of interviews			4	2,831	0.28	0.31	0.08	[0.21, 0.42]
Number of job offers			6	3,927	0.11	0.12	0.12	[−0.04, 0.28]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			24	9,377	0.12	0.14	0.10	[0.00, 0.27]
Employment quality			7	1,576	−0.01	−0.01	0.06	[−0.08, 0.06]
Other								
Number of interviews			4	575	0.30	0.32	0.00	[0.32, 0.32]
Number of job offers			3	391	0.10	0.11	0.00	[0.11, 0.11]
Employment status <sup>b</sup>			8	15,402	0.15	0.17	0.05	[0.11, 0.23]
Employment quality			7	709	0.11	0.14	0.07	[0.05, 0.22]

Note. For reasons of comparison we provide mean-corrected sample-weighted correlations (*r<sub>c</sub>*) that were reported by Kanfer et al. (2001); blank cells indicate that the researchers did not report an *r<sub>c</sub>* for that relationship.

<sup>a</sup> Relationships are displayed for overall job-search intensity with the four employment success outcomes. <sup>b</sup> 0 = did not find a new job, 1 = found a new job. <sup>c</sup> The difference in *ks* is due to Kanfer et al. (2001) using a broader coding of job-search intensity, including measures such as environmental exploration (which we coded as goal exploration), interview preparation (which we coded as job-search quality), and number of job interviews (which we coded as a separate outcome).

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ment success outcomes. The findings provide empirical support for the role of self-regulation in job search, showing that it positively relates to job-search intensity and quality, and employment success. Enhancing our understanding of the job-search and employment success construct space, our findings show that both job-search intensity and quality positively relate to quantitative employment success outcomes (i.e., interviews, job offers, employment status), with active job search showing stronger relations than preparatory job search. Employment quality was only predicted by specific job-search variables, such as goal exploration, goal clarity, active job search, and job-search quality. The relations between job-search self-regulation, job-search intensity, and employment success were relatively similar in pre-2000 and post-2000 studies and across sample region. These findings may suggest that although Internet has substantially changed the type of search activities that job seekers engage in, the psychological processes underlying job search are not significantly different across time and socioeconomic systems. Taken together, the findings firmly document the theoretical importance of psychological factors in the successful pursuit of employment, and inform practice about the relevant factors for counseling, interventions, and profiling.

### Theoretical and Practical Implications

Our quantitative review documents the broadening of the nomological network of job search since Kanfer and colleagues' (2001) meta-analysis (with over 60% of the Figure 1 variables being not examined by Kanfer et al., 2001) and deepens and extends our knowledge in four areas of theoretical and practical importance: (1) the role of self-regulation in job search; (2) the relationship between job-search behavior and employment success; (3) the roles of personality, attitudinal, and contextual factors; and (4) the moderating role of job-seeker type.

**Self-regulation and job search.** Our findings extend Kanfer et al. (2001) by delineating the concept of self-regulation in job search (distinguishing between trait self-regulation and job-search self-regulation), and examining its relations with job-search intensity and quality, and employment success. Trait self-regulation was the only personality factor that consistently predicted job-search behavior and employment success. In contrast, Big Five traits were only weakly or not related to job-search intensity and employment status. These findings corroborate conceptualizing job search as a motivational/self-regulatory process, suggesting that trait self-regulation (in contrast to Big Five traits) captures individual differences in motivational tendencies of proximal importance to job-search behavior.

Overall job-search self-regulation as well as its specific components were moderately to strongly positively related to job-search intensity and quality. Consistent with motivation theories arguing that self-regulation most strongly affects actions rather than outcomes (e.g., Kanfer, 1990), our findings show that job-search self-regulation relates to employment success partially through its association with search intensity and quality. In addition, job-search self-regulation also directly predicted several outcomes, suggesting that the process of establishing and clarifying goals and controlling attention, affect, and behavior is also directly beneficial for attaining (high-quality) jobs, regardless people's job-search behaviors.

**Job search and employment success.** Some authors have questioned the importance of job-search intensity and called for research on specific types of effort (e.g., Koen et al., 2010; Šverko et al., 2008). First, providing resolution in this debate, our findings consistently indicate small to moderate positive relationships between job-search intensity and quantitative employment success outcomes, across job-seeker types, survey timing, publication year, and sample regions. Thus, people who engage in more job-search activities, more likely have job interviews, receive job offers, and obtain employment. Using a substantially larger and more diverse study database, our findings extend prior meta-analytic evidence (Kanfer et al., 2001) by showing a robust positive relationship across various quantitative outcome measures and moderators. We would like to emphasize that large effect sizes are not to be expected for distal and complex outcomes such as employment status because these depend on numerous factors, many of which are beyond job seekers' control (e.g., the labor market, discrimination, recruiter idiosyncrasies; Van Hooft et al., 2013; Wanberg et al., 2002). Also, the dichotomous nature of employment status limits the possibility to find large correlations (cf. Sutton, 1998).

Second, the present study extends our understanding by including specific job-search measures. Supporting stage theories (Barber et al., 1994; Blau, 1994; Soelberg, 1967), active rather than preparatory job search more strongly relates to employment success. Practically, these findings suggest the critical need to spend enough time in active behavioral pursuit of job opportunities. Unlike previous suggestions (e.g., Barber, 1998; Franzen & Hangartner, 2006; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000) we did not find stronger relations for informal as compared with formal job search. Rather, our results show small to moderate positive relations of both with interviews, and of formal job search with job offers. Although formal job search had a small negative relation with employment status, we think it is premature to suggest that job seekers should not use formal methods. The formal methods in the four studies contributing to this relation included searching via Internet, print and radio/TV ads, and employment services. Print advertising and employment services substantially contributed to the negative relation (Van Hooft et al., 2009). Print advertising is now less used, and employment services may be useful for specific jobs. Rather than discouraging formal methods, our overall findings on job-search intensity suggest that job seekers should use a broad range of job-search activities. They should spend some time on pre-application activities, plus make sure they devote their attention to actively contacting employers and submitting applications.

Our examination of job-search quality extends previous meta-analytical findings. Job-search quality was positively related to number of interviews, job offers, and employment status. In addition, unlike job-search intensity, it positively predicted employment quality. Although far fewer studies have used job-search quality than intensity, the pattern of results is promising, offering initial support for job-search quality theory (Van Hooft et al., 2013). These findings also align with intervention research, which suggested that interventions are more effective if they include job-search skills training (Liu et al., 2014). Because organizations use a broad variety of recruitment channels, present-day job search has become complex and opaque. Consequently, the quality of search in terms of self-regulation, learning, and adjustment to recruiter idiosyncrasies is essential. From a practical perspective, job-search quality measures may inform individualized job-search

interventions by providing job seekers with specific feedback on self-regulatory effectiveness in their job-search progress and encouraging job seekers to search “smarter” but with consistent effort.

Our study further extends Kanfer et al. (2001) by including employment quality. Providing resolution to the mixed findings of primary studies, our results show that overall job-search intensity is basically unrelated to employment quality, as is job-search intention. Instead, goal exploration, goal clarity, active job search, and job-search quality had consistent positive relations with employment quality, varying between .12 and .19. These findings support theorizing on the importance of goal-establishment processes in job search, which likely stimulate an active, goal-directed, and high-quality job search, resulting in well-prepared and targeted applications (Kanfer & Bufton, 2018; Van Hooft et al., 2013; Wanberg et al., 2002). Our findings provide practical directions how to increase the chances to obtain high-quality employment, which is especially important in tight labor markets where finding jobs is relatively easy, but obtaining high-quality employment is more challenging.

**Personality, attitudinal, and contextual antecedents.** Although Kanfer et al. (2001) reported substantial effects for the Big Five traits (based on  $k$ s between 1 and 14), we found only weak relations with job-search intensity and employment status ( $r_c \leq .12$ ). The larger  $k$ s suggests more confidence in the present findings. Similar to prior theorizing and research, the findings suggest that broad, cross-situational traits impact behavior and outcomes mostly through their influence on motivational processes (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002).

Theorizing and studies over the past two decades have greatly expanded the domain of attitudinal and contextual variables proposed to relate to job search and employment success. We found a uniform pattern of moderately strong positive relations of select attitudinal and contextual factors with overall job-search self-regulation and intensity, but smaller and less consistent relations with employment success. The findings corroborate but also go beyond previous meta-analytic results. Similar to Kanfer et al. (2001), employment commitment and job-search self-efficacy related moderately positively to job-search intensity. Extending Kanfer et al. (2001), our results illustrate the relevance of job-search attitudes and contextual factors such as social pressure to search and financial need for job-search intensity. These findings provide support for the three predictors proposed by the theory of planned job-search behavior (i.e., attitudes, social pressure, and self-efficacy; Ajzen, 1991; Van Hooft, 2018a), but also suggest the importance of additional factors such as intrinsic commitment to employment and external financial need to find employment. Except for financial need, the same attitudinal and contextual factors stood out as correlates of job-search self-regulation.

Our study further advances the literature by examining how personality, attitudinal, and contextual variables relate to employment quality, an outcome not examined by Kanfer et al. (2001). In contrast to employment status, employment quality was predicted by several personality traits (i.e., neuroticism, trait self-regulation, core self-evaluations, agreeableness). A possible explanation for this difference may be that in contrast to measures of employment status, employment quality measures represent a postsearch subjective judgment of the new job. Previous research on the relations of neuroticism, core self-evaluations, and agreeableness with job

satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002, 2005) suggests that personality may affect judgments of employment quality independent of prior search. Related, for individuals with these traits, employment quality judgments might reflect a restorative process (e.g., those low in neuroticism may be better able to put aside tribulations and disappointments associated with their job search). Future research should investigate this explanation using measures that disassociate prior search difficulty and new job expectations from new job satisfaction and distinguish between pre-entry and post-entry assessments of employment quality.

Last, an interesting pattern of results arose for financial need. On the one hand this contextual factor has a motivating role in the job-search process as indicated by its positive relationships with job-search intensity. On the other hand, financial need was not related to employment status, and negatively to employment quality. Theoretically, this may be explained by the negative effects financial hardship has on cognitive functioning and mental health, as well as on people’s job-search quality. Practically, these findings are of interest to policymakers regarding the provision of unemployment benefits, affecting job seekers’ financial need (Wanberg, van Hooft, Dossinger, van Vianen, & Klehe, 2020).

**Job search among different job-seeker types.** We empirically evaluated moderating effects of three job-seeker types: new labor market entrants, unemployed individuals, and employed individuals, and found some differential patterns across samples. The relations of job-search intensity with job offers, employment status and quality were consistently higher among new entrants ( $r_c$ s between .14 and .19) and employed individuals ( $r_c$ s between .18 and .21) than among unemployed individuals ( $r_c$ s between .03 and .14). The weaker relations for unemployed persons may reflect the higher barriers that they likely face in gaining (re)entry into the workforce (e.g., stereotypes; Trzebiatowski, Wanberg, & Dossinger, 2019). Further, these findings may reflect differences between job-seeker types in the clarity of their job-search goals. For example, unemployed individuals may cast a wider net such that if a more intense job search leads to reemployment, it does not result in high-quality employment because of poorer fit or barriers that unemployed job seekers face. Future research should investigate the clarity of job-search goals for each group and the unique barriers to workforce entry to test these explanations and inform programs to better assist unemployed job seekers.

## Limitations

A first limitation relates to the judgments we had to make about aggregating variables into categories. Some were well-defined and measured using validated instruments (e.g., conscientiousness), but for others it was necessary to aggregate across diverse measures (e.g., self-regulatory acts, employment quality). Theoretically, it would be of interest to split such broader categories into their component parts. For example, self-regulatory acts could be divided into attentional control, emotion regulation, and motivation control to analyze their relations separately. Employment quality could be divided into intrinsic versus extrinsic job factors, or whether the measurement occurred preentry versus postentry (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). However, more primary research is needed for such analyses.

Second, some findings should be interpreted with caution as the variables involved may have some construct overlap. Specifically,

some goal exploration elements resemble job-search elements. However, goal exploration is more generic and oriented toward gathering information and exploring career goals, whereas job search focuses specifically on looking for job opportunities. Also, some concept overlap may exist between active job search and the outcome number of interviews, because Blau's (1994) active job-search scale includes an item on job interviews. This could be one explanation for the relatively strong correlation between active job search and number of interviews. We suggest future researchers to exclude the interview item in job-search measures when studying the relation with number of interviews.

Third, our tests for publication bias suggest that there may be factors that increase the likelihood that studies with larger effect sizes are more likely to be reported. The relatively minor differences in observed versus imputed effect sizes suggest that although caution should be used in interpreting results, publication bias will not strongly affect our conclusions.

Fourth, our model and analyses focused on constructs available in the empirical literature. Consequently, some potentially relevant constructs are missing. Job-seeker skills is an example, although other antecedents may be interpreted as proxies (e.g., educational level for cognitive ability, work experience for work-related skills). These have only small-sized relations with job search and employment success, both in previous meta-analyses (Kanfer et al., 2001) and our findings (see online supplemental material). As another example, we did not include (re)employment speed as outcome in our analyses because of the paucity of primary research. However, employment status can be considered as a proxy for employment speed. Nevertheless, future research should include skills and speed measures.

Fifth, studies have used dynamic approaches in modeling the job-search process (e.g., Da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014; Lopez-Kidwell et al., 2013; Wanberg et al., 2005, 2010, 2012), but these are still too few in number and too different to warrant metaanalytical synthesis. Also, lack of primary research prevented testing cyclical processes as outlined in dynamic theoretical models (e.g., Barber et al., 1994; Van Hooft et al., 2013; Wanberg et al., 2010). Future research should identify key drivers of dynamic job-search processes across a job-search episode, and examine if and how self-regulatory mechanisms, such as reflection, change job-search goals and strategies or cause withdrawal from the search process.

Last, whereas meta-analysis provides insight into potential moderators, study-level moderator analyses have low statistical power (Hedges & Pigott, 2004). For example, our analyses on publication year and sample region have low *ks* in some cases, which may limit the conclusions on these comparisons. However, relationships with large *ks* such as between job-search intensity and employment status, show high similarity over time (i.e.,  $r_c$  of .19 and .18), suggesting that this relationship is not significantly different between pre- and post-2000 studies. Further, moderator analyses can miss important within-study relationships (Cooper & Patall, 2009). Using individual participant data in a multilevel format (e.g., to test effects of region; Wanberg et al., 2020) can enhance the precision of moderator analyses, which is especially important for relationships with high variability across studies. Some relationships showed substantial variability across studies. While considering broad credibility intervals as a signal that there may be study-level moderators, it should be noted that when *ks* are small, spuriously small credibility intervals can also be obtained.

Research shows that estimates of between-sample variability ( $SD_{rc}$ ) are only as valid as the breadth and quantity of samples from which the data are obtained (Steel, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Paterson, 2015).

## Recommendations for Future Research

Our literature review and meta-analytic findings offer several suggestions for future research, which can be broadly grouped into (1) recommendations to broaden the use and improve the measurement of process variables and employment outcomes, (2) suggestions for moving beyond well-established relations, and (3) suggestions for new directions.

In the first category, the paucity of research using validated measures of dimensions of job-search behavior other than job-search intensity (e.g., job-search quality, job-search self-regulatory activities) and measures of employment quality required us to aggregate across a variety of measures. Attention should be given to developing and using standard measures of these constructs. There is also a need for a validated update of Blau's (1994) job-search intensity scale, examining which search activities are outdated and which modern activities should be included (e.g., online job boards, social media).

In the second category, many studies have examined the link between distal antecedents and employment status, generally showing negligible relations. Also, many studies examined the job-search intensity—employment status link, consistently indicating that higher levels of job-search intensity positively (albeit not strongly) relate to success in finding employment. Future research should broaden the employment success criterion, by examining quantity and quality outcomes during the job-search process (e.g., number of interviews, quality of jobs interviewed for), and after the job-search process has terminated (e.g., employment speed, pre- and post-entry employment quality). For example, few studies examined antecedents of employment speed, even though speedy reemployment has important implications for well-being and mental health (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). In addition, more attention should be given to the mechanisms and moderators explaining how specific aspects of job-search behavior (e.g., job-search activities and quality) relate to employment success outcomes.

Furthermore, our moderator analyses demonstrating relatively small but consistently larger effects when outcomes were measured after the predictors pointed toward the importance of timing in the study design. Researchers should carefully time and justify measurements of job-search behavior and employment success outcomes guided by the dynamics of the job-search process. When assessing employment success too soon after measuring job search, the job-search activities may not have had the chance to result in interviews or job offers. When assessing employment success too long after measuring job search, the job-search measure may not accurately capture all job-search efforts. Moreover, longitudinal within-participants designs with repeated measures are usually needed to capture the dynamics of malleable antecedents, job-search self-regulation, and job-search behavior. Research questions should inform the spacing of the measures (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly), based on theoretical accounts regarding fluctuations in the constructs of interest.

Finally, we propose new research directions to further elucidate the self-regulatory mechanisms and processes that appear integral to job-search motivation. First, we found few studies assessing the relation of self-regulatory process with outcomes beyond employment status. Also, relatively few studies investigated antecedents of and relations between aspects of job-search self-regulation, particularly goal content, exploration, and clarity. We expect that digitalization, greater participation in alternative work arrangements, and an increasingly age-diverse workforce will increase the importance of goal exploration and clarity. The way individuals structure their job search can introduce different job-search intentions (e.g., part-time vs. full-time work) with different job-search strategies. It will be particularly valuable for studies examining self-regulatory mechanisms to use repeated measures designs, to allow dynamic and reciprocal assessments of these processes over time.

Second, although research suggested the importance of reflection and learning during the job-search process (e.g., Da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014; Van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009; Van Hooft et al., 2013; Wanberg, Basbug, et al., 2012), little is known about antecedents of reflection and about how reflection changes attitudinal variables, goals, and strategies. Self-regulation theories pose that evaluation and interpretation of search experiences importantly affect motivated action. Although job seekers rarely receive feedback, reflection represents the process by which they make sense of their job-search experiences and intermediate search outcomes, such as (not) receiving an interview invitation. Proper reflection may instigate a learning process, leading to improved job-search activities (Van Hooft et al., 2013; Wanberg, Basbug, et al., 2012). Studies on the development of valid measures of reflection, and their relation to the modulation of job-search goals over time are sorely needed.

## Conclusion

Our study contributes to theory, research, and practice in three ways. First, our synthesis of the large array of job-search antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes showed the crucial role of self-regulatory processes and their links to a range of employment success outcomes. Second, our review highlights important gaps and provides directions for future research. Third, our study provides new knowledge about job search, which is a common experience of critical and growing importance to individuals, organizations, and societies. Our findings have important practical implications to assist job seekers. For example, findings suggest low trait self-regulation, employment commitment, job-search self-efficacy, and job-search attitudes as important factors to focus on in profiling inventories and counseling as to identify job seekers in need of help. Job-search interventions should be designed to improve malleable antecedents such as employment commitment, job-search self-efficacy, and job-search attitudes, and teach job seekers how to improve their job-search self-regulation, active job search, and job-search quality. We hope our results will stimulate new research efforts that can help in the early identification of individuals who may need extra assistance and in developing interventions that maximize the likelihood of finding desired new employment.

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