



Multiple predictors and criteria of job search success

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the combined and differential effects of five job search behaviors (informal sources, formal sources, preparatory search intensity, active search intensity, job search effort) on five criteria of job search success (job interviews, job offers, employment status, person-job fit, and person-organization fit) as well as the direct and moderating effects of job search self-efficacy. Data based on a sample of 225 recent university graduates found that active job search intensity was positively related to job interviews and offers, and informal job sources was negatively related to job offers and employment status. The results also support an unfolding process of job search success in which active job search intensity predicts job interviews; job interviews predict job offers; and job offers predict employment status. In addition, job search self-efficacy was a significant predictor of interviews, offers, employment status, and PJ fit perceptions, and moderated the relationship between job offers and employment status. The relationship between job offers and employment was stronger for job seekers with low job search self-efficacy. The implications of these results for job search research and practice are discussed.

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Keywords: Job search; Job seeker; Job search behavior; Job search success; Job search self-efficacy

1. Introduction

Job search involves gathering information in the pursuit of potential job opportunities, generating and evaluating job alternatives, and choosing a job from the alternatives (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Philips, 1994). The consequences of job search have been

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shown to include proximal outcomes such as being invited for job interviews and receiving job offers as well as more distal outcomes like obtaining employment and the quality of employment (Saks, 2005; Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987; Van Hooft, Born, Taris, & Van der Flier, 2004).

The importance of job search for job seekers and organizations has dramatically increased over the past decade. In the United States, workers are expected to engage in over a dozen job changes over the course of their work lives making job search an integral aspect of American work-life (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). At the same time, there has been a considerable increase in job search research including a recent meta-analysis (Kanfer et al., 2001). As a result, we know a great deal more about the antecedents and consequences of job search since Schwab et al. (1987) reviewed the literature almost twenty years ago.

However, there remain a number of shortcomings of previous studies that limit our understanding of job search success. For example, although we know that job search intensity predicts employment status (Kanfer et al., 2001) we do not know which job search behaviors are more or less effective relative to other job search behaviors. We also do not know if some job search behaviors are more effective for certain criteria of job search success. Along these lines, the main objective of this study was to examine the combined and differential effects of five job search behaviors on several criteria of search success. In addition, the relationships between job search success criteria is examined as well as the moderating effects of job search self-efficacy in the relationship between job interviews and job offers and between job offers and employment status. In the following section, these objectives are described in more detail along with the study hypotheses.

2. Study objectives and hypotheses

The objectives of this study are designed to improve upon several limitations of previous studies on job search including a lack of multiple success criteria; a focus on single rather than multiple job search behaviors; the failure to consider relationships between criteria of job search success; and little attention to job search self-efficacy as a moderating variable.

2.1. Job search success criteria

According to Brasher and Chen (1999), job search research has been plagued by a lack of consistency in the operationalization of search success. Furthermore, there is little evidence of convergent validity among the various criteria. This is a serious problem because the effectiveness of job search depends on the criteria used to measure success and different types of job search behaviors might be more or less likely to result in search success (Brasher & Chen, 1999). It is possible that some job search behaviors are more important than others for certain success criteria. For example, in their meta-analysis, Kanfer et al. (2001) found that although both job search intensity and job search effort were positively related to job offers and employment status, the results of moderator analyses indicated that effort was a better predictor of employment status but intensity was a stronger predictor of job offers. Thus, the extent to which job search predicts search success depends on the job search variable and the success criteria. Thus, more attention is required in terms of how success criteria are conceptualized and assessed (Kanfer et al., 2001).

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