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Predictors and outcomes of job search behavior: The moderating effects of gender and family situation

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Abstract

This study explored differences in the antecedents and consequences of job search behavior depending on gender and family situation in a large, nationwide sample of the Dutch population. Using Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB), we found no gender differences in the antecedents of job seeking. However, family situation did affect the relations in the TPB, such that personal attitude was a slightly weaker, and perceived social pressure a stronger predictor of job seeking for individuals with families than for singles. Concerning the consequences, job search behavior significantly predicted the chances of finding (new) employment, but not job satisfaction in the new job and the level of agreement between the obtained and wanted job.

Predictors and outcomes of job search behavior:

The moderating effects of gender and family situation

In many Western countries persistent gender differences exist in the context of employment. Labor force participation among women is substantially lower than among men in both Europe (Eurostat, 2002) and the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). Moreover, in most European countries the unemployment levels among women continue to be higher than among men (Eurostat, 2002). Furthermore, research has often found that women are employed in a narrow range of female-dominated jobs that are generally worse in terms of pay and opportunities for training and advancement than non-female-dominated jobs (Drentea, 1998; Mau & Kopischke, 2001; Mencken & Winfield, 2000). Also in The Netherlands some evident employment-related differences exist between men and women. Unemployment levels among women, for example, are about twice as high as among men (4.7% compared to 2.5%), and the labor force participation is lower among women than among men (53.4% compared to 77.1%; Statistics Netherlands, 2002). Furthermore, the majority of employed women in The Netherlands have part-time jobs, compared to only a small minority of the employed men (Portegijs, Boelens, & Keuzenkamp, 2002).

One factor that may affect these employment-related differences between men and women is individual job search behavior. Previous research has indicated that job search behavior is an important predictor of finding employment (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001) and employment quality (Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Werbel, 2000). With regard to the gender differences in employment patterns, the question arises whether the relation of job search behavior with finding employment and employment quality is similar for men and women.

Most studies on gender and job seeking have focused on gender differences in the use of formal versus informal job seeking strategies (Huffman & Torres, 2001; Straits, 1998), and on the effects of using formal versus informal search strategies on employment outcomes such as earnings in the obtained job and gender typicality of the obtained job (Drentea, 1998; Huffman &

Torres, 2001; Leicht & Marx, 1997; Mencken & Winfield, 2000). The first purpose of the current study was to investigate gender differences in the relation of job search behavior in a more general form with a broader range of employment outcomes, including job attainment and job satisfaction.

The second purpose related to gender differences in the predictors of job search behavior. Several studies have investigated the predictors of job search behavior in general. Kanfer et al.'s (2001) meta-analysis showed that gender has only a small direct effect on job search behavior ($r_{\text{corrected}} = .05$), indicating that men were more likely to engage in job seeking than women. A question that remains, relates to the extent to which the relations of the various predictors with job seeking are similar for men and women.

Gender differences not only exist in the context of paid employment but also in relation to household tasks and care. According to traditional gender roles, men have paid jobs while women engage in domestic activities (Eagly, 1987). These roles still persist today, for example, Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, and Robinson (2000) reported that married women in the United States spend almost twice the amount of time on housework as compared to married men. Furthermore, women in The Netherlands spend over twice as much time on domestic activities (e.g., childrearing) as compared to men (Portegijis et al., 2002). It is likely, however, that findings like these depend on the particular family situation. We therefore suggest that in addition to gender, family situation is important with regard to job seeking and its predictors and outcomes.

Thus, the present study extends the existing literature by investigating the moderating effects of both gender and family situation on (a) the relation of job search behavior with its predictors, and (b) the relation of job search behavior with job search outcomes. In the following, we first present the general research model that was used in the current study. Second, we discuss the possible moderating effects of gender and family situation.

General research model

Job search predictors

In predicting the intensity of people's job search behavior, past research found support for the usefulness of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB; e.g., Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992). According to the TPB, job search behavior is predicted by the amount of time and effort individuals intend to put in their job search behavior (i.e., job search intention) and one's confidence in the ability to perform various job search activities (i.e., perceived behavioral control). As Ajzen (1991) notes, perceived behavioral control is compatible with Bandura's (1982) self-efficacy concept. Applied to job search behavior, perceived behavioral control can thus be regarded as job search self-efficacy (cf. Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992). Furthermore, the TPB suggests that people's job search intentions are predicted by their personal attitudes towards job seeking (i.e., job search attitude), their perceptions of social pressure to engage in job seeking (i.e., subjective norm), and their job search self-efficacy.

The TPB is a complete theory of behavior, in that other variables will influence intention and behavior only indirectly, via attitude, perceived social pressure, and self-efficacy (Conner & Armitage, 1998). External variables such as demographics, personality traits, and culture will affect an individual's attitudinal and normative considerations, and those considerations will ultimately predict intentions and behavior. In addition, external variables may have an impact on the relative importance of attitudes and perceptions of social pressure (Fishbein, 1980).

The major purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of gender and family situation in the job search process. In the context of the TPB, these variables are understood as external variables. In the next section we discuss the anticipated *indirect* effects of gender and family situation on job search intention, and the expected effects of gender and family situation on the *relative importance* of attitudes and perceptions of social pressure. Consistent with the TPB, we formulated the following general hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: (a) Personal job search attitude, (b) perceived social pressure, and (c) job search self-efficacy positively predict job search intention.

Hypothesis 2: (a) Job search intention and (b) job search self-efficacy positively predict job search behavior.

Job search outcomes

The most obvious purpose of job search behavior is finding a (new) job. Meta-analytic work indeed supported a positive relation between search intensity and finding a job among new entrants at the labor market, job losers, and job-to-job seekers (Kanfer et al., 2001). In addition to finding employment per se, the quality of the obtained employment is an important employment outcome (Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987). Job search behavior is thought to relate positively to employment quality, because a more intense job search is likely to result in more job opportunities, allowing the job seeker to choose the best alternative. Research investigating the relation between job seeking and employment quality however is limited (Kanfer et al., 2001), and yielded mixed results. For example, some studies found a positive relation between job seeking and job satisfaction (Leana & Feldman, 1995; Steffy, Shaw, & Noe, 1989), while others reported non-significant results (Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999; Werbel, 2000).

The current study investigated the relation of job search behavior with three outcome measures. Individuals who invest more time in their job search are expected to have a greater probability of attaining a (new) job than others. Because individuals who invest more time in job seeking, and who use more search strategies, are likely to generate more and better job options than others, we expect that they are more satisfied with their new jobs than others. In addition, more active job seekers are expected to find jobs that are more in agreement with the type of job they were searching for in terms of working hours and type of contract. Thus,

Hypothesis 3: Job search behavior will be positively related to job attainment.

Hypothesis 4: Among individuals who obtained (new) employment, job search behavior will be positively related to (a) job satisfaction in the new job and (b) the agreement between the obtained job and the job wanted.

Effects of gender and family situation on job search behavior

In the context of job search and recruitment, previous research has reported gender differences not only in the use of job search strategies (e.g., formal and informal strategies) but also in job search intensity, job mobility, and job attribute preferences (Keith & McWilliams, 1999; Nicholson & West, 1988). These differences in values, attitudes, and behavior between men and women can be explained by the influence of gender roles (i.e., shared expectations about the appropriate behaviors for each sex; Eagly, 1987), gender stereotypes (i.e., shared beliefs about psychological characteristics of men and women; Williams & Best, 1990), and gender differences in self-construal (Cross & Madson, 1997). Based on these concepts we argue that gender differences exist in the relation of job search behavior with its predictors and outcomes.

Gender, family situation and the predictors of job seeking

Gender. Gender stereotype research has shown that women more than men are concerned with the welfare of others, and are more aware of other people's feelings (Eagly, 1987). Interpersonal relationships are more important to women than to men (Konrad, Ritchie Jr., Lieb, & Corrigan, 2000; Williams & Best, 1990). Regarding the construal of the self, women's conception of the self has is more relational as compared to men's (Cross & Madson, 1997). Thus, within the framework of the TPB, perceptions of social pressure should be stronger predictors of behavioral intentions for women than for men. In contrast, men, more than women, have an assertive and controlling tendency, resulting in a greater independence of others (Eagly, 1987). Men are also more often described as autonomous, acting more independently of others (Williams & Best, 1990), and individualistic tasks and goals are more important for men than for women (Venkatesh, Morris, & Ackerman, 2000). Thus, in the context of the TPB, personal attitudes should be stronger predictors of behavioral intentions for men than for women. Applied to job seeking we expect:

Hypothesis 5: Whereas (a) perceived social pressure is a stronger predictor of job search intention for women than for men, (b) personal job search attitude is a stronger predictor of

job search intention for men than for women.

Family situation. Previous research has demonstrated that family situation impacts on work attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, willingness to relocate, and voluntary turnover (Blegen, Mueller, & Price, 1988; Brett & Reilly, 1988). Also in the area of job seeking we expect family situation to be of importance. Because of the stronger links to other people, the social environment is hypothesized to stronger affect the job search decision-making process of individuals with a partner and children as compared to others. In contrast, personal attitudes should be more important for predicting job seeking among singles than among individuals with a family.

Hypothesis 6: Whereas (a) perceived social pressure is a stronger predictor of job search intention for individuals with a family than for singles, (b) personal job search attitude is a stronger predictor of job search intention for singles than for individuals with a family.

Gender, family situation and the outcomes of job seeking

Gender. Unemployment statistics in The Netherlands suggest that women experience more difficulties in finding a job than men (Statistics Netherlands, 2002). Similarly, Kanfer et al. (2001) found that among new entrants at the labor market males were more likely to obtain employment than females. We therefore expect that men are more likely to find a (new) job than women. Furthermore, we will examine to what extent gender affects the type of job obtained in terms of job satisfaction, and level of agreement.

Concerning job search intensity, research found little difference between both sexes (Kanfer et al., 2001). At the same time, however, men are more likely than women to obtain employment (e.g., Statistics Netherlands, 2002). We therefore expect the relation between job search behavior and job attainment to be stronger for men than for women. Discriminatory employment practices may provide an additional rationale for this hypothesis (Davison & Burke, 2000). In addition to the expected moderating effect of gender on the job search behavior – job attainment relation, we also examine whether gender moderates the relations of job search

behavior with the other job search outcomes.

Family situation. Family situation is hypothesized to impact on job attainment. Because individuals with families are more tied to their current community, and less flexible to move, they evaluate job alternatives more critically, and therefore be less likely to obtain (new) employment than others. Consistent with this reasoning previous research has demonstrated that individuals with families are less likely to leave their current jobs and move somewhere else than individuals without families (Blegen et al., 1988; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). In addition to the relation between family situation and job attainment, we also examine whether family situation affects the type of job obtained in terms of job satisfaction and level of agreement. Furthermore, the possible moderating role of family situation in the relation of job search behavior with job attainment and the other job search outcomes is examined. Thus,

Hypothesis 7: (a) Gender and (b) family situation will be related to job attainment, such that men and singles are more likely to obtain a (new) job than women and individuals with a family, respectively.

Hypothesis 8: The relation of job search behavior with job attainment is stronger for men than for women.

Method

Sample and procedure

The data were collected as part of a larger research project (cf. Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, & Blonk, 2004), using a two-wave panel design. The predictor variables (i.e., personal job search attitude, perceived social pressure, and job search self-efficacy) as well as job search intention were assessed at Time 1 of the study. Job search behavior and the outcome variables (i.e., job attainment, job satisfaction, and agreement between the obtained and wanted job) were assessed four months later at Time 2.

The Time 1 questionnaire was administered to a panel of 2,000 Dutch households in

February 2001. The panel is representative for the Dutch population with regard to age, sex, religion, level of education, and geographical distribution (CentERdata, 2002). For the present study the panel members belonging to the (potential) labor force, that is, all panel members aged 16 to 65, were requested to fill in the questionnaire (i.e., 3,170 individuals out of the 2,000 households). A total of 1,854 individuals completed the Time 1 questionnaire (58.5% response rate). For the purposes of the current study, only those respondents with an independent household were selected ($n = 1,703$). Children living with their parents for example were excluded from the sample. Of these 1,703 respondents, 52.1% was male. The average age was 42.0 ($SD = 11.0$). Almost 80% of the respondents lived with a partner ($n = 1,346$), 54.1% did not have any children, 37.6% held a college or university degree, and 76.6% were employed.

Four months later at Time 2 (June 2001) the same procedure was used as at Time 1. In total 1,246 individuals out of the 1,703 eligible individuals at Time 1 completed the Time 2 questionnaire (73.2% response rate). To check for selective non-response, the respondents who participated at Time 1 only were compared with the respondents who participated in both waves. Respondents who participated at both times were found to be slightly older than the respondents who participated at Time 1 only, $t(1700) = 4.20, p < .001$. Otherwise no differences were found between the Time 2 respondents and non-respondents.

Measures

Job search outcomes. At Time 2 of the study we assessed three job search outcomes. First, job attainment was assessed by asking respondents whether they had found a job (if they were not employed at Time 1) or had changed jobs (if they were employed at Time 1) in the last four months. Second, general job satisfaction in the new job was measured with one item asking the respondents to indicate whether they were satisfied with their jobs. Response options ranged from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. Third, we measured the agreement between the obtained and wanted job. Respondents were asked at Time 1 whether they were searching for a part-time

job or a full-time job, and whether they were searching for a temporary or a permanent job. At Time 2 respondents who found a (new) job were asked whether it was a part-time or a full-time job, and whether it was a temporary or a permanent job. Two items assessed the level of agreement. The first item measured the agreement with regard to the number of hours (i.e., part-time versus full-time), and the second item measured the agreement with regard to the type of contract (i.e., temporary versus permanent). Both items were coded 1 = *in agreement* and 0 = *not in agreement*. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .70.

Job search behavior. Job search behavior was assessed at Time 2, using an 11-item index based on Blau (1994) as adapted by Van Hooft, Born, Taris, and Van der Flier (in press). Participants were asked to indicate how much time they *had spent* in the *last four months* on 11 job search activities (e.g., reading classified/help wanted advertisements, talking with friends or relatives about possible job leads, and going on a job interview). Response options ranged from 1 = *no time at all* to 5 = *very much time* (coefficient alpha = .90).

Job search intention. Job search intention was assessed at Time 1 with the same 11-item index as job search behavior. Participants were asked to indicate how much time they intended to spend on the various job search activities in the next four months. Response options were identical to the behavior measure (coefficient alpha = .93).

Job search predictors. At Time 1 a series of job search predictors were assessed. All items used to measure these predictors were completed by using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). First, personal job search attitude was assessed with Vinokur and Caplan's (1987) 3-item scale asking the respondents to indicate the extent to which they regarded it *wise*, *beneficial*, and *useless* (reverse scored) to seek for a (new) job in the next four months (alpha = .70). Second, perceived social pressure was measured using Vinokur and Caplan's (1987) 2-item scale, asking the respondents to indicate the extent to which *their significant other*, and *most people who are important to them* think they should seek for a (new)

job in the next four months ($\alpha = .87$). Third, job search self-efficacy was assessed by eight items based on Ellis and Taylor (1983) and Van Ryn and Vinokur (1992). A sample item is: “I have confidence in my abilities to complete a good job application” ($\alpha = .82$).

Gender, family situation, and control variables. Gender was coded 0 = *male* and 1 = *female*. Family situation was assessed in accordance with the method Blegen et al. (1988) proposed to measure kinship responsibility. The sum was calculated of two items, one asking whether the respondent is married or is cohabitating with a partner (0 = *not married / no partner*, 1 = *married / partner*), and one assessing the number of children in the household (0 = *no children*, 1 = *one child*, 2 = *two or more children*). This index was preferred over the use of the single indicators separately for reasons of parsimony, and because previous research found stronger correlations of the index measure with outcomes such as intent to leave and turnover as compared to the separate indicators (Blegen et al., 1988). Age and level of education were used as control variables, because these variables have been shown to be related to both job search behavior and job search outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001). In addition, employment position was selected as control variable because unemployed individuals show higher levels of job search intention and behavior than employed individuals (Van Hooft et al., 2004). Level of education was assessed by asking the respondents to indicate the highest level of education they completed. Education was then coded as 1 = *low* (i.e., primary education or lower vocational training), 2 = *intermediate* (i.e., secondary school or high school), 3 = *high* (i.e., college or university). Employment position at Time 1 was assessed with the following item: “Do you have a paid job at the moment?”

Analyses

Analyses were performed in three steps. First, the predictors of job search intention and the moderating effects of gender and family situation were examined, using moderated ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis. For this analysis the respondents who participated at Time 1 were selected ($n = 1,703$). Second, the relation of job search intention and job search self-efficacy

with job search behavior was investigated using hierarchical OLS regression analysis. For this analysis the respondents who participated in both waves were selected ($n = 1,246$). Third, the relation of job search behavior with job attainment and the moderating effects of gender and family situation were examined using moderated logistic regression analysis, because the outcome variable is dichotomous (Menard, 1995). For this analysis the respondents who participated in both waves were selected ($n = 1,246$). The relation of job search behavior with job satisfaction and the agreement measures were examined using moderated OLS regression analysis. For the job satisfaction and agreement analyses, only those Time 2 participants were selected who obtained (new) employment in the last four months. All variables used in the moderated regression analyses were centered in order to avoid multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, t -statistics for mean differences, and correlations among the study variables for men and women separately. A multivariate analysis of variance suggested mean differences between men and women on one or more of the Time 1 variables, $F(8, 1691) = 22.18, p < .001$. Table 1 shows that men were older, higher educated, and more often employed than women, and men reported higher levels of job search self-efficacy than women. No significant mean differences between men and women were found for either the Time 2 variables, $F(2, 1243) = 0.74, p = .48$, or the Time 2 variables that were assessed among respondents with a new job, $F(2, 56) = 1.45, p = .24$. Furthermore, Table 1 shows that family situation and age were negatively related to job search intention for both men and women. Level of education and employment position were related to job search intention among women only, in that higher educated women and women with a job reported higher levels of job search intention than others. Consistent with the TPB, personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure were positively related to job search intention among both men and women. Interestingly, among men family situation was positively related to employment position, but negatively among women.

Thus, men with a partner and children were more likely to be employed, whereas women with a partner and children were less likely to be employed.

Tables 2 and 3 present the regression analyses of job search intention, job search behavior, and the job search outcomes on the predictor variables. Below we discuss the results in the order of the specific hypotheses the analyses pertain to. Thus, we first present the results concerning the predictors (Hypotheses 1-2) and outcomes (Hypotheses 3-4) of job search behavior in general. Second, we present the moderating effects of gender and family situation (Hypotheses 5-8).

Job search predictors

According to Hypothesis 1 job search intention should relate positively to personal job search attitude, perceived social pressure, and job search self-efficacy. Table 2 presents the regression analysis that was performed to test this hypothesis. Job search intention was regressed on gender, family situation, and the control variables in the first step. Together these variables explained 6% of the variance in job search intention. Gender and family situation were negatively related to job search intention, indicating that males and singles intended to invest more time in job seeking than females and individuals with families, respectively. As for the control variables, only age had a significant effect on job search intention: older individuals intended to invest less time in job seeking than younger individuals. The TPB-variables personal job search attitude, perceived social pressure, and job search self-efficacy were added to the equation in the second step, resulting in a significant improvement of the explained variance in job search intention, $\Delta R^2 = .33$, $F_{\text{change}}(3, 1691) = 307.24, p < .01$. The beta-weights of personal job search attitude, perceived social pressure, and job search self-efficacy were significant, supporting Hypotheses 1a to 1c.

Job search intention and job search self-efficacy were expected to relate positively to job search behavior (Hypothesis 2). To test these relations, job search behavior was regressed on gender, family situation, and the control variables in the first step of a hierarchical regression analysis (see Table 2). Addition of job search intention and job search self-efficacy in the second

step resulted in a significant improvement of the explained variance in job search behavior, $\Delta R^2 = .23$, $F_{\text{change}}(2, 1236) = 200.04$, $p < .01$. A significant, positive effect of job search intention on job search behavior was found, supporting Hypothesis 2a. Job search self-efficacy, however, did not contribute to the prediction of job search behavior (Hypothesis 2b not supported).

Job search outcomes

Job search behavior was expected to relate positively to job attainment (Hypothesis 3). As reported in Table 1, a positive correlation was found between job search behavior and job attainment for both men ($r = .25$, $p < .01$) and women ($r = .15$, $p < .01$). A hierarchical logistic regression analysis was performed to test whether job search behavior predicted job attainment over and above the effects of gender, family situation, age, level of education, and employment position. As shown in Table 3, adding job search behavior to the equation resulted in a significant improvement of the model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 27.59$, $p < .01$). Table 3 furthermore reports odds ratios (Exp B) for all independent variables. The odds ratio represents how much more likely (odds ratio greater than 1) or less likely (odds ratio of less than 1) it is for an individual to have obtained a job at Time 2 for each one-unit increase in the independent variable (Menard, 1995). The odds ratio of job search behavior is 1.68, indicating that a one-unit increase on the job search behavior index results in a 68% increase in the odds of having obtained a job. Thus, job search behavior has a positive effect on job attainment (Hypothesis 3 supported).

In addition to an increased chance to obtain (new) employment, individuals with higher levels of job search behavior were expected to obtain better quality jobs in terms of job satisfaction and agreement between the job obtained and the job wanted. Hierarchical OLS regression analysis demonstrated that job search behavior was not related to job satisfaction in the new job and the level of agreement after having controlled for the effects of gender, family situation, age, level of education, and employment position (Hypotheses 4a and 4b not supported).

Gender and family situation and the predictors of job seeking

Hypothesis 5 stated that there should be gender differences in the weight of personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure in the prediction of job search intention. Gender, family situation, the control variables, and the TPB-variables were regressed on job search intention in the first two steps (see Table 2). Addition of the Gender \times Personal job search attitude and Gender \times Perceived social pressure interactions in the third step of the regression analysis did not improve the explained variance in job search intention, $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F_{\text{change}}(2, 1689) = 0.07$, $p = .94$. Thus, Hypotheses 5a and 5b were not supported.

Family situation was expected to moderate the relation of personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure with job search intention. This effect was tested by adding interaction terms of family situation with personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure in the fourth step of the regression of job search intention. Table 2 shows that inclusion of these interactions resulted in a significant, though very small, improvement of the explained variance in job search intention, $\Delta R^2 = .003$, $F_{\text{change}}(2, 1687) = 3.72$, $p < .05$. Thus, whereas personal job search attitude predicted job search intention more strongly among singles than among individuals with a family, the opposite was found for perceived social pressure (Hypothesis 6a-b supported).

In the fifth step of the regression (not displayed in Table 2), the three-way interactions between gender, family situation, and the TPB-variables personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure were added. These three-way interactions did not improve the prediction of job search intention, $\Delta R^2 = .001$, $F_{\text{change}}(2, 1685) = 1.76$, $p = .17$. Thus, the differences in the importance of personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure in the prediction of job search intention between individuals with a family and singles did not depend on gender.

Gender, family situation and the outcomes of job seeking

Hypothesis 7 stated that gender and family situation should relate to job attainment. Table 3 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis showing that neither gender nor family situation affected job attainment (Hypotheses 7a-b not supported).

According to Hypothesis 8, the job search behavior – job attainment relation should be stronger for men than for women. Using moderated logistic regression analysis, we tested whether the Gender \times Job search behavior interaction could improve the prediction of job attainment after controlling for the main effects of gender, family situation, the control variables, and job search behavior. At the same time we tested whether the job search behavior – job attainment relation was different depending on family situation. Table 3 shows that inclusion of the interaction terms did not improve the prediction of job attainment (Hypothesis 8 not supported).

We also tested for moderating effects of gender and family situation in the relation of job search behavior with job satisfaction and level of agreement. As reported in Table 3, no moderating effects of gender and family situation were found in the job search behavior – level of agreement relation. However, a significant moderating effect of gender was found in the relation of job search behavior with job satisfaction. The beta-weight of the Gender \times Job search behavior interaction was negative ($\beta = -.37, p < .05$), indicating that the relation of job search behavior with job satisfaction is more positive for men than for women. Table 1 indeed shows that whereas the zero-order correlation between job search behavior and job satisfaction is negative for women ($r = -.42, p < .05$), it is positive, albeit not significant, for men ($r = .20, p = .29$).

Discussion

This study examined differences in the antecedents and consequences of job search behavior depending on gender and family situation in a large, nationwide sample of the Dutch population. The antecedents of job search behavior were investigated in the context of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior. Consistent with previous research (Caska, 1998; Van Hooft et al., in press; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992), support was found for this theory. That is, a strong relation was found between job search behavior and the participants' job search intention four months before. Furthermore, personal job search attitude, perceived social pressure to engage in job seeking, and job search self-efficacy significantly predicted job search intention. Together

these variables accounted for almost 40% of the variance in job search intention.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of gender and family situation in the context of job seeking. We examined both the direct effects of gender and family situation on job search intention, and the moderating effects of gender and family situation on the relations of job search intention with its predictors. Regarding the direct effects, gender was weakly related to job search intention, indicating that men were slightly more likely to plan to engage in job seeking than women (cf. Kanfer et al., 2001). Family situation negatively affected job search intention, indicating that individuals with families were less likely to plan to engage in job seeking than singles. This finding corresponds with previous research reporting negative effects of kinship responsibility (Blegen et al., 1988) on intention to leave the current job and voluntary employee turnover. Although the kinship responsibility construct is defined in a broader sense than our family situation construct (e.g., having relatives in the community), having a partner and having children make up an important part of this construct.

As reported in Table 1, the relation between family situation and job seeking was similar for men and women. In contrast, the relation between family situation and current employment position was different for men and women. Whereas men with higher scores on the family situation scale were more likely to be employed, women with higher scores on the family situation scale were less likely to be employed. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that differences in participation at the labor market are larger between men and women with children than between men and women without children (Portegijs et al., 2002).

No support was found for the expected moderating effects of gender on the relations of job search intention with its predictors. Thus, in the area of job search, women in The Netherlands do not seem to be more sensitive to social pressure than men, as theory (e.g., Cross & Madson, 1997; Eagly, 1987) and previous studies on gender differences in the predictors of behavior (Grogan, Bell, & Conner, 1997; Venkatesh et al., 2000) have suggested. One explanation for this finding

could be the type of behavior studied. Personal job search attitude was the most important predictor of job search intention for both men and women. Job seeking may be of such importance to personal development and well-being of both sexes (e.g., Wanberg, 1997), that people are less likely to be heavily influenced in this matter by other people in their social environment. A second explanation stems from the favorable economical situation in The Netherlands at the time of the study. The tight labor market may have convinced women to seek paid employment, even when support of their partners was lacking. A third explanation relates to the Dutch national culture. In cross-cultural studies The Netherlands has been characterized by high scores on gender egalitarianism or femininity (GLOBE-study, 2001; Hofstede, 1980). Societies high on gender egalitarianism and femininity are described as societies in which relatively small gender role differences exist (House et al., 2001). Because our findings might relate to the relatively small gender role differences in The Netherlands and might therefore be country specific, future research should investigate gender differences with regard to job seeking and its predictors in other cultures.

Family situation weakly affected the strength of the relations of job search intention with its predictors. As expected, perceived social pressure was a stronger predictor of job search intention for individuals with a family than for singles. The reverse was found for personal job search attitude. Note that the family situation interactions added little to the explained variance in job search intention, and the beta-weights of the interaction terms were small. To get a better understanding of the size of the differences in the effects of personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure on job search intention between individuals with and individuals without families, we regressed job search intention on gender, the control variables, and the TPB-predictors for individuals with and individuals without families separately ($n = 780$ and $n = 354$, respectively). These analyses showed strong effects of personal job search attitude on job search intention for both groups, though a little stronger for singles ($\beta = .58, p < .01$) than for individuals with a partner and children ($\beta = .46, p < .01$). Perceived social pressure moderately affected job

search intention among individuals with a partner and children ($\beta = .24, p < .01$), but did not affect the job search intentions of singles ($\beta = .08, p = .11$).

Consistent with previous research (Kanfer et al., 2001), job search behavior was positively related to job attainment. Contrary to the expectations, however, job search behavior was not a significantly stronger predictor of job attainment among men than among women. Furthermore, women were as likely as men to obtain (new) employment. These findings do not align with unemployment statistics, reporting higher levels of unemployment among women than among men (Statistics Netherlands, 2002). A possible explanation for our results might relate to the situation at the labor market in The Netherlands at the time of study. The tight labor market may have had a positive impact on the employment position of women. Studies by Statistics Netherlands (2002), reporting that the increase in labor force participation in 2001 was about twice as high among women than among men, support this reasoning.

Because in times of a healthy economy most people who are looking for a (new) job, will be able to find it, it is important to see whether *satisfactory* employment is found. Our results did not support the expected positive relation between job search behavior and satisfaction with the new job. Lack of support for this relation is not uncommon (e.g., Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Wanberg et al., 1999; Werbel, 2000). A first possible explanation for this null finding might relate to the use of a one-item measure for job satisfaction. Although previous research demonstrated that single-item measures of overall job satisfaction are usually strongly correlated with multiple-item measures (Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997), the limited variability in our measure might have restricted the power to find significant effects. Another explanation is that dissatisfied employees may have already started a new job search, or in fact may never have stopped their job search. Indeed, job dissatisfaction is an important antecedent of job search behavior among employed individuals (Blau, 1994; Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994). This negative relation between job satisfaction and subsequent job search behavior might have overshadowed the positive relation

between job search behavior and subsequent job satisfaction among individuals who found a (new) job. Alternatively, both job seeking and job satisfaction might be influenced by people's personality. For example, more critical individuals may invest more time in job seeking in order to locate job alternatives that match their wishes, but at the same time may tend to be less satisfied with their jobs. Yet another explanation for the mixed results regarding the job seeking – job satisfaction relation relates to the samples used. In the present study, for example, evidence was found that the relation of job search behavior with job satisfaction is different for men and women. Specifically, whereas the relation between job search and job satisfaction was positive for men (though not significant), it was significantly negative for women. Women that have invested more time in job search behavior may be more likely to be disappointed in their new jobs, because they are more informed about the labor market and other, possibly better, job opportunities.

Besides job satisfaction, we used a second measure related to employment quality in the new job, that is, the agreement between the job obtained and the job sought with regard to the amount of hours and the type of contract (cf. Van Hooft et al., in press). However, we did not find support for the predicted positive effect of an individual's job search behavior on the level of agreement. The small sample that was used to test this relation and the limited variability in the level of agreement measure might have contributed to this lack of support.

Limitations and conclusion

This study examined the predictors and outcomes of job search in a sample that is considered a good representation of the entire Dutch population. Unlike previous research we did not specifically focus on either employed job seekers or unemployed job seekers or new entrants at the labor market; our sample included individuals from all of these groups. On the one hand this may limit the comparability of our results to previous studies focusing on those specific groups. On the other hand, our study extends the literature by showing that results found in previous research can be generalized to a sample composed of individuals with a broad variety of

educational, vocational, and geographical backgrounds.

A second limitation pertains to the use of direct global measures for personal job search attitude and perceived social pressure, instead of the more comprehensive belief-based measures (Ajzen, 1991). Although previous research showed that global measures are valid predictors of job seeking behaviors (e.g., Caska, 1998; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987), the lack of support regarding the moderating role of gender in the relation of job search intention with its predictors, might relate to the type of measures used. Although, the global attitudes and global perceptions of pressure did not differ between men and women, the salient beliefs underlying these attitudes and perceptions might differ between men and women. Future research should therefore study gender differences in this context using both global and belief-based measures of the TPB-variables.

A third limitation of the present study relates to the reliance on self-report measures. Common method variance might therefore be a concern. We do believe, however, that the use of an extensive index to measure job search intention and behavior, including both preparatory and active job search activities (Blau, 1994), and the use of a two-wave longitudinal design might have attenuated this concern. Furthermore, measures such as family situation and job attainment, although assessed through self-report, are objective in nature (Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey, 1996).

In conclusion, previous research and national statistics often report that persistent gender differences exist in the context of employment. Job search behavior was investigated as a possible factor that may influence these employment-related gender differences. However, the current study found little evidence for the presence of gender differences in the relations of job search behavior with its predictors and outcomes. In contrast, some evidence was found for differences depending on family situation in the predictors of job seeking.

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Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the studied variables

	Men		Women		<i>t</i> ^c	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD														
<i>Time 1 variables:</i>																		
1 Family situation ^a	1.53	1.16	1.62	1.13	-1.62													
2 Age	43.31	10.84	40.62	11.10	5.05**	.03												
3 Level of education	2.25	0.72	2.15	0.70	2.97**	-.04	-.06											
4 Employment position ^b	0.85	0.36	0.67	0.47	8.64**	.22**	-.37**	.07*										
5 Personal job search attitude	2.32	0.97	2.30	0.96	0.43	-.08*	-.27**	.02	.07*									
6 Perceived social pressure	1.73	0.88	1.74	0.92	-0.11	-.08*	-.09**	-.08*	-.09**	.54**								
7 Job search self-efficacy	3.65	0.59	3.53	0.59	4.17**	.05	-.00	.16**	.05	-.17**	-.17**							
8 Job search intention	1.39	0.58	1.36	0.55	1.10	-.09**	-.24**	.00	-.01	.58**	.43**	-.03						
<i>Time 2 variables:</i>																		
9 Job search behavior	1.25	0.42	1.24	0.43	0.69	-.09*	-.25**	-.02	-.01	.41**	.31**	-.02	.54**					
10 Job attainment	0.05	0.21	0.06	0.23	-0.83	-.04	-.08*	-.04	.01	.10*	.13**	-.02	.21**	.25**				
<i>Time 2 respondents with a new job:</i>																		
11 Job satisfaction	4.20	0.76	4.24	0.79	-0.22	.13	-.35	.14	-.29	.12	-.03	-.04	.09	.20				
12 Level of agreement	0.84	0.30	0.68	0.43	1.69	.29	-.27	.12	.13	.16	-.01	.25	.16	.13				

Note. Correlations men below diagonal, correlations for women above diagonal. Due to incidental missing values *n* varies between 887 and 888 for men, and between 813 and 814 for women for variables 1 to 8. For variables 9 and 10 *n* varies between 656 and 657 for men, and *n* is 589 for women. For variables 11 and 12 *n* varies between 29 and 30 for men, and between 30 and 33 for women.

^a Scores on family situation range from 0 to 3, with higher scores indicating that the individual is part of a larger household.

^b 0 = not employed, 1 = employed.

^c Positive (negative) *t*-values indicate means are higher for men (women).

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01.

Table 2

Moderated OLS regression analysis of job search intention and hierarchical OLS regression analysis of job search behavior

Predictor	OLS regression				OLS regression	
	Job search intention (β)				Job search behavior (β)	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2
<i>Step 1: Background variables</i>						
Gender ^a	-.05*	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.04	-.02
Family situation	-.09**	-.06**	-.06**	-.06**	-.09**	-.05
Age	-.23**	-.11**	-.11**	-.10**	-.22**	-.11**
Level of education	.02	-.01	-.01	-.00	.04	.03
Employment position ^b	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.02	.01	.02
<i>Step 2: TPB-variables</i>						
Personal job search attitude		.48**	.48**	.47**		
Perceived social pressure		.17**	.17**	.18**		
Job search self-efficacy		.07**	.07**	.07**		.01
Job search intention						.49**
<i>Step 3: Two-way interaction effects with gender</i>						
Gender \times Personal job search attitude			.00	.00		
Gender \times Perceived social pressure			-.01	-.01		
<i>Step 4: Two-way interaction effects with family situation</i>						
Family situation \times Personal job search attitude				-.06*		
Family situation \times Perceived social pressure				.05*		
Multiple R	.25**	.63**	.63**	.63**	.25**	.54**
ΔR^2	.06**	.33**	.00	.003*	.06**	.23**
Adjusted R ²	.06**	.39**	.39**	.39**	.06**	.29**

Note. Due to incidental missing values $N = 1,700$ for job search intention and $N = 1,244$ for job search behavior.

^a -1 = male, 1 = female.

^b -1 = not employed, 1 = employed.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Moderated logistic regression of job attainment and moderated OLS regression of job satisfaction and of agreement between the job obtained and the job wanted

Predictor	Logistic regression Job attainment (Exp B)			OLS regression Job satisfaction (β)			OLS regression Level of agreement (β)		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<i>Step 1: Background variables</i>									
Gender ^a	1.04	1.09	1.17	-.01	-.03	-.06	-.30**	-.29*	-.26†
Family situation	0.98	1.06	0.99	-.02	-.02	.08	.35**	.36**	.36*
Age	0.70*	0.81	0.80	-.00	-.02	-.04	-.29*	-.28*	-.29*
Level of education	0.87	0.83	0.86	.14	.14	.16	-.04	-.04	-.06
Employment position ^b	0.92	0.96	0.97	-.16	-.17	-.09	-.01	.01	.04
<i>Step 2: Job search behavior</i>									
Job search behavior		1.60**	1.68**		-.10	-.19		.09	.05
<i>Step 3: Interaction gender</i>									
Gender × Job search behavior			0.90			-.37*			-.03
Family situation × Job search behavior			1.14			.04			-.12
$\Delta \chi^2$									
χ^2 (df)	7.47 (5)	27.59 (1)**	3.35 (2)						
		35.06 (6)**	38.41 (8)**						
Multiple R				.19	.21	.38	.46*	.47*	.48†
ΔR^2				.04	.01	.10*	.21*	.01	.01
Adjusted R ²				-.05	-.06	.02	.14*	.13*	.11†

Note. Due to incidental missing values N = 1,246 for job attainment, N = 63 for job satisfaction, and N = 59 for level of agreement.

^a -1 = male, 1 = female

^b -1 = not employed, 1 = employed

† p < .10 * p < .05. ** p < .01.