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Employability and Job Search after Compulsory Reemployment Courses: The Role of Choice, Usefulness, and Motivation

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Compulsory reemployment courses aim to increase unemployed people's chances of reemployment by enhancing their employability and job search activities. However, the course outcomes vary greatly. This study examined the conditions and mechanisms that influence the outcomes of reemployment courses. In a two-wave study of 643 participants, we assessed participants' course experience (perceived choice and perceived usefulness), motivation for finding reemployment (internalisation), and employability and job search before and after the course. The results confirmed that a more internalised motivation was positively related to most course outcomes. Unexpectedly, perceived choice was unrelated to internalised motivation and course outcomes. Instead, high perceived choice was beneficial for motivation and some course outcomes only when the participants perceived the course to be useful for finding reemployment but was detrimental when they perceived the course to be useless. Perceived usefulness was also directly and positively related to the participants' internalised motivation, which was in turn positively associated with most employability dimensions and job search activities after the course. Our results imply that the compulsory nature of reemployment courses may not be detrimental to people's motivation and course outcomes as long as they perceive the course to be useful for finding reemployment.

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INTRODUCTION

Unemployment has a negative impact on the unemployed (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009) and on societies overall (Van den Berg & Van der Klaauw, 2006). Past research has shown that the probability of finding reemployment increases with people's employability (i.e. their skills, knowledge, and attitudes that together form the ability to find and keep a job; see Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004). More specifically, employability can function as a coping resource during unemployment (Chen & Lim, 2012) because it makes people less vulnerable during economic recessions (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte, & Alarco, 2008). In addition, more employable job-seekers are more likely to gain reemployment (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007).

In line with these findings, many Western governments have introduced compulsory reemployment courses to enhance unemployed people's employability (e.g. McQuaid & Lindsay, 2005). In these courses, participants learn basic work-related skills, practice their social skills with group exercises, explore their career opportunities, and receive training and education to increase their human capital. The courses are reasonably comparable to welfare-to-work programs such as the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Program (JOBS; see Vinokur, Van Ryn, Gramlich, & Price, 1991), but they have a mandatory attendance policy, are often more time-intensive, and last 6 months or longer.

Although compulsory reemployment courses aim to enhance the participants' employability and job search skills, the outcomes of these courses differ widely. Some participants become more employable and more motivated to search for jobs, while others stagnate or become demotivated and stop searching completely (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Lens, & De Witte, 2010). The compulsory nature of reemployment courses may be a possible reason for these mixed findings and has consequently become a subject of debate. Several politicians, reemployment counselors, and researchers have argued that unemployed people should not be required to participate in a reemployment course because the benefits of compulsory participation are often too meager to justify their costs (Van den Berg & Van der Klaauw, 2006). Insights into the conditions and mechanisms that support or hinder the benefits of a reemployment course would thus contribute greatly to this debate.

The current study focuses on participants' motivation as the mechanism associated with the varying outcomes of compulsory reemployment courses, because the outcome of any training largely depends on the trainees' motivation (see Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000). The primary purpose of our study is to explain the differences in participants' employability and job search activities after a reemployment course by investigating factors that affect their motivation for finding reemployment. Specifically, we propose

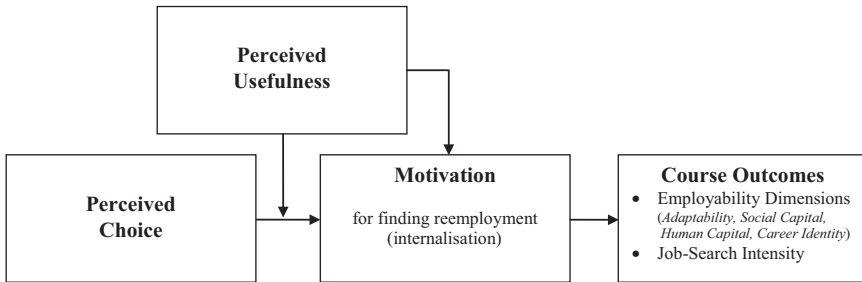


FIGURE 1. Theoretical framework.

that two factors may be particularly important for people's motivation and, thus, for the outcomes of a course. These two factors are people's perceived choice to participate in a reemployment course and their perception of the usefulness of the course (Figure 1).

Course Outcomes: Employability and Job Search

Although finding reemployment depends on many factors, the best predictor known to date is job search intensity, which refers to the frequency and scope of job search behaviors such as looking at employment advertisements or contacting potential employers. However, the reemployment process is a dynamic self-regulatory and goal-oriented process that is also driven by individuals' ability and motivation to find work (Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002). To address the notion of ability in this process, Fugate et al. (2004) introduced the concept of employability.

Fugate et al. (2004) noted that employability is composed of four dimensions, namely adaptability, social capital, human capital, and career identity, each of which consists of different skills, knowledge, and attitudes that together constitute the ability to find and keep a job. *Adaptability* describes the readiness to cope with and willingness to explore one's career possibilities, which has been shown to play an important role in gaining reemployment (Koen, Klehe, Van Vianen, Zikic, & Nauta, 2010). *Social capital* reflects the interpersonal aspect of employability and concerns "knowing-whom" competencies. Social capital refers to one's social network, social skills, and support, which are all known to impact and facilitate reemployment success (see McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). *Human capital* refers to personal factors that may affect one's chances of finding reemployment. These "knowing-how" competencies include education, experience, training, skills, and knowledge. Finally, *career identity* reflects "knowing-why" competencies such as individual work values and employment commitment. Career identity can provide guidance in making decisions and establishing reemployment goals (McArdle et al., 2007).

Fugate and colleagues (2004) argued that employability is an aggregate construct that eliminates conceptual and operational redundancies among its dimensions. Each dimension has value in its own right and may function differently from the other dimensions, but the dimensions together generate the concept of employability. Although prior research on the role of employability in the reemployment process is scarce, the literature indicates that the employability dimensions are empirically distinct in predicting both job search activities and reemployment. To illustrate, Koen, Klehe, and Van Vianen (2013) found that career identity predicted both job search intensity and reemployment success. Adaptability predicted only job search intensity, and social and human capital predicted only reemployment success. In line with these findings, we examined each employability dimension separately in this study.

Motivation for Finding Reemployment

To understand individual differences in employability and job search activities after a reemployment course, it is essential to address people's motivation, which is a crucial factor for engagement in training and training outcomes in general (see Colquitt et al., 2000). Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) proposes that intrinsically motivated people engage in an activity because they find it enjoyable and interesting and that extrinsically motivated people engage in an activity because it is instrumental in reaching a certain outcome. At the same time, SDT states that people can internalise extrinsically motivated activities to varying degrees by making the activities personally valuable. The more someone has internalised the outcome of an extrinsically motivated activity, the more autonomously motivated the person will be when engaging in that activity. Autonomously motivated people act with a sense of volition and endorsement of an essentially extrinsically motivated activity. A less internalised or more controlled form of motivation involves acting because one feels pressured to do so or forced by some external or internal source. Accordingly, SDT views intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to be a continuum instead of a dichotomy.

The concept of internalisation is especially helpful in the context of reemployment because the activities undertaken to find reemployment are not always interesting or satisfying in themselves (i.e. intrinsic motivation) but can be perceived to be important for reaching the goal of reemployment (i.e. internalised extrinsic motivation). Moreover, a more internalised motivation is particularly effective in predicting engagement and persistence in activities that require discipline and persistence (see Gagné & Deci, 2005). Therefore, we predict that a more internalised motivation is highly relevant for participating in a compulsory reemployment course. According to SDT, the more internalised people's motivation becomes, the more personally important the

prospect of regaining employment becomes. A more internalised motivation for finding reemployment should entail a stronger engagement in the respective behavior (i.e. the reemployment course) and should thereby foster the intended outcomes of the course (i.e. increasing employability and job search). In other words, a more internalised motivation should provide people with the energy to engage in the reemployment course and may thus foster the acquisition of the employability dimensions and job search intensity. Thus, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 1: A more internalised motivation for finding reemployment will be positively related to participants' (dimensions of) employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course.

Facilitating Internalisation and Course Outcomes: The Role of Choice and Usefulness

To optimally benefit from a reemployment course, participants may need a more internalised motivation. Past research suggests that both the choice of participation and the perceived usefulness of training play an important role in predicting participants' motivation and training effectiveness (see Baldwin, Ford, & Blume, 2009; Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Similarly, SDT stresses that perceived choice of participation and usefulness of an activity help to internalise the intended outcome of that activity (Deci, Egharri, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Patall, Cooper, & Wynn, 2010).

Perceived Choice. The perception of choice is a core aspect of many psychological theories, and many studies have supported its link to motivation and learning (see Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008). Although a feeling of choice can facilitate internalisation, a feeling of compulsion or pressure can limit the internalised motivation to engage in that activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, higher levels of perceived choice in taking part in a reemployment course may lead to a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment, which in turn should advance the various dimensions of employability and job search intensity (see Hypothesis 1).

Although participating in a reemployment course may be mandated by the government, compulsory attendance is not an either/or phenomenon (see Patall et al., 2008). The perception of choice can depend on numerous factors, such as the way in which people are introduced to a course, the conditions and consequences of not attending the course, and the enforcement of those consequences. Research on compulsory addiction treatment programs highlights this distinction between objective and perceived choice of participation (e.g. Wild, Cunningham, & Ryan, 2006). Wild et al. (2006)

showed that there was no one-on-one relationship between objective and perceived choice and, more importantly, that perceived rather than objective choice of participation predicted engagement in the treatment program. Therefore, we considered the perceived choice of participation in the reemployment course and propose the following:

Hypothesis 2a: Perceived choice of participation will be positively related to a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment.

Hypothesis 2b: Perceived choice of participation will be positively related to participants' (dimensions of) employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course.

However, perceived choice in itself does not always contribute to participants' motivation and training effectiveness. For example, participants may regard voluntary training to be less important than compulsory training, in which case their higher perceived choice of participation will not result in higher motivation and better training outcomes (see Baldwin et al., 2009). Similarly, Reeve, Nix, and Hamm (2003) proposed that perceived choice may lead to a more internalised motivation when accompanied by other facilitating factors such as the provision of a rationale for an activity. Thus, in addition to perceived choice, the perception that training is useful may foster participants' internalised motivation and training outcomes.

Perceived Usefulness. Previous studies have indeed shown that people's belief that training is useful plays a crucial role in motivation and engagement during training and the subsequent effectiveness of the training (see Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Although this finding pertains to both the expected and perceived usefulness during training, we focus on the *perceived* usefulness of the course. The perceived usefulness seems particularly relevant with regard to compulsory reemployment courses because people often know little about the content of the course before they participate in the course.

According to SDT, the perceived usefulness of an activity can enhance internalisation and subsequent effort (Deci et al., 1994). Reeve, Jang, Hardre, and Omura (2002) experimentally manipulated perceived usefulness by providing students with a rationale for an uninteresting but potentially personally useful learning task (learning conversational Chinese). They found that providing a rationale increased the students' effort; specifically, students had a more internalised motivation during the learning task and subsequently invested more effort. Similarly, Jang (2008) concluded from three studies that having a rationale can help people generate a more internalised motivation, which in turn facilitates constructive engagement in uninteresting but personally important tasks. Accordingly, a reemployment course that is perceived to

be useful for finding reemployment may help someone to achieve a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment. Consequently, a more internalised motivation can help people to constructively engage in the course and acquire greater employability and increase their job search activities. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 3a: The perceived usefulness of the reemployment course will be positively related to a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment.

Hypothesis 3b: The perceived usefulness of the reemployment course will be positively related to participants' (dimensions of) employability and job search intensity after the course.

Previous research suggests that the perceived choice and perceived usefulness of a reemployment course may not function independently of each another. In fact, the perceived usefulness of a course may strengthen the positive effects of perceived choice. For example, Assor, Kaplan, and Roth (2002) found that "fostering relevance" played a crucial role in predicting students' engagement in schoolwork. They stated that providing choice is desirable because it allows people to realise their personal goals, but that it is also necessary to help them understand the connection between a task and their personal goals, i.e. show them the relevance of the activity. Katz and Assor (2007) later discussed that having a choice in itself is not sufficient to support motivation: the choices need to be relevant to people's needs, interests, and goals. Patall et al. (2010) suggested that providing rationales for engaging in tasks may be more effective than providing alternative choices to support a more internalised motivation. Therefore, we predict that perceived choice will positively relate to internalised motivation for finding reemployment and subsequent course outcomes, especially when people perceive a reemployment course to be useful for finding reemployment. We propose the following:

Hypothesis 4a: The relationship between perceived choice of participation and a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment is moderated by the perceived usefulness of the course. This relationship is positive when the course is perceived to be useful.

Hypothesis 4b: The relationship between perceived choice of participation and participants' (dimensions of) employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course is moderated by the course's perceived usefulness. This relationship is positive when the course is perceived to be useful.

Hypotheses 2–4 suggest that the experience of a reemployment course influences participants' motivation and course outcomes simultaneously.

However, as implied in Hypothesis 1, we believe that a more internalised motivation acts as a mediating mechanism between the experience of the reemployment course (i.e. perceived choice and perceived usefulness) and employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course. In other words, internalisation may explain how and why the experience of a course influences the outcomes of that course. This notion is in line with Kanfer's (1991) distal–proximal framework of motivational theories, which states that variables that are more distal from performance outcomes influence these outcomes through more proximal variables. In our study, the experience of a course can be considered the more distal factor, and motivation can be considered the more proximal factor in fostering course outcomes. This idea is consistent with the majority of the existing models on training motivation and training effectiveness, which demonstrate that the relationships between individual or situational variables and training outcomes are mediated by motivation (see Colquitt et al., 2000). In summary, we expect that motivation mediates the proposed relationships between the perceived choice and the perceived usefulness of a course and the outcomes of that course. We also expect that the perceived usefulness of a course affects the strength of the relationship between perceived choice and participants' motivation for finding reemployment, which in turn affects the subsequent outcomes of the course. Thus, we also propose a mediated moderation.

Hypothesis 5a: The relationship between perceived choice and (dimensions of) employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course is mediated by a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment.

Hypothesis 5b: The relationship between the perceived usefulness of a course and (dimensions of) employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course is mediated by a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment.

Hypothesis 5c: The moderating effect of the perceived usefulness of a course on the relationship between perceived choice and (dimensions of) employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course is mediated by motivation for finding reemployment.

METHODS

Participants and Procedure

The data collection for the current study occurred in the context of a larger project on the employability of long-term unemployed people. To test the current hypotheses, we used a sample of people ($n = 643$; 365 women (56.8%) and 278 (43.2%) men) who had participated in a compulsory reemployment course and had responded to two voluntary paper-and-pencil questionnaires

set one year apart: one of the questionnaires was administered before (Time 1) and one was administered after (Time 2) the reemployment course. The participants' average age was 46.4 years ($SD = 9.0$) and their average length of unemployment was 75.3 months ($SD = 88.9$). The highest completed level of education was preliminary school for 29.6 per cent of the respondents and high school or basic training for 31.7 per cent of the respondents; 20.3 per cent had undergone vocational training; 12.3 per cent held the Dutch equivalent of a Bachelor's degree; and 5.9 per cent held a Master's degree.

Reemployment Courses

The inclusion criterion for participation in the current study was that participants were obligated to participate in a reemployment course. These compulsory reemployment courses were offered to participants who had been unemployed for over 3 months, who received regular government benefits as determined by welfare law, and who were physically and psychologically able to work. The courses were offered to participants by a reemployment counselor after an assessment of the participant's preferences regarding their area of work (e.g. gardening, nursing, administration, finance, etc.). Although varying in focus, all of the reemployment courses aimed to enhance the dimensions of the participants' employability and job search activities within half a year. Attendance at these reemployment courses was obligatory in that not attending would be followed by a reduction in welfare benefits.

Measures

All variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*low agreement*) to 5 (*high agreement*). Where necessary, items were translated from English into Dutch and translated back into English to ensure the comparability of the items. Given the high proportion of low-educated respondents, most of the items were simplified in collaboration with reemployment consultants.

Employability. Each dimension of employability was assessed at Time 1 and Time 2. *Adaptability* was measured in the same way as carried out by Zikic and Klehe (2006), by combining two subscales: career planning (Gould, 1979) and career exploration (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). An example item for career planning is "I know what I need to do to reach my career goals", and an example of career exploration is "I investigate career opportunities." *Social capital* was reflected by social skills and was measured with the Perceived Social Competence Scale (Anderson-Butcher, Iachini, & Amorose, 2008). An example item of this scale is "I ask others if I can be of

help.” We operationalised *human capital* by measuring qualifications using Wanberg et al.’s (2002) scale. An example item of this scale is “An employer would be impressed with my qualifications.” *Career identity* was measured using a six-item scale developed by Warr, Cook, and Wall (1979) and contained items such as “Having a job is very important to me.”

Job Search Intensity. We assessed job search intensity at Time 1 by asking the participants how many hours per week on average they spent searching for a job. This measure serves as a good indicator of job search intensity among unemployed people (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005). Job search intensity at Time 2 was measured with a 12-item scale based on Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, and Blonk’s (2004) scale. The participants indicated how often (1 = *never [0 times]* to 5 = *very frequently [at least 10 times]*) they had engaged in diverse job search behaviors in the past 3 months such as “used the internet to locate job openings”.

Motivation for Finding Reemployment. The internalisation of motivation was assessed at Time 2 with the 16-item Job Search Self-Regulation Questionnaire, which represents four regulatory styles on the continuum of internalisation that are applicable to job search (SRQ-JS; Vansteenkiste, Lens, DeWitte, De Witte, & Deci, 2004). The items were adapted to reflect motivation for finding reemployment by replacing “job search” with “finding reemployment”. The questionnaire asked the question, “Why do you want to find reemployment?” This question was followed by items such as “because I enjoy putting effort into finding reemployment that would interest me” (intrinsic motivation), “because finding reemployment is personally meaningful for me” (identified regulation), “because it is my duty as an unemployed person to find reemployment” (introjected regulation) and “because I need the money” (external regulation). In line with SDT and to reduce the number of variables for further analyses, we calculated the Relative Autonomy Index (RAI) from the various motivational subscales to reflect the level of internalisation. This calculation was performed by assigning each subscale a different weight and combining them in order from the least to the most fully internalised (see Ryan & Deci, 2000). To form the RAI, the external regulation subscale was assigned a weight of -2 ; the introjected regulation subscale was assigned a weight of -1 ; the identified regulation subscale was assigned a weight of $+1$; and the intrinsic motivation subscale was assigned a weight of $+2$. In other words, the more autonomous one’s motivation to find reemployment, the larger its positive weight; the more controlled one’s motivation to find reemployment, the larger its negative weight. Many studies have demonstrated the usefulness of the RAI to reflect internalisation (e.g. Senecal & Guay, 2001; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).

Perceived Choice and Perceived Usefulness. Perceived choice and perceived usefulness were assessed at Time 2 with two seven-item scales of the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (Deci et al., 1994). The participants indicated the degree to which they felt that they had a choice about participating in the reemployment course (e.g. “I felt like it was not my own choice to participate in this reemployment course”) and how useful they thought the reemployment course was for finding reemployment (e.g. “I believe that participating in this reemployment course can help me to find reemployment”).

Control Variables. Gender, age, education, and length of unemployment are often reported as correlates of job search intensity and reemployment status (Wanberg et al., 2002) and were thus assessed at Time 1 as demographic control variables. Initial analyses revealed that gender and education were uncorrelated with the dependent variables (the employability dimensions and job search intensity at Time 2) after controlling for their associated Time 1 variables. In line with methodological recommendations (see Becker, 2005), these were left out of later analyses to ensure sufficient statistical power.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

We performed two statistical procedures to assess the extent of common method variance. Following the recommendation of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), we used a common latent factor approach with structural equation modeling (SEM). We found that the method factor accounted for only 14 per cent of the variance, which is less than the average amount of method variance in organisational research. As a second test, we used a latent marker variable technique with SEM (see Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010) with general life satisfaction as a marker variable (measured with a five-item scale ($\alpha = .89$) developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The results revealed method factor loadings of .35, which suggest that the items were contaminated by a source of method variance. The square of these factor loadings indicates the percentage of variance in the factors associated with the marker variable. Thus, the amount of method variance in each factor was only 12 per cent, which is again less than average. Together, these two statistical tests suggest that common method variance was not a pervasive problem in our study.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, internal consistencies, and correlations between all the variables. We investigated each proposed

TABLE 1
Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Age in years	46.44	8.98	(-)																		
2. Gender ^o	.43	.50	.14**	(-)																	
3. Education ^{oo}	2.33	1.20	.04	.09	(-)																
4. Unemployment Length ^{ooo}	75.30	88.90	.20**	-.02	.10	(-)															
<i>T1 variables</i>																					
Employability Dimensions																					
5. Adaptability: Career Planning	3.04	1.14	-.13**	.08	.24**	-.11	(.91)														
6. Adaptability: Career Exploration	2.41	1.04	-.10*	.11*	.20**	-.18**	.44**	(.89)													
7. Social Capital	3.73	.71	-.07	-.06	.25**	-.06	.43**	.25**	(.88)												
8. Human Capital	2.83	1.04	-.07	.20**	.45**	-.07	.58**	.44**	.47**	(.85)											
9. Career Identity	3.68	.84	-.20**	.03	.12*	-.17**	.36**	.28**	.37**	.37**	(.80)										
10. Job Search Intensity ^{ooo}	19.34	12.7	-.12**	.09	.02	-.13*	.13*	.19**	.04	.08	.18**	(-)									
<i>T2 variables</i>																					
Employability Dimensions																					
11. Perceived Choice	2.88	.93	-.02	.00	-.12*	.07	.00	-.09	-.02	-.03	.03	-.03	(.86)								
12. Perceived Usefulness	3.24	1.01	-.12**	-.05	-.09	-.07	.15**	.06	.12**	.10*	.23**	.04	.20**	(.95)							
13. Motivation (RAI)	.00	1.00	-.11*	-.07	.06	-.03	.28**	.21**	.22**	.22**	.33**	.09	.02	.26**	(-)						
Employability Dimensions																					
14. Adaptability: Career Planning	2.80	1.19	-.15**	.05	.12*	-.09*	.53**	.27**	.21**	.34**	.26**	.04	.10	.35**	.20**	(.89)					
15. Adaptability: Career Exploration	2.48	1.11	-.18**	.07	.09	-.23**	.29**	.38**	.25**	.32**	.33**	.10	-.04	.27**	.32**	.47**	(.91)				
16. Social Capital	3.73	.73	-.05	-.05	.22**	.02	.28**	.24**	.63**	.41**	.29**	-.07	.03	.21**	.25**	.24**	.29**	(.89)			
17. Human Capital	2.97	1.02	-.11**	.15**	.35**	-.15**	.48**	.40**	.39**	.73**	.36**	.03	.03	.23**	.27**	.39**	.40**	.51**	(.87)		
18. Career Identity	3.62	1.08	-.21**	-.01	.14**	-.12**	.34**	.28**	.33**	.36**	.63**	.13*	.05	.34**	.40**	.39**	.49**	.41**	.46**	(.87)	
19. Job Search Intensity	1.76	.75	-.14**	.13**	.10*	-.22**	.35**	.55**	.29**	.41**	.34**	.22**	-.05	.21**	.27**	.69**	.35**	.45**	.43**	.34**	(.93)

Note. Coefficient alphas are on the diagonal in parentheses. *N* = 643.

** *p* < .01 (2-tailed), * *p* < .05 (2-tailed)

^o Gender categories include 0 = female, 1 = male. ^{oo} Education categories include 1 = preschool, 2 = basic training, 3 = vocational training, 4 = bachelor, 5 = master. ^{ooo} Unemployment Length was assessed in months. ^{oooo} Job-search Intensity at T1 was assessed in hours per week.

relationship separately by means of hierarchical regression analyses. Hypothesis 1 stated that a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment would be positively related to the dimensions of employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course. We used the RAI as an indicator of internalised motivation. Regression analyses (Table 2) confirmed that internalised motivation played an important role in predicting most dimensions of the participants' employability and their level of job search intensity at Time 2, after controlling for these variables at Time 1. With the exception of career planning, the results showed that a more internalised motivation was associated with higher adaptability (career exploration: $\beta = .25$), social capital ($\beta = .12$), human capital ($\beta = .11$), career identity ($\beta = .21$), and job search intensity ($\beta = .25$), which largely supports Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2 stated that the perceived choice of participation was positively related to a more internalised motivation (2a) and to the dimensions of employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course (2b). However, we did not find a significant main effect on internalised motivation (Table 3) or on the employability dimensions and job search intensity at Time 2 (Table 4). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that perceived usefulness would be positively related to a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment (3a) and to the dimensions of employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course (3b). Indeed, the perceived usefulness of a reemployment course was positively related to a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment ($\beta = .25$; Table 3). The results also showed that perceived usefulness was positively related to adaptability (career exploration: $\beta = .24$, career planning: $\beta = .26$), social capital ($\beta = .14$), human capital ($\beta = .15$), career identity ($\beta = .20$), and job search intensity ($\beta = .19$) at Time 2 (Table 4). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that perceived usefulness would moderate the relationship between perceived choice and internalised motivation for finding reemployment (4a) and between perceived choice and the dimensions of employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course (4b). To avoid multicollinearity, all the variables were centered first (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). We found a significant interaction effect of perceived choice and perceived usefulness on internalised motivation for finding reemployment ($\beta = .14$), which supports Hypothesis 4a (Table 3). Simple slope analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) showed that the slope for low perceived usefulness was significant ($\beta = -.12$, $p = .02$) and that the slope for high perceived usefulness was marginally significant in the opposite direction ($\beta = .10$, $p = .09$; Figure 2). Thus, the results showed that the relationship between perceived choice and motivation was moderated by perceived usefulness; specifically, a high perceived choice was related to a more internalised (i.e. more autonomous) motivation when perceived usefulness was also

TABLE 2
Hierarchical Multiple Regression on the Dimensions of Employability and Job Search Intensity at Time 2

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Adaptability: Exploration (T2)</i>			<i>Adaptability: Planning (T2)</i>			<i>Social Capital (T2)</i>		
	b	SD b	β	b	SD b	β	b	SD b	β
Step 1									
Age	-.01	.01	-.12*	-.01	.01	-.08	-.00	.00	-.02
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.15**	.00	.00	-.02	.00	.00	.07†
Variable at T1°	.36	.06	.34**	.54	.05	.52**	.66	.04	.64**
Step 2									
Age	-.01	.01	-.10†	-.01	.01	-.08	-.00	.00	-.01
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.15**	.00	.00	-.02	.00	.00	.07†
Variable at T1°	.31	.06	.29**	.53	.05	.50**	.63**	.04	.61**
Motivation (RAI)	.28	.06	.25**	.06	.06	.05	.08	.03	.12**
Multiple R step 2			.49**			.54**			.65**
Δ R ² step 2			.06**			.00			.01**
Adjusted R ² total			.23**			.28**			.41**

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); † $p < .05$ (1-tailed).

° associated with the variable at T2 as reported in each column header

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>Human Capital (T2)</i>			<i>Career Identity (T2)</i>			<i>Job Search Intensity (T2)</i>		
	b	SD b	β	b	SD b	β	b	SD b	β
Step 1									
Age	-.01	.00	-.04	-.01	.01	-.08*	-.01	.01	-.08
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.09**	-.00	.00	-.01	-.00	.00	-.18**
Variable at T1°	.71	.03	.70**	.79	.05	.61**	.01	.00	.18**
Step 2									
Age	-.00	.00	-.03	-.01	.01	-.07†	-.01	.01	-.06
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.09**	-.00	.00	-.01	-.00	.00	-.18**
Variable at T1°	.68	.03	.70**	.70	.05	.54**	.01	.00	.17**
Motivation (RAI)	.11	.04	.11**	.22	.04	.21**	.18	.04	.25**
Multiple R step 2			.75**			.66**			.38**
Δ R ² step 2			.01**			.04**			.06**
Adjusted R ² total			.56**			.43**			.14**

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); † $p < .05$ (1-tailed).

° associated with the variable at T2 as reported in each column header

TABLE 3
Hierarchical Multiple Regression on Internalised Motivation (RAI) for
Finding Reemployment

Predictors	b	SD b	β
Step 1			
Age	-.01	.01	-.08
Unemployment Length	.00	.01	.01
Perceived Choice	-.04	.05	-.04
Perceived Usefulness	.25	.04	.25**
Step 2			
Age	-.01	.01	-.07
Unemployment Length	.00	.01	-.01
Perceived Choice	-.01	.05	-.01
Perceived Usefulness	.25	.05	.25**
Usefulness*Choice	.11	.04	.14**
Multiple R			.27**
ΔR^2 step 1			.07**
ΔR^2 step 2			.02**
Adjusted R^2 total			.08**

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); † $p < .05$ (1-tailed).

high. At the same time, a high perceived choice was associated with a less internalised (i.e. more controlled) motivation when perceived usefulness was low.

Regarding Hypothesis 4b, we found significant interaction effects (Table 4) of perceived choice and perceived usefulness on social capital ($\beta = .08$) and job search intensity ($\beta = .16$) at Time 2, after controlling for Time 1. Simple slope analyses for social capital showed that only the slope of high perceived usefulness was significant ($\beta = .08$, $p = .04$), which indicates that a high perceived choice was associated with more social capital only when the perceived usefulness was also high (Figure 3). Concerning job search intensity, we found that only the slope of low perceived usefulness was significant ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .02$), which indicates that a low perceived choice was especially associated with less job search intensity when the perceived usefulness was also low (Figure 4). Thus, Hypothesis 4b was supported for social capital and job search intensity.

Hypothesis 5a proposed that participants' internalised motivation for finding reemployment would mediate the relationship between perceived choice and the dimensions of employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course. However, because perceived choice had no main effect on motivation, employability, and job search intensity, Hypothesis 5a can be rejected. Hypothesis 5b stated that participants' motivation for finding reemployment would mediate the relationship between the perceived usefulness of

TABLE 4
Hierarchical Multiple Regressions on the Dimensions of Employability and Job Search Intensity at Time 2

Predictors	Adaptability: Exploration (T2)			Adaptability: Planning (T2)			Social Capital (T2)		
	b	SE b	β	b	SE b	β	b	SE b	β
Step 1									
Age	-.01	.01	-.09†	-.01	.01	-.06	-.00	.00	-.01
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.13*	.00	.00	-.01	.00	.00	.07†
Variable at T1°	.35	.06	.33**	.51	.05	.48**	.64	.04	.62**
Perceived Choice	-.06	.06	-.05	.06	.06	.05	.01	.03	.01
Usefulness	.26	.06	.24**	.31	.06	.26**	.10	.03	.14**
Step 2									
Age	-.01	.00	-.09†	-.01	.01	-.05	.00	.00	-.01
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.14*	.00	.00	-.02	.00	.00	.06
Variable at T1°	.31	.06	.32**	.51	.05	.48**	.63	.04	.61**
Perceived Choice	-.05	.06	-.03	.06	.06	.06	.02	.03	.02
Usefulness	.21	.06	.24**	.31	.06	.26**	.10	.03	.14**
Usefulness*Choice	.06	.05	.07	.05	.05	.05	.05	.02	.08*
Step 3									
Age	-.01	.00	-.08	-.01	.01	-.05	.00	.00	.00
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.14*	.00	.00	-.02	.00	.00	.06
Variable at T1°	.31	.06	.28**	.51	.05	.48**	.62	.04	.60**
Perceived Choice	-.05	.06	-.03	.06	.06	.05	.02	.03	.02
Usefulness	.21	.06	.19**	.31	.06	.26**	.09	.03	.12**
Usefulness*Choice	.04	.05	.05	.05	.05	.06	.04	.02	.07†
Motivation (RAI)	.09	.03	.20**	-.00	.03	-.02	.03	.01	.08*
Multiple R step 3			.52**			.60**			.66**
Δ R ² step 1			.24**			.36**			.43**
Δ R ² step 2			.00			.00			.01*
Δ R ² step 3			.03**			.00			.01*
Adjusted R ² total			.26**			.35**			.43**

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); † $p < .05$ (1-tailed)
° associated with the variable at T2 as reported in each column header

Predictors	Human Capital (T2)			Career Identity (T2)			Job-Search Intensity (T2)		
	b	SE b	β	b	SE b	β	b	SE b	β
Step 1									
Age	-.00	.00	-.03	-.01	.01	-.07†	-.01	.01	-.06
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.09*	.00	.00	.00	-.00	.00	-.16**
Variable at T1°	.70	.03	.71**	.73	.05	.57**	.01	.00	.15**
Perceived Choice	.02	.04	.02	-.00	.05	-.00	-.06	.05	-.07
Usefulness	.15	.04	.15**	.21	.04	.20**	.14	.04	.19**
Step 2									
Age	-.00	.00	-.02	-.01	.01	-.07†	-.00	.01	-.05
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.09*	.00	.00	.00	-.00	.00	-.18**
Variable at T1°	.69	.03	.71**	.73	.05	.57**	.01	.00	.19**
Perceived Choice	.03	.04	.03	-.00	.05	-.00	-.05	.05	-.04
Usefulness	.15	.04	.15**	.21	.04	.20**	.10	.04	.19**
Usefulness*Choice	.02	.03	.02	.00	.03	.00	.09	.04	.16**
Step 3									
Age	-.00	.00	-.02	-.01	.01	-.07†	-.00	.01	-.04
Unemployment Length	-.00	.00	-.09*	-.00	.00	-.00	-.00	.00	-.18**
Variable at T1°	.68	.03	.69**	.67	.05	.52**	.01	.00	.17**
Perceived Choice	.03	.04	.03	.00	.05	.00	-.03	.05	-.04
Usefulness	.13	.04	.13**	.18	.04	.16**	.10	.04	.14**
Usefulness*Choice	.01	.03	.02	-.02	.03	-.02	.08	.04	.13*
Motivation (RAI)	.03	.02	.08**	.08	.02	.18**	.06	.02	.19**
Multiple R step 2			.76**			.68**			.43**
Δ R ² step 1			.57**			.44**			.13**
Δ R ² step 2			.00			.00			.02**
Δ R ² step 3			.01*			.03**			.03**
Adjusted R ² total			.57**			.45**			.16**

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed); * $p < .05$ (2-tailed); † $p < .05$ (1-tailed)
° associated with the variable at T2 as reported in each column header

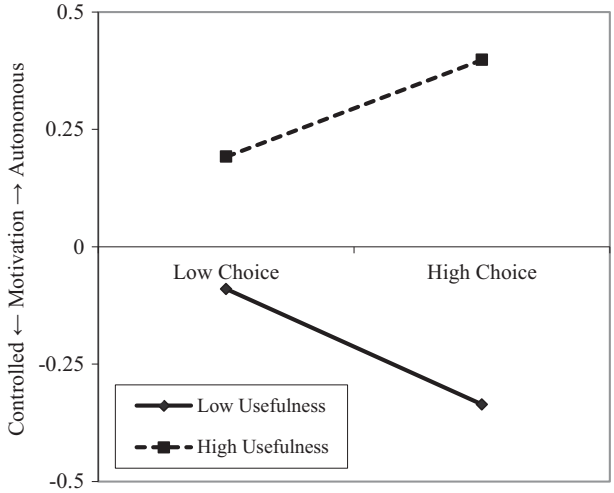


FIGURE 2. Interaction effect of perceived choice and perceived usefulness on the internalisation of motivation for finding reemployment.

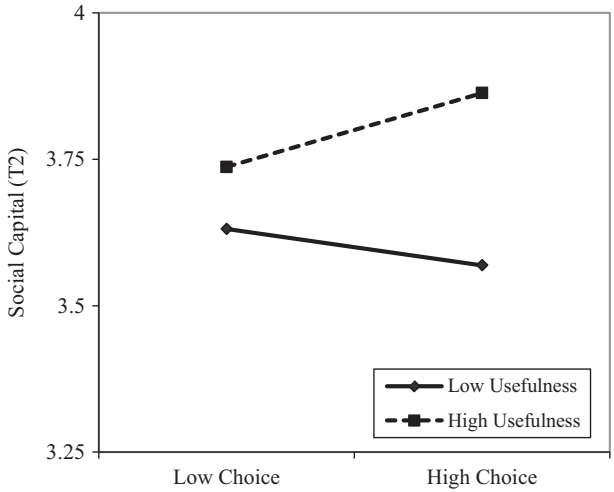


FIGURE 3. Interaction effect of perceived choice and perceived usefulness on social capital after the reemployment course (Time 2), after controlling for the level of social capital at Time 1.

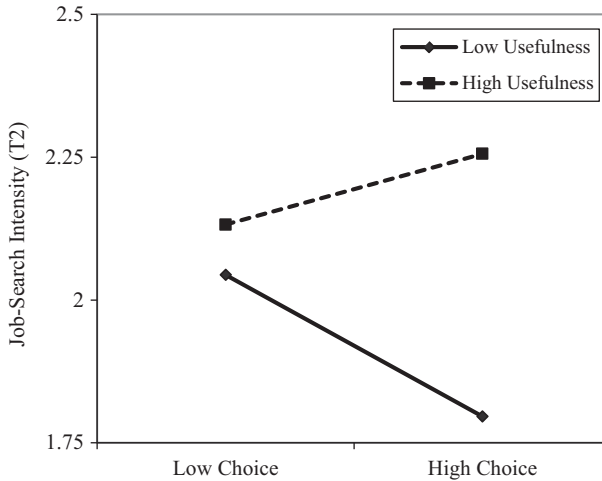


FIGURE 4. Interaction effect of perceived choice and perceived usefulness on job search intensity after the reemployment course (Time 2), after controlling for the level of job search intensity at Time 1.

a reemployment course and the dimensions of employability and job search intensity after the course. The results (Table 4) showed that motivation partially mediated the relationship between perceived usefulness and most of the dimensions of employability at Time 2, namely adaptability (career exploration: $Z = 3.05, p = .00$), social capital ($Z = 1.92, p = .05$), human capital ($Z = 2.06, p = .03$), and career identity ($Z = 3.24, p = .00$). The only relationship that was not mediated by motivation was the relationship between perceived usefulness and career planning at Time 2. Motivation also partially mediated the effect of perceived usefulness on job search intensity at Time 2 ($Z = 2.89, p = .00$). Thus, Hypothesis 5b was partially supported.

Hypothesis 5c assumed a mediated moderation by stating that the moderating effect of perceived usefulness on the relationship between perceived choice and the dimensions of employability and job search intensity after the reemployment course would be mediated by the motivation for finding reemployment. Following Muller, Judd, and Yzerbyt (2005), we used a moderated causal steps approach. In this approach, mediated moderation is established when the regression coefficient of the interaction term (i.e. usefulness \times choice) is no longer significant when the mediator (i.e. internalised motivation) is added to the equation. For social capital, the regression weight was no longer significant after adding motivation to the regression equation, which indicates a mediated moderation. However, the Sobel test revealed that this mediated moderation was only marginally significant ($Z = 1.69,$

$p = .09$). For job search intensity, the standardised regression weight of the interaction decreased slightly when adding motivation to the regression equation (Table 4), which indicates a partial but significant mediated moderation ($Z = 2.33, p = .02$). Thus, Hypothesis 5c was only partially supported.

DISCUSSION

Many reemployment services use compulsory reemployment courses to enhance people's chances of finding reemployment by stimulating their employability and job search activities. The goal of the current study was to explain individual differences in employability and job search intensity after such compulsory reemployment courses. Combining research on training effectiveness with that on SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000), we proposed that the mechanism underlying the differential outcomes of reemployment courses would lie in people's motivation for finding reemployment.

We expected that a high perceived choice of participation would lead to a more internalised motivation and better course outcomes for those who perceived the course to be useful for finding reemployment. The results supported these expectations for participants' motivation but also revealed that a strong perception of choice was associated with a less internalised motivation when participants did not perceive the course to be useful for finding reemployment. We found a comparable pattern for two of the intended course outcomes, namely, social capital and job search intensity. The combination of high perceived choice and high perceived usefulness was beneficial for people's social capital, whereas the combination of low perceived choice and low perceived usefulness was detrimental to people's job search intensity.

We furthermore predicted that the effects of perceived choice and perceived usefulness on the dimensions of employability and job search intensity would be mediated by participants' motivation, which was partially supported by the results. Specifically, internalised motivation partially mediated the effect of perceived usefulness on most of the dimensions of employability and job search intensity, as well as the interaction effect of usefulness and choice on some of the course outcomes (i.e. social capital and job search intensity). Overall, however, participants' internalised motivation was not the only mechanism that could foster or hinder course outcomes. Perceived usefulness remained a significant predictor throughout the mediation analyses; reemployment courses that were perceived to be useful fostered the participants' motivation, employability, and job search intensity.

Together, these findings demonstrate that participants in a compulsory reemployment course can still perceive a sense of choice. If they perceive the course to be useful for finding reemployment, a sense of choice contributes to their motivation, employability, and job search after the course. The results

also imply that the compulsory nature of a course may not be detrimental to people's motivation, employability, and job search as long as they perceive the course to be useful for finding reemployment. In fact, the lack of a main effect of perceived choice indicates that the perceived usefulness of a course is more important than the perceived choice when participating in that course.

Theoretical Implications

Facilitating Internalisation and Course Outcomes. Previous studies on the utility of compulsory courses have reported mixed findings on the relationships between perceived choice of participation, motivation, and subsequent training effects (Patall et al., 2008). In this context, the major contribution of our paper is that it offers insight into why perceived choice can be both beneficial and detrimental to motivation and training outcomes. Our results show that a feeling of choice when participating in a reemployment course fosters motivation and some of the course outcomes only when unemployed people perceive such a course to be useful for finding reemployment. However, the same sense of choice can lead to less internalised motivation for finding reemployment and, thus, to relatively less successful course outcomes when this reemployment course falls short of people's expectations.

The finding that higher perceived choice was beneficial when a course was perceived to be useful is in line with the suggestion of SDT that providing a rationale can prevent the undermining effects of compulsory tasks and can support a more internalised motivation (Deci et al., 1994; Patall et al., 2008). As argued by Reeve et al. (2003), perceived choice by itself does not always foster positive outcomes, but perceived choice in the context of other autonomy-supportive factors, such as perceived usefulness, does foster positive outcomes. Our results also support Patall et al.'s (2010) proposition that the usefulness of engaging in tasks can be even more effective than providing choices to support a more internalised motivation. Thus, while the perceived usefulness of a course seems to outweigh the perceived choice of participation, our results show that the combination of both is most ideal.

At the same time, our findings show that when a course is not perceived to be useful for finding reemployment, high perceived choice is associated with less internalised motivation. In their meta-analysis on the effects of choice on intrinsic motivation, Patall et al. (2008) briefly discussed that there can be circumstances under which the positive effects of choice are diminished or even reversed, for example when the consequences of the choice become greater. When people consider a reemployment course to be useless, they may regret their choice, which may harm their motivation and the acquisition of employability and job search activities during that course. Thus, choosing a

useless reemployment course may be more detrimental than being obliged to participate in that same useless course. In the latter case, people are at least prompted by an external source, namely the obligation.

It is important to note that perceived choice of participation is not the same as the provision of choice itself. According to Reeve et al. (2003), the perception of choice will lead to internalisation only when the choice of the action itself (i.e. action choice: whether to participate in a reemployment course) is considered instead of the choice of the various options of that action (i.e. option choice: choosing between various reemployment courses). In this study, we believe that we have examined perceived choice as an action choice: our measure reflects the extent to which the participants felt that they had a choice to attend the course and not whether the participants felt as though they could choose between various (previously determined) courses. However, we cannot fully state that we measured action choice because we did not explicitly distinguish between the two types of choice. The distinction between action and option choices is important to consider in future studies.

The Acquisition of Employability. Another contribution of our paper is associated with the acquisition of employability during reemployment courses. Our results showed that the participants' perceived choice of participation and their perceived usefulness of the course affected their employability to a lesser extent than their motivation and job search activities. Although the perceived usefulness of a course fostered all of the employability dimensions, the combination of perceived choice and perceived usefulness boosted only social capital. The positive effects of perceived choice on the acquisition of employability may depend on people's initial expectations; for example, the participants may have expected the reemployment course to be beneficial for their social capital and were particularly eager to learn these skills. In future research, it is worth investigating the motivating role of participants' expectations regarding the acquisition of specific employability dimensions during reemployment courses.

In addition, some of the employability dimensions showed an overall decrease between measurements. Unfortunately, this result is not a stand-alone finding within reemployment research (see Paul & Moser, 2009). Especially in cases of long-term unemployment, people tend to lose their career identity, job skills, motivation, and job-related networks as the unemployment duration increases. Our results indicate that reemployment courses may not help to counteract the decrease in employability when participants' perceived usefulness and perceived choice are both low, which may explain the overall decrease in career identity and career planning in this particular study. Taken together, our findings on the acquisition of employability underline the importance of considering each dimension of employability separately, in both research and practice.

Practical Implications

Our results provide insights into the conditions and mechanisms that can make choice beneficial or undesirable for motivation and performance-related outcomes. The findings also add to our knowledge of the utility of compulsory courses in a real-life setting and thus bear a number of practical implications. First, our study shows that the internalisation of motivation for finding reemployment is important for the outcomes of reemployment courses. The more people *want* to find reemployment, the more they benefit from the reemployment course by enhancing their employability and job search activities. People who feel as though they *have to* find reemployment benefit less. Thus, for a reemployment course to be beneficial, it is important for reemployment practice to be aware of the reasons why unemployed people strive to find reemployment.

However, being able to stimulate the internalisation of motivation among the participants of a reemployment course is more important for reemployment practice. This study suggests that participants' motivation for finding reemployment can become more internalised when they perceive the reemployment course to be useful for finding reemployment. Communicating the usefulness of a course for finding reemployment may help people to internalise the outcome of the course and boost their employability and job search activities even when these courses require compulsory attendance. Although the compulsory nature of reemployment courses is often debated in reemployment research and practice (Van den Berg & Van der Klaauw, 2006), our study shows that compulsory attendance does not have to be detrimental to participants' motivation, employability, and job search as long as the participants can understand the usefulness of what they are doing. A similar finding has been noted in the goal-setting literature, where Locke, Latham, and Erez (1988) showed that a "tell and sell" style of assigning goals was more beneficial for people's goal commitment and performance than a "tell" style alone and approximately as beneficial as freely chosen goals. In other words, a "tell and sell" style when assigning unemployed people to reemployment courses is most likely the best way to enhance the utility of such a course.

Limitations and Future Research

Because we were not able to form a control group within this sample, we cannot state that people's employability and job search activities changed as a consequence of the reemployment course. In addition, because people participated in different reemployment courses and because we were dependent on the available registration system, we cannot say much regarding the exact content of the reemployment courses. However, the aim of our study was to assess the conditions under which people benefit more from a course

and not to test the contents of specific courses. Our aim was to show that differences in people's perceptions about any reemployment course can influence the outcomes of that course.

Unfortunately, we were not able to measure people's motivation for finding reemployment before the reemployment course at Time 1. It is possible that people's initial level of motivation affects their perceived choice to participate in the course or their motivation after the course. Although we focused on investigating whether and how the experience of the course could facilitate a more internalised motivation, employability, and job search intensity, the relationships between people's initial motivation and course outcomes warrant investigation in future studies.

Another shortcoming of our study is its reliance on self-report measures. Although we statistically showed that common method variance is not an inherent problem in our study, it is important to note that we also took several procedural precautions to minimise common method variance, such as temporal separation of the data and clear labeling of separate sections in the surveys (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). In addition, Spector and Brannick (2010) stated that method variance tends to lessen interaction effects in regression analyses, which implies that our results are conservative estimates of the studied relationships. Overall, we believe that our results are not flawed by common method variance.

If it were ethically viable, an experimental or quasi-experimental study could rule out most of the limitations of the current study. Conducting such a study could confirm and elaborate on the finding that the experience of a course influences motivation and the outcomes of the course. In addition, the importance of perceived usefulness in our study calls for future studies on the determinants and moderating factors of perceived usefulness and motivation. For example, we considered the usefulness of a reemployment course with respect to the distal goal of finding reemployment. However, finding reemployment as a goal may have different personal value for unemployed people because it could be valued as either an intrinsic or an extrinsic goal (see Ryan & Deci, 2000). A more internalised motivation to pursue an intrinsic reemployment goal as opposed to an extrinsic reemployment goal may lead to different outcomes in terms of job search, reemployment, and subsequent job quality. The latter is especially important to consider as a way in which to foster long-lasting reemployment and prevent people from leaving their job and having to start over again.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine and explain individual differences in employability dimensions and job search activities among unemployed people who participated in a compulsory reemployment course. We showed

that people's internalised motivation is crucial in this regard; a more internalised motivation for finding reemployment was beneficial for most of the course outcomes. In turn, we showed that the influence of compulsory participation in these courses is conditional upon their perceived usefulness: perceived choice can be particularly beneficial when participants find the course useful for finding reemployment. When this is the case, participants tend to have a more internalised motivation and benefit more from the course; specifically, they acquire more social capital and engage in more job search activities. However, if people perceive a course to be non-useful for finding reemployment, perceived choice can be detrimental to their motivation and some course outcomes. For reemployment practice, this finding implies that counselors should aim to aid participants in understanding the usefulness of such a course for finding reemployment.

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