The Reciprocal Relationship Between Resources and Psychological Distress Among

Unemployed Job Seekers

Abstract

This study sets out to investigate the reciprocal relationship between resources and psychological distress in a sample of unemployed job seekers shortly after dismissal. This idea of reciprocal relationships is inspired by general resource-based theories, the conservation of resources theory and the broaden and build theory in particular. We selected perceived availability of networks as a social resource and reemployment efficacy as a personal resource, and we distinguished between negative and absence of positive affect as indicators of psychological distress. We analyzed data of 610 unemployed job seekers who participated twice in a survey with a time lag of six months and using structural equation modeling. Results showed that negative affect (but not absence of positive affect) depleted both perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy. The path from resources to psychological distress was not significant. We discuss potential implications for research and practice.

Keywords: well-being, outplacement, resources, network, efficacy

The Reciprocal Relationship Between Resources and Psychological Distress Among

Unemployed Job Seekers

Studies have convincingly demonstrated that job loss and associated periods of

unemployment bring about psychological distress (for meta-analyses, see Murphy &

Athanasou, 1999; Paul & Moser, 2009), and that such distress follows closely upon the

transition between employment and unemployment (Thomas, Benzeval, & Stansfeld, 2005).

Scholars have invested considerably in understanding the process that leads to psychological

distress: At the most general level, the idea is that job loss quickly depletes a number of

critical resources that induce psychological distress. By way of illustration, job loss depletes

financial resources owing to loss of monthly earning and extra costs associated with being

more at home (e.g., heating, spending free time) and with job search. This then may cause

psychological distress (Freyer & Payne, 1986; Vinokur & Schul, 2002).

We take this idea further in two ways, inspired by resource-based theories. First, we

argue that psychological distress may consume the resource reservoir, so that loss of resources

and psychological distress may, over time, form a negative cycle. Returning to the example

above, psychological distress after imminent or actual job loss may consume financial

reserves owing to extra costs for healthcare. We test this idea of reciprocity with a specific

view on social and personal resources as they are more malleable compared to the more often

studied financial resources, and thus provide an excellent platform for intervention. We see

social resources in terms of perceived availability of networks, and personal resources in

terms of reemployment efficacy. These two resources have specific resonance in the realm of

unemployment and reemployment research: Unemployment has been associated with reduced

networks (Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 1995), whereas perceived availability of networks may

open up job leads and ultimately facilitate reemployment (McKee-Ryan, Kinicki, Song, &

Wanberg, 2005). Similarly, job loss may seriously affect one's confidence overall and in

finding adequate employment in particular (Paul & Moser, 2009). Efficacy has a central role in career theories, such as the social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002) that links efficacy to career goals (e.g., finding reemployment) and efforts to achieve those goals (e.g., job search intensity; De Coen, Forrier, De Cuyper, & Sels, 2015).

Second, we argue that the strength of effects, from resources to psychological distress and vice versa, are conditional upon the nature of psychological distress, in particular negative affect or the absence of positive affect: the effects are likely stronger for negative affect, because of the primacy of job loss that triggers an overall negative view that goes beyond the absence of positive affect. The distinction between negative and positive affect aligns with the ideas described by Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid and Lucas (2012) and with the more general distinction between "negative" and "positive" psychology (Ouweneel, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 2013; Wright, 2003): Negative and positive affect are independent constructs rather than bipolar ends of the same continuum, and they are each monitored by different processes (Fiori, Bollmann, & Rossier, 2015; Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). The distinction furthermore has particular significance in the realm of unemployment research. Most studies have focused upon indicators of negative affect, for example feelings of depression or anxiety (e.g., Murphy & Athanasou, 1999; Paul & Moser, 2009). Comparatively few studies have also included indicators of positive affect, for example feelings of happiness, while those are critical to understand the full impact job loss and the driving mechanisms behind what could ultimately become a negative cycle.

A particular strength of our study is that we provide a fairly conservative test. The reason is that we sampled unemployed job seekers who are provided with outplacement services after recent job loss. We follow them at two occasions: Quickly after job loss at the start of outplacement counselling (T1) and six months later (T2). Outplacement is a professional service that provides psychological and job search counselling. The focus of

intervention lies on the proficient use of networks for job leads and on creating awareness about and strengthening confidence in potential satisfying reemployment opportunities. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the presumed relationships are at least to some extent buffered by the intervention.

Theory and Hypotheses

A shared assumption in dominant theories in the realm of unemployment research is that job loss depletes resources that are critical for individual thriving, and hence that such depletion of resources creates psychological distress. A shortage of resources is likely in the event of job loss: Job loss has been ranked in the top ten of most traumatic life events (Hanisch, 1999; Moorhouse & Caltabiano, 2007) and traumatic events result in rapid resource depletion (e.g., Hobfoll, 1991). This idea is central in the latent deprivation model by Jahoda (1981, 1982). This model is built on the assumption that unemployment frustrates a number of needs provided by work, such as social contact and status. These needs contribute to individual thriving, and hence deprivation of these needs causes psychological distress (Paul, Geithner, & Moser, 2009).

Our focus is upon perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy as potential resources, the former social and the latter personal, which are likely to become gradually more frustrated upon job loss. Perceived networks can be regarded as a specific form of social contact in Jahoda's jargon. It reflects the individual's perceived range of formal (e.g., former colleagues) and informal (e.g., friends, family) contacts who may serve as sources for job leads (Steel & Griffeth, 1989). Reemployment efficacy is aimed at reestablishing a desired status. It concerns the confidence in finding adequate employment (Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010). Our argument then is that perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy contribute to individual thriving which has been demonstrated abundantly (e.g., De Coen et al., 2015; McKee Ryan et al., 2005; Vansteenkiste,

Lens, De Witte, & Feather, 2005; Wanberg, 2012) and conversely that lack of these resources induces psychological distress.

Yet, this general assumption requires more comment and explanation along insights from more general resource-based models, such as the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 1991; see also Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014 for a review within the domain of Work and Organizational Psychology) and the broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004). We will elaborate on these frameworks below.

A central assumption in the conservation of resources theory is that resources are linked to form so-called resource caravans. Holmgreen and colleagues (2017) see the connection between social support and self-efficacy as such a resource caravan. This has particular resonance in this study given the resemblance with perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy: Gains and losses in perceived availability of networks will go together with gains and losses in reemployment efficacy, and vice versa. In other words, the implication of such resource caravans for our study is that perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy are mutually related.

A further assumption in the conservation of resources theory is that loss of resources and psychological distress affect each other, so that they are connected and eventually form a negative cycle. This takes the ideas advanced in the latent deprivation model a critical step further by accounting for a feedback loop from distress to loss of resources. This feedback loop can be understood through two mechanisms: Individuals who feel distressed may not have sufficient resources left to invest or they may become more defensive in how they invest remaining resources. Both mechanisms may, rather paradoxically, further consume resources.

For example, distressed individuals may not have sufficient resources left for social interaction or instead may be more conflict prone owing to irritability: Psychological distress has been associated with social withdrawal, isolation, and a greater potential for interpersonal

conflicts (Norris & Uhl, 1993; Solomon, 1986), which may unintentionally limit the effectiveness and perceived availability of networks in times of crisis. This is a well-established dynamic, also in other domains: Psychological distress following (natural) disasters (e.g., Norris & Kaniasty, 1996) and major life events such as chronic disease and mass layoffs (e.g., Atkinson, Liem, & Liem, 1986; Lane & Hobfoll, 1992) erode perceived social support.

Along similar lines, psychological distress may gradually consume reemployment efficacy and ultimately job search (see e.g., Kasl, 1982). A plausible assumption is that stressed individuals do not have sufficient resources left to invest in job search, or that they become very selective in identifying job targets. This is exacerbated through mechanisms related to the selection effect, which is a variant of the more general healthy worker effect with a focus upon the unemployed: Employers prefer to hire healthy employees, as they are expected to perform better and be less absent from work (Parker & Kulik, 1995). Hence, distressed individuals may more often be rejected for potential job offers and stay unemployed for a longer period of time (Paul & Moser, 2009). This then leads to a further reduction in re-employment efficacy. The implication for our study is that perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy affect psychological distress and likewise, that psychological distress affects the perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy.

The broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2001, 2004) advances the distinction between negative and positive emotions as critical. Likewise, psychological distress should not be approached as unidimensional, but instead as the combination of negative affect and the absence of positive affect. Our argument is that negative affect rather than the absence of positive affect is a key feature in the assumed interplay with (lack of) resources. The reason is that job loss, and involuntary job loss in particular, is associated with strong negative affect:

This aligns with insights from Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) that punishing stimuli are more strongly related to variability in negative than in positive affect. The distinction between negative and positive affect appears important to understand the underlying dynamics. The broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2004) suggest that negative emotions and likely also negative affect constrain individual action, as individuals become more risk averse and oriented on the here and now: They tend to become more avoidant and defensive, much along the ideas advanced in the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989). In contrast, positive affect broadens people's momentary thought action repertoires: Positive affect may lead individuals to engage with their environment and to partake in activities, so that positive affect facilitates perceived availability of networks and strengthens reemployment efficacy. Absence of positive affect then may not have the positive effects associated with approach behavior, yet it may not have the obvious negative effects associated with negative affect. The implication for our study is that the interplay between (lack of) resources and negative affect is likely stronger than the interplay between (lack of) resources and absence of positive affect.

All in all, our hypotheses are that perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy are closely related, and thus relate positively at each measurement wave (H1); that perceived availability of networks (H2a) and reemployment efficacy (H2b) reduce psychological distress over time; that psychological distress reduces perceived availability of networks (H3a) and reemployment efficacy over time (H3b); and finally that the interplay between resources and psychological distress is stronger for negative affect than for absence of positive affect (H4).

Method

Context

Data were collected in Flanders (i.e., the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) in collaboration with the outplacement agency "Ascento" between January 2011 and January

2015. The duration of a standard outplacement trajectory is one year with 60 hours of counselling spread over three phases. The first phase encompasses two months with 20 hours of counselling. The focus is upon helping job seekers cope with job loss. The second phase encompasses four months with another 20 hours of counselling. The focus is upon facilitating job search by defining the workers' labor market profile (e.g., identifying personal strengths and competencies and (work) values), by strengthening job search competencies (e.g., writing a resume), and by highlighting various job search tools, including networks. The third phase covers six months and 20 hours of counselling. The focus is upon following up on the job seekers' actions and providing support where needed.

Data Collection Procedure and Sample

Outplacement counsellors invited unemployed job seekers to enroll in our study at the start of their counseling trajectory (Time 1). All 668 unemployed job seekers willing to participate received an email containing a link to our first online questionnaire. Of them, 570 provided answers to the survey's core questions (response rate Time 1 = 85%). A follow-up was scheduled in the middle of the participants' outplacement trajectory, approximately six months later (Time 2). All 668 Time 1 participants were invited to participate, of which 352 provided answers to the survey's core questions (response rate Time 2 = 53%).[1] In view of the multiple imputation approach applied to analyze the data, the final sample ($N = 610$) included all respondents that provided some information on the core study variables at Time 1 and/or Time 2. Note that most respondents whose answers had to be imputed ($n = 300$ vs. $n = 310$ with complete answers at both measurement points) provided full data on these core variables at either Time 1 ($n = 252$) or Time 2 ($n = 40$).

The participants' age varied from 25 to 67 years ($M = 50.28$; $SD = 7.06$).[2] Of the participants, 338 were men (55%). Moreover, 154 participants (25%) did not complete secondary education, 205 (34%) did complete secondary education, 114 (19%) had a bachelor

degree, and 94 (15%) had a master degree or higher. For 43 participants (7%), information on education was missing. Finally, participants' tenure in their former organization varied from 0 to 40 years (M = 12.58; SD = 9.15).

Note that the data used in this study were built on data used earlier in the study by Vanhercke and colleagues (2015) on the effects of perceived employability on psychological distress. The current study provides an extension in multiple ways: Conceptually by focusing on negative affect and absence of positive affect, theoretically by focusing on different, interdependent resources as well as their interplay with psychological distress, and methodologically by working with an increased sample size (N = 610 versus N = 179) that allows the use of advanced analyses techniques such as structural equation modeling and multiple imputation.

Measures

Perceived availability of networks. Perceived availability of networks was measured with the three items of the dimension "networking" from the Employment Opportunity Index (EOI) scale which was developed and validated by Griffeth, Steel, Allen, and Bryan (2005). An example item is: "I have a far-reaching "network" of contacts which could help me find out about other job opportunities.". Participants had to rate these items on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Reliability (pooled Cronbach's alpha) was .90 at Time 1 and .87 at Time 2. The EOI scale has been shown to account for relatively large turnover variance (Griffeth et al., 2005).

Reemployment efficacy. Reemployment efficacy was measured with six items. Five items were taken from the Reemployment Efficacy Scale developed by Wanberg et al. (2010). Participants had to indicate how confident they were that they would, for example, "get a good paying job" and "find a job that you like". In order to account for the match between the job and the job seeker's profile we added one item, namely confidence to "find a job that

matches your knowledge, skills and expertise" (1 = *not at all confident* and5 = *highly confident*). The job search counseling offered in outplacement helps unemployed job seekers to define their profile (e.g., personal strengths and competencies, (work) values) and match their profile with jobs available on the labor market. Reliability (pooled Cronbach's alpha) was .90 at Time 1 and Time 2.

Psychological distress. Psychological distress was operationalized by means of the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) (Goldberg, 1972; Goldberg & Williams, 1988). This measure was validated by Goldberg et al. (1997). The first six items tapped into negative affect. Participants had to indicate on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot more than usual*) how much they had felt, for example "unhappy and depressed" during the previous weeks. The other six items referred to aspects indicative of absence of positive affect. These items were also rated on a 4-point scale but with a different wording, that is, going from 1 (*more than usual*) to 4 (*a lot less than usual*). Respondents had to indicate, for example how "reasonably happy" they had felt during the previous weeks. For both negative affect and absence of positive affect, Time 1 concerns the period before the start of the outplacement trajectory, and after they received the news of their dismissal. Time 2 concerns the period in time roughly five months after they started outplacement. Reliability for negative affect (pooled Cronbach's alpha) was .91 at Time 1 and .88 at Time 2. Reliability for the absence of positive affect (pooled Cronbach's alpha) was .86 at Time 1 and .84 at Time 2.

Control variables. We used age (in years), gender (0 = female; 1 = male), previous organizational tenure (in years), and education as covariates. Education was recoded into dummy variables with participants holding a degree lower than secondary education as the reference group for respectively those holding a secondary degree, a bachelor degree, and a master (or higher) degree. We tested our hypotheses with and without these controls. Given

that results were essentially identical, we only report those from the analyses without controls (see e.g., the recommendation by Spector and Brannick, 2011).

Results

We first inspected descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0, performing a multiple imputation procedure ($m = 5$, with m equal to the number of imputations) in order to deal with missing data. The correlations between the study variables are presented in Table 1. Perceived availability of networks ($r = .53$, $p < .001$), reemployment efficacy ($r = .43$, $p < .001$) and negative affect ($r = .45$, $p < .001$) showed relatively high rank-order stability over time: Higher versus lower perceived availability of networks, reemployment efficacy and negative affect at Time 1 goes together with higher versus lower perceived availability of networks, reemployment efficacy and negative affect at Time 2, respectively. Stability was lower for absence of positive affect ($r = .25$, $p < .001$). Moreover, perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy related positively both within and across time. Both perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy related negatively to negative affect within and across time. Furthermore, perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy at Time 1 related negatively to absence of positive affect at Time 1. At Time 2, they related negatively to absence of positive affect at Time 1 and Time 2.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

We then used structural equation modeling (SEM) in the R-environment (Lavaan 0.5-package, Rosseel, 2012), applying a multiple imputation procedure ($m = 5$; e.g., Newman, 2014) and maximum likelihood estimation. Models were evaluated using the CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR and AIC fit indices, with conventional standards (i.e., CFI and TLI > .90; RMSEA < .08; SRMR < .09; Weston & Gore, 2006 and for AIC: "the smaller the value, the

better the fit"; Burnham & Anderson, 2004). Alternative models were compared using the χ^2-difference test. More specifically, we completed three steps to conduct the SEM analyses.

First, we tested the measurement models (see Table 2, top panel). For both Time 1 and Time 2, we compared the hypothesized four-factor model (i.e., perceived availability of networks, reemployment efficacy, negative affect and absence of positive affect; M1) to four alternative models: i) a three-factor model in which all affect items loaded on one factor, while all other items loaded on their corresponding factor (M2); ii) a three-factor model in which the items of perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy loaded on one factor, while all others loaded on their corresponding factor (M3); iii) a two-factor model in which the resource items (i.e., perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy) loaded on one factor and the affect items on the other factor (M4); and iv) a one-factor model (M5). Latent factors correlated at both Time 1 and Time 2. Overall, the hypothesized four-factor model fitted the data reasonably well at both Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, all items loaded significantly and in the expected direction on their corresponding latent factor. Model fit improved substantially at both measurement occasions when adding a correlation between two items tapping into reemployment efficacy: "get hold of a job that matches your previous job" and "get hold of a job that is better than your previous job" (see M1b). This correlation makes conceptual sense as these two items were the only ones explicitly comparing the new and the previous job. Both M1 and M1b fitted the data better than the four alternative models.

Second, we tested factorial invariance across time (Meredith, 1993). Therefore, we compared the unconstrained to the constrained stability model. That is, we combined the superior measurement models (i.e., M1b) from Time 1 and Time 2, letting error terms of corresponding items across time correlate and accounting for auto-regressions of the latent factors. In the unconstrained model, $\chi^2(780) = 1632.03$, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, TLI = .93,

RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .06, AIC = 44007.90, as opposed to the constrained model, $\chi^2(797) =$

1649.37, $p < .001$, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .06, AIC = 43991.24, factor

loadings were allowed to vary across time. Since the constrained model showed a non-

significant loss of fit, $\Delta\chi^2(17) = 17.34$, $p = .43$, factorial invariance was supported.

      Third, we compared six structural models to probe our hypotheses (see Table 2, lower

panel). We started off by comparing the following five models: i) a model containing auto-

regression effects, controlling for baseline levels (S1); ii) a model that additionally included

within-time correlations between perceived availability of networks and reemployment

efficacy (S2); iii) a model building on S2 that also included the hypothesized effects from the

two resources to psychological distress over time (S3); iv) a model building on S2 while

adding the hypothesized effects from psychological distress to the two resources over time

(S4); and v) a model combining all hypothesized effects (S5). In each of these models,

psychological distress and the two resources were allowed to correlate within time.

      As evident from Table 2, S2 improved model fit as compared to S1 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 173.30$, Δdf

$= 2$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, S4 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 13.18$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p < .01$), but not S3 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.18$, $\Delta df =$

2, $p = .27$), improved model fit as compared to S2. Finally, S5 did not improve model fit as

compared to S4 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.04$, $\Delta df = 4$, $p = .40$). This means that support was found for

Hypothesis 1: Perceived availability of networks and reemployment efficacy are closely

related, thus relating positively at each measurement wave (i.e., $r = .42$ at Time 1, $r = .38$ at

Time 2). However, no support was found for Hypotheses 2a and 2b: There were no effects of

the two resources on psychological distress over time. In line with Hypotheses 3a and 3b, we

established that negative affect reduced perceived availability of networks ($\gamma = -.23$, $p < .05$)

and reemployment efficacy ($\gamma = -.25$, $p < .01$). However, no such effects were found for

positive affect ($\gamma = .16$, $p = .07$ and $\gamma = .11$, $p = .22$, respectively). Finally, comparing S4 to a

sixth model that constrained the effects of negative affect and absence of positive affect to be

equal for each resource (S4b) showed a significant difference in fit in favor of S4 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 6.74$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < .05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 found partial support: The effect of negative affect on the two resources was stronger than the effect of absence of positive affect. The reverse did not hold: We found no, and thus no differential, effects of the two resources on negative versus absence of positive affect over time. Figure 1 displays the results of the final structural model (i.e., S4).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Explained variance in negative affect was 37 percent and in absence of positive affect 16 percent: Both can be attributed to baseline affect. Explained variance in perceived availability of networks was 42 percent, in reemployment efficacy 35 percent, both attributed to baseline perceptions and previous negative affect. Previous negative affect explained about 3 percent of the variance in the two resources, controlling for baseline levels of these resources.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

Discussion

Most studies in the realm of unemployment research start from the assumption that job loss quickly depletes resources which then causes psychological distress, a dynamic that is central to Jahoda's (1981, 1982) latent deprivation model. We extended and then tested this line of thought in several ways. First, we investigated the co-occurrence of social (i.e., perceived availability of networks) and personal (i.e., re-employment efficacy) resources. In contrast, earlier studies mostly focused upon more manifest but less malleable resources, income in particular. Second, we also probed potential reciprocity in the relationship between resources and psychological distress: loss of resources may induce psychological distress and distress may consume resources. Third, we distinguished between negative affect and absence of positive affect as indicators of psychological distress.

The pattern of results was as follows. First, we established that that the resources were mutually and positively related. This supports the idea that resources, perceived availability of networks and re-employment efficacy, form a dynamic synergy along the idea of resource caravans. This may imply that resource depletion upon job loss is vast and multiple.

Second and perhaps more importantly, psychological distress consumes resources over time, but resources did not significantly affect psychological distress. The finding that psychological distress consumes resources fits with insights from both the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 1991) and the broaden and build theory (Fredickson, 2001, 2004): Individuals who feel distressed cannot or do not longer take action that benefit their networks and re-employment chance. Instead, they tend to perceive all aspects of life in a more negative light, including the availability of networks and their efficacy in finding reemployment.

Yet, a critical question is why resources do not seem to affect psychological distress. A plausible explanation relates to the unique sample used in this study, namely unemployed job seekers at the start of an outplacement trajectory after recent job loss. This may have influenced the results in two ways. First, recent job loss may immediately cause psychological distress (Hobfoll, 1991), and individuals may not yet have recovered when they registered for outplacement. Second, the first phase of the outplacement trajectory is very much focused upon coping with job loss, and hence the emphasis during intake is on psychological distress rather than on depletion of resources.

Another critical question is why the effect from distress on resources is found for negative affect, yet not for absence of positive affect. At the most aggregate level, this lends further support (i.e., in addition to the Confirmatory Factor Analysis, see the results section) for the view that negative and positive affect are different constructs and should be treated as such. At a more specific level, it supports the idea advanced by Diener and colleagues (1999)

that punishing stimuli, for example involuntary dismissal, are more strongly related to variability in negative rather than in positive affect.

These results can inform the practice of outplacement in a number of ways. First, the observation that negative affect depletes resources also over time emphasizes the critical role of coping with job loss. In the coping process, counsellors may first want to pay specific attention to strategies to reduce negative affect rather than to feed positive affect to prevent further losses. For example, some counsellors talk about dismissal in terms of opening up new opportunities and thus a potentially positive event, but this may not align with unemployed job seekers' feelings and needs. Stated differently, it seems important to acknowledge job loss as a "true loss" rather than starting from potential new opportunities it brings about.

Second, it also seems important to feed resources that are lost owing to psychological distress. Multiple stakeholders can contribute to that aim. For example, job seekers' formal (i.e., professional) and informal (i.e., friends and family) contacts and the outplacement counsellor may continue to provide support to strengthen perceived availability of networks. This support may also focus upon increasing the job seekers' confidence, so as to feed reemployment efficacy. Both networks and re-employment efficacy are important in making the transition from unemployment to employment (e.g., DeFillipppi & Arthur, 1994). On a related note, the observation that resources cluster together in caravans seems to suggest that the strategy to focus upon different resources may be effective, as those resources may strengthen each other.

Limitations and Avenues For Future Research

The results of this study should be interpreted against a number of limitations. First, we used self-report measures at Time 1 and Time 2, hence implying a risk of common method bias (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). A potential route for future research could be to use other-ratings, for example from the perspective of outplacement consultants,

or more objective measures such as the number of job applications as a result of consulting networks.

Second, our measure of perceived availability of networks was narrow in the sense that it emphasizes instrumentality, namely "contacts who may serve as sources for job leads" (Steel & Griffeth, 1989). Instrumental support refers to providing help and information in order to solve problems, for example when an individual becomes involuntarily unemployed. More emotional aspects, such as communicating support, empathy and belief in the value of the individual (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Semmer et al., 2008) were not accounted for. A plausible assumption is that this emotional aspect has particular resonance shortly after dismissal while the more instrumental aspect may gain in importance when individuals are in the actual process of job search. Therefore, a potential route for future research could be to probe perceived availability of networks in greater detail, accounting for both instrumental and emotional aspects.

Third, the sample of unemployed job seekers used in this study is quite unique, which also poses a risk in terms of possibilities for generalizations. Therefore, it appears important to test our ideas also in other samples of job seekers and with varying unemployment duration.

Fourth, a potential criticism may be that negative affect explained little variance in the two resources (i.e., $\Delta R^2 = 3\%$), raising questions on the practical significance of our results. Still, our results remain meaningful a) since it is likely that the counselling intervention somewhat buffered the effects of negative affect and b) since studies with a time lag of less than a year that account for concept stability generally show that other variables cannot explain large amounts of additional variance (Taris & Kompier, 2004). Again, future studies may benefit from testing our ideas in other samples and using other (e.g., larger) time lags.

References

Atkinson, T., Liem, R., & Liem, J. H. (1986). The social costs of unemployment: Implications

for social support. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *27*, 317-331. Retrieved

from http://www.jstor.org.kuleuven.ezproxy.kuleuven.be/stable/2136947

Burnham, K. P., & Anderson, D. R. (2004). *Model selection and multimodel inference: A*

fractical information-theoretic approach. New York, NY: Springer-Verlag New York,

Inc.

Cohen, S., & Willis, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis.

Psychological Bulletin, 98, 310-357. doi:10.1037//0033-2909.98.2.310

De Coen, A., Forrier, A., De Cuyper, N., & Sels, L. (2015). Job seekers' search intensity and

wage flexibility: Does age matter? *Ageing & Society, 35*, 346-366. doi:

10.1017/S0144686X13000731

DeFillippi, R. J., & Arthur, M. B. (1994). The boundaryless career: A competency-based

perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 15*, 307-324. doi:

10.1002/job.4030150403

Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three

decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin, 125*, 276-302. doi:10.1037/0033-

2909.125.2.276

Fiori, M., Bollmann, G., & Rossier, J. (2015). Exploring the path through which career

adaptability increases job satisfaction and lowers stress: The role of affect. *Journal of*

Vocational Behavior, 91, 113-121. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2015.08.010

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-

and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, *56*, 218-226.

doi:10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218

Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, 359*, 1367-1377. doi: 10.1098/rstb.2004.1512

Freyer, D., & Payne, R. (1986). Being unemployed: A review of the literature on the psychological experience of unemployment. In C.L. Copper & I.T. Robertson (Eds.), *International review of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 235-278)*. Chichester, England: Wiley.

Goldberg, D. P. (1972). *The detection of psychiatric illness by questionnaire (Maudsley Monograph No. 21)*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Goldberg, D. P., Gater, R., Sartorius, N., Ustun, T. B., Piccinelli, M., Gureje, O., & Rutter, C. (1997). The validity of two versions of the GHQ in the WHO study of mental illness in general health care. *Psychological Medicine*, *27*, 191-197. doi: 10.1017/S0033291796004242

Goldberg, D. P., & Williams, P. (1988). *A user's guide to the General Health Questionnaire*. London: NFER-Nelson.

Griffeth, R. W., Steel, R. P., Allen, D. G., & Bryan, N. (2005). The development of a multidimensional measure of job market cognitions: The Employment Opportunity Index (EOI). *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*, 335-349. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.2.335

Halbesleben, J. R. B., Neveu, J. P., Paustian-Underdahl, S. C., & Westman, M. (2014). Getting to the COR: Understanding the role of resources in conservation of resources theory. *Journal of Management, 40*, 1334-1364. doi:10.1177/0149206314527130

Hanisch, K. A. (1999). Job loss and unemployment research from 1994 to 1998: A review and recommendations for research and intervention. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 55*, 188-220. doi:10.1006/jvbe.1999.1722.

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress.

    American Psychologist, 44, 513-524. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.44.3.513

Hobfoll, S. E. (1991). Traumatic stress: A theory based on rapid loss of resources. *Anxiety*

    Resarch, 4, 187-197. doi:10.1080/08917779108248773

Holmgreen, L., Tirone, V., Gerhart, J., & Hobfoll, S. E. (2017). Conservation of resources

    theory: Resource caravans and passageways in health contexts. In C. L. Cooper and J.

    C. Quick (Eds.), *The handbook of stress and health. A guide to research and practice*

    (pp. 443-460). Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Jahoda, M. (1981). Work, employment, and unemployment: Values, theories and approaches

    in social research. *American Psychologist, 36*, 184-191. doi:10.1037/0003-

    066X.36.2.184

Jahoda, M. (1982). *Employment and unemployment: A social-psychological analysis*.

    Cambridge: Cambrigde University Press.

Kasl, S. V. (1982). Strategies of research on economic instability and health. *Psychological*

    Medicine, 12, 637-649. doi:10.1007/978-3-662-07891-4_13

Lane, C., & Hobfoll, S. E. (1992). How loss affects anger and alienates potential supporters.

    Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 60, 935-942. doi:10.1037/0022-

    006X.60.6.935

Latack, J. C., Kinicki, A. J., & Prussia, G. E. (1995). An integrative process model of coping

    with job loss. *The Academy of Management Review, 20*, 311-342. doi:10.2307/258849

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (2002). Social cognitive career theory. In D. Brown,

    L. Brooks and Associates (Eds.), *Career Choice and Development (4th Edition)* (pp.

    255-311). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Luhmann, M., Hofmann, W., Eid, M., & Lucas, R. E. (2012). Subjective well-being and

adaptation to life events: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social

Psychology*, *102*, 592–615. doi:10.1037/a0025948

McKee-Ryan, F. M., Kinicki, A. J., Song, Z., & Wanberg, C. R. (2005). Psychological and

physical well-being during unemployment: A meta-analytic study. *Journal of Applied

Psychology*, *90*, 53-76. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.1.53

Meredith, W. (1993). Measurement invariance, factor analysis and factorial invariance.

Psychometrika, 58, 525-543. doi:10.1007/BF02294825

Moorhouse, A., & Caltabiano, M. L. (2007). Resilience and unemployment: Exploring risk

and protective influences for the outcome variables of depression and assertive job

searching. *Journal of Employment Counselling, 44*, 115-125. doi:10.1002/j.2161-

1920.2007.tb00030.x

Murphy, G. C., & Athanasou, J. A. (1999). The effect of unemployment on mental health.

Journal Of Occupational & Organizational Psychology, *72*, 83-99.

doi:10.1348/096317999166518

Newman, D. A. (2014). Missing data: Five practical guidelines. *Organizational Research

Methods, 17*, 372-411. doi:10.1177/1094428114548590

Norris, F. H., & Kaniasty, K. (1996). Received and perceived social support in times of stress:

A test of the social support deterioration deterrence model. *Journal of Personality and

Social Psychology*, *71*, 498-511. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.71.3.498

Norris, F., & Uhl, G. (1993). Chronic stress as a mediator of acute stress: The case of

Hurricane Hugo. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *23*, 1263-1284. doi:

10.1111/j.1559-1816.1993.tb01032.x

Ouweneel, E., Le Blanc, P., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2013). Do-it-yourself: An online positive

psychology intervention to promote positive emotions, self-efficacy and engagement

at work. *Career Development International, 18*, 173-195. doi:10.1108/CDI-10-2012-0102

Parker, P. A., & Kulik, J. A. (1995). Burnout, self- and supervisor-rated job performance, and absenteeism among nurses. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, *18*, 581-599. doi:10.1007/BF01857897

Paul, K. I., Geithner, E., & Moser, K. (2009). Latent deprivation among people who are employed, unemployed or out of the labor force. *Journal of Psychology, 143*, 477-491. doi:10.3200/JRL.143.5.477-491

Paul, K. I., & Moser, K. (2009). Unemployment impairs mental health: Meta-analyses. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 74*, 264-282. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2009.01.001

Podsakoff, P. M., Mackenzie, S. B., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*, 879-903. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Rosseel, Y. (2012). Lavaan: An R-package for structural equation modeling. *Journal of Statistical Software, 48*, retrieved from http://www.jstatsoft.org/v48/i02/paper

Semmer, N. K., Elfering, A., Jacobshagen, N., Perrot, T., Beehr, T. A., & Boos, N. (2008). The emotional meaning of instrumental social support. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *15*, 235-251. doi:10.1037/1072-5245.15.3.235

Solomon, S. D. (1986). Mobilizing social support in times of disaster. In C. R. Figley (Ed.), *Trauma and its wake: Vol. 2. Traumatic stress theory, research, and intervention* (pp. 232-263). New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Spector, P. E., & Brannick, M. T. (2011). Methodological urban legends: The misuse of statistical control variables. *Organizational Research Methods, 14*, 287-305. doi: 10.1177/1094428110369842

Steel, R. P., & Griffeth, R. W. (1989). The elusive relationship between perceived employment opportunity and turnover behavior: A methodological or conceptual artifact? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *74*, 846–854. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.74.6.846

Taris, T. W., & Kompier, M. A. J. (2006). Games researchers play – extreme group analysis and mediation analysis in longitudinal health research. *Scandinavian Journal of Work Environment and Health, 32*, 463-472. doi:10.5271/sjweh.1051

Thomas, C., Benzeval, M., & Stansfeld, S. A. (2005). Employment transitions and mental health: An analysis from the British household panel survey. *Journal Of Epidemiology And Community Health*, *59*, 243-249. doi:10.1136/jech.2004.019778

Vanhercke, D., Kirves, K., De Cuyper, N., Verbruggen, M., Forrier, A., & De Witte, H. (2015). Perceived employability and psychological functioning framed by gain and loss cycles. *Career Development International, 20*, 179-198. doi:10.1108/CDI-12-2014-0160

Vansteenkiste, M., Lens, W., De Witte, H., & Feather, N. T. (2005). Understanding unemployed people's job search behavior, unemployment experience and wellbeing: A comparison of expectancy-value theory and self-determination theory. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *44*, 269-287. doi:10.1348/014466604X17641

Vinokur, A. D., & Schul, Y. (2002). The web of coping resources and pathways to reemployment following a job loss. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 7*, 68-83. doi:10.1037//1076-8998.7.1.68

Wanberg, C. R. (2012). The individual experience of unemployment. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *63*, 369-396. doi:10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100500

Wanberg, C. R., Zhu, J., & Van Hooft, E. A. J. (2010). The job search grind: Perceived

    progress, self-reactions, and self-regulation of search effort. *Academy of Management*

    Journal, *53*, 788-807. doi:10.5465/AMJ.2010.52814599

Weston, R., & Gore, P. A. (2006). A brief guide to structural equation modeling. *The*

    Counseling Psychologist, 34, 719-751. doi:10.1177/0011000006286345

Wright, T. A. (2003). Positive organizational behavior: An idea whose times has truly come.

    Journal of Organizational Behavior, 24, 437-442. doi:10.1002/job.197

Footnotes

[1] Note that some of the job seekers obtained new employment between Time 1 and Time 2 (n = 155), whereas others remained unemployed (n = 220). Conducting the analyses for both groups separately did not yield differential results. Accordingly, we treated the sample as one.

[2] Note that "older" job seekers, aged 45 or older, were overrepresented in our sample. This age distribution follows from Belgian law: Employers are bound to inform dismissed employees who are 45 years or older that they are entitled to outplacement at the expense of the employer (Vanhercke et al., 2015).

Table 1

Pooled Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations Between the Study Variables (N = 610)

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender	-	-	-													
2. Age	50.28	7.06	.02	-												
3. Secondary education	-	-	.05	-.10*	-											
4. Bachelor	-	-	.09*	.14*	-.35*	-										
5. Master or higher	-	-	.03	.10	-.26	-.12	-									
6. Tenure	12.58	9.15	-.13**	.03	.02	.03	-.16***	-								
7. Networks T1	3.24	1.55	-.02	-.08*	-.10*	.03	.15***	-.03	(.90)							
8. Networks T2	3.26	1.39	-.05	-.05	-.10*	-.03	.18**	-.01	.53***	(.87)						
9. R-Efficacy T1	2.94	0.91	-.05	-.15***	-.10*	.02	.13**	-.15***	.34***	.22***	(.90)					
10. R-Efficacy T2	2.91	0.85	-.04	-.16*	-.00	.02	.06	-.07	.21***	.38***	.43***	(.90)				
11. Negative affect T1	2.15	0.83	.10*	.11**	.04	-.01	.04	.04	-.21***	-.17***	-.27***	-.22***	(.91)			
12. Negative affect T2	2.26	0.70	.04	.11*	-.07	.00	.03	-.02	-.14**	-.22***	-.16***	-.32***	.45***	(.88)		
13. No positive affect T1	2.24	0.61	.08	.10*	.03	-.04	.09	.03	-.19***	-.11*	-.25***	-.17***	.68***	.33***	(.86)	
14. No positive affect T2	2.28	0.54	-.09*	.03	-.01	-.03	.06	-.08	-.08	-.13**	-.06	-.19***	.23***	.56***	.25***	(.84)

Note. Pooled scale reliabilities are indicated between brackets on the diagonal. M, mean; SD, standard deviation; Networks, perceived availability of networks; R-Efficacy, reemployment efficacy; No positive affect, absence of positive affect; T1, Time 1; T2, Time 2.

p < .05, **p* < .01, ***p* < .001. PE stands for Perceived Employability.

Table 2

Fit Indices for the Measurement and Structural Models (N = 610)

Model	χ^2	*df*	CFI	TLI	AIC	RMSEA	SRMR	Δ Model	Δ χ^2	*Δ df*
Fit indices for the measurement models										
Time 1										
M1	953.53	183	.90	.89	28156.83	.09	.05			
M1b	***630.67***	***182***	***.94***	***.93***	***27835.97***	***.07***	***.04***	M1 vs. M1b	322.86***	1
M2	978.27	185	.90	.88	28177.57	.09	.05	M2 vs. M1b	347.59***	3
M3	1534.97	185	.83	.80	28734.27	.11	.08	M3 vs. M1b	904.29***	3
M4	1882.61	187	.78	.76	29077.91	.13	.08	M4 vs. M1b	1251.90***	5
M5	3414.53	188	.59	.54	30607.83	.17	.16	M5 vs. M1b	2783.80***	6
Time 2										
M1	594.33	183	.92	.91	16923.92	.08	.05			
M1b	***421.03***	***182***	***.95***	***.95***	***16752.62***	***.06***	***.04***	M1 vs. M1b	173.30***	1
M2	783.43	185	.88	.87	17109.02	.10	.06	M2 vs. M1b	362.40***	3
M3	942.13	185	.85	.83	17267.71	.11	.07	M3 vs. M1b	521.09***	3
M4	1304.57	187	.78	.76	17626.16	.13	.09	M4 vs. M1b	883.54***	5
M5	2410.41	188	.57	.52	18730.00	.18	.16	M5 vs. M1b	1989.40***	6

Relationships between perceived availability of networks, reemployment efficacy, negative affect and absence of positive affect

S1	1781.83	799	.93	.92	44119.70	.05	.10			
S2	1649.37	797	.94	.93	43991.24	.04	.06	S1 vs. S2	132.47***	2
S3	1644.19	793	.94	.93	43994.06	.04	.06	S2 vs. S3	5.17	4
S4	*1636.18*	*793*	*.94*	*.93*	*43986.05*	*.04*	*.05*	S2 vs. S4	13.18**	4
S5	1632.14	789	.94	.93	43990.01	.04	.05	S4 vs. S5	4.04	4
S4b	1642.93	795	.94	.93	43988.80	.04	.05	S4 vs. S4b	6.74*	2

Note. Best-fitting models in bold and italics.
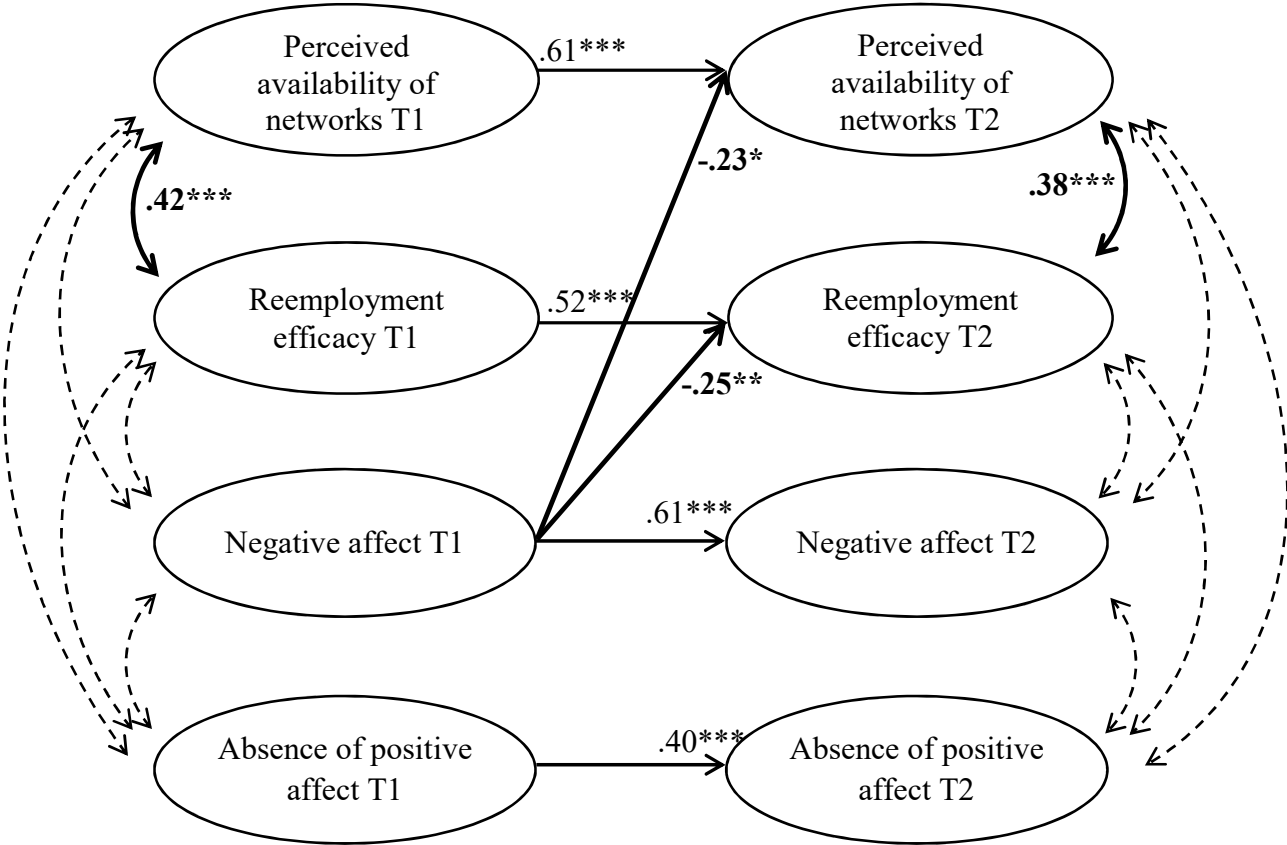
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Figure 1. Final structural model with the relationships (i.e., the solid lines) between perceived availability of networks, reemployment efficacy, negative affect and absence of positive affect.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.