

Predicting applicants' job pursuit behavior from their selection expectations: the mediating role of the theory of planned behavior

**BERT SCHREURS^{1*}, EVA DEROUX², EDWIN A. J. VAN HOOFT²,
KARIN PROOST³ AND KAREL DE WITTE⁴**

¹*Utrecht University, The Netherlands*

²*Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Netherlands*

³*Open Universiteit Nederland, The Netherlands*

⁴*University of Leuven, Belgium*

Summary

Applicants' pretest expectations about the forthcoming selection procedure may serve as a key factor in applicants' decision-making. The current study examined the validity of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as an explanatory mechanism of the relationship between pretest selection expectations (warmth/respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, feedback) and job pursuit behavior. Data were collected at two points in time, using a sample of applicants for the military. Selection expectations, job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, and controllability were significantly related to job pursuit intention. Job pursuit attitude mediated the relationship between selection expectations and job pursuit intention. Subjective norm and time lag were the only significant predictors of job pursuit behavior. Practical implications, strengths and limitations, as well as directions for further research are discussed. Copyright © 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Introduction

An organization's ability to recruit a sufficient number of high-quality applicants is a major source of competitive advantage (Rynes & Barber, 1990). Therefore, many organizations, private and public, are investing extensive resources in advertising, head hunting, and providing incentives to attract the best people to their organization. Besides generating applicants, it is important to maintain applicants' interest throughout the selection process (Barber, 1998). The unwarranted withdrawal of qualified applicants from the process may lead to a reduced utility of the hiring system (Murphy, 1986).

The last 25 years, our knowledge about factors influencing applicants' job pursuit decisions has increased a great deal (for an overview, see Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Examples of antecedents of job pursuit behavior, extensively investigated in the recruitment literature,

* Correspondence to: Bert Schreurs, Department of Social and Organizational Psychology, Utrecht University, Heidelberglaan 1, P.O. Box 80.140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands E-mail: b.h.j.schreurs@uu.nl

are job and organizational characteristics (e.g., Cable & Judge, 1994), recruiter characteristics (e.g., Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998), perceived fit (e.g., Cable & Judge, 1996), perceived job alternatives (e.g., Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, & Campion, 1998), and hiring expectancies (e.g., Rynes & Lawler, 1983).

A related research domain deals with applicant perceptions of selection procedures, also described as applicant reactions. Most applicant perception studies focus almost exclusively on perceptions after test-taking (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Post-test perceptions have been shown to be valid predictors of test performance (Chan, Schmitt, DeShon, Clause, & Delbridge, 1997), self-perceptions (Bauer et al., 1998), and attitudes and intentions toward the organization (Macan, Avedon, Paese, & Smith, 1994). It is likely, however, that applicant post-test perceptions and behaviors are influenced by beliefs applicants hold before test-taking (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Recently, drawing on findings from social psychology (Olson, Roese, & Zanna, 1996), Bell, Wiechmann, and Ryan (2006), and Derous, Born, and De Witte (2004) showed that applicants' pretest expectations about the selection procedure may serve as a key factor in applicant decision-making. The results from these studies indicate that pretest expectations are related to various self-reported outcomes and behavioral intentions such as motivation-to-apply and job acceptance intention. To date, however, no study has gone beyond self-reported outcomes to study the relationship of pretest expectations with actual behavior, even though the latter may be the only outcome that has direct practical value for hiring organizations. Another reason for studying actual behavior is that behavioral intention has not always been found to be a good surrogate of actual behavior (e.g., Davies, Foxall, & Pallister, 2002). Therefore, if available, preference should be given to a measure of actual job pursuit (Barber, 1998; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Accordingly, the first purpose of this study was to extend prior research on selection expectations by examining their relationship with actual job pursuit behavior.

Our second objective was to study the explanatory mechanisms behind the expectation-job pursuit relationship. Toward this end, we used Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB). This model has proven its validity in a wide range of studies (see Armitage & Conner, 2001 for a review), and has been referred to as a promising explanatory framework for job pursuit behavior (Chapman et al., 2005). Although some studies have examined the components of the TPB to predict job pursuit intentions (e.g., Arnold, Loan-Clarke, Coombs, Wilkinson, Park, & Preston, 2006; Van Hooft, Born, Taris, & Van der Flier, 2006), to our knowledge, little research tested the complete TPB (see Gibson, Griepentrog, & Marsh, 2007 for an exception). Specifically, perceptions of behavioral control (PBC) are rarely included, even though job pursuit behavior may not be under the complete volitional control of applicants (Schmitt & Ryan, 1997). Perceptions of control may therefore add to the prediction of actual behavior.

The majority of studies examining applicant perceptions and/or job choice processes involved student samples (Chapman et al., 2005; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). Furthermore, recruitment and applicant perception literature has mainly relied on self-reported attitudes and intentions instead of real applicant behavior (Arnold et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 2005; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). In the present study, we diverge from this trend by studying actual job choice outcomes among real applicants. Figure 1 displays our research model.

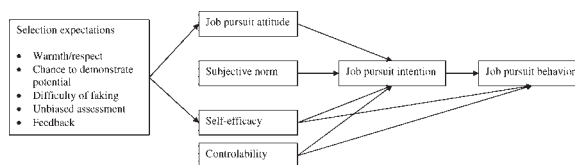


Figure 1. Overview of the research model

Job Pursuit and the Theory of Planned Behavior

In the recruitment literature, the term job pursuit has been used to refer to outcome variables that measure a person's desire or decision to enter or stay in the applicant pool without committing to a job choice (Chapman et al., 2005). Contrary to most prior recruitment studies, which usually rely exclusively on applicants' self-reported job pursuit intentions, the present research also includes applicants' actual job pursuit behavior. More specifically, the behavioral variable of interest in the present study is applicants' decision to continue to pursue employment after the application process.

Several scholars (e.g., Arnold et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 2005) have suggested that attitude-behavior models, such as the theory of planned behavior (TPB, Ajzen, 1991), may serve as a theoretical framework to explain job pursuit processes. The TPB is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which assumes that most human social behavior is under volitional control, and can be predicted from intentions alone. The TPB has proven its validity in predicting a wide assortment of behaviors (for reviews, see Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Sutton, 1998), such as job search (Song, Wanberg, Niu, & Xie, 2006; Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, & Blonk, 2004) and employee turnover (Van Breukelen, Van der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004). In the context of job pursuit behavior, however, the validity of the TPB has yet to be demonstrated. According to the TPB, the most proximal determinant of behavior is a person's *intention* to engage in it, which reflects the effort that someone plans to exert in order to perform the behavior. Intention, in turn, is a function of three determinants. The first determinant is the person's *attitude* toward the behavior, referring to the positive or negative evaluation of performing the behavior. The second determinant is the *subjective norm*, reflecting the person's perception of social pressure regarding the performance of the behavior. The third determinant is *perceived behavioral control* (PBC), which refers to the person's perception of control over performance of the behavior. PBC was added to the TRA to deal with situations in which people may lack complete volitional control over the behavior of interest. All else equal, individuals with high levels of PBC should be more disposed (i.e., intend) to perform the behavior. PBC is also held to influence the behavior directly. PBC has often been found to improve prediction over and above intention (Armitage & Conner, 2001), particularly when the behavior is not under complete volitional control and to the extent that it is an accurate reflection of actual behavioral control (Ajzen, 2002). There is an ongoing debate about the exact nature of the construct of PBC (Ajzen, 2002; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Some (e.g., Conner & Armitage, 1998; Terry & O'Leary, 1995) have argued that PBC is comprised of two distinct, yet related types of control: *self-efficacy* and *controllability*. Self-efficacy refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of performing a behavior (Bandura, 1982), and would reflect people's perceived control over internal resources (e.g., skills and abilities). Controllability, on the other hand, refers to perceptions of control over the environmental constraints on behavior (perceived control; Conner & Armitage, 1998; Terry & O'Leary, 1995), and would reflect people's perceived control over external resources (e.g., availability of opportunities and resources, dependence of cooperation of others; Ajzen, 1985).

Translated into the current job-pursuit context, the TPB posits that job pursuit behavior (i.e., applicants' decision to continue to pursue employment with an organization) can be predicted by job pursuit intention (i.e., applicants' intention to continue to pursue employment). Job pursuit intention, in turn, is expected to be a function of job pursuit attitude (i.e., applicants' cognitive or affective evaluation about putting effort into further pursuing a job with the organization), subjective norm (i.e., applicants' perception of social pressure by significant others such as partner, parents, and peers), self-efficacy (i.e., applicants' confidence in their ability to complete the next selection hurdle), and controllability (i.e., applicants' conviction that they have requisite resources and can overcome whatever obstacle they encounter). Finally, self-efficacy and controllability are also assumed to exert a

direct influence on job pursuit behavior. It should be noted, however, that controllability is expected to add to the prediction of job pursuit behavior only insofar it is an accurate representation of actual control. Taken together, following hypotheses can be formulated:

Hypothesis 1: (a) Job pursuit attitude, (b) subjective norm, (c) self-efficacy, and (d) controllability positively predict job pursuit intention.

Hypothesis 2: (a) Job pursuit intention, (b) self-efficacy, and (c) controllability positively predict job pursuit behavior.

Hypothesis 3: Job pursuit intention (a) completely mediates the relation of job pursuit attitude and subjective norm with job pursuit behavior and (b) partially mediates the relation of self-efficacy and controllability with job pursuit behavior.

Applicant Selection Expectations

For a long time, research on applicant perceptions has concentrated exclusively on studying perceptions of the selection procedure following test-taking. Post-test perceptions have been shown to have important consequences for the individual (e.g., test performance, self-efficacy) as well as for the organization (e.g., fairness perceptions, organizational attractiveness, recommendation intentions) (Hausknecht et al., 2004; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Recently, a special issue of the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* (Anderson, 2004) presented a variety of new theoretical developments in understanding applicants' attitudinal perceptions and behavioral reactions toward selection procedures. More specifically, following earlier recommendations from Ryan and Ployhart (2000), researchers started examining applicants' pretest expectations about forthcoming selection procedures (Bell, Ryan, & Wiechmann, 2004; Deros et al., 2004) as these expectations may influence a range of affective (e.g., test anxiety), conative (e.g., test-taking motivation), cognitive (e.g., post-test perceptions), and behavioral outcomes (e.g., applicant withdrawal).

Applicant selection expectations are conceptually different from applicant perceptions. Expectations refer to individuals' beliefs about a future state of affairs (Olson et al., 1996). They are subjective probabilities that vary in certainty. For instance, when individuals know they will be entering a novel setting (e.g., attending the selection process), they are likely to form explicit expectations about its characteristics in order to "prepare" for this new event. Perception, on the other hand, describes the process whereby sensory stimulation is translated into organized experience (Lindsay & Norman, 1977). That experience, or percept, is the joint product of the stimulation and of the process itself. So, without experiencing the selection process, strictly speaking, applicants can have no perception of it.

The findings hitherto suggest several dimensions of selection expectations that can be reliably distinguished (for a detailed description, see Bell et al., 2006; Deros et al., 2004). When looking ahead at the forthcoming selection procedure applicants expect to be treated in a *warm, respectful, and personal* manner by recruiters. That is, they expect recruiters to be empathic, to create optimal test conditions, and to ask intrusive questions only if this is relevant to the job. Applicants also expect to be able to *demonstrate their potential* during the selection process and to express themselves directly to the recruiter because this would allow them to show the recruiter how motivated they are and what they are capable of. A third dimension refers to applicants' expectations regarding *difficulty of faking* during the selection process. In general, applicants expect that it is difficult to mislead the selection personnel. Applicants further expect the selection procedure to be *unbiased*. That is, they expect a fair procedure

and equal opportunities for all applicants by objective, standardized procedures, and a competent approach of recruiters. Applicants also expect to receive *feedback* on their test performances. Specifically, they assume that they will be informed on the type of selection outcome (e.g., pass or fail) and that an explanation about their test performances is provided. Schreurs, Derous, Proost, Notelaers, and De Witte (2008) recently found that these dimensions were of particular relevance to comprehend applicant expectations of military selection procedures. As the present study was also conducted in a military context (see below), these five dimensions were included as measures of selection expectations. Other dimensions that have been reported (Deraus et al., 2004) refer to expectations of *transparency* (i.e., insight into the practical organization of the procedure and various test-technical facets) and *general information on the job opening* (e.g., task requirement, work conditions).

As stated earlier, selection expectations are presumed to have a central influence on applicants' affect, cognitions, and behaviors. Specifically, in the present study we propose that selection expectations are a key determinant of applicants' job pursuit attitude and self-efficacy, two of the basic predictors of the TPB.

Within the framework of expectancy-value theory (Feather, 1982), attitudes are conceived as reflecting individuals' expectations about the characteristics of a target, weighted by the individuals' evaluations of those characteristics. In the context of job pursuit, for example, applicants may have a strong expectation that they will be treated respectfully during the forthcoming selection procedure. To the extent that applicants value a respectful treatment, they will develop a favorable attitude toward continuing their job pursuit with the organization. Consistent with this line of reasoning, recent research has found significant positive relationships between applicants' pretest expectations and several pretest attitudinal outcomes, such as organizational attractiveness, organizational prestige, and test-taking motivation (Bell et al., 2006; Derous et al., 2004; Schreurs et al., 2008).

Along the same lines, we propose that selection expectations relate to applicants' beliefs about their ability to successfully complete the selection process (i.e., self-efficacy). Self-efficacy beliefs are partly based on an analysis of task requirements and an assessment of the availability of situational and personal resources and constraints to perform the task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In a job pursuit context, for example, applicants may have a strong expectation that they will be discriminated against in the forthcoming selection procedure, and that nothing can be done to change it. This assessment is likely to result in an impaired belief in one's ability to successfully complete the next selection hurdle. In support of this argument, significant positive relationships between selection expectations and self-efficacy beliefs have been reported by Bell et al. (2006).

The TPB is held to be a complete theory of behavior (Fishbein, 1980); any other variables, like selection expectations, are understood as external variables, which influence is exerted through the basic predictors from the TPB. Specifically, based on the research findings presented above, we anticipate selection expectations (warmth/respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, feedback) to influence job pursuit intention through job pursuit attitude and self-efficacy. Furthermore, as intention is an immediate antecedent of the corresponding behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), we propose that the relationship between expectations and job pursuit behavior is mediated by job pursuit intention as well.

Hypothesis 4: The relation between selection expectations (warmth/respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, feedback) and job pursuit intention is mediated by (a) job pursuit attitude and (b) self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 5: The relation between selection expectations (warmth/respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, feedback) and job pursuit behavior is mediated by (a) job pursuit attitude, (b) self-efficacy, and (c) job pursuit intention.

Organizational Context

The present study was conducted among Dutch-speaking applicants for the Belgian military. The Belgian military is structured into four branches consisting of the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Medical Service. Approximately 40 000 personnel are currently on active duty in the Belgian military with an additional 6000 in the reserve component. The Belgian military has three personnel categories: officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted personnel. There is no conscription. Each year, the Belgian military hires about 1400 new employees.

In Belgium, the prestige of the military is rather low compared to other professions. This has been so since the early 1980s, although there has been a small rise in popularity and trustworthiness in the midst 1990s when the Belgian military started actively participating in peace-support missions (Manigart, 2005). Due to its unfavorable image, the Belgian military, as well as many other Western militaries, has difficulties in attracting, enlisting, and retaining the required numbers of new recruits (Bachman, Segal, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 2000).

The selection procedure of the Belgian military contains multiple hurdles. The first hurdle consists of an information session in one of 10 military career offices, spread all over the country. During the information session, prospective applicants receive information about vacancies, working conditions, career possibilities, and about the forthcoming selection process, on which prospects can make their decision whether or not to apply.

Those who decide to apply are requested by the career office personnel to take a short screening test (hurdle 2). The test assesses memory, spatial, numeric, and logical reasoning, and is meant to weed out only those applicants who are unable to perform any military occupation. Accordingly, the success ratio on this test is very high (about 95%). Successful applicants, after they are informed about their test result, are then assigned a date¹ to attend the next selection hurdle at the Center for Recruitment and Selection (CRS, hurdle 3). The scheduled dates for hurdle 3 are stored in the organization's database that is used to manage application data.

The extended screening at the CRS takes a full day, and comprises a medical, physical, and psychological screening. Medical examination consists of full spine radiography, analysis of blood and urine samples, an electrocardiogram, a vision and hearing test, a respiratory function test, and weight and height measurements. For the physical examination applicants are subjected to an ergometric bike exercise. Applicants have to keep up a certain pace while the resistance is increased at regular intervals. Psychological screening consists of a personality test, an interest inventory, and a semi-structured interview conducted by a military psychologist.

At the end of the selection process, successful applicants are allocated to one of the available military occupations (e.g., infantry, nursing, air traffic control) based on applicants' test scores and submitted vocational preferences. The allocation system is designed to ensure that applicants with higher test scores have a high chance of getting their job of preference. Naturally, this is at the expense of applicants with lower test scores. They often get assigned to less popular jobs.

The Belgian military also employs civilians. The selection for civil servants is carried out by the national selection center that works independently from the military selection center, and that is in charge of the selection of all federal government personnel besides the military. The sample of the present study contains only applicants for military positions.

¹Actually, applicants can choose from three, usually consecutive, dates. The alternative dates are automatically generated and imposed by a dispatching system which main function is to ensure that the CRS' processing capacity is not exceeded. Hence, applicants have only very limited say in scheduling the selection appointment, the latter being largely dependent on the CRS' selection workload.

Method

Participants and procedure

We carried out a longitudinal study with two measuring moments in a sample of applicants for the Belgian military. During a six-month period (October 2005–March 2006), career office personnel distributed surveys randomly to applicants who had just passed the initial screening test at the career office. Time 1 surveys contained questions about demographic variables, expectations about the next selection hurdle, subjective norm, perceived control, and attitudes and intentions to attend the next selection hurdle. Respondents were also asked to write down their national identification number for tracking Time 2 job pursuit behavior.

Several precautions were taken to prevent socially desirable responding. Specifically, in the instructions it was emphasized that cooperation was voluntary and that participants were free to stop at any time. It was stressed that data were collected for research purposes only and that results would have no impact on the further selection course or outcome. Applicants were asked to enclose their survey in an envelope, and to deposit the sealed envelope in a cardboard ballot box showing the logo of the first author's academic affiliation. Surveys were filled out in a room that was separated from the location used by career office personnel to hold information sessions.

Within the time span of our study, 1068 applicants passed the initial screening test at the career office. Time 1 surveys were randomly distributed among these applicants and completed by 269 respondents. Due to practical constraints, it was not feasible to survey all applicants who had passed the test, or to obtain exact information on the number of non-respondents. Based on verbal reports of career office personnel, though, it seems that few, if any, applicants refused to participate. Missing data led to 238 participants being included in the analyses. Of the respondents included in the final sample, 89% were men. The respondents' age ranged between 16 and 33 years ($M = 23$, $SD = 3.5$). 69% had completed secondary school. 63% of the participants were unemployed at the time of this study.

To check for selective non-response, we compared the respondents in the final sample ($n = 238$) with the non-respondents (individuals who had one or more missing values, $n = 31$). Multivariate analysis of variance including gender, age, education level, employment status, score on the initial screening test, and the recruitment variables job pursuit attitude and intention, showed no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents, $F(7, 261) = 0.99$, $p = .44$.

To determine the representativeness of our sample *vis-à-vis* the total sample of applicants, we compared respondents in the final sample ($n = 238$) with the remaining 830 ($1068 - 238$) applicants that passed the initial screening test within the time span of our study on demographics and test score but did not participate in our study. Multivariate analysis of variance including gender, age, education level, and test score showed no significant group differences, $F(4, 1063) = 1.04$, $p = .39$.

Time 2 data related to whether or not applicants showed up for hurdle 3 at the Center for Recruitment and Selection on the scheduled date (i.e., job pursuit behavior). Presence/absence data were extracted from the organization's database. Other information that was retrieved from the database includes date of application/initial screening (i.e., hurdle 2) and scheduled test-taking date for hurdle 3 (available for applicants who attended and did not attend). Both dates were used to calculate the time lag between hurdle 2 and 3.

In the present study, 28.6% of the applicants withdrew from the selection process, which is comparable to the withdrawal rates reported in prior withdrawal studies (Ryan, Sacco, McFarland, & Kriska, 2000; Schmit & Ryan, 1997). The average time lag between application/initial screening (hurdle 2) and the extended screening (hurdle 3) was 20.12 days ($SD = 13.66$; $\min = 1.00$; $\max = 76.00$). Time lag was controlled for in the analyses (see below).

Measures

All self-report measures in this study were retrieved from existing studies and utilized a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). All items are listed in the Appendix, except for those of the AES, which can be found in Schreurs et al. (2008).

Applicant selection expectations

Applicants' expectations of forthcoming selection procedures were measured using the five-dimensional Applicant Expectation Survey (AES) created and validated in a military context by Schreurs et al. (2008). The AES includes following scales: warmth/respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, and feedback. *Warmth/respect* reflects the way that applicants expect to be treated during the selection procedure. The scale was measured with eight items (e.g., "I expect the personnel to behave courteously"). *Chance to demonstrate potential* refers to applicants' expectations of getting the opportunity to perform well during selection. This scale was measured with seven items (e.g., "I expect to get sufficient opportunity to show what I'm capable of"). *Difficulty of faking* refers to applicants' beliefs about the difficulty of pretending to possess the qualities that are needed in the job. This scale was measured with four items [e.g., "I expect that I can make the selector believe that I have the right qualities for the job" (reversed)]. *Unbiased assessment* refers to the equal treatment of all applicants. Unbiased assessment was measured with three items (e.g., "I expect applicants to be treated equally, irrespective of race"). *Feedback* refers to applicants' expectations of getting sufficient information on their test performance. Feedback was measured with four items (e.g., "I expect feedback on my test results to be sufficiently detailed"). The reliabilities of warmth/respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, and feedback were $\alpha = .90$, $\alpha = .89$, $\alpha = .88$, $\alpha = .82$, $\alpha = .90$, respectively. Note that the AES does not include transparency and general job information (Deros et al., 2004) because recent studies indicate that these dimensions are less relevant to a military context (Deros & Schreurs, in press; Schreurs et al., 2008).

Because the AES (Schreurs et al., 2008) is a new measure, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the AES to verify the fit of the five-dimensional conceptualization. This analysis showed a good fit for a five-factor solution: $\chi^2(242, N = 238) = 448.11$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 1.85$; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .06; Standardized Root-Mean-Square Residual (SRMR) = .06; Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .98; Non-Normed Fit Index = .97. The average standardized item loadings onto each of the factors were as follows: warmth/respect = .73, chance to demonstrate potential = .76, difficulty of faking = .79, unbiased assessment = .78, feedback = .84. The five-factor model provided a better fit to the data than a single factor model, $\chi^2(252, N = 238) = 2159.63$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 8.57$; RMSEA = .18; SRMR = .12; CFI = .85; NNFI = .83, $\chi^2\Delta(10, N = 238) = 1711.52$, $p < .001$. The five-factor model also provided a better fit than a three-factor model in which, consistent with recent developments in organizational justice literature (e.g., Colquitt, 2001), warmth/respect formed an interpersonal factor, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking and unbiased assessment were collapsed to form a procedural factor, and feedback formed an informational factor, $\chi^2(249, N = 238) = 1150.47$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 4.62$; RMSEA = .12; SRMR = .10; CFI = .91; NNFI = .90; $\chi^2\Delta(7, N = 238) = 702.36$, $p < .001$. These results provide some support for the five-dimensional structure used in this study.

Job pursuit attitude

The TPB and its predecessor the TRA state that (job pursuit) attitudes are a function of the person's beliefs that (job pursuit) behavior leads to certain outcomes (i.e., job offer) and the person's evaluation of these outcomes (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein, 1980). Accordingly, a distinction can be made between indirect belief-based measures and direct global measures of attitudes (Ajzen, 1991). The latter type

was used to assess job pursuit attitude, since, relative to a person's beliefs, global attitudes are more proximal antecedents of intention. Furthermore, global attitudes have been shown to be valid predictors of job pursuit intention in previous research (Arnold et al., 2006; Van Hooft et al., 2006). Specifically, job pursuit attitude was measured with three items, asking applicants to indicate the extent to which they would regard it *sensible*, *wise*, and *useful* to continue their job pursuit with the military (i.e., Van Hooft et al., 2006). The reliability of the job pursuit attitude scale was .87.

Subjective norm

According to the TPB and the TRA, subjective norms are a function of the person's normative beliefs that important referent individuals or groups approve or disapprove of performing job pursuit behavior and the person's motivation to comply with these referents (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein, 1980). As with attitudes, a distinction can also be made between indirect belief-based measures and direct global measures of subjective norms. Again, in the present study, a global measure was used, similar to what was done in previous job pursuit research (Arnold et al. 2006; Van Hooft et al., 2006), and based on the argument that global measures are more proximal predictors of intention than belief-based measures. Specifically, subjective norm was measured with a two-item scale, asking applicants to indicate the extent to which *their significant other*, respectively, *most people who are important to them* think they should continue to pursue a job with the military (cf. Van Hooft et al., 2006). The reliability of the subjective norm scale was .85.

Perceived behavioral control (PBC)

Based on previous research (e.g., Terry & O'Leary, 1995), we distinguished between two components of PBC. The first component relates to PBC over internal resources, and was measured as *self-efficacy* for job pursuit behavior. Four items were selected and adapted from prior studies in a job search context (e.g., Van Hooft et al., 2004). A sample item is: "I have confidence in my abilities to successfully complete the next phase of the testing process." The reliability of the self-efficacy scale was .78. The second component refers to perceived *controllability* over external resources such as time, opportunities, and resources. Four items were adapted from prior research (Van Hooft, Born, Taris, van der Flier, & Blonk, 2005). A sample item is: "I have sufficient resources to continue my job pursuit with the military." The reliability of the controllability scale was .74. CFA showed a good fit for a two-factor model, in which the self-efficacy items loaded on one factor and the controllability items on the other, $\chi^2(19, N=238) = 29.76, p > .05$; $\chi^2/df = 1.57$; RMSEA = .05; SRMR = .04; CFI = .98; NNFI = .97. This two-factor model provided a better fit than a single factor model collapsing self-efficacy and controllability items, $\chi^2(20, N=238) = 293.22, p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 14.66$; RMSEA = .24; SRMR = .17; CFI = .65; NNFI = .51; $\chi^2\Delta(1, N=238) = 263.46, p < .001$. These results provide support for the two-dimensional structure of PBC used in this study.

Job pursuit intention

Applicants' inclination to continue their job pursuit was measured with three items adapted from Van Hooft et al. (2004). A sample item is: "I will continue to pursue a job with the military." The reliability of the job pursuit intention scale was .81.

Job pursuit behavior

The behavior of interest in this study relates to whether applicants attended or withdrew from the selection procedure. Therefore, as a measure of actual job pursuit behavior, we verified in the organization's application database whether or not applicants were absent or present on the scheduled selection day ($0 = \text{absent}$; $1 = \text{present}$)². Dichotomous outcomes, such as applicant attendance versus

²Seven applicants rescheduled their initial selection appointment by telephone. We analyzed the data with and without these few cases. As the results for these analyses were very similar, we only report the results from the full dataset. For these seven "reschedules," the most recent selection appointment was used to calculate the time lag between hurdle 2 and 3.

withdrawal, are common in many areas of research (e.g., drug use, alcohol, smoking, recidivism) (Hedeker, Mermelstein, & Demirtas, 2007; Liberman, 2005). In the area of organizational behavior, binary outcomes are encountered frequently to measure employee turnover (e.g., Allen, Weeks, & Moffitt, 2005; Huselid & Day, 1991; Morrow, McElroy, Laczniak, & Fenton, 1999; Payne & Huffman, 2005; Somers, 1995), and attendance versus non-attendance (e.g., Harrison, 1995; Okun & Sloane, 2002; Ryan et al., 2000; Ryan, Horvath, & Kriska, 2005). Binary outcomes are also common in TPB studies (e.g., Dumas, Nissley-Tsiopinis, & Moreland, 2007; Harrison, 1995; Prestholdt, Lane, & Mathews, 1987; Sutton, Bickler, Sancho-Aldridge, & Saidi, 1994; Sutton, Saidi, Bickler, & Hunter, 1995; Van Breukelen et al., 2004). Despite the potential limitations of dichotomous outcomes (i.e., less variability), the inclusion of the attendance/withdrawal variable in the present study seems appropriate for two reasons: (1) it accurately reflects the behavior of interest, and (2) it extends the study of job pursuit beyond studies exclusively relying on self-report measures of job pursuit intention. The latter is particularly important, as intentions are not always a good proxy of behavior (e.g., Davies et al., 2002; Godin & Kok, 1996; Schmit & Ryan, 1997).

Control variables

Given their importance in prior research on military propensity (e.g., Bachman et al., 2000), applicants were asked to fill out their age, gender (0 = *female*; 1 = *male*), educational level (0 = *secondary school not completed*; 1 = *secondary school completed*), and employment status (0 = *unemployed*; 1 = *employed*). Time lag (number of days) between date of application/initial screening (i.e., hurdle 2) and scheduled test-taking date for hurdle 3 varied between applicants and was also included as a control variable. Time lag has been shown to be an important correlate of job pursuit in previous research (e.g., Arvey, Gordon, & Massengill, & Mussio, 1975; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). Based on a meta-analytical study, Chapman et al. (2005) advised against undue time lags in the hiring process as long time lags are likely to result in negative reactions and withdrawal.

Analyses and Results

Before testing the hypotheses, we performed CFA to evaluate the distinctiveness of the Time 1 measures used in this study. A 10-factor model, in which each indicator loaded only on its primary factor, provided a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(774, N=238)=1110.00$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df=1.43$; RMSEA = .04; SRMR = .05; CFI = .98; NNFI = .97. All indicators loaded significantly on their hypothesized latent variable, and there were no large modification indices. Next, we tested a second model, in which all indicators loaded on a single factor. The logic underlying the “single factor procedure” (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) is that if method variance is largely responsible for the covariation among the Time 1 data, CFA should indicate that a single (method) factor fits the data. However, a one-factor model did not fit the data well, $\chi^2(819, N=238)=5168.80$, $p < .001$; $\chi^2/df=6.31$; RMSEA = .15; SRMR = .12; CFI = .85; NNFI = .84. The 10-factor model provided a better fit than the single factor model, $\chi^2\Delta(45, N=238)=4058.80$, $p < .001$, indicating that the respondents of this study could distinguish the 10 constructs well.

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations among the study variables are reported in Table 1. The table shows that job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, self-efficacy, and controllability were significantly correlated with job pursuit intention. Except for subjective norm, none of the TPB variables was significantly correlated with job pursuit behavior. All selection expectations (warmth/respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, feedback)

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities, and correlations of study variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Gender	0.89	0.31															
2. Age	23.00	3.55	-.02														
3. Education	0.69	0.46	-.03	.05													
4. Employment status	0.36	0.48	-.07	.29	.01												
5. Time lag	20.12	13.66	-.05	.05	.22	.08											
6. Warmth/respect	4.11	0.51	-.09	.00	-.01	.02	-.02	(.90)									
7. Demonstrate potential	3.92	0.61	-.09	-.06	-.11	-.02	-.10	.51	(.89)								
8. Difficulty of faking	3.85	0.78	-.13	-.02	-.02	-.11	.02	.23	.28	(.88)							
9. Unbiased assessment	4.05	0.65	-.05	.04	-.00	.09	.10	.35	.36	.14	(.82)						
10. Feedback	4.09	0.60	-.13	-.01	-.09	.00	-.06	.61	.67	.27	.38	(.90)					
11. Job pursuit attitude	4.37	0.53	.02	-.00	-.05	.01	-.07	.36	.33	.16	.24	.42	(.87)				
12. Subjective norm	4.14	0.80	-.06	.01	-.11	.02	-.11	.32	.31	.15	.28	.37	.54	(.85)			
13. Self-efficacy	3.87	0.56	.05	.06	-.02	.02	-.07	.35	.34	.15	.22	.33	.55	.39	(.78)		
14. Controllability	3.94	0.78	-.01	.03	-.06	-.18	-.12	.08	.18	.26	.02	.30	.34	.24	.15	(.75)	
15. Job pursuit intention	4.58	0.48	.07	-.02	-.03	-.02	.01	.36	.30	.13	.22	.39	.74	.48	.41	.34	(.81)
16. Job pursuit behavior	0.71	0.45	-.01	-.06	-.14	-.03	-.22	-.03	.07	.07	-.08	.02	.04	.17	.03	.07	.04

Note: $N = 238$; Gender (0 = female; 1 = male); Education (0 = secondary school not completed; 1 = secondary school completed); Employment status (0 = unemployed; 1 = employed); Time lag in number of days between time of application and selection. Correlations $\geq .13$ are significant at $p < .05$ and correlations $\geq .17$ are significant at $p < .01$. Variables 6–15 were rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

were significantly correlated with job pursuit attitude, self-efficacy, and job pursuit intention, but not with job pursuit behavior.

Prediction of job pursuit intention

To test Hypothesis 1, stating that job pursuit intention can be predicted with the variables (a) job pursuit attitude, (b) subjective norm, (c) self-efficacy, and (d) controllability, we performed a hierarchical regression analysis (see Table 2). In the first step of the analysis job pursuit intention was regressed on gender, age, educational level, and employment status. None of these demographics was significantly related to intention. The TPB variables job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, self-efficacy, and controllability were entered in the second step. Attitude, subjective norm, and controllability significantly predicted intention, in support of Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1d. Hypothesis 1c, stating that self-efficacy predicts intention, was not supported. The TPB variables explained 57% of the variance in job pursuit intention.

Prediction of job pursuit behavior

To test Hypothesis 2, stating that job pursuit behavior can be predicted with (a) job pursuit intention, (b) self-efficacy, and (c) controllability, we performed a hierarchical logistic regression analysis (see Table 3). The model with the demographics (gender, age, educational level, employment status) and time lag, entered in the first step was significant. Only time lag showed a significant relationship with job pursuit behavior. The odds ratio (Exp B) for time lag was lower than one, meaning that applicants with long intervals were more likely to withdraw from the procedure. Specifically, the odds

Table 2. Linear regression of applicants' job pursuit intention on demographics, job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, self-efficacy, and controllability

Predictor/step	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	95% CI		β	R^2	ΔR^2	Adj. R^2
			LB	UB				
Step 1						.01	.01	-.01
Gender	.10	.10	-.10	.29	.06			
Age	-.00	.01	-.02	.02	-.02			
Education	-.03	.07	-.17	.10	-.03			
Employment status	-.01	.07	-.14	.13	-.01			
Step 2						.58**	.57**	.56**
Gender	.09	.07	-.04	.22	.06			
Age	-.00	.01	-.02	.01	-.02			
Education	.02	.05	-.07	.11	.02			
Employment status	.01	.05	-.09	.10	.01			
Job pursuit attitude	.58**	.05	.48	.69	.65			
Subjective norm	.07**	.03	.01	.13	.11			
Self-efficacy	-.00	.05	-.10	.08	-.01			
Controllability	.06*	.03	-.00	.11	.09			

Note: $N = 238$; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for unstandardized regression coefficients (*B*), lower (LB), and upper (UB) bounds; β = standardized regression coefficient; Adj. R^2 = adjusted R^2 ; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Table 3. Logistic regression of applicants' job pursuit behavior on demographics, time lag, and the TPB variables

Predictor/step	<i>B</i>	SE (<i>B</i>)	Wald	Exp (<i>B</i>)	95% CI (odds)	$\Delta\chi^2$ (df)	χ^2 (df)
Step 1							13.70 (5)*
Gender	-.20	.48	.17	.82	.32–2.11		
Age	-.03	.04	.34	.98	.90–1.06		
Education	.55	.35	2.48	1.74	.87–3.46		
Employment status	-.01	.32	.00	.99	.53–1.87		
Time lag	-.03**	.01	7.60	.97	.95–.99		
Step 2						5.86 (4)	19.56 (9)*
Gender	-.08	.49	.03	.92	.35–2.40		
Age	-.03	.05	.51	.97	.89–1.06		
Education	.48	.36	1.83	1.62	.81–3.25		
Employment status	.03	.33	.01	1.03	.54–1.99		
Time lag	-.03**	.01	6.68	.97	.95–.99		
Job pursuit attitude	-.35	.38	.85	.71	.34–1.48		
Subjective norm	.52*	.23	5.31	1.69	1.08–2.63		
Self-efficacy	-.08	.33	.06	.93	.48–1.77		
Controllability	.10	.21	.24	1.11	.73–1.69		
Step 3						.05 (1)	19.61 (10)*
Gender	-.09	.49	.04	.91	.35–2.38		
Age	-.03	.05	.50	.97	.89–1.06		
Education	.48	.36	1.83	1.62	.81–3.25		
Employment status	.03	.33	.01	1.04	.54–1.99		
Time lag	-.03**	.01	6.73	.97	.95–.99		
Job pursuit attitude	-.41	.47	.78	.66	.27–1.66		
Subjective norm	.52*	.23	5.10	1.68	1.07–2.63		
Self-efficacy	-.08	.33	.06	.93	.48–1.77		
Controllability	.10	.22	.20	1.10	.72–1.69		
Job pursuit intention	.11	.48	.05	1.12	.44–2.83		

Note: $N = 238$; 95% CI (odds) = 95% confidence interval for Exp (*B*); * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

of withdrawal are increased by about 3% for each day an applicant has to wait longer. Adding job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, self-efficacy, and controllability in the second step, and job pursuit intention in the third step, did not result in a significant improvement of model fit. Of the variables entered, only subjective norm was significantly related to job pursuit behavior. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Mediation analyses

To establish mediation, four conditions must be met (Baron & Kenny, 1986). First, it must be demonstrated that the independent variable is related to the mediator. The second requirement is that the independent variable is related to the outcome variable. Third, the mediator must relate to the outcome variable. Finally, the effect of the independent variable on the outcome variable should decrease when the effect of the mediator is taken into account. Hypothesis 3 posited that job pursuit intention would completely mediate the relationship of job pursuit attitude and subjective norm with job pursuit behavior, and partially mediate the relationship of self-efficacy and controllability with job pursuit behavior. Except for subjective norm, none of the independent variables were significantly related to job pursuit behavior, nor was job pursuit intention, the presumed mediator (see Hypothesis 2). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Noteworthy is that subjective norm was still significant after intention was controlled for, suggesting a direct effect on job pursuit behavior (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 4 posited that job pursuit attitude and self-efficacy would mediate the relationship between selection expectations and job pursuit intention. As already mentioned (see Table 1), all selection expectations were significantly positively correlated with job pursuit attitude, self-efficacy, and job pursuit intention. Moreover, regression analysis showed that selection expectations accounted for a significant portion of the variance in intention, with feedback and warmth/respect as significant predictors (see Table 4). Table 1 showed that job pursuit attitude and self-efficacy were significantly correlated with job pursuit intention. Table 4 presents the results of the mediated variable regression analysis. When attitude and self-efficacy were controlled for in the analysis, none of the selection expectations had significant beta-weights. Job pursuit intention was significantly predicted by job pursuit attitude, but not by self-efficacy. Thus, in support of Hypothesis 4a, attitude completely mediated the relationships between selection expectations (about warmth/respect and feedback) and intention. No support was found for Hypothesis 4b.

Hypothesis 5 posited that job pursuit attitude, self-efficacy, and job pursuit intention would mediate the relationship between selection expectations and job pursuit behavior. However, none of these variables were significantly related to the outcome variable, job pursuit behavior (see Hypothesis 2). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Discussion

This study examined the validity of the TPB as an explanatory mechanism of the relationship between selection expectations and job pursuit intention and behavior, using a sample of actual applicants for the military. Regarding the validity of the TPB in the context of job pursuit, we found that job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, and controllability were positively related to job pursuit intention, accounting for 57% of the variance. The relationship with intention was more pronounced for attitude than it was for subjective norm. This finding may be due to the predominantly male Western sample. Men, relative

Table 4. Linear regression of applicants' job pursuit intention on demographics, selection expectations, job pursuit attitude, and self-efficacy

Predictor/step	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	95% CI		β	R^2	ΔR^2	Adj. R^2
			LB	UB				
Step 1						.01	.01	-.01
Gender	.10	.10	-.10	.29	.06			
Age	-.00	.01	-.02	.02	-.02			
Education	-.03	.07	-.17	.10	-.03			
Employment status	-.01	.07	-.14	.13	-.01			
Step 2						.19***	.19**	.16**
Gender	.18*	.09	.00	.36	.12			
Age	-.00	.01	-.02	.01	-.02			
Education	-.00	.06	-.13	.12	-.00			
Employment status	-.01	.06	-.13	.12	-.01			
WR	.16*	.07	.02	.30	.18			
DP	.01	.07	-.12	.14	.01			
FAK	.02	.04	-.06	.10	.03			
UA	.04	.05	-.05	.14	.06			
FB	.20**	.07	.06	.34	.26			
Step 3						.57**	.38**	.55**
Gender	.10	.07	-.04	.23	.06			
Age	-.00	.01	-.01	.01	-.01			
Education	.01	.05	-.08	.10	.01			
Employment status	-.02	.05	-.11	.07	-.02			
WR	.07	.05	-.04	.18	.08			
DP	-.00	.05	-.10	.10	-.00			
FAK	-.01	.03	-.07	.05	-.02			
UA	.01	.04	-.06	.08	.01			
FB	.06	.05	-.05	.16	.07			
Job pursuit attitude	.62**	.05	.53	.72	.70			
Self-efficacy	-.02	.05	-.11	.07	-.02			

Note: $N = 238$; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for unstandardized regression coefficients (*B*), lower (LB), and upper (UB) bounds; β = standardized regression coefficient; Adj. R^2 = adjusted R^2 ; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

^a R^2 totals do not add up because of rounding. WR = Warmth/respect; DP = Chance to demonstrate potential; FAK = Difficulty of faking; UA = Unbiased assessment; FB = Feedback.

to women, have been found to act more independently of others and attach more importance to individualistic tasks and goals (Venkatesh, Morris, & Ackerman, 2000). Along the same line, Van Hooft et al. (2006) found that job application attitude was a stronger predictor of job application intention among males than females, whereas the opposite was true for subjective norm. It is also found that in individualistic countries, such as Belgium (Hofstede, 2001), intentions and behaviors are strongly guided by personal attitudes (e.g., Triandis, 2000). Self-efficacy was positively related to intention, but failed to predict unique variance.

This study contributes to the literature by testing the full TPB model, including actual job pursuit behavior, and measures of self-efficacy and controllability, the two components of PBC. The inclusion of actual behavior is important because, relative to job pursuit attitude and intention, it is more active in nature, and is the most direct measure of attraction (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). Prospects can gather information on many job opportunities at the same time (and take a short screen), it is much more demanding, in terms of time and energy, to go through multiple selection procedures. Besides the TPB

variables, our research model consisted of demographic variables and the variable “time lag” that were all controlled for in the regression analyses to examine the unique contribution of the TPB-variables. Some authors (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Breaugh, 2006; Edwards, 2008) have cautioned against the “overcontrol” of variance, in particular when the control and independent variables are significantly related, because the use of statistical control might alter the relationship between the independent and the outcome variables. However, supplementary analyses (not reported in the Results section) showed that this was not the case: the regression coefficients of the basic-TPB variables (i.e., job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, self-efficacy, and controllability) remained virtually the same when the control variables were omitted from the analyses, presumably because of the negligible associations between the controls and the basic TPB-variables.

Contrary to our hypotheses, job pursuit intention, self-efficacy, and controllability did not significantly predict actual job pursuit behavior. This finding conflicts with predictions from the TPB and previous studies demonstrating PBC (self-efficacy and/or controllability) and intentions to be significantly related to behavior (e.g., Armitage & Conner, 2001). Accordingly, this study contributes to research on applicant decision-making by demonstrating that, in a multiple hurdle selection context, job pursuit intention may not always be an accurate predictor of subsequent behavior. Thus, contrary to what has been suggested by scholars in the field (e.g., Arnold et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 2005), the TPB did not work well to predict actual behavior in this particular context. Based on these and similar findings (e.g., Davies et al., 2002), we recommend cautiousness when relying on intention measures as surrogates of actual job pursuit behavior, as is common in the area of applicant attraction (e.g., Arnold et al., 2006; Highhouse, Stierwalt, Bachiochi, Elder, & Fisher, 1999; Van Hooft et al., 2006).

A logical question then is: Why were job pursuit intention and behavior not significantly related in this study? We put forward several possible explanations for this interesting finding notwithstanding that they are meant to be tentative and explorative, and should be viewed as such with care.

One viable explanation is that the intention to pursue a military occupation might have changed in the interval between the time at which it was assessed (i.e., at the application) and the time at which the behavior was observed (i.e., at test-taking at the selection center). As mentioned above, at the end of the selection process, applicants are allocated to one of the many military occupations based on their score on the initial screening test, their test results at the selection center, and their vocational preferences. Applicants with high test scores usually get assigned to their job of preference, whereas applicants with low scores typically land in the less popular jobs. It seems plausible to suppose that applicants' intention to pursue a military career may change when they find out that their score on the screening test will probably not qualify them for their job of preference. Therefore, it can be assumed that, relative to applicants with low scores on the screening test, those with high scores are more likely to act upon their intentions as they expect to have higher chances to get the job they want³. To test this *post hoc* explanation, a moderated logistic regression analysis was performed by entering the interaction term between screening test score and job pursuit intention in the final step, after entering the control variables and the main effect terms (i.e., test score and the TPB-variables). This model was highly significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 238) = 18.29, p < .001$. Test score, $W(1) = 7.83, p < .01$, and the intention by score interaction, $W(1) = 10.13, p < .01$, were both significant, job pursuit intention was not. Thus, initial test score moderated the relation between intention and behavior, so that intention was positively related to behavior among applicants with high test scores, and negatively related among applicants with low test scores.

Besides the significant moderating effect of test score, there might be other possible explanations for the non-significant correlation between intention and behavior. We briefly discuss four of them: (1) the

³We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this possible explanation.

occurrences of “unplanned problems,” (2) the skewed distribution of job pursuit behavior, (3) the scale formats used, and (4) the availability of job alternatives.

“Unplanned problems” (e.g., had to work during scheduled testing time) might have led some applicants to withdraw from the selection process (Ryan et al., 2000; Schmit & Ryan, 1997). The fact that controllability and self-efficacy did not add to the prediction of job pursuit behavior, however, seems to suggest that there were limited internal and external constraints on performing the behavior. It cannot be excluded, though, that unplanned problems did play a role, and that our measures of perceived behavioral control have not been accurate proxies of actual control.

The low intention-behavior correlation might also be due to the fairly skewed distribution of job pursuit behavior. In the present study, less than 30% of all applicants who successfully completed the first hurdle actually withdrew from the procedure, which is comparable to the rates reported in prior withdrawal studies (Ryan et al., 2000; Schmit & Ryan, 1997). Clearly, if there is little variance in behavior, strong correlations cannot be expected (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

The non-significant correlation might be partly due to the different response formats that were used for the assessment of intention and behavior (Courneya, 1994; Sutton, 1998). A common solution to the scale correspondence problem is to use continuous numerical scales for both intention and behavior (e.g., Armitage, Conner, Loach, & Willetts, 1999; Van Hooft et al., 2005). In the present study, however, this solution was not suitable, as the behavior of interest (i.e., attendance vs. non-attendance) was dichotomous in nature.

Last but not least, applicants may have withdrawn because they accepted an alternative job offer in the interval between hurdle 2 and 3. The plausibility of this explanation is strengthened by recent research showing that the military ranked last when 18–25 year olds were asked about their favorite employer (Manigart, 2005), and by the significant relationship between time lag and behavior: long time lags increase the likelihood of finding another job.

A noteworthy finding in this study was that subjective norm significantly related to job pursuit behavior, even after controlling for job pursuit intention. Previous research on military enlistment (e.g., Bachman et al., 2000; Gibson et al., 2007) indicates that significant others (partner, parents, peers) play a critical role in influencing youth attitudes toward the military in early recruitment stages. The present study extends these findings, demonstrating that significant others continue to exert influence during the selection process. As suggested by one of our reviewers, families may play a larger role in influencing job pursuit in a military than in a non-military setting. The U.S. Army has advertising that specifically targets parents in terms of educating them on military careers and encouraging them to check out the Army’s website for additional information, presumably because they realize the importance of parents/family as influencing factors in the decision to join the military.

Applicant selection expectations

One of the purposes of this study was to merge the literatures on applicant reactions, in terms of applicants’ pretest selection expectations, and rational decision making. In line with propositions from Bell et al. (2004), we found that selection expectations were positively related to job pursuit attitude and self-efficacy. Expectations of warmth/respect and feedback were significant predictors of job pursuit intention. In addition, we found that the relationship between expectations and intention was completely mediated by job pursuit attitude. No significant relationship, however, was found between selection expectations and job pursuit behavior. Nonetheless, understanding the mechanisms that affect job pursuit intention is important by itself, as intention is related to many other attraction outcomes, such as applicants’ intention to recommend the hiring organization (Cable & Judge, 1996; Gilliland,

1993; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman, & Stoffey, 1993), word-of-mouth (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey, & Edwards, 2000; Van Hove & Lievens, 2005), and product purchase intention and behavior (Macan et al., 1994). Applicants' job pursuit intentions may therefore "spillover" into other areas (Rynes & Barber, 1990). That is, although in the present study applicants' intentions to pursue a job did not translate to job pursuit actions, it may well be that other behavioral outcomes, not investigated in this study (e.g., recommending the organization to friends, visiting an open day), were produced. Future research should therefore further investigate the potential role of selection expectations as related to these other attraction outcomes.

Limitations and directions for further research

This study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of self-reports could have inflated the associations between the Time 1 variables, due to common method variance. Research on this topic, however, indicates that the problem of common method bias is probably overstated and is rarely strong enough to invalidate research findings (Doty & Glick, 1998; Spector, 2006). Furthermore, the results of the confirmatory factor analyses supported the idea that the constructs under study were empirically separable. Although it cannot be ruled out that common method bias to some extent contributed to the significant correlations, it does not seem to pose a serious threat to the interpretation of the results from this study.

A second possible limitation relates to the generalizability of our results. Our sample was exclusively composed of applicants for the Belgian military. Hence, some caution is warranted in generalizing our results to other cultures, applicant populations, and industries. On the other hand, an advantage of studying a single organization is that non-recruitment factors that may have an impact on applicant attraction are controlled (Barber, 1998). Besides, the selection and allocation procedure of the Belgian military is certainly not unique. Multiple hurdle selection systems are widespread (e.g., Ryan et al., 2000). Also, the practice of job allocation is quite common in both private and public organizations. For instance, allocation systems for person-job matching are being used to assign job seekers to vacancies (Kellard, Adelman, Cebulla, & Heaven, 2002) and to allocate volunteers to jobs based on their interest profile and background experience (How HR can help, 2005). Furthermore, many occupations within the military—one of the largest employers worldwide—also exist outside a military context (e.g., nurse, firefighter, police, doctor, psychologist, pilot) (Hunt, 1991). Finally, given that the withdrawal rate in this study was within the same range as was found in studies using non-military applicants (Ryan et al., 2000; Schmit & Ryan, 1997), it does not appear that people who apply for military service are significantly more committed to their job pursuit than people who apply for a non-military job.

In the present study the full TPB model, supplemented with selection expectations, was successful in explaining job pursuit intention but unsuccessful in explaining actual job pursuit behavior. In fact, three out of five hypotheses were rejected because no significant relationships were found with job pursuit behavior. Above, we have offered some tentative explanations for the nonsignificant relationships, yet the question remains: what are the implications of these findings for theory building and future research agendas? With regard to theory building, our results suggest that, in multiple hurdle selection contexts, intentions are not in all situations and not for all individuals good predictors of actual behavior. Specifically, we found that the intention-behavior relationship was stronger for applicants with high test scores. The predictive power of the TPB may be further improved by including other variables such as number of job offers, perceived job alternatives, hiring expectancies, and number of applications that may possibly affect the predictive power of intentions for actual pursuit behavior. Future research may also benefit from investigating self-regulatory motivational processes, such as psychological

commitment and effort (Bagozzi, 1992), that may intervene between the formation of an intention and the decision to act, in particular because in most, if not all, hiring situations time lags occur (Arvey et al., 1975; Rynes et al., 1991; Soelberg, 1967).

From a theoretical perspective (e.g., expectancy-value theory, Feather, 1982), the nonsignificant relationship between selection expectations and job pursuit behavior suggests that applicants' beliefs about the forthcoming selection procedure carry insufficient weight to affect applicants' behavior, and—a fortiori—that other beliefs are probably more important in predicting job pursuit behavior. For example, recent studies on employer branding of the military (e.g., Lievens, 2007; Lievens, Van Hove, & Anseel, 2007) have shown that applicants' early impressions of the organization (e.g., exciting, secure) are associated with the organization's attractiveness as an employer. Hence, future research could investigate the importance of these early impressions relative to applicants' expectations of the selection procedure in predicting job pursuit behavior.

Practical implications

The results showed that respondents with long time lags between application and the next selection hurdle were more likely to withdraw. Similar findings have been reported previously (Arvey et al., 1975; Rynes et al., 1991). In addition to these former studies, our study suggests that lags may even be more important than the traditional determinants of applicant attraction, such as job pursuit intention, in predicting withdrawal. From a practical perspective, these results suggest that organizations should shorten time lags between selection hurdles as much as possible to take full advantage of the applicant population.

Given the potential impact of selection expectations on a variety of attitudes, intentions, cognitions, and behaviors, organizations may want to enhance applicants' expectations (Bell et al., 2004). For example, organizations could provide information about their selection procedure through their corporate Web Sites. However, some caution is warranted. As noted by Bell et al., raising expectations that cannot be met may result in adverse outcomes such as withdrawal and negative word-of-mouth. Therefore, organizations should pay just as much attention to improving their selection procedures in order to meet or exceed applicants' expectations.

In conclusion, this study shows that although selection expectations and the TPB variables are good predictors of job pursuit intention, they do not necessarily succeed in predicting actual job pursuit behavior. That is, selection expectations, job pursuit attitude, subjective norm, and controllability were significantly related to job pursuit intention. Only, time lag and subjective norm, however, accounted for a significant amount of variance in actual behavior. Attitude mediated the relationship between expectations and job pursuit intention. These results add to the increasing knowledge on applicant expectations of selection procedures and their role in making vocational choices.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by a Special PhD grant of the Fund for Scientific Research Flanders, Belgium (F.W.O.—Vlaanderen). We would like to acknowledge Jenny De Maret (Belgian Ministry of Defense) for assisting in data collection.

Author biographies

Bert Schreurs received his PhD in Psychology from the University of Leuven, Belgium, and is currently Assistant Professor at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. His research interests include recruitment, selection, and occupational health.

Eva Derous held her PhD in Psychology from the University of Leuven, Belgium. She is currently working as an Assistant Professor in Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Her research interests are in recruitment and selection, work motivation, and workplace diversity.

Edwin A. J. van Hooft received his PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the Free University Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and is currently Assistant Professor at the Institute of Psychology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. His research interests include motivation and self-regulation, recruitment, and job search and reemployment.

Karin Proost received her PhD in Psychology from the University of Leuven, Belgium, and is currently employed at the Open University, the Netherlands, as an Assistant Professor. Her main research interests are applicant reactions and work-life balance.

Karel De Witte received his PhD in Psychology from the University of Leuven, Belgium, where he is currently employed as an Associate Professor. His research interests include applicant reactions, HRD, and management of hospitals.

References

- Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behavior. In J. Kuhl, & J. Beckman (Eds.), *Action-control: From cognition to behavior* (pp. 11–39). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179–211.
- Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32, 665–683.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (2005). The influence of attitudes on behavior. In D. Albarracín, B. T. Johnson, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *The handbook of attitudes*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Allen, D. G., Weeks, K. P., & Moffitt, K. R. (2005). Turnover intentions and voluntary turnover: The moderating roles of self-monitoring, locus of control, proactive personality, and risk aversion. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 980–990.
- Anderson, N. (2004). Editorial - The dark side of the moon: Applicant perspectives, negative psychological effects (NPEs), and candidate decision making in selection. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 12, 1–8.
- Armitage, C. J., & Conner, M. (2001). Efficacy of the theory of planned behavior: A meta-analytic review. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 40, 471–499.
- Armitage, C. J., Conner, M., Loach, J., & Willetts, D. (1999). Different perceptions of control: Applying an extended theory of planned behavior to legal and illegal drug use. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 21, 301–316.
- Arnold, J., Loan-Clarke, J., Coombs, C., Wilkinson, A., Park, J., & Preston, D. (2006). How well can the theory of planned behavior account for occupational intentions? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 69, 374–390.
- Arvey, R. D., Gordon, M. E., Massengill, D. P., & Mussio, S. J. (1975). Differential dropout rates of minority and majority job candidates due to “time lags” between selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*, 28, 175–180.
- Bachman, J. G., Segal, D. R., Freedman-Doan, P., & O'Malley, P. M. (2000). Who chooses military service? Correlates of propensity and enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces. *Military Psychology*, 12, 1–30.
- Bagozzi, R. P. (1992). The self-regulation of attitudes, intentions, and behavior. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 55, 178–204.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.

- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37, 122–147.
- Barber, A. E. (1998). *Recruiting employees: Individual and organizational perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173–1182.
- Bauer, T. N., Maertz, C. P., Dolen, M. R., & Campion, M. A. (1998). Longitudinal assessment of applicant reactions to employment testing and test outcome feedback. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83, 892–903.
- Bell, B. S., Ryan, A. M., & Wiechmann, D. (2004). Justice expectations and applicant perceptions. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 12, 24–38.
- Bell, B. S., Wiechmann, D., & Ryan, A. M. (2006). Consequences of organizational justice expectations in a selection system. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 455–466.
- Breaugh, J. A. (2006). Rethinking the control of nuisance variables in theory testing. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 20, 429–443.
- Cable, D. M., Aiman-Smith, L., Mulvey, P. W., & Edwards, J. R. (2000). The sources and accuracy of job applicants' beliefs about organizational culture. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43, 1076–1085.
- Cable, D. M., & Judge, T. A. (1994). Pay preferences and job search decisions: A person-organization fit perspective. *Personnel Psychology*, 47, 317–348.
- Cable, D. M., & Judge, T. A. (1996). Person-organization fit, job choice decisions, and organizational entry. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 67, 294–311.
- Chan, D., Schmitt, N., DeShon, R. P., Clause, C. S., & Delbridge, K. (1997). Reactions to cognitive ability tests: The relationships between race, test performance, face validity perceptions, and test-taking motivation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82, 300–310.
- Chapman, D. S., Uggerslev, K. L., Carroll, S. A., Piasentin, K. A., & Jones, D. A. (2005). Applicant attraction to organizations and job choice: A meta-analytical review of the correlates of recruiting outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 928–944.
- Colquitt, J. A. (2001). On the dimensionality of organizational justice: A construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 386–400.
- Conner, M., & Armitage, C. J. (1998). Extending the theory of planned behavior: A review and avenues for further research. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28, 1429–1464.
- Courneya, K. S. (1994). Predicting repeated behavior from intention: The issue of scale correspondence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 24, 580–594.
- Davies, J., Foxall, G. R., & Pallister, J. (2002). Beyond the intention-behaviour mythology: An integrated model of recycling. *Marketing Theory*, 2, 29–113.
- Derous, E., Born, Ph. M., & De Witte, K. (2004). How applicants want and expect to be treated: Applicants' selection treatment beliefs and the development of the social process questionnaire on selection. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 12, 99–119.
- Derous, E., & Schreurs, B. (in press). Modeling the structure of applicant reactions: An empirical study within the Belgian military. *Military Psychology*.
- Doty, D. H., & Glick, W. H. (1998). Common method bias: Does common methods variance really bias results? *Organizational Research Methods*, 1, 374–406.
- Dumas, J. E., Nissley-Tsiopinis, J., & Moreland, A. D. (2007). From intent to enrollment, attendance, and participation in preventive parenting groups. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 16, 1–26.
- Edwards, J. R. (2008). To prosper, organizational psychology should... overcome methodological barriers to progress. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29, 469–491.
- Feather, N. T. (1982). Human values and the prediction of action: An expectancy-valence analysis. In N. T. Feather (Ed.), *Expectations and actions: Expectancy-value models in psychology* (pp. 263–289). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fishbein, M. (1980). A theory of reasoned action: Some applications and implications. In H. E. Howe, & M. M. Page (Eds.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation* (Vol. 27, pp. 65–116). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Gibson, J. L., Griepentrog, B. K., & Marsh, S. M. (2007). Parental influence on youth propensity to join the military. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 70, 525–541.
- Gilliland, S. W. (1993). The perceived fairness of selection systems: An organizational justice perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 18, 694–734.
- Gist, M. E., & Mitchell, T. R. (1992). Self-efficacy: A theoretical analysis of its determinants and malleability. *Academy of Management Review*, 17, 183–211.

- Godin, G., & Kok, G. (1996). The theory of planned behavior: A review of its applications to health-related behaviors. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 11, 87–98.
- Harrison, D. A. (1995). Volunteer motivation and attendance decisions: Competitive theory testing in multiple samples from a homeless shelter. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, 371–385.
- Hausknecht, J. P., Day, D. V., & Thomas, S. C. (2004). Applicant reactions to selection procedures: An updated model and meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 57, 639–683.
- Hedeker, D., Mermelstein, R. J., & Demirtas, H. (2007). Analysis of binary outcomes with missing data: Missing = smoking, last observation carried forward, and a little multiple imputation. *Addiction*, 102, 1564–1573.
- Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E. F. (2003). Measuring attraction to organizations. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 63, 986–1001.
- Highhouse, S., Stierwalt, S. L., Bachiochi, P. D., Elder, A. E., & Fisher, G. (1999). Effects of advertised human resource management practices on attraction of African American applicants. *Personnel Psychology*, 52, 425–442.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- How HR can help in the aftermath of disaster: Some lessons from the tsunami experience in Thailand. (2005). *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 13, 18–20.
- Hunt, J. G. (1991). *Leadership: A new synthesis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Huselid, M. A., & Day, N. E. (1991). Organizational commitment, job involvement, and turnover: A substantive and methodological analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76, 380–391.
- Kellard, K., Adelman, L., Cebulla, A., & Heaven, C. (2002). From job seekers to job keepers: Job retention, advancement and the role of in-work support programmes. *Research Report 170*, Department for Work and Pensions, Leeds, UK.
- Lieberman, A. M. (2005). How much more likely? The implications of odds ratios for probabilities. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 26, 253–266.
- Lievens, F. (2007). Employer branding in the Belgian Army: The importance of instrumental and symbolic beliefs for potential applicants, actual applicants, and military employees. *Human Resource Management*, 46, 51–69.
- Lievens, F., Van Hove, G., & Anseel, F. (2007). Organizational identity and employer image: Towards a unifying framework. *British Journal of Management*, 18, S45–S59.
- Lindsay, P. H., & Norman, D. A. (1977). *Human information processing: An introduction to psychology* (2nd ed.). New York: Academic Press.
- Macan, T. H., Avedon, M. J., Paese, M., & Smith, D. E. (1994). The effects of applicants' reactions to cognitive ability tests and an assessment center. *Personnel Psychology*, 47, 715–738.
- Manigart, P. (2005). Risks and recruitment in postmodern armed forces: The case of Belgium. *Armed Forces & Society*, 31, 559–582.
- Morrow, P. C., McElroy, J. C., Lacznia, K. S., & Fenton, J. B. (1999). Using absenteeism and performance to predict employee turnover: Early detection through company records. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 55, 358–374.
- Murphy, K. R. (1986). When your top choice turns you down: Effect of rejected job offers on the utility of selection tests. *Psychological Bulletin*, 99, 133–138.
- Okun, M. A., & Sloane, E. S. (2002). Application of planned behavior theory to predicting volunteer enrollment by college students in a campus-based program. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 30, 243–250.
- Olson, J. M., Roese, N. J., & Zanna, M. P. (1996). Expectancies. In E. T. Higgins, & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 211–238). New York: Guilford Press.
- Payne, S. C., & Huffman, A. H. (2005). A longitudinal examination of the influence of mentoring on organizational commitment and turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48, 158–168.
- Podsakoff, P. M., & Organ, D. W. (1986). Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Management*, 12, 69–82.
- Prestholdt, P. H., Lane, I. M., & Mathews, R. C. (1987). Nurse turnover as reasoned action: Development of a process model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 72, 221–227.
- Ryan, A. M., Horvath, M., & Kriska, S. D. (2005). The role of recruiting source informativeness and organizational perceptions in decisions to apply. *International Journal of Recruitment and Selection*, 13, 235–249.
- Ryan, A. M., & Ployhart, R. E. (2000). Applicants' perceptions of selection procedures and decisions: A critical review and agenda for the future. *Journal of Management*, 26, 565–606.
- Ryan, A. M., Sacco, J. M., McFarland, L. A., & Kriska, S. D. (2000). Applicant self-selection: Correlates of withdrawal from a multiple hurdle process. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 163–179.

- Rynes, S. L., & Barber, A. E. (1990). Applicant attraction strategies: An organizational perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 15, 286–310.
- Rynes, S. L., Bretz, R. D., & Gerhart, B. (1991). The importance of recruitment in job choice: A different way of looking. *Personnel Psychology*, 44, 487–520.
- Rynes, S. L., & Lawler, J. (1983). A policy-capturing investigation of the role of expectancies in decisions to pursue job alternative. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 68, 620–631.
- Schmit, M. J., & Ryan, A. M. (1997). Applicant withdrawal: The role of test-taking attitudes and racial differences. *Personnel Psychology*, 50, 855–876.
- Schreurs, B., Derous, E., Proost, K., Notelaers, G., & De Witte, K. (2008). Applicant selection expectations: Validating a multidimensional measure in the military. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 16, 170–176.
- Smither, J. W., Reilly, R. R., Millsap, R. E., Pearlman, K., & Stoffey, R. W. (1993). Applicant reactions to selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*, 46, 49–76.
- Soelberg, P. O. (1967). Unprogrammed decision making. *Industrial Management Review*, 8, 19–29.
- Somers, M. J. (1995). Organizational commitment, turnover and absenteeism: An examination of direct and interaction effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 16, 49–58.
- Song, Z., Wanberg, C. R., Niu, X., & Xie, Y. (2006). Action-state orientation and the theory of planned behavior: A study of job search in China. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 68, 490–503.
- Spector, P. E. (2006). Method variance in organizational research: Truth or urban legend? *Organizational Research Methods*, 9, 221–232.
- Sutton, S. (1998). Predicting and explaining intentions and behavior: How well are we doing? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28, 1317–1338.
- Sutton, S., Bickler, G., Sancho-Aldridge, J., & Saidi, G. (1994). Prospective study of predictors of attendance for breast screening in inner London. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 48, 65–73.
- Sutton, S., Saidi, G., Bickler, G., & Hunter, J. (1995). Does routine screening for breast cancer raise anxiety? Results from a three-wave prospective study in England. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 49, 413–418.
- Terry, D. J., & O'Leary, J. E. (1995). The theory of planned behaviour: The effects of perceived behavioural control and self-efficacy. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 34, 199–220.
- Triandis, H. C. (2000). Culture and conflict. *International Journal of Psychology*, 35, 145–152.
- Turban, D. B., Forret, M. L., & Hendrickson, C. L. (1998). Applicant attraction to firms: Influences of organization reputation, job and organizational attributes, and recruiter behaviors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 52, 24–44.
- Van Breukelen, W., Van der Vlist, R., & Steensma, H. (2004). Voluntary employee turnover: Combining variables from the “traditional” turnover literature with the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 25, 893–914.
- Van Hooft, E. A. J., Born, M. Ph., Taris, T. W., & Van der Flier, H. (2006). Ethnic and gender differences in applicants' decision-making processes: An application of the theory of reasoned action. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 14, 156–166.
- Van Hooft, E. A. J., Born, M. Ph., Taris, T. W., Van der Flier, H., & Blonk, R. W. B. (2004). Predictors of job search behavior among employed and unemployed people. *Personnel Psychology*, 57, 25–59.
- Van Hooft, E. A. J., Born, M. Ph., Taris, T. W., Van der Flier, H., & Blonk, R. W. B. (2005). Bridging the gap between intentions and behaviors: Implementation intentions, action control, and procrastination. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66, 238–256.
- Van Hoyer, G., & Lievens, F. (2005). Recruitment-related information sources and organizational attractiveness: Can something be done about negative publicity? *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 13, 179–187.
- Venkatesh, W., Morris, M. G., & Ackerman, P. L. (2000). A longitudinal field investigation of gender differences in individual technology adoption decision-making processes. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 83, 33–60.

Appendix: Overview of Items Used to Measure the TPB-Variables

Job pursuit attitude

I would regard it as sensible to attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

I would regard it is as wise to attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

I would regard it as useful to attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

Subjective norm

Most people who are important to me think that I should attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

People who are significant to me think that I should attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

Self-efficacy

I have confidence in my abilities to successfully complete the next phase of the testing process.

I doubt that I will be able to successfully complete the next phase of the testing process. (reverse scored)

I am sure that my skills are sufficient to successfully complete the next phase of the testing process.

I know that I have the capacities to be successful in the next phase of the testing process.

Controllability

I have sufficient resources to attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

I feel in complete control over whether or not I attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

There is a real chance that unforeseen circumstances will prevent me from attending the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection. (reverse scored)

It is beyond my control whether I will attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection. (reverse scored)

Job pursuit intention

I will continue to pursue a job with the military.

I will attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

I intend to attend the forthcoming selection day at the Center for Recruitment and Selection.

All self-report measures in this study utilized a 5-point Likert scale.

1 = *strongly disagree*

2 = *somewhat disagree*

3 = *neither agree nor disagree*

4 = *somewhat agree*

5 = *strongly agree*.