

Job search and the theory of planned behavior: Minority–majority group differences in The Netherlands[☆]

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Abstract

The labor market in many Western countries increasingly diversifies. However, little is known about job search behavior of “non-traditional” applicants such as ethnic minorities. This study investigated minority–majority group differences in the predictors of job search behavior, using the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Data were collected in a two-wave longitudinal design among 697 temporary employees in The Netherlands. Results showed that the ethnic minorities’ perceptions of social pressure predicted intentions to search for a (new) job more strongly than their personal attitudes did. The opposite was found in the native-Dutch group. Self-efficacy did not contribute to the prediction of job search intention. Job search behavior related significantly to job search outcomes, such as job attainment.

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1. Introduction

The process of pursuing (new) employment, or job search behavior, is an important aspect of people's work lives. That is, job search behavior determines the opportunity set of potential jobs from which job seekers may choose (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994), and influences outcomes such as employment status and employment quality (Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987). Job search behavior can be defined as "the specific behaviors through which effort and time are expended to acquire information about labor market alternatives" (Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994, p. 278). It includes activities such as preparing a resume, reading personnel advertisements, making inquiries to prospective employers, and going to job interviews. Previous research has investigated the antecedents of job search behavior and employment outcomes among both individuals entering the workforce, and unemployed and employed individuals. In a recent meta-analysis, Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz (2001) quantitatively reviewed this literature. Kanfer et al. (2001) concluded that the vast majority of studies investigated job search behavior among job losers and college graduates, whereas only a few studies reported data from employed samples. Moreover, hardly any of the studies focused on job search behavior of "non-traditional" applicants such as ethnic minorities. In the present time of culturally diversifying workforces (Chemers, Oskamp, & Costanzo, 1995; Triandis, Kurowski, & Gelfand, 1994), this is a serious omission in the literature.

In the current longitudinal study we, therefore, investigated and compared job search behavior and its predictors among ethnic minorities and the majority group in The Netherlands. We used a sample of individuals who worked or recently had worked for a temporary employment agency. Job search behavior is especially salient in this group because their employment position is relatively unstable and uncertain compared to the position of permanent employees. In addition, the workforce increasingly consists of temporary workers (e.g., Berchem, 2002; Feldman, Doeringhaus, & Turnley, 1994; Pot, Koene, & Paauwe, 2001), whilst little research has been conducted in this group (cf. Ellingson, Gruys, & Sackett, 1998). Also, the proportion of ethnic minorities is substantially larger among temporary workers than in the total workforce (Van der Ende, Donker van Heel, Koene, & Nauta, 2002).

We investigated the predictors of job search behavior among ethnic minorities and the Dutch majority using the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Although two previous studies already used the TPB to predict job search behavior (Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992), the current study extends the existing literature in three ways. First, previous research examined the applicability of the TPB in US samples of unemployed individuals (Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992) and graduating students (Caska, 1998). The current study extended the generalizability of the TPB by using the theory to predict job search behavior in a non-US sample of temporary employees. Second, the current study used a longitudinal design and assessed both the predictors and the outcomes of job search behavior. Third, although some studies investigated job search behavior of ethnic minorities (Green,

Tigges, & Diaz, 1999; Nesdale & Pinter, 2000), no research specifically examined and directly compared the predictors of job search behavior between ethnic minorities and the majority group. Before discussing the hypothesized cultural differences, we first present the general research model used in this study.

1.1. Research model

The theory of planned behavior, an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), has proved its value in the prediction of a whole range of behaviors, as is demonstrated in several reviews (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Sutton, 1998). Applied to job search behavior, the TPB states that the immediate antecedent of *job search behavior* is the intention to look for a job. *Job search intention* in turn, is predicted by the extent to which a person has a positive or negative evaluation of job search behavior (i.e., job search attitude), the perception of social pressure to look for a (new) job (i.e., subjective norm), and people's confidence in their ability to perform various job search activities (i.e., perceived behavioral control; Ajzen, 1991). According to the TPB, job search intention completely mediates the effects of job search attitude and subjective norm on job search behavior. Thus, there is no direct link between attitude and subjective norm on the one hand, and behavior on the other. Perceived behavior control, however, is supposed to influence behavior both directly and indirectly through intention. That is, people will be more likely to perform their intended job search activities, such as writing an application letter, if they feel confident in their ability to write a proper application letter (cf. Ajzen, 1991). Previous research has found support for the use of the TPB to predict job search behavior (Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992). Therefore, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 1. (a) Job search attitude, (b) subjective norm, and (c) perceived behavioral control positively predict job search intention.

Hypothesis 2. (a) Job search intention and (b) perceived behavioral control positively predict job search behavior.

Hypothesis 3. Job search intention: (a) completely mediates the relation of job search attitude and subjective norm with job search behavior, and (b) partially mediates the relation of perceived behavioral control with job search behavior.

The most obvious purpose and consequence of job search behavior is successful attainment of (new) employment. Schwab et al. (1987) noted that success in generating job alternatives is a function of the intensity of the individual's job search behavior. Indeed, research has indicated that individuals who spend more time on job seeking are more likely to find a (new) job than others (Kanfer et al., 2001). Based upon this research we expected that:

Hypothesis 4. Job search behavior relates positively to job attainment.

In addition to finding employment the quality of the obtained employment is an important employment outcome (Schwab et al., 1987; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Job search behavior is thought to relate positively to employment quality, because a more intense job search is likely to result in more job opportunities, allowing the job seeker to choose the best alternative. In the current study, we assessed employment quality with two measures: job satisfaction and agreement between the obtained and wanted job. We expected that:

Hypothesis 5. Among individuals who obtained (new) employment, job search behavior relates positively to: (a) job satisfaction in the new job and (b) the agreement between the obtained and wanted job.

It should be noted that job attainment and employment quality do not just depend on job search behavior. Other variables such as the labor market demand (Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002), interviewing skills (Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Maurer, Solamon, Andrews, & Troxtel, 2001), and discrimination in personnel selection (Evers & Van der Flier, 1998; Stewart & Perlow, 2001) influence job attainment. Because our focus was on the predictors and outcomes of *job search behavior*, we did not include these variables in the current study. Regarding the potential effects of these variables on job search behavior, it should be mentioned that the TPB is a complete theory of behavior, in that other variables are thought to influence behavior only indirectly (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Fishbein, 1980). Specifically, external variables such as demographics, personality traits, perceived labor market demand, and culture will affect the attitudinal and normative considerations, and those considerations will ultimately predict intentions and behavior. In addition, external variables may have an impact on the relative importance of attitudes and subjective norms (Fishbein, 1980). In the next section, we will discuss the anticipated effects of culture on the relative importance of job search attitudes and subjective norms in the prediction of job search intentions.

1.2. Minority–majority group differences

Populations and workforces in many Western countries increasingly diversify (Alders, 2001; Chemers et al., 1995; Hall, 1997). In the United States, black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans constitute about a quarter of the population, and this proportion is projected to rise substantially (Triandis et al., 1994). In The Netherlands, about 15–20% of the population has a cultural background other than Dutch (Statistics Netherlands, 2001). The major ethnic minority groups in The Netherlands are from Indonesian, Surinamese, Antillean, Turkish, and Moroccan descent. These minority groups have different statuses (Pettigrew, 1998). That is, whereas the Indonesian and Surinamese/Antillean immigrants are from (former) Dutch colonies, the Turkish and Moroccan immigrants originally arrived in The Netherlands as “guest workers” in the 1960s and 1970s. Many of them, however, did not return to their countries of origin, but rather had their families come over to The Netherlands (Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). In general, ethnic minorities have lower levels of education as

compared to the native-Dutch (Statistics Netherlands, 2002). Furthermore, their position at the labor market is relatively weak, as is indicated by high unemployment rates and overrepresentation in lower skilled jobs (Dagevos, 2001; Statistics Netherlands, 2002). There is some evidence, however, that these differences are diminishing over time (Te Nijenhuis, De Jong, Evers, & Van der Flier, 2003). Discrimination based on race, ethnicity or nationality is forbidden by law in The Netherlands, and employers are required to make an effort to achieve a proportional representation of ethnic minorities within their organization. The Netherlands have adopted the ideal of multiculturalism, meaning that respect for cultural differences and egalitarian goals are promoted (Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2003). There exists a stern norm against blatant prejudice, illustrated by Pettigrew's (1998) findings that blatant prejudice is relatively low in The Netherlands. Nevertheless, research has shown some evidence for subtle prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998) and indirect discrimination (De Vries & Pettigrew, 1998; Van der Werf, 1992) in The Netherlands.

Individuals with different ethnic backgrounds are likely to differ in their attitudes, values, and norms, because of their different cultural roots. Hofstede (1980, 1991) extensively investigated value differences between 53 countries and regions. Individualism versus collectivism appeared to be an important dimension on which country cultures differ. Hofstede (1991) described individualism as pertaining to cultures in which the ties between individuals are loose, and people are expected to look after themselves. In these cultures people tend to perceive themselves as autonomous individuals who are independent of the group, and they tend to give priority to personal goals over collective goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Collectivism has been described as pertaining to cultures in which people are integrated in cohesive ingroups that protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Hofstede, 1991). In these cultures people tend to perceive themselves as interdependent with their group, and they tend to give priority to the goals of the group over their personal goals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Previous research has characterized the Dutch national culture as highly individualistic. Hofstede (1980, 1991) classified The Netherlands among the five most individualistic countries in his study. In the GLOBE project, The Netherlands belonged to the five countries ranked lowest on group and family collectivism (Javidan & House, 2001). In contrast to the highly individualistic Dutch culture, the cultures of the major ethnic minority groups in The Netherlands have been described as more collectivistic (GLOBE-study, 2001; Hofstede, 1991; Mesquita, 2001). Based on the cultural differences in individualism and collectivism, we formulated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 6. Whereas (a) subjective norm is a stronger predictor of job search intention than job search attitude in the ethnic minority group, (b) job search attitude is a stronger predictor of job search intention than subjective norm in the Dutch group.

Hypothesis 7. Whereas (a) subjective norm is a stronger predictor of job search intention in the ethnic minority group than in the Dutch majority group, (b) job search attitude is a stronger predictor of job search intention in the Dutch majority group than in the ethnic minority group.

To summarize, we expect that the TPB accurately predicts job search behavior of temporary employees in The Netherlands. Moreover, we expect job search behavior to be a significant predictor of job search outcomes, such as successful attainment of (new) employment, job satisfaction in the new job, and agreement of the obtained job with the type of job wanted. Furthermore, we expect several differences in the importance of the various predictors of job search behavior between ethnic minorities and the majority group. Specifically, we propose that personal attitudes regarding job seeking are more important predictors of job search intention in the majority group, whereas perceptions of social pressure to seek (new) employment are more important predictors of job search intention in the ethnic minority group.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedures

The data were collected in a longitudinal design. Job search intention and the predictor variables were assessed at Time 1 (November 2000). Actual job search behavior and the outcome variables were assessed four months later at Time 2 (April 2001). Time 1 surveys were sent to a random sample of 4985 individuals who worked or recently had worked for a large Dutch temporary employment agency. A total of 714 usable questionnaires were received, resulting in a response rate of 14.3%. Compared to the overall random sample, respondents received slightly more education, $M = 1.96$ ($SD = 0.62$) versus $M = 1.81$ ($SD = 0.66$) on a 3-point scale, $t(881.52) = 5.87$, $p < .001$, and were more often female, $M = 0.67$ ($SD = 0.50$) versus $M = 0.50$ ($SD = 0.49$), $t(914.46) = 9.19$, $p < .001$. No significant difference in age was found between respondents and the overall sample, $M = 27.34$ ($SD = 11.36$) versus $M = 26.58$ ($SD = 10.29$), $t(863.95) = 1.70$, $p = .09$.

A total of 108 respondents (15.1%) considered themselves as belonging to one or more non-Dutch minority groups (i.e., Surinamese, Antillean, Turkish, Moroccan, Other). Our sample reflected the distribution of the various non-Dutch minority groups in The Netherlands reasonably well. As we focus on ethnic minorities in this study, the non-Dutch respondents from Northwestern European countries were excluded from the analyses, resulting in a sample of 697 respondents.

Two-thirds of the respondents in the resulting sample were female ($n = 469$), and the respondents' age ranged from 14 to 69 ($M = 27.2$, $SD = 11.4$). Level of education varied between primary school/lower vocational training (21.6%), secondary school/high school/intermediate vocational training (62.1%), and college/university (16.3%). At the time of the survey 74.6% of the respondents were employed. The vast majority of the respondents (88.2%) indicated they intended to engage in some form of job seeking in the next four months. Of these, 12.8% reported they preferred a temporary job, whereas 55.5% reported they preferred a permanent job. The remainder of the participants did not have a preference.

In the Time 1 questionnaire 480 respondents (68.9%) indicated they were willing to participate in a short telephone follow-up measurement four months later. The

respondents were interviewed by a trained graduate student, using a structured questionnaire with closed format questions. In total 404 individuals participated in the follow-up survey (response rate is 84.2%). Comparison of the Time 1 respondents who did, and who did not participate at Time 2 revealed no significant differences regarding gender, $M = 0.68$ ($SD = 0.47$) versus $M = 0.67$ ($SD = 0.47$), $t(694) = -0.29$, $p = .77$, level of education, $M = 1.93$ ($SD = 0.59$) versus $M = 1.97$ ($SD = 0.64$), $t(684) = 0.90$, $p = .37$, and employment position, $M = 0.75$ ($SD = 0.43$) versus $M = 0.74$ ($SD = 0.44$), $t(694) = -0.44$, $p = .66$. However, Time 2 respondents were slightly older, $M = 28.05$ ($SD = 11.91$) versus $M = 26.12$ ($SD = 10.45$), $t(668.60) = -2.27$, $p < .05$, and less often from a non-Dutch ethnic background, $M = 0.10$ ($SD = 0.31$) versus $M = 0.18$ ($SD = 0.39$), $t(537.77) = 2.83$, $p < .01$, than Time 2 non-respondents.

2.2. Measures

Job search intention, job search attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control were measured in the questionnaire at Time 1. Job search behavior, job attainment, job satisfaction, and the agreement between the obtained and wanted job were measured in the telephone follow-up survey at Time 2. Unless stated otherwise, items were completed by using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). As described below, our measures were based on measures that have been shown to be reliable and valid in previous research. Because the current study focused on a group of job seekers with relatively low levels of education, and with a relatively large proportion of ethnic minorities, we conducted a pilot-study in June 2000 in a comparable sample of 59 individuals to test our measures. The measures appeared to be usable, and sufficiently reliable in this specific context.

2.2.1. Job search outcomes

At Time 2 of the study we assessed three different job search outcomes. First, job attainment was assessed by asking respondents who were employed at Time 1 whether they changed jobs, and respondents who were not employed at Time 1 whether they found a job. Second, overall job satisfaction in the new job was measured with one item asking the respondents to indicate whether they were satisfied with their jobs. Response options ranged from 1 = *very dissatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*. A single-item job satisfaction measure was chosen to reduce the length of the telephone follow-up questionnaire, and to avoid asking too many seemingly repetitious questions. Third, we measured the agreement between the obtained and wanted job. Respondents were asked at Time 1 whether they were searching for a part-time job or a full-time job, and whether they were searching for a temporary job or a permanent job. At Time 2 we asked the respondents who found a (new) job whether it was a part-time or a full-time job, and whether it was a temporary or a permanent job. The measure for agreement consisted of two items. The first measured the agreement with regard to part-time versus full-time, and the second measured the agreement with regard to temporary versus permanent (1 = *in agreement*, 0 = *not in agreement*).

2.2.2. Job search behavior

Job search behavior was assessed at Time 2 by an 11-item index based on the behavioral scale of Blau (1994). Participants were asked to indicate how much time they *had spent* on several preparatory and active job search activities in the *last four months*. The items of Blau's scale were translated into Dutch and slightly adapted to the Dutch context and the specific characteristics of the sample (which contains both employed and unemployed job seekers, and a relatively large number of minimally educated job seekers). One item was dropped because it applied to employed job seekers only ("Used current within company sources [e.g., colleagues] to generate potential job leads"). Another item was dropped because it concerned a highly uncommon job search activity in The Netherlands ("Listed yourself as a job applicant in a newspaper, journal or professional association"). Furthermore, two items were added to the scale, one about visiting job fairs, and one about the use of the internet to locate job openings (cf. Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999). The resulting scale included the following items: made inquiries/read about getting a job, prepared/revised resume, read classified/help wanted advertisements, talked with friends or relatives about possible job leads, spoke with previous employers or business acquaintances about possible job leads, visited job fairs, contacted employment agencies, looked for jobs on the internet, made inquiries to prospective employers, sent out application letters/filled out job applications, and gone on a job interview. Response options ranged from 1 = *no time at all* to 5 = *very much time*. The coefficient α for this scale was .89 among ethnic minorities and .86 among the native-Dutch.

2.2.3. Job search intention

Ajzen (1991) describes intentions as the extent to which people are willing to try hard to perform the behavior, or the effort they are planning to exert in order to perform the behavior. Previous studies investigating job search behavior within the framework of the TRA or TPB assessed job search intentions with only one or a few general items referring to the effort job seekers intend to exert (see Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), however, stress the importance of correspondence in specificity, target, situation, and time between the behavior and intention measure. We therefore assessed job search intention with the same 11-item index as job search behavior. At Time 1 participants were asked to indicate how much time they *intended to spend* on the various job search activities in the *next four months*. Response options were identical to the behavior measure. Coefficient α for this scale was .92 among both ethnic minorities and the native-Dutch.

2.2.4. Job search attitude

According to the TPB and its predecessor the TRA (job search) attitudes are a function of the individual's beliefs that (job search) behavior leads to certain outcomes (i.e., job attainment) and the individual's evaluations of these outcomes (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein, 1980). Consequently, two types of measures of attitudes can be distinguished, that is, indirect belief-based measures and direct global measures (Ajzen, 1991). Job search

attitudes were assessed using the latter type of measure, because global attitudes are the more proximal predictors of intentions as compared to an individual's beliefs, and because previous research has demonstrated that global attitudes are valid predictors of job search intentions (Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they regarded it *wise*, *beneficial*, and *useless* (reverse scored) to seek for a (new) job in the next four months (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). In addition to this more instrumental attitudinal measure, we distinguished a second, more affective component. Based on Ajzen and Driver (1992), we asked participants to indicate whether they thought job search to be *interesting*, *enjoyable*, *pleasant*, and *boring* (reverse scored). Confirmatory factor analysis showed support for a two-factor structure, with the instrumental job search attitude items loading on the one factor and the affective items on the other, as the two-factor model fitted the data significantly better than the one-factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{two-factor model}}(13, N = 686) = 85.92, p < .001$, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .97, comparative fit index (CFI) = .97 versus $\chi^2_{\text{one-factor model}}(14, N = 686) = 1144.89, p < .001$, GFI = .72, CFI = .48; $\chi^2_{\text{diff.}} = 1058.97, p < .001$. Instrumental and affective job search attitudes were therefore regarded as two distinct variables in this study. Among native-Dutch coefficient α was .84 for the instrumental job search attitude scale, and .83 for the affective job search attitude scale. Among ethnic minorities coefficient α was .76 and .78, respectively.

2.2.5. Subjective norm

As with attitudes, subjective norms are also a function of beliefs. Specifically, the individual's perceived social pressure to engage in job seeking (i.e., subjective norm) is based on the person's beliefs that specific individuals or groups approve or disapprove of performing job search behavior (i.e., normative beliefs), and the person's motivation to comply with these referent individuals or groups (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein, 1980). As with attitudes, also two types of measures of subjective norms can be distinguished, that is, indirect belief-based measures and direct global measures (Ajzen, 1991). Again, in correspondence with previous research (Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey, 1996), and because global measures of subjective norm are the more proximal predictors of intentions as compared to belief-based measures, subjective norms were assessed using the direct, global measure. More specifically, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which *their significant other*, respectively, *most people who are important to them* think they should search for a (new) job in the next four months (cf. Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). Coefficient α for this scale was .89 in both groups.

2.2.6. Perceived behavioral control

In accordance with previous research, perceived behavioral control was measured as self-efficacy concerning job search behavior (see also Ajzen, 1991; Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992). Eight items were selected based on Ellis and Taylor (1983) and Van Ryn and Vinokur (1992). Sample items include: "I have confidence in my abilities to complete a good job-application" and "In general, I'm not very

good at impressing potential employers with my qualifications” (reverse scored). Coefficient α for this scale was .68 in the ethnic minority group and .78 in the native-Dutch group.

2.2.7. Demographic and control variables

In addition to the psychological variables described before, the respondents' gender, age, education, employment position, and ethnicity were measured. Gender was coded 0 = *male* and 1 = *female*. Level of education was assessed by asking the respondents to indicate the highest education type they had completed. Education was then coded as 1 = *primary education/lower vocational training*, 2 = *secondary school/high school/intermediate vocational training*, 3 = *college/university*. Employment position was assessed with the following item: “Do you have a paid job at the moment?” Response options included *yes* (coded 1) and *no* (coded 0). Ethnicity was measured using the subjective method. That is, respondents were asked: “To which ethnic group(s) do you consider yourself to belong to?” Response options included *Antillean/Aruban, Moroccan, Dutch, Surinamese, Turkish*, and *Other*. Respondents could tick one or more options. Ethnicity was then coded as 0 = *Dutch majority* (that is, respondents who indicated they considered themselves Dutch only) and 1 = *ethnic minority* (that is, respondents who considered themselves as belonging to one or more ethnic minority groups).

2.3. Analyses

In Section 3, we first present the analyses assessing the predictors of job search intention among all temporary employees who participated in the Time 1 survey. Second, we present the analyses of the predictors of job search behavior among the Time 2 respondents. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used in both cases. The Time 1 and Time 2 samples that were used in these analyses consisted of both respondents who indicated they intended to engage in job seeking and respondents who indicated they did not. Although the latter group was small (i.e., only 10.5% if the Time 1 respondents did not intend to engage in any of the 11 job search activities), we did include them in our analyses. The reasoning for that was twofold. First, this latter group can be regarded as having low levels of intention, which can be interpreted as reflecting natural variation on intention. Second, intentions may change over a four month time period, meaning that despite their low levels of job search intention some of these respondents might still engage in job seeking. Gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and employment position were used as control variables in the job search intention and job search behavior analyses, because these variables have been shown to be related to both job search behavior and job search outcomes. Specifically, Kanfer et al. (2001) found in their meta-analytical review of the job search literature that men, younger individuals, non-Whites, and individuals with higher levels of education showed higher levels of job search behavior than women, older individuals, Whites, and individuals with less education, respectively. In addition, employment position was selected as control variable because other research has indicated that unemployed individuals show higher levels

of job search intention and behavior as compared with employed individuals (Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, & Blonk, in press).

Hierarchical logistic regression analysis was used to assess the relation of job search behavior with job attainment and the agreement between the obtained and wanted job, because these outcome measures were dichotomous. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to assess the relation of job search behavior with job satisfaction. In the job attainment analysis all Time 2 participants were included. In the job satisfaction analysis, however, only those Time 2 participants were selected who obtained (new) employment since the Time 1 measurement. In the agreement analyses, those Time 2 participants were selected who obtained (new) employment since the Time 1 measurement, and who reported at the Time 1 measurement what type of employment they were looking for. Because employment outcomes tend to relate to several biographical variables (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001), gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, and employment position were used as control variables.

To assess the minority–majority group differences in the relative importance of the TPB-variables in the prediction of job search intention, hierarchical regression analyses were performed for both groups separately. The resulting β -weights for instrumental attitude and subjective norm were compared within both groups. A t test was used to examine the hypothesized differences between the β -weights. Moderated multiple regression analysis was performed (Aguinis, 1995) to examine the hypothesized differences of the β -weights between the two groups. To avoid multicollinearity, we converted the variables used in the regression analysis to z -scores first (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

3. Results

Table 1 presents the means, the standard deviations, and the correlations among the variables. Instrumental job search attitude, affective job search attitude, and subjective norm correlated significantly with job search intention and behavior in the expected direction. Self-efficacy, however, did not show a significant relation with either intention or behavior. Job search intention showed a significant positive association with job search behavior. Correlation analysis further supported the distinction between instrumental and affective job search attitude; that is, the correlation between both variables was significant, but relatively small ($r = .12$, $p < .01$), and the correlation patterns with the other variables differed substantially.

3.1. Prediction of job search intention

To test Hypothesis 1, stating that job search intention can be predicted with the variables: (a) job search attitude, (b) subjective norm, and (c) self-efficacy, we performed a hierarchical regression analysis (see Table 2). In the first step of the analysis job search intention was regressed on the control variables gender, age, level of education, employment position, and ethnicity. Education had a significant positive

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

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<i>Time 1 respondents</i>																
1 Gender ^a	0.67	0.47														
2 Age	27.24	11.35	.04													
3 Education	1.95	0.61	.09*	.17**												
4 Employment position ^b	0.75	0.44	.05	.16**	.11*											
5 Ethnicity ^c	0.14	0.34	-.13**	.01	-.07	-.04										
6 Instr. Job search attitude	2.89	1.12	-.10*	.06	.06	-.20**	.14**									
7 Aff. Job search attitude	3.03	0.78	-.07	.01	.02	-.03	.02	.12**								
8 Subjective norm	2.13	1.09	-.05	-.03	.02	-.22**	.25**	.59**	.01							
9 Self-efficacy	3.63	0.58	-.01	.02	.12**	.06	-.14**	-.05	.35**	-.19**						
10 Job search intention	1.91	0.81	-.03	.06	.08*	-.13**	.29**	.52**	.18**	.46**	-.03					
<i>Time 2 respondents</i>																
11 Job search behavior	1.60	0.60	.00	-.02	.01	-.22**	.20**	.34**	.10*	.31**	-.03	.47**				
12 Job attainment	0.27	0.45	-.04	-.03	.03	-.11*	.01	.26**	.00	.11*	.07	.17**	.28**			
<i>Time 2 respondents with a new job</i>																
13 Job satisfaction	4.21	0.93	.09	-.04	.00	.12	-.08	-.18	-.13	-.06	.10	-.15	.02	—		
14 Agreement 1	0.23	0.42	.09	.20*	.04	.06	.09	.03	-.11	.04	.08	-.04	.11	—	.09	
15 Agreement 2	0.47	0.50	.13	-.01	.01	.06	.02	.15	.12	.07	-.06	.16	.23*	—	.08	.38**

Note. Due to incidental missing values *N* varies between 673 and 696 for the Time 1 respondents, between 396 and 404 for correlations for the Time 2 respondents, and between 96 and 110 for the respondents with a new job. Agreement 1 refers to agreement between the obtained and wanted job regarding the amount of hours (full-time versus part-time), whereas Agreement 2 refers to agreement regarding the type of contract (permanent versus temporary).

^a 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b 0 = not employed, 1 = employed.

^c 0 = native-Dutch, 1 = ethnic minority.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Hierarchical regression analysis of job search intention and job search behavior

Predictor	Job search intention (β)		Job search behavior (β)	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Control variables				
Gender ^a	.01	.05	.03	.03
Age	.06	.03	-.01	-.04
Education	.10*	.05	.03	.01
Employment position ^b	-.14**	-.01	-.21**	-.13**
Ethnicity ^c	.27**	.19**	.18**	.05
TPB-variables				
Instr. job search attitude		.36**		
Aff. job search attitude		.11**		
Subjective norm		.22**		
Self-efficacy		.03		-.01
Job search intention				.44**
Multiple <i>R</i>	.32**	.60**	.28**	.49**
ΔR^2	.10**	.26**	.08**	.16**
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.09**	.35**	.07**	.23**

Note. Due to incidental missing values $N = 660$ for job search intention and $N = 392$ for job search behavior.

^a 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b 0 = not employed, 1 = employed.

^c 0 = native-Dutch, 1 = ethnic minority.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

effect, that is, higher educated respondents intended to invest more time in their job search than did lower educated respondents. Employment position had a significant negative effect, that is, respondents with a paid job scored lower on job search intention than did respondents without a paid job. Ethnicity had a significant positive effect, indicating that ethnic minorities intended to invest more time in their job search than the Dutch majority did.

In Step 2 the TPB-variables were added. Instrumental job search attitude, affective job search attitude, and subjective norm significantly predicted intention, in support of Hypothesis 1a and b. Hypothesis 1c, stating that self-efficacy significantly predicts job search intention, was not supported. The TPB-variables explained 26% extra variance in job search intention over the control variables, resulting in an adjusted R^2 of .35.

3.2. Prediction of job search behavior

To test Hypotheses 2, stating that job search behavior can be predicted with: (a) job search intention and (b) self-efficacy, we performed a second hierarchical regression analysis. Table 2 presents the results. In the first step of the analysis job search behavior was regressed on the control variables age, gender, education, employment

position, and ethnicity. Employment position and ethnicity both had a significant effect on job search behavior. That is, respondents without a paid job and ethnic minorities engaged in more job search behavior than did respondents with a paid job, respectively, the Dutch majority. In the second step we added the TPB-variables. Job search intention showed a strong effect on job search behavior, in support of Hypothesis 2a. The effect of self-efficacy was not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 2b was not supported. The TPB-variables explained 16% extra variance in job search behavior over the control variables.

To test the mediating role of job search intention in the relation of job search attitude, subjective norm, and self-efficacy with job search behavior, we performed a mediated variable regression analysis, that is, a hierarchical regression analysis with job search behavior as dependent variable. In the first step job search behavior was regressed on the control variables. In the second step the predictor variables instrumental job search attitude, affective job search attitude, subjective norm, and self-efficacy were added to the equation. In the third step the mediator variable, that is job search intention, was added.

In line with the requirements for mediation as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) instrumental job search attitude, affective job search attitude, and subjective norm significantly correlated with both intention and behavior, and intention significantly correlated with behavior (see Table 1). Self-efficacy, however, did not correlate significantly with either intention or behavior. Thus, there was no need to further examine whether intention mediated between self-efficacy and job search behavior. Hypothesis 3b, stating that job search intention partially mediates the relation between self-efficacy and job search behavior, was not supported. Table 3 reports the results of the mediated variable analysis for instrumental job search attitude, affective job search attitude, and subjective norm. Instrumental job search attitude and subjective norm contributed significantly to the prediction of job search behavior in Step 2 ($\beta = .22, p < .01$ and $\beta = .16, p < .05$). Affective job search attitude, however, did not contribute significantly to the prediction of job search behavior ($\beta = .06, p = .21$). After entering job search intention in the equation in Step 3, however, the β -weights of instrumental attitude and subjective norm decreased, and were no longer significant. Thus, the data supported Hypothesis 3a, with regard to the mediating role of job search intention in the relation of instrumental job search attitude and subjective norm with job search behavior.

3.3. *Prediction of job search outcomes*

Job search behavior was expected to relate positively to job attainment (Hypothesis 4). Table 4 presents the results of the hierarchical logistic regression analysis that was used to test this hypothesis. In the first step, job attainment was regressed on the control variables. Only employment position had a significant effect on job attainment. The odds ratio (Exp *B*) for employment position was lower than one, meaning that employed individuals were less likely to find new employment than were non-employed individuals. Job search behavior was added to the equation in Step 2, resulting in a significant improvement of the model fit.

Table 3
Mediated variable regression analysis of job search behavior

Predictor	Job search behavior (β)		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Control variables			
Gender ^a	.04	.07	.05
Age	.00	-.03	-.04
Education	.02	-.01	-.01
Employment position ^b	-.21**	-.11*	-.10*
Ethnicity ^c	.19**	.13**	.05
TPB-variables			
Instr. job search attitude		.22**	.08
Aff. job search attitude		.06	.01
Subjective norm		.16*	.09
Self-efficacy		.00	-.01
Mediator			
Job search intention			.37**
Multiple <i>R</i>	.29**	.43**	.52**
ΔR^2	.08**	.10**	.08**
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.07**	.16**	.25**

Note. Due to incidental missing values $N = 384$.

^a 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b 0 = not employed, 1 = employed.

^c 0 = native-Dutch, 1 = ethnic minority.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

As indicated by an odds ratio of 2.89, individuals who engaged in more job search behavior were more likely to attain employment than others. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Hypothesis 5a, which expected a positive relation between job search behavior and job satisfaction among individuals who obtained (new) employment, was tested with a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Table 4 shows that neither the control variables nor job search behavior related significantly to job satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 5a was not supported by the data. The expected positive relation between job search behavior and agreement between the obtained and wanted job (Hypothesis 5b) was examined using two hierarchical logistic regression analyses. In the first analysis agreement with regard to amount of hours (part-time versus full-time) was regressed on the control variables in Step 1. Job search behavior was added to the equation in Step 2. As shown in Table 4, the effect of neither the control variables nor job search behavior was significant. In the second analysis agreement with regard to type of contract (temporary versus permanent) was regressed on the control variables and job search behavior. In support of Hypothesis 5b, job search behavior showed a significant and positive relation with agreement regarding type of contract, after controlling for gender, age, education, employment position, and ethnicity.

Table 4

Hierarchical regression analysis of job attainment, job satisfaction, and agreement between the obtained and wanted job

Predictor	Job attainment (Exp B)		Job satisfaction (β)		Agreement 1 (Exp B)		Agreement 2 (Exp B)	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Background variables								
Gender ^a	0.81	0.75	.07	.07	1.34	1.26	1.75	1.50
Age	1.00	1.00	-.06	-.06	1.05 [†]	1.04 [†]	0.99	0.99
Education	1.15	1.15	.02	.02	0.91	0.96	1.01	1.13
Employment position ^b	0.55*	0.73	.11	.12	1.32	1.39	1.22	1.39
Ethnicity ^c	1.12	0.73	-.10	-.10	1.92	1.79	0.99	0.86
TPB-variables								
Job search behavior		2.89**		.03		1.34		2.19*
$\Delta\chi^2$		28.93 (1)**				0.64 (1)		5.16 (1)*
$\chi^2(df)$	6.98 (5)	35.91 (6)**			5.66 (5)	6.30 (6)	2.14 (5)	7.30 (6)
Multiple R			.17	.17				
ΔR^2			.03	.00				
Adjusted R^2			-.02	-.03				

Note. Due to incidental missing values $N = 396$ for job attainment, $N = 109$ for job satisfaction, $N = 109$ for Agreement 1, and $N = 97$ for Agreement 2.

^a 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b 0 = not employed, 1 = employed.

^c 0 = native-Dutch, 1 = ethnic minority.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

[†] $p < .10$.

3.4. Examination of cultural differences

Table 5 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables used in this study for the Dutch group and for the ethnic minority group separately. In support of the relations as predicted by the TPB, instrumental job search attitude, affective job search attitude, and subjective norm showed significant and positive correlations with job search intention in both groups. Furthermore, intention correlated strongly with behavior in both groups. Correlations of self-efficacy with intention and behavior, however, were not significant in either the Dutch group or the ethnic minority group. Job search behavior correlated significantly with job attainment in the Dutch group, however, it did not in the ethnic minority group.

Table 5 also presents the t values for mean differences between the two groups. The control variables age, employment position, and level of education did not differ between the groups, but gender did. In the ethnic minority group a smaller proportion was female than in the Dutch group. Concerning the other variables, ethnic minorities scored significantly higher on job search intention and job search behavior. Instrumental job search attitude and subjective norm scores were also higher in the ethnic minority group. Ethnic minorities, however, reported lower levels of self-effi-

Table 5
Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the Dutch group and the ethnic minority group

	Dutch group		Ethnic minority group		<i>r</i> ^c	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>												
<i>Time 1 respondents</i>																
1 Gender ^a	0.70	0.46	0.52	0.50	3.34**		.05	.11	.11	−.13	−.10	.04	.01	−.06	.03	.21
2 Age	27.18	11.61	27.62	9.59	−0.40	.04		.11	.22*	.00	.18	−.05	−.13	.12	.00	−.23
3 Education	1.96	0.71	1.85	0.63	1.69	.08	.18**		.08	.08	−.06	.10	.09	.18	.24	.11
4 Employment position ^b	0.75	0.43	0.71	0.46	0.97	.03	.15**	.11**		−.37**	−.23*	−.34**	.01	−.24*	−.43**	.20
5 Instr. job search attitude	2.82	1.12	3.28	1.00	−4.02**	−.08	.07	.07	−.17**		.07	.59**	−.01	.48**	.42**	.04
6 Aff. job search attitude	3.03	0.78	3.07	0.81	−0.49	−.06	−.01	.04	.01	.13**		.06	.13	.29**	.18	−.35*
7 Subjective norm ^c	2.02	1.01	2.81	1.30	−5.69**	−.03	−.03	.03	−.19**	.58**	.00		−.20	.54**	.41*	−.23
8 Self-efficacy	3.67	0.57	3.42	0.63	3.82**	−.04	.05	.12**	.06	−.03	.39**	−.15**		.04	−.18	.30
9 Job search intention	1.81	0.75	2.50	0.94	−6.78**	.03	.05	.09*	−.10*	.52**	.16**	.39**	.01		.53**	−.06
<i>Time 2 respondents</i>																
10 Job search behavior	1.56	0.55	1.96	0.83	−3.02**	.03	−.03	−.03	−.17**	.31**	.08	.24**	.03	.42**		.10
11 Job attainment	0.27	0.44	0.29	0.46	−0.21	−.07	−.01	.02	−.15**	.28**	.05	.17**	.05	.21**	.32**	

Note. Correlations for the Dutch group below diagonal, correlations for ethnic minority group above diagonal. For the Time 1 respondents *N* varies between 601 and 585 in the Dutch group and between 88 and 95 in the ethnic minority group. For correlations with the Time 2 variables *N* varies between 355 and 362 in the Dutch group, and between 39 and 42 in the ethnic minority group.

^a 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b 0 = not employed, 1 = employed.

^c Positive (negative) *t* values indicate means are higher for the Dutch (ethnic minority) group.

* *p* < .05.

** *p* < .01.

cacy than did the Dutch group. Job attainment did not differ significantly between the two groups.

To test the expected cultural differences (Hypothesis 6a and b) separate hierarchical regression analyses of job search intention were performed for both groups. In the first step job search intention was regressed on the control variables gender, age, level of education, and employment position. In the second step, the TPB-variables were added. As Table 6 shows, in the ethnic minority group subjective norm was a stronger predictor of intention than was instrumental attitude. This difference in β -weights was significant, $t(85) = 1.96$, $p < .05$ (Hypothesis 6a supported). In the Dutch group the reverse was found, that is, instrumental attitude was a stronger predictor of intention than was subjective norm. This difference in β -weights was significant, $t(575) = 3.40$, $p < .01$, in support of Hypothesis 6b.

Hypothesis 7a and b expected differences between the two groups in the strength of the relation of job search attitude and subjective norm with intention. To test these hypotheses a moderated multiple regression analysis was performed (Aguinis, 1995), using the total sample. In Step 1 of the regression analysis, job search intention was regressed on the control variables (gender, age, level of education, employment position, and ethnicity) and the TPB-variables (instrumental and affective job search attitude, subjective norm, and self-efficacy). In Step 2 we added the interac-

Table 6

Hierarchical regression analyses of job search intention for the Dutch group and the ethnic minority group separately

Predictor	Job search intention in the Dutch majority group (β)		Job search intention in the ethnic minority group (β)	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Control variables				
Gender ^a	.02	.07 [†]	-.04	-.03
Age	.06	.03	.09	.07
Education	.08 [†]	.03	.18 [†]	.11
Employment position ^b	-.12**	-.01	-.26*	.04
TPB-variables				
Instr. job search attitude		.42**		.16
Aff. job search attitude		.11**		.15
Subjective norm		.15**		.54**
Self-efficacy		.01		.16 [†]
Multiple R	.15**	.55**	.31 [†]	.69**
ΔR^2	.02**	.28**	.10 [†]	.37**
Adjusted R^2	.02**	.29**	.05 [†]	.41**

Note. Due to incidental missing values $N = 575$ in the Dutch group and $N = 85$ in the ethnic minority group.

^a 0 = male, 1 = female.

^b 0 = not employed, 1 = employed.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

[†] $p < .10$.

tions between ethnicity and the TPB-variables. The addition of the interactions resulted in 1.4% extra explained variance in job search intention ($p < .01$, adjusted $R^2 = .35$ and $.36$, respectively). The β -weight of the Ethnicity \times Subjective norm interaction was positive and significant ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$). This finding is in support of Hypothesis 7a, stating that subjective norm is a stronger predictor of intention in the ethnic minority group than it is in the Dutch group. The β -weight of the Ethnicity \times Instrumental attitude interaction was negative, as predicted in Hypothesis 7b, but only marginally significant ($\beta = -.09$, $p < .10$).

4. Discussion

The results provided partial support for the theory of planned behavior in predicting job search behavior in a sample of temporary employees in The Netherlands. Job search attitude and subjective norm were significant predictors of job search intention, and job search intention significantly predicted job search behavior. Intention fully mediated the effects of attitude and subjective norm on behavior. Self-efficacy, however, did not add to the prediction of intention and behavior. Also the zero-order correlations of self-efficacy with job search intention and behavior were not significant. A possible explanation for these null findings relates to the measure used to assess self-efficacy. The fact that the self-efficacy items did not exactly match the items used to measure job search intention and job search behavior might have deflated the relations of self-efficacy with intention and behavior. The job search attitude and subjective norm measures, however, did not match the job search intention and behavior items either, and these variables did show significant relations with intention and behavior. Although ideally the measures for attitude, subjective norm, and self-efficacy should correspond exactly with the measures for intention and behavior, we chose to use the more global measures to reduce the length of the questionnaire, and to avoid asking too many seemingly repetitious questions.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant findings with respect to self-efficacy relates to the composition of our sample. That is, some individuals in our sample may not (intend to) engage in job search behavior, although they do have high levels of job search self-efficacy. Employed respondents who do not intend to leave their current jobs might be an example of such respondents. The presence of such respondents might have deflated the relation of self-efficacy with job search intention and behavior. This idea, however, was not supported by our data. We repeated our analyses using a subsample of respondents who intended to spend time on at least one job search activity ($n = 615$). The zero-order correlations of self-efficacy with intention and behavior were still non-significant. Also the regression results were highly similar to the results presented before. In the regression analysis of intention, the effect of self-efficacy on job search intention remained non-significant.

Previous research studying the relation of self-efficacy with job search intention and behavior found mixed results. While some studies reported moderate or even strong relations (e.g., Blau, 1994; Caska, 1998; Saks & Ashforth, 1999), others found weak or no relations (Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992; Wanberg et al., 1996). A moder-

ating effect of sample type seems plausible (i.e., self-efficacy is a more important predictor in samples of inexperienced job seekers). Closer examination of our data revealed some support for this notion. For example, among job seeking students ($n = 268$), self-efficacy correlated marginally significant with job search intention, $r = .10$, $p < .10$. In contrast, among job seeking non-students ($n = 346$), self-efficacy was not related to job search intention, $r = -.02$, $p = .71$. In their meta-analysis, Kanfer et al. (2001) reported a mean corrected sample-weighted correlation of .27 between self-efficacy and job search behavior, which was not found to be moderated by sample type, however. But due to the limited number of studies comprising employed job seekers, this moderator analysis concerned job losers versus new entrants only. Future research should investigate the relation of self-efficacy with job search in different sample types more closely.

Following Ajzen and Driver (1992), we distinguished between an instrumental and an affective component of attitude. This theoretical distinction was clearly supported by the data. Both components were only weakly correlated, and showed substantially different correlation patterns with the other study variables. Instrumental and affective job search attitude both added to prediction of job search intention. With this, the current study extends previous research examining job search behavior in the context of the TPB (Caska, 1998; Van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992) or its predecessor, the TRA (Vinokur & Caplan, 1987), suggesting that an individual's job search behavior is stimulated not only by positive instrumental attitudes such as regarding job seeking as wise and useful, but also by affective attitudes such as regarding job seeking as interesting and enjoyable.

4.1. Job search outcomes

Consistent with previous research (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Kanfer et al., 2001), we found a significant relation between job search behavior and job attainment. However, as noted by Wanberg et al. (1999), in times of a healthy economy most people who are looking for a (new) job, will be able to find it (see also Taris, Heesink, & Feij, 1995). Therefore, it is important to see whether satisfactory employment is found. Our results did not support the expected positive relation between job search behavior and satisfaction with the new job. Previous research reported mixed results concerning this relation. Some studies found a positive association between job search behavior and job satisfaction (e.g., Leana & Feldman, 1995; Steffy, Shaw, & Noe, 1989), whereas others found little or no support (e.g., Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Wanberg et al., 2000; Wanberg et al., 1999; Werbel, 2000). A possible explanation for this null finding might be that those low in job satisfaction may have already started a new job search, or in fact may never have stopped their job search. Indeed, other research has identified job dissatisfaction as an important antecedent of job search behavior among employed individuals (e.g., Blau, 1994; Boudreau, Boswell, Judge, & Bretz, 2001; Bretz et al., 1994; Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992). This negative relation between job satisfaction and subsequent job search behavior might have overshadowed the positive relation between job search behavior and subsequent job satisfaction among individuals who found a (new) job.

Besides job satisfaction, we used two additional measures related to employment quality, that is, the agreement between the job obtained and the job sought with regard to the amount of hours and the type of contract. Our results indicated that individuals who invested more time in their job search found a job that matched their desires with regard to the type of contract. This is an important outcome in that it offers some support for the contention that investing time in job seeking does not only pay off in a higher probability to obtain a job, but also in higher levels of agreement between the type of employment job seekers were looking for and the type of employment they obtained. Future research should further investigate the effects of job search behavior on different aspects of the type of employment found, such as agreement with respect to type of business, level of the job, and job characteristics (e.g., level of autonomy, responsibility, or skill variety).

4.2. Cultural differences

As indicated by Ajzen (1991) the relative importance of attitudes and subjective norms in the prediction of intentions can vary across situations. More specifically, Fishbein (1980) notes that the relative importance of these variables may be influenced by external variables such as demographics or personality. In the current study, we investigated whether cultural differences could account for differences in the relative importance of job search attitudes and subjective norm in the prediction of job search intentions. When testing the TPB for ethnic minorities and the Dutch majority separately, some differences were found between both groups. In the ethnic minority group we found that subjective norms were stronger related to behavioral intentions than were job search attitudes. In the Dutch majority the opposite was found. Our findings confirm previous research by Abrams, Ando, and Hinkle (1998), in which subjective norms were found to relate stronger to turnover intentions in a Japanese sample than in a British sample. Similar to the differences found in Abrams et al.'s (1998) study, our findings related to minority–majority group differences in the strength of the relation of subjective norms and personal attitudes with intentions can be explained by cultural differences in individualism versus collectivism. That is, in collectivistic cultures behavior is guided more by social norms than by personal attitudes, whereas the opposite is true in individualistic cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Our findings offer some support for the generalizability of the TPB to other, non-Western cultures. That is, in the ethnic minority group as well as in the Dutch group most relations are consistent with the relations as predicted by the TPB. As discussed above, however, the relative importance of the TPB-variables was different in both groups, that is, the strength of several relations was moderated by cultural background. This is an important finding, because many psychological theories have been developed by European Americans (Hall, 1997), and therefore the relevance of these theories in other cultural contexts has been questioned (Nagayama Hall & Maramba, 2001). In times of increasingly diversifying labor markets in many Western countries, it is important to study cultural differences in vocational behavior.

4.3. Limitations

In the current study, we looked at cultural differences in the predictors of job search. A limitation pertains to the composition of the ethnic minority group. This group was not very large and ethnically fairly heterogeneous. Due to the small size of the subsample of ethnic minorities, we were not able to investigate the relation between job search behavior and employment quality for ethnic minorities and the Dutch group separately. Moreover, we were not able to further distinguish between the various ethnic groups within this subsample. Future research must confirm the cultural differences reported in this study for specific ethnic groups.

Also, future research should include direct measures of collectivism–individualism. Because the actual collectivistic and individualistic values held by the respondents were not assessed directly in the current study, we cannot rule out the possibility that the differences we found between the two groups were caused by other group characteristics than the assumed differences in collectivistic versus individualistic values.

Furthermore, the rather low response rate might have influenced the findings, and therefore may limit the generalizability of the study. We were, however, able to compare the respondents with the overall random sample on gender, age, and level of education. Because females and higher educated individuals were slightly overrepresented among the respondents as compared to the overall sample, gender and level of education (along with age and employment position) were used as control variables. The effects of these variables were mostly small and non-significant. However, because respondents might have differed from the non-respondents on other unmeasured variables, such as language skills in Dutch, some caution is needed with regard to the generalizability of the study findings.

In summary, the current study investigated cultural differences in the predictors of job search in a sample of temporary employees in The Netherlands. The results showed a stronger influence of the social environment on job search in the ethnic minority group compared to the Dutch group. This pattern of findings is consistent with the view that people in collectivistic cultures attach more importance to harmonious relationships with others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Employment counselors could take these differences into account when assisting people in their job search. Offering social support and exerting social pressure are important means of stimulating job search behavior (Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & Van Ryn, 1989). Our findings suggest this might be of even greater importance for job seekers with a collectivistic cultural background.

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