Strength in adversity: The influence of psychological capital on job search

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Summary
This study examined the influence of psychological capital on job search among displaced employees. On the basis of a sample of 179 retrenched professionals, managers, executives, and technicians, we found that psychological capital (self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience) was positively related with displaced employees’ level of perceived employability, a coping resource. Perceived employability was positively related with problem-focused and symptom-focused coping strategies. Whereas problem-focused coping was positively related with preparatory and active job search, symptom-focused coping strategy was not. The relationship between psychological capital and preparatory and active job search was mediated by perceived employability and problem-focused coping. Implications of our findings are discussed.

Keywords: psychological capital; perceived employability; reemployment; coping with job loss; job search

Recent developments in the global economy have resulted in the highest rate of unemployment since the Great Depression of 1930s. Reports from the U.S. Department of Labour revealed that U.S. unemployment rate continues to hover at approximately 8.3 per cent (BLS, 2012a) and 119 463 U.S. employees were laid off in February 2012 alone (BLS, 2012b). In this study, we defined displaced employees as individuals who have lost their jobs involuntarily and are currently not engaged in any form of paid employment.

For displaced employees, life after job loss is fraught with anxieties, financial concerns, and marital tensions (e.g., McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005; Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). As well, they face the daunting task of seeking reemployment. Clearly, much self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, that is, psychological capital (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) is needed to sustain them during these difficult times.

Previous research on job search and reemployment had focused predominantly on human and social capital (e.g., Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002). Human capital refers to the “knowing-how” variables (e.g., educational level, cognitive abilities, and skills) that affect reemployment success (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007). Social capital, on the other hand, encompasses the “knowing-whom” competencies and is concerned with both formal and informal networks that provide career related information which affects reemployment prospects (McArdle et al., 2007). In general, individuals with high levels of human and social capital were more successful in gaining reemployment after job loss (Gowan & Lepak, 2007). Although the importance of human and social capital has been thoroughly examined, systematic attention on how psychological capital affects the reemployment process is lacking.

Different from human and social capital, psychological capital is concerned with individuals’ strength, perceptions, attitudes toward work, and general outlook on life (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). It has been theorized and empirically shown to affect human flourishing and optimal functioning (Cole, Daly, & Mak, 2009).
Drawing from Kasl’s (1982) reverse causation model, which posits that positive psychological health facilitates positive behaviors and outcomes, we argue that psychological capital, a manifestation of positive psychological well-being, plays an important role alongside human and social capital in facilitating the reemployment process. Integrating research on psychological capital, perceived employability, coping strategies, and job search, we present our research model in Figure 1.

Premised upon the framework provided by coping with job loss (Latack, Kinicki, & Prussia, 1995), we argue that psychological capital influences reemployment by affecting the amount of coping resources displaced employees possess—in this instance, their levels of perceived employability. We define perceived employability as individuals’ perceived ability to attain sustainable employment that commensurate with their qualifications (Rothwell, Herbert, & Rothwell, 2008). We believe that displaced employees with high psychological capital are more likely to perceive themselves as employable. As a coping resource, perceived employability impacts the type of coping goals displaced employees possess and the type of coping strategies they adopt (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004). Coping goals refer to individuals’ overall desired objective that they wish to accomplish through coping strategies. Coping strategies refer to cognitive and behavioral efforts that individuals utilize to manage goal pursuit (Latack et al., 1995). Displaced employees with high levels of coping resources are likely to adopt control-oriented goals whereas those with low levels of coping resources are likely to adopt escape-oriented goals (Latack et al., 1995). Displaced employees with control-oriented goals employ problem-focused strategies that involve taking proactive and systematic actions to address their unemployment. Displaced employees with escape-oriented goals, on the other hand, take on symptom-focused coping strategies that aim to reduce immediate distress caused by job loss. The type of coping strategy displaced employees adopt will impact their job search.

Examining psychological capital within the job loss and reemployment literature extends and contributes to these research streams in two main ways. First, this study contributes to research on psychological capital by systematically linking it with job loss, reemployment, and job search studies. Prior research on psychological capital had argued that it is an important resource that enables positive outcomes for employees (e.g., Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009; Avey, Luthans, & Youssef, 2010). Although psychological capital is important in aiding employees overcome setbacks in jobs, psychological capital is arguably more important for displaced employees because job loss is one of

![Figure 1. Hypothesized research model](image-url)
life’s most stressful events. Indeed, experiencing job loss has been found to be more stressful than coping with divorce or death (e.g., Defrank & Ivancevich, 1986; Wanberg, Zhang, & Diehn, 2010). To cope with job loss and reemployment, displaced employees require the psychological tenacity to overcome setbacks and the mental strength to inoculate themselves against hard knocks encountered in reemployment job search. Examining how psychological capital positively benefits individuals who are experiencing one of life’s most adverse situations is an important test of its validity as a positive mental resource and extends the nomological net of variables in job loss and reemployment research.

Second, this study contributes empirically to practice. Current reemployment programs tend to focus predominantly on increasing job seekers’ skills, knowledge, and abilities. Much lesser attention has been given by career counselors to improve psychological wellbeing of displaced employees. This study suggests that possessing a positive mindset after job loss is just as important as having the right skill set or social networks. We hope that this study will help convince career counselors on the importance of positivity and fuels the development and implementation of specific interventions programs to improve psychological well-being of displaced employees.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Psychological capital and perceived employability

Prior studies argued that individuals’ perception of how employable they are has profound consequences on their abilities to adapt to employment changes, their job search patterns, and their subjective well-being (Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, Witte, & Alarco, 2008; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Rothwell et al., 2008). Specifically, individuals who perceive themselves as highly employable are better able to adapt to job movements and engage in more creative job search (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). As perceived employability involves the subjective interpretation of one’s abilities to find a job, it is likely to be affected by one’s psychological state. A positive state of mind will have a salubrious impact on how individuals perceive their employability. We believe that psychological capital, a manifestation of positive psychological state, will positively influence how displaced employees perceive their employability after job loss.

Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007) identified four human capacities—self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism—that constitute individuals’ psychological capital. Together, these human capacities are vital in building strength and uplifting individuals’ flagging spirits.

Self-efficacy is defined as confidence in successfully executing a task or accomplishing a goal (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Displaced employees with high self-efficacy are confident that they possess the right skills and abilities to perform well in their future jobs and are confident of being reemployed (Lim & Loo, 2003). These beliefs translate into a higher level of perceived employability and motivate them in the reemployment job search process.

Hope refers to the individual’s perceived capability to derive pathways to attain desired goals and to motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). Scholars explained that hope consists of pathways thinking, agency thinking, and the union of these two pathways (Snyder et al., 2002). Pathway thinking refers to the perceived capability to conjure up plans or routes to reach a goal, and agency thinking refers to the ability to initiate and sustain action toward desired goal through motivation and determination (Snyder, 1994). A hopeful displaced employee is one who is motivated to search for and conjure new pathways of reemployment. The creative energies and resourcefulness developed from seeking these new pathways in turn create a sense of control and mastery that fuels motivation and determination for reemployment. The reiterative effect of agency and pathway creates an upward spiral of hope, raising perceptions of employability, motivating him to continue to seek reemployment.

Optimists are people who make internal and stable attributions regarding positive events and attribute negative events (e.g., job loss) to external, temporary, and situation-specific factors (Seligman, 1998). As a facet of psychological capital, optimism is associated with a positive future outlook and a tendency to view positive events as within the control
of self (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). Optimistic individuals who lost their jobs will attribute the causes of their job loss to external and temporary situations, not to a lack of employability. Positive explanatory style adopted by optimistic displaced employees allows them to continue to believe that they are employable and reemployment is within their control.

Resilience, the fourth facet of psychological capital, refers to the capacity to bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure, or even positive events (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). One of the most adverse negative effects of job loss is its scarring effect on displaced employees (Eliason & Storrie, 2006). Prior research found that job loss negatively affects self esteem and perceived employability such that displaced employees are likely to perceive themselves as incapable and unemployable (Eliason & Storrie, 2006). Traversing an adverse situation such as job loss requires the capacity to overcome, bounce back, and reach out to greater career heights. The resilience aspect of psychological capital emphasizes the psychological strength of individuals to persist despite career setbacks and bounce back to where they initially were before job loss occurs. Displaced employees who are resilient possess mental strength to “stick-it-in” and exercise perseverance in reemployment. Despite career setbacks, resilient employees continue to believe that they are employable and persist in their efforts to secure a job.

Although we acknowledge that each component of psychological capital can have independent effects on perceived employability, prior research suggested that these four facets are likely to synergistically affect outcomes and are best represented by a higher order construct (cf. Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). Consistent with Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007), we argue that self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience create a synergistic motivational propensity that affects perceived employability. An example of how the four facets of psychological capital affect perceived employability synergistically is as follows.

Displaced employees who have high levels of psychological capital are likely to be confident about their skills and abilities to perform in their new jobs, hold optimistic views about their reemployment chances, are able to find pathways to attain their reemployment goals, and are resilient to setbacks. Having this positive state of mind allows them to maintain a high degree of perceived employability and motivates them to seek reemployment despite career setbacks. On the other hand, displaced employees who have low levels of psychological capital are likely to be pessimistic, not confident about their skills and abilities, unable to direct their energies toward fulfilling reemployment goals, and less resilient to setbacks. These individuals are likely to view themselves as unemployable and give up easily on seeking reemployment.

In line with this, we examine psychological capital as a higher order construct. We posit that the four facets of psychological capital will synergistically and positively affect how displaced employees perceive their employability.

Hypothesis 1: Psychological capital is positively related to perceived employability.

Perceived employability and coping strategies

Perceived employability is an important coping resource that facilitates or constrains the type of strategy displaced employees use to cope with job loss (Fugate et al., 2004). Generally, displaced employees who possess more coping resources are better able to adopt proactive strategies to address unemployment compared with those who possess fewer such resources. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) identified two coping strategies, (i) problem-focused coping and (ii) symptom-focused coping, which individuals can use to cope with adverse situations.

Problem-focused coping is a proactive coping strategy when individuals actively change their environment to eliminate the source of their distress. In the context of job loss and reemployment, an example of problem-focused coping strategy is self-initiated attempts by displaced employees to seek employment-related assistance such as acquiring job search information and techniques from other more experienced job seekers. This learning process is important because job search is a highly uncertain activity and job seekers often lack relevant information that help them succeed in job placements. Learning from more experienced others will help job seekers reduce this uncertainty and provide them with necessary information on what they need to do to obtain a job. By proactively seeking employment advice from more experienced job seekers, displaced employees are focused on learning from others to find a long-term solution (i.e., reemployment) to eliminate their current distress (i.e., unemployment).
Symptom-focused coping on the other hand is a reactive coping strategy that attempts to alleviate the immediate or emotional distress associated with a stressful event (Bennett, Martin, Bies, & Brockner, 1995). An example of symptom-focused coping during job loss is seeking financial assistance from friends and relatives. Compared with seeking employment assistance, seeking financial assistance is a reactive approach that aims to alleviate immediate financial hardship associated with job loss but does not directly address the unemployment problem.

This distinction between problem-focused and symptom-focused coping strategy has previously been investigated and supported in job loss and reemployment studies (e.g., Bennett et al., 1995; Leana & Feldman, 1992; Leana, Feldman, & Tan, 1998).

Drawing from the work of Latack et al. (1995) and Rothwell et al. (2008), we argue that perceived employability, as a coping resource, is likely to have an effect on the type of coping goals and strategies that displaced employees adopt. Displaced employees who perceive themselves highly employable are less likely to view job loss as threatening (Fugate et al., 2004). Consequently, these individuals are likely to set control-oriented coping goals that aim to resolve unemployment permanently. Consistent with control-oriented coping goals, these displaced employees will adopt proactive problem-focused coping strategy by seeking out employment assistance to ensure that they are reemployed within the shortest period.

By contrast, displaced employees who perceive themselves less employable are likely to adopt escape-oriented coping goals and avoid strategies that directly address their jobless situation. This is because these individuals are less confident that their skills and competencies can help reintegrate them into the workforce. They are more likely to feel diffident about their job prospects and view any attempts to seek permanent reemployment to be met with little success. Thus, rather than focusing their efforts on finding a permanent, albeit difficult and painful solution through job search, these individuals are likely to turn to seemingly less stressful strategies to tackle their current and immediate problem that is, to seek financial assistance from friends and relatives. Although this does not immediately resolve their unemployment situation, it does provide some form of relief from the stress associated with job loss. On the basis of the preceding arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 2:** Perceived employability is positively related to problem-focused coping strategy (seeking employment assistance) and negatively related to symptom-focused coping strategy (seeking financial assistance).

**Coping strategies and job search behaviors**

Job search behaviors refer to activities that individuals engage in order to acquire knowledge about labor market alternatives (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy, & Shalhoop, 2006). These activities include (i) preparatory job search, which are activities targeted at obtaining job information and identifying potential job leads, and (ii) active job search that involve behaviors related to actual job seeking (Blau, 1994).

Although some prior studies had relied on a combined measure of preparatory and active job search, an increasing number of scholars have argued for the need to tease apart these two job search processes and to examine them as different facets of a construct (Linnehan & Blau, 2003). Such arguments are reasonable because, theoretically, job search occurs in stages (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Philips, 1994). Although job search activities in the different stages are not mutually exclusive, some activities are more prominent in certain stage than others (Barber et al., 1994). Examining job search as a global measure may obscure the intricacies surrounding each stage of job search, leading to potentially misleading results (Blau, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 1999).

Studies that examined preparatory and active job search separately found that they are related with different antecedents and outcomes. For example, Saks and Ashforth (1999) found that active job search significantly predicts short-term reemployment success whereas preparatory job search is significantly related with long-term employment quality and career benefits. Not surprisingly, whether an individual finds a job quickly is a result of how active he is in looking for a job. However, whether he finds a high-quality job that is satisfying and worth
keeping depends on the amount of preparation and research he puts in before looking for a job. Similarly, Linnehan and Blau (2003) found that employees with higher intention to quit are more likely to engage in active rather than preparatory job search. These examples suggested that teasing apart active and preparatory job search helps us better understand how these different job search activities affect employment outcomes. In line with the calls to examine preparatory and active job search as separate measures, this study draws a distinction between the two.

Although different in nature, both preparatory and active job search are self-regulatory goal-driven behaviors that begins with the identification of employment goals and involves the engagement of purposive volitional actions directed toward achieving those goals (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). Conceptualizing job search as volitional goal-driven behaviors resonates with the coping with job loss model by Latack et al. (1995). According to Latack et al. (1995), coping with job loss is goal driven and displaced employees typically have two general coping goals: (i) securing reemployment and (ii) addressing immediate financial hardship. Depending on their coping goals, displaced individuals will utilize different coping strategies to manage their goal pursuit (Latack et al., 1995).

Displaced employees who perceived themselves highly employable tend to believe that employment is within reach and are likely to set reemployment as their goal. As such, they are likely to adopt problem-focused coping strategies that are targeted at securing reemployment. As previously argued, seeking employment assistance is one such problem-focused coping strategy that displaced employees can adopt. Seeking advice from others allows displaced employees to learn the intricacies of job search and help them to develop confidence and skills in preparing for job search (preparatory job search). As well, knowing the ins and outs of job search motivates them to actively seek out reemployment opportunities (active job search).

On the other hand, displaced employees who perceive themselves less employable tend to view reemployment as difficult (Rothwell et al., 2008). Their coping goal is directed less at obtaining a job, but more at relieving their immediate problems, especially financial distress associated with job loss. To cope with their financial difficulties, these individuals engaged in symptom-focused coping strategy of seeking financial assistance. Compared with the demanding and stressful task of looking for a job, seeking financial assistance from others is a more immediate solution to their financial distress. With their financial hardship addressed through loans and financial assistance, these displaced individuals rationalized that there is no immediate need for them to look for jobs. Therefore, individuals who engaged in symptom-focused coping are likely to be less motivated to engage in preparatory and active job search.

On the basis of the preceding arguments, we predict that displaced employees who perceive themselves highly employable are less likely to seek financial assistance and are more likely to engage in preparatory and active job search because they tend to engage in problem-focused coping. However, displaced employees who seek financial assistance because of low perceived employability are less likely to engage in preparatory and active job search due to a lack of motivation to do so.

The preceding arguments suggest that perceived employability is a distal variable that affects job search behaviors. Specifically, individuals’ perceived employability affects their coping goals—(i) securing reemployment or (ii) addressing immediate financial hardship. Their coping goal, in turn, activates coping strategies that will either facilitate or impede job search. Thus, the relationships between individuals’ perceived employability and their job search behaviors are mediated by their coping strategy. Therefore, we posit that:

**Hypothesis 3a:** Problem-focused coping (seeking employment assistance) is positively related to preparatory and active job search whereas symptom-focused coping (seeking financial assistance) is negatively related to preparatory and active job search.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Problem-focused coping (seeking employment assistance) and symptom-focused coping (seeking financial assistance) mediate the relationship between perceived employability and both preparatory and active job search.
Psychological capital and job search—two pathways approach

Job search is a self-regulatory process that is determined by an individual’s coping resource and coping strategies (Latack et al., 1995). Consistent with our earlier hypotheses, we believe that psychological capital affects the level of individuals’ perceived employability (coping resource), which in turn will predict the type of coping strategies (problem or symptom focused strategy) individuals adopt. Coping strategies will subsequently impact job search. This suggests that psychological capital is a distal variable that impacts preparatory and active job search through proximal variables such as coping resource and coping strategies.

The distal–proximal approach to understanding relationships between psychological constructs and behaviors has been well discussed in social psychology and organizational behavioral research (Hoyle, 2010). One area which the distal–proximal approach has been extensively applied in is research on the relationship between personality, motivation, and behavior. Scholars have established that personality is a distal cause of behaviors whereas motivation is a more proximal factor. The impact of personality on behaviors is typically mediated by individuals’ motivation associated with their personality type (Hoyle, 2010). For example, achievement orientation impacts individuals’ behavior by motivating them to outdo their competitors. Similar to how personality affects behavior, we argue that the effects of psychological capital on job search should follow the same proximal–distal logic. We posit that psychological capital has an impact on preparatory and active job search through two different pathways—problem-focused pathway and symptom-focused pathway.

Problem-focused pathway suggests that displaced employees with high levels of psychological capital are resilient to career setbacks and continue to perceive themselves as highly employable despite job loss. These individuals are motivated to seek employment-related assistance, and such effort creates additional pathways that increase their hope for reemployment. The positive influence of psychological capital on perceived employability and the adoption of problem-focused coping strengthen their beliefs that they possess the means to be reemployed. This belief motivates them to engage in both preparatory and active job search.

Symptom-focused pathway, on the other hand, suggests that displaced employees with lower psychological capital are less likely to engage in job search activities. When faced with job loss, employees with lower psychological capital are more susceptible to loss of self esteem and confidence, causing them to raise doubts about their employability. Perceiving themselves to be less employable, these displaced employees expect themselves to experience failures during reemployment job search and may perceive reemployment as unattainable. In order to overcome financial hardship associated with job loss, they rationalize that it is easier to seek financial assistance than to engage in job search. Viewing reemployment as difficult and beyond their reach, these displaced employees tend to avoid stressful activities involved with preparatory and active job search. On the basis of these arguments, we posit that:

Hypothesis 4: Psychological capital has an indirect effect on preparatory and active job search through both problem-focused and symptom-focused pathways.

Method

Sample and procedures

We obtained data for the study through the use of an online survey. Prior to administering the survey, we conducted a pretest with a group of job seekers \((n = 5)\) to obtain feedback regarding the clarity of instructions and presentation of survey.

We recruited respondents for the main study from the database of a government-affiliated unemployment agency in Singapore. The primary role of this agency is to design and provide skill upgrading courses as well as placement services for the unemployed. The database consisted of 1000 retrenched professionals, managers, executives, and technicians (PMETs) who are actively seeking fulltime reemployment. English is the official medium of education in Singapore. All respondents had obtained at least tertiary education and have a good command of the English language. We conducted all surveys and communications in English.
We randomly sent an email invitation to participate in this study to 600 PMETs in the database. The email invitation consisted of a brief introduction to the study as well as an HTML link to the online survey. We also informed the PMETs that the survey is completely anonymous and that they will receive $10 as a token of our appreciation for their participation. We sent a reminder email one week after the initial invitation. We set up the online survey system such that it compared the Internet Protocol (IP) address of each response with those of previous responses and automatically rejects multiple responses from the same IP address. This is to prevent “ballot box stuffing” that is prevalent among online surveys where tokens of appreciation are given. Setting up the online survey to reject multiple responses from the same IP address does not compromise survey anonymity because the system was not designed to track IP addresses. Also, the IP addresses were not linked to participants’ responses in any way.

We received 179 responses that were usable, yielding a final response rate of approximately 30 per cent. Men comprised 58 per cent of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are married (61.5 per cent) with an average age of 42 years old ($SD = 8.89$ years old). The average length of unemployment is 13 months ($SD = 15.42$ months). The demographic profile of respondents is comparable with that of individuals in the database. Specifically, the database comprised 62 per cent male. Average age of PMETs in database was 45 years old ($SD = 7.53$ years old) and had an average unemployment length of about 15 months. Although we cannot effectively rule out non-response bias, these figures showed that respondents in our study are demographically similar to those who did not respond.

**Measures**

In this section, we described and explained the scales used to assess the variables in our study. As several scales used in this study were not originally developed in the framework of job search research, we have contextualized these scales to suit the context of this study. We would like to highlight that the psychometric properties of the scales used in this study remain high. A full list of the items measuring each variable can be found in the Appendix.

We assessed psychological capital ($z = .90$) with the scale developed by Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007). As the original psychological capital scale was developed to assess and enhance psychological capital of individuals who are employed, we changed the wordings of the original items to suit the context of this study. In the self-efficacy sub-scale, we added the term “future job” whenever appropriate to assess respondents’ confidence in their abilities to meet job demands of their new job after reemployment. A sample item of self-efficacy includes “In my future job, I feel confident in representing my area of work in meetings with management.” In items measuring hope, resilience, and optimism, we added the term “job search” to measure the degree of respondents’ positive attitudes toward the job search process. A sample item of hope includes “There are lots of ways around my problem at job search.” A sample item of resilience includes “I feel I can handle many things at a time in my job search.” A sample item of optimism includes “I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job search.” We scored all items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). High scores reflect high levels of psychological capital. Corrected item-total correlation of our items ranged from .49 to .72.

We assessed perceived employability ($z = .80$) with the subscale developed by Rothwell et al. (2008). The original scale was developed to measure perceived employability of college students. Four subscales in the original scale measured perceptions of employability related to college reputation, academic degree, and academic performance in college. The other four subscales measured perceived employability related to skills, abilities, and job market perceptions. As our sample consists of displaced employees who have previous job experience, the four dimensions on academic and college background were less relevant than the dimensions on skills, abilities, and job market perceptions. Hence, in our study, we included only the six items that assess a person’s perceived employability on the basis of their skills, abilities, and job market perceptions. Sample items in our scale include “The skills and abilities I possess are what employers are looking for” and “I feel I could get any job as long as my skills and experiences are reasonably relevant”. We scored all items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A high score reflects a high level of perceived employability. Corrected item-total correlation of our items ranged from .45 to .67.
We assessed seeking employment assistance ($\alpha = .92$) with six items adapted from Morrison’s (1993) study on newcomers’ socialization. We define seeking employment assistance as “the process in which job seekers seek information about job search techniques and strategies by asking and learning from other more experienced job seekers”. Morrison’s (1993) scale was developed to assess how newcomers in organizations proactively seek information to help them socialize into their new environment and perform better in their jobs. Morrison (1993) explained that proactively seeking information is important because it helps newcomers reduce uncertainty in a new work environment.

In many aspects, job seekers are similar to newcomers in organizations. Job seekers often find themselves in highly uncertain environment where they were not given enough information on how to be successful at job search. Whereas some job seekers are reactive, others will proactively seek information related to job search. Similar to newcomers in organizations, the best source of information is often someone who has more experience. As the available constructs in the job search literature do not quite tap on this aspect of proactively learning from someone more experienced, we have adapted Morrison’s (1993) scale to suit the present study. Care was taken to ensure that our items reflect as much as possible the original underlying processes of information seeking intended by Morrison (1993). One item, “ask your direct supervisor,” was not applicable to our study because displaced employees would not have a direct supervisor who can provide them with advice.

A sample item in our scale is “In the last 3 months, I asked a more experienced job seeker how to look for a job.” We scored all items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A high score on this measure reflects high level of seeking employment assistance. Corrected item-total correlation of our items ranged from .54 to .85.

We assessed seeking financial assistance ($\alpha = .92$) with five items adapted from the help-seeking behavior subscale developed by Anderson and Williams (1996). We define seeking financial assistance as the process in which displaced employees approach others for financial assistance during unemployment. In the original scale, Anderson and Williams (1996) measured help-seeking behaviors from the perspective of help givers. As we are interested in how displaced employees seek financial assistance, that is, how help seekers seek help, we reworded the original items to reflect this perspective. We took care in rewording the items to ensure that the essential meanings of the original items were retained. We did not reword two items from the original scale because the meaning of the items cannot be mapped meaningfully into a scale that measures seeking financial assistance. A sample item includes, “In the last 3 months, I often asked others to assist me with my financial difficulties.” We scored all items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A high score on this measure reflects high level of seeking financial assistance. Corrected item-total correlation of our items ranged from .63 to .88.

We measured preparatory job search ($\alpha = .87$) and active job search ($\alpha = .94$) with the scale developed by Blau (1994). This scale was first developed in 1994, and much has changed to affect how job search can be conducted. For example, job seekers have increasingly turned to the Internet in their job search. We believe that there is a need to reflect these changes in job search strategies in our scale.

To reflect the use of Internet in job search, we added the item “...used the internet to locate job openings” to preparatory job search. Also, we replaced “...listed yourself as a job applicant in a newspaper, journal or professional association” in the active job search scale with the item “...posted my resume on recruitment websites.” Essentially, listing oneself as a job applicant in newspapers and posting resumes on recruitment websites are similar because both activities aim to advertise oneself as a job applicant in a public domain. As our sample consisted of displaced employees who do not have access to “within company resources”, we removed the item “...use current within company resource (e.g. colleagues) to generate potential job leads” from the preparatory job search scale. We added two items, “...attended company recruitment talks” and “...attended career exhibitions or job fairs,” to reflect a wider variety of active job search options that are available to job applicants today.

In summary, we measured preparatory job search with six items and active job search with eight items. A sample item for preparatory job search includes “In the last 3 months, I spoke with previous employers or business acquaintances about possible job leads.” A sample item for active job search includes “In the last 3 months, I sent out my resume to potential employers.” We scored all items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A high score reflects high level of job search activities. Corrected item-total correlation for preparatory job search ranged from .51 to .56, and corrected item-total correlation for active job search ranged from .53 to .68.
Control variable
We controlled for the effect of length of unemployment on our dependent variables, preparatory and active job search. This is because prior studies suggested that length of unemployment significantly affects job search and other related variables such as job loss depression and coping behaviors (Wanberg et al., 2002). We measured length of unemployment with a single item by asking respondents to indicate the number of months they have been displaced from their job to the time when they completed the online survey.

Analyses and Results
Table 1 shows the reliability coefficients, means, standard deviations, and correlations of variables examined in this study. The reliability coefficients indicated that all scales have an acceptable level of internal consistency. On the basis of the correlation table, preparatory job search and active job search are highly correlated (r = .81). These correlations are not inconsistent with prior research. Prior research showed that correlation between preparatory job search and active job search was approximately .80 (e.g., Griffeth, Steel, Allen, & Bryan, 2005). Although highly correlated, preparatory job search and active job search have different antecedents and predict different outcomes (Griffeth et al., 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999). Rather than combining them in a single composite job search variable, which may lead to potentially misleading results, we analyzed them as two separate variables.

Confirmatory factor analyses and measurement model
Prior to analyzing psychological capital as a second-order construct, we performed confirmatory factor analyses to ascertain its factor structure. With the exception of Resilience 1 and Optimism 2 and 5, the remaining items loaded reasonably well on their latent factors. Because of poor factor loading, we dropped these items from subsequent analyses. We parcelled the remaining items and examined whether the latent variables load adequately onto the second-order construct. Figure 2 shows that self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience loaded reasonably well onto the second-order construct, psychological capital ($\chi^2 (40, 179) = 85.89, p < .01, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.07$).

Following this, we ran a measurement model analysis with psychological capital as a second-order construct. Results in Figure 3 suggested that our measurement model is a good fit for the data ($\chi^2 (170, 179) = 290.31, p < .01, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.07$).

In order to test for discriminant validity among our variables, we compared the measurement model against several other competing measurement models. In alternative measurement model 1, we assumed perceived employability to be an indicator of psychological capital. In alternative measurement model 2, we assumed both active and preparatory job search to be indicators of an overall job search variable. In alternative measurement model 3, we assumed seeking employment assistance to be an indicator of active job search.

Table 2 provides a summary of the chi-square comparison tests. The differences in chi-square between our hypothesized measurement model and alternative measurement models are significant, that is, the more complex model hypothesized model provides a better fit for the data than the simpler alternative models. This suggests that the variables in our study are empirically distinct from each other and best analyzed as separate constructs.

Model testing
We used the structural equation modeling with MPLUS 5.21 (Muthén & Muthén, Los Angeles, CA, USA; www.statmodel.com), to test the hypotheses. Figure 4 shows the results of our structural model with item parcels.
Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological capital</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>(.90)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived employability</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking employment assistance</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking financial assistance</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory job search</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Active job search</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td>(.94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of unemployment 13 months</td>
<td>15.42 months</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.15*</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>8.89</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (male = 1, female = 2)</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insomnia (tracer variable)</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>(.93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cronbach’s alphas appear in parentheses along the diagonal. n = 179.

*p < .05; **p < .01.
After controlling for the effects of length of unemployment, the hypothesized model provides a reasonably good fit to the data ($\chi^2 (195, 179) = 322.89, p < .01$, $CFI = 0.95$, $TLI = 0.94$, $RMSEA = 0.06$, $SRMR = 0.08$). We performed nested model analysis to assess the absolute fit of the proposed model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1998). We compared the hypothesized model with a less constrained model where paths were added from psychological capital and perceived employability to preparatory job search and active job search. We present the less constrained model in Figure 5.

A chi-square comparison suggested that the chi-square difference between the two models (hypothesized model: $\chi^2 (195, 179) = 322.89, p < .01$ and less constrained model: $\chi^2 (191, 179) = 314.55, p < .01$) is non-significant ($\Delta \chi^2 = 8.34, p = .08, \Delta df = 4$). Hence, the more constrained hypothesized model provides a better fit for the data than the less constrained model.

Our results suggest that psychological capital is positively and significantly related with perceived employability ($\beta = .66, p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Contrary to our prediction, however, perceived employability is positively and significantly related to both seeking employment assistance ($\beta = .29, p < .05$) and seeking financial assistance ($\beta = .22, p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is only partially supported.

Consistent with our hypotheses, after controlling for the effects of seeking financial assistance, seeking employment assistance is positively and significantly related to both preparatory job search ($\beta = .67, p < .01$) and active job search ($\beta = .60, p < .01$). However, after controlling for the effect of seeking employment assistance, seeking financial assistance is not significantly related to preparatory job search ($\beta = .11, p > .10$) and active job search ($\beta = .05, p > .10$). Hence, Hypothesis 3a is also partially supported.
Hypothesis 3b involves testing the significance of multiple mediators. To do so, we need to examine the total indirect effect associated with all the mediators and the specific indirect effect associated with each mediator (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). On the basis of Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) recommendation, we utilized the bias-corrected (BC) bootstrapping confidence interval (CI) analyses with 5000 bootstrap sample in Mplus to examine whether seeking employment assistance and financial assistance significantly mediates the relationships between perceived employability and both preparatory and active job search.

Table 2. Chi-square comparison tests between hypothesized measurement model and alternative measurement models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>$\Delta \chi^2$ from hypothesized measurement model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized measurement model</td>
<td>$\chi^2 (170, 179) = 290.31$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative measurement model 1</td>
<td>$\chi^2 (174, 179) = 302.51$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>$\Delta \chi^2 = 12.20$, $p &lt; .01$, $\Delta df = 4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(perceived employability as an indicator of psychological capital)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative measurement model 2</td>
<td>$\chi^2 (175, 179) = 303.60$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>$\Delta \chi^2 = 13.29$, $p &lt; .01$, $\Delta df = 5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(active and preparatory job search as indicators of an overall job search variable)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative measurement model 3</td>
<td>$\chi^2 (175, 179) = 411.01$, $p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>$\Delta \chi^2 = 120.7$, $p &lt; .01$, $\Delta df = 5$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(seeking employment assistance as an indicator active job search)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. Hypothesized measurement model

Note: Individual indicators and control variables are omitted due to space constraints. Figures from latent variables to P1 and P2 are factor loadings of item parcels on latent variables.
Figure 4. Structural model after controlling for length of unemployment

Figure 5. Structural model with paths added from psychological capital and perceived employability to job search behaviors
There are several advantages in using this statistical method to test for multi-mediation. First, this method tests each indirect effect while controlling for other possible indirect effect, ensuring that the findings are specific to each mediator. Second, using a multi-mediator model avoids biased parameter estimates that results from testing each indirect effect separately through a series of simple mediator models (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Testing all the hypothesized indirect effects in one statistical model reduces the number of inferential tests required and the possibility of Type I error inflation. Third, this method does not rely on the problematic assumption of normal sampling distribution and allows a robust test of our hypotheses even when normal sampling distribution is mildly violated (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Using BC bootstrapping CI analyses, we construct 95 per cent confidence intervals of our tests, adjusting for median biasness and skewness. In this method, if a mediator significantly mediates the relationship between the independent and dependent variable, the range of its indirect effect’s 95 per cent BC bootstrapping CI will not contain 0 (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Table 3 shows that the estimated total indirect effect from perceived employability to preparatory job search is 0.22 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.04, 0.40). The estimated specific indirect effect from perceived employability to preparatory job search through seeking employment assistance is 0.20 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.03, 0.37), and the estimated specific indirect effect through seeking financial assistance is 0.03 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = −0.02, 0.07). These results suggested that seeking employment assistance significantly mediated the relationship between perceived employability and preparatory job search whereas seeking financial assistance did not.

Table 3. Mediation analyses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimates</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effects of perceived employability to preparatory job search</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of indirect effect</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific indirect effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived employability → seeking employment assistance → preparatory job search</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived employability → seeking financial assistance → preparatory job search</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of perceived employability to active job search</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of indirect effect</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific indirect effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived employability → seeking employment assistance → active job search</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived employability → seeking financial assistance → active job search</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of psychological capital to preparatory job search</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of indirect effect</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific indirect effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological capital → perceived employability → seeking employment assistance → preparatory job search</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological capital → perceived employability → seeking financial assistance → preparatory job search</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>−0.03</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of psychological capital to active job search</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of indirect effect</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific indirect effect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological capital → perceived employability → seeking employment assistance → active job search</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological capital → perceived employability → seeking financial assistance → active job search</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 179. *p < .05; **p < .01.
Analyses also showed that the estimated total indirect effect from perceived employability to active job search is 0.15 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.03, 0.27). The estimated specific indirect effect from perceived employability to active job search through seeking employment assistance is 0.13 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.02, 0.24), and the estimated specific indirect effect through seeking financial assistance is 0.02 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = −0.02, 0.05). This suggested that seeking employment assistance significantly mediated the relationship between perceived employability and active job search whereas seeking financial assistance did not. Thus, Hypothesis 3b is partially supported.

We performed BC bootstrapping CI analyses to test the indirect relationships between psychological capital and job search through the two coping pathways. Analyses showed that the estimated total indirect effect from psychological capital to preparatory job search is 0.18 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.03, 0.33). The estimated indirect specific effect from psychological capital through problem-focused pathway is 0.17 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.02, 0.32), and the estimated specific indirect effect through symptom-focused pathway is 0.01 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = −0.03, 0.05). The estimated total indirect effect from psychological capital to active job search is 0.12 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.02, 0.22). The estimated specific indirect effect from psychological capital through problem-focused pathway is 0.11 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = 0.02, 0.21), and the specific estimated indirect effect through symptom-focused pathway is 0.01 (95 per cent BC bootstrap CI = −0.02, 0.03). This suggests that psychological capital influences job search only through problem-focused but not symptom-focused pathway. Hypothesis 4 is partially supported.

**Alternative models testing**

In order to test the robustness of our model, we compared our hypothesized model with four alternative models that might possibly explain the relationships between the variables in our study. In alternative model 1, we reversed the path between psychological capital and perceived employability whereas the rest of the model remains the same. In alternative model 2, we hypothesized perceived employability to predict psychological capital. In turn, psychological capital predicts seeking employment and financial assistance. Seeking employment and financial assistance subsequently predict preparatory and active job search. In alternative model 3, we hypothesized psychological capital to predict perceived employability. Perceived employability, in turn, predicts preparatory and active job search. Preparatory and active job search subsequently predict seeking employment and financial assistance. In alternative model 4, we hypothesized perceived employability to predict psychological capital. We hypothesized psychological capital, in turn, to predict preparatory and active job search. Preparatory and active job search subsequently predict seeking employment and financial assistance.

Table 4 shows the fit indices and the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) indices for all the models. As none of the aforementioned models are nested, we used AIC and BIC comparisons to assess the quality of the models. AIC and BIC assess the parsimonious fit of non-nested models by considering both model fit and number of parameters estimated. A smaller AIC and BIC indicated that a model is more parsimonious and fits the data better (Kline, 2000). Results in Table 3 show that among all the models, our hypothesized model has the lowest AIC and BIC indices. This indicates that our hypothesized model provides the best fit for the data and is the best among the alternative models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>TLI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>AIC</th>
<th>BIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesized model</td>
<td>$\chi^2_{(195, 179)} = 322.89, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>11 204.79</td>
<td>11 453.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative model 1</td>
<td>$\chi^2_{(195, 179)} = 319.99, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>11 205.89</td>
<td>11 460.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative model 2</td>
<td>$\chi^2_{(195, 179)} = 330.74, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>11 212.37</td>
<td>11 460.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative model 3</td>
<td>$\chi^2_{(195, 179)} = 395.83, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>11 277.73</td>
<td>11 526.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative model 4</td>
<td>$\chi^2_{(195, 179)} = 508.50, p &lt; .01$</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>11 390.40</td>
<td>11 639.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Comparison of fit indices between hypothesized model and alternative models.
Common method variance tests

As with all self-reported studies, we subjected our results to potential inflation due to common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). We tested for the effect of common method variance by using partial correlation procedure as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003). According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), partial correlation procedure involves using a measure of the assumed source of method variance as a covariate in analyses. The two commonly used covariates in this method are (i) general affectivity and (ii) a “tracer” variable, which is theoretically unrelated to other variables in the study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Figure 6 shows the structural model after controlling for length of unemployment and partialling out general affectivity and insomnia—the “tracer” variable. We measured general affectivity with positive ($\alpha = .92$) and negative affects ($\alpha = .85$; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), and we measured insomnia ($\alpha = .93$) with the scale developed by Jenkins, Stanton, Niemczyk, and Rose (1988). Chi-square difference test suggested that our model before partialling out general affectivity and insomnia is no different from a model that partials out these variables ($\Delta \chi^2 = 56.36, p = .14, \Delta df = 46$). These results provide preliminary evidence that our findings are not influenced by respondents’ affective states or inflated by method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To further ascertain that common method variance is not an issue in our study, we compared the differences in partial correlations between predictor and criterion variables with their corresponding zero-order correlation by using Olkin and Finn’s (1995) significance test (cf. Spector, Chen, & O’Connell, 2000). If our results are inflated by common method variance or caused by a background variable such as general affectivity, the partial correlations of our variables will be significantly smaller than their corresponding zero-order correlations.

As shown in Table 5, only four out of 36 partial correlations are significantly smaller than their corresponding zero-order correlations. These results show little possibility that general affectivity and common method variance are responsible for the relationships observed in this study. Although we cannot effectively rule out the presence of common method variance, results of the preceding tests suggested that common method variance is not a major problem in this study.

Figure 6. Structural model after controlling for length of unemployment and partialling out general affectivity and insomnia
Table 5. Zero-order correlations and partial correlations after controlling for general affectivity and insomnia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2a</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>3a</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>4a</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>5a</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>6a</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>7a</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>8a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Psychological capital</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Psychological capital (partial)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perceived employability</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Perceived employability (partial)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Seeking employment assistance</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Seeking employment assistance (partial)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Seeking financial assistance</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.25**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a</td>
<td>Seeking financial assistance (partial)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.19*</td>
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Note: Figures in bold and italic represent partial correlations that are significantly lower from corresponding zero-order correlations at the .05 level. n = 179. 
*p < .05; **p < .01.
Additional analyses

Although not explicitly hypothesized, we performed multi-group analyses to ascertain how differences in length of unemployment affect the relationships hypothesized in our model.

Before valid multi-group analyses can take place, measurement invariance of key constructs must be established (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). As the key construct in our study is psychological capital, it is important to ascertain that we have measured it to the same extent for both recently and long-term displaced employees. We define recently displaced employees as those who were unemployed for 12 months or less and the long-term displaced employees as those who were unemployed for more than 12 months.

To test for measurement invariance, we parcelled the items measuring psychological capital and ran measurement invariance tests with MPLUS 5.21. Results showed that form invariance between recently and long-term displaced employees is supported ($\chi^2 (83, 179) = 143.48, p < .01$, $CFI=0.95$, $TLI=0.93$, $RMSEA=0.09$, $SRMR=0.08$). Next, we imposed between-group equality constraints on the factor loadings and tested for factorial invariance by comparing the chi-square of this more constraint model with the baseline form invariance model. Chi-square comparison showed that chi-square difference between the two models (form invariance model: $\chi^2 (83, 179) = 143.48, p < .01$; factorial invariance model: $\chi^2 (90, 179) = 152.39, p < .01$) is non-significant ($\Delta \chi^2 = 8.91, p = .26$, $\Delta df=7$). This suggested that psychological capital has factorial invariance and we measured it to the same extent in both recently and long-term displaced employees. Therefore, multi-group analyses are appropriate.

The recently displaced group consisted of 123 displaced employees, and the long-term displaced group consisted of 56 displaced employees. We show our findings in Figure 7.

Fit indices indicated that the models in our multi-group analyses fit the data well ($\chi^2 (14, 179) = 29.46, p < .01$, $CFI=0.96$, $TLI=0.91$, $RMSEA=0.10$, $SRMR=0.082$). As seen in Figure 7, the relationships between the variables in our model are different for recently and long-term displaced employees. Specifically, psychological capital has a stronger influence on perceived employability among long-term displaced employees ($\beta = .87, p < .01$) than among recently displaced employees ($\beta = .56, p < .01$). In turn, perceived employability affects seeking employment assistance more for long-term displaced employees ($\beta = .31, p < .01$) than for recently displaced employees ($\beta = .25, p < .05$). Perceived employability also affects seeking financial assistance more for recently displaced employees ($\beta = .28, p < .05$) than for long-term displaced employees ($\beta = .24, p < .05$).

We also found that seeking employment assistance has a stronger influence on preparatory job search ($\beta = .49, p < .01$) and active job search ($\beta = .65, p < .01$) for long-term displaced employees than for recently displaced employees ($\beta = .35, p < .01$ and $\beta = .51, p < .01$, respectively). On the other hand, seeking financial assistance affects preparatory job search ($\beta = .11, p < .10$) and active job search ($\beta = .10, p < .10$) of recently displaced employees more than long-term displaced employees ($\beta = -.02, p > .10$ and $\beta = -.01, p > .10$ respectively).

To test whether the path estimates in the two models are significantly different from each other, we conducted a series of chi-square difference tests. We compared the chi-square of our model where all the parameters are freely estimated with a series of models where one set of relationship between two variables is constrained to be equal. If the chi-square difference test is significant, it suggests that the paths that are constrained to be equal are significantly different from each other. The reverse is true when the chi-square difference test is non-significant.

On the basis of the chi-square difference tests, only the relationship between psychological capital and perceived employability is significantly different between recently and long-term displaced employees ($\Delta \chi^2 = 6.39, p < .01$, $\Delta df=1$). Two possible reasons may account for this. First, given the recency of their job displacement, recently displaced employees may continue to believe that their skills and work experience still remain relevant. Second, compared with long-term displaced employees, recently displaced individuals are less likely to have attended multiple reemployment interviews. Thus, they are also less likely to have experienced rejections from potential employers. The perception that they possess relevant skills and relative lack of rejections at interviews buffer recently displaced employees from the reality that reemployment is difficult. This buffering effect could reduce the need for them to draw from psychological capital as a resource to maintain their perceived employability.
In contrast, psychological capital plays a more significant role in helping long-term displaced individuals maintain positive attitudes regarding their employability in the midst of the challenges they encountered.

One plausible reason why we did not find any differences in the relationships between perceived employability, seeking employment, and financial assistance and job search among recently and long-term unemployed could be due to a lack of statistical power (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Alken, 2003). Despite our findings that recently and long-term displaced individuals are not too different from each other in the preceding relationships, the path parameters in the models highlighted an interesting relationship, that is, individuals with different length of unemployment differ in their approach toward job search. Future research on reemployment should consider how differences in length of unemployment affect job search and reemployment outcomes.

Discussion

In this study, we examined the effects of psychological capital on job search among displaced employees. Consistent with our arguments, psychological capital is positively related to perceived employability, a coping resource. Displaced employees with high levels of psychological capital tend to perceive themselves more employable than those with lower levels. As a coping resource, perceived employability directly impacts the type of coping strategies displaced employees adopt.
Contrary to our hypotheses, perceived employability is positively and significantly related with both problem-focused and symptom-focused coping. These results are not unusual. Past research found that individuals typically use a variety of coping strategies to deal with stress (Leana & Feldman, 1992; Leana et al., 1998). For example, Leana et al. (1998) found that positive reappraisal can impact both problem-focused and symptom-focused coping strategies in similar ways. Consistent with prior research, respondents in our study seem to utilize both problem-focused and symptom-focused coping strategies in their bid for reemployment. One plausible reason why highly employable individuals engage in both problem-focused and symptom-focused coping strategies could be that they believe that both strategies, when used in tandem, enhance the possibility of being reemployed. By resolving their short-term financial difficulties with loans from others, they are better able to focus on seeking employment assistance and engaging in job search that alleviates their unemployment in the long run.

Turning to the two pathways linking psychological capital and job search, psychological capital was found to influence job search indirectly through problem-focused pathway but not symptom-focused pathway. This finding is not surprising because theories and research have suggested that psychological capital is associated with a positive state of mind and has long-term beneficial effects on human development (Luthans, Youssef, et al., 2007). As part of this study, we asked respondents to provide qualitative comments describing their current attitude toward life in general and expectations of their future jobs. Respondents' comments showed that displaced employees with higher psychological capital tend to have more positive outlook toward their life, perceive themselves as more employable and are more motivated to seek reemployment:

*I've always believe in having a positive mindset so that my self-esteem and confidence will not be lowered. Remembering quality time spent with my 2 daughters motivates me to hunt for a good job and to upgrade myself. I imagine that I will be a manager in a reputable company [sic]*.

(Respondent 6, age 30 years, married, unemployed for six months)

*In the future, I would like to see myself as someone who is always living life to the fullest and being successful in all areas of interest. Besides being joyous, thankful and leading a fulfilling life, I see myself having a job that allows me to lead a team of subordinates. Despite being the team leader, I will continue to remain humble and be pleasant to my subordinates [sic]*.

(Respondent 73, age 34 years, single, unemployed for nine months)

*I see myself as continuously upgrading my skills so that I can remain relevant to my work. I want to stay healthy and having a positive mindset motivates me to keep persevering in my job search despite setbacks [sic]*.

(Respondent 112, age 46 years, married, unemployed for 36 months)

The preceding narratives are in stark contrast to comments from displaced employees with low levels of psychological capital. These individuals reported more negative attitudes toward life, tend to believe that it is impossible for them to be reemployed, attributed their unemployment to a lack of opportunities in the job market, and groused about insufficient assistance from the government and unemployment agencies. As well, these individuals are more concerned with remuneration associated with their future jobs than with career developments. Qualitative comments from some of these employees support these conclusions:
I can’t think about my future job. My guess is that it will be tough. Increment will be marginal and there will be no bonus. Not sure if I will ever be reemployed [sic].

(Respondent 94, age 50 years, married, unemployed for one month)

If I ever find a job, I see myself working till the day I die, burdened by medical bills and high cost of living [sic].

(Respondent 56, age 32 years, single, unemployed for 18 months)

I have lost all my dignity in life and pride for what I do. If I ever get a job, I will be holding one that is low in pay and I would only barely be able to make ends meet [sic].

(Respondent 102, age 50 years, married, unemployed for two months)

These qualitative comments suggest that psychological capital is important in sustaining individuals during adversity. Despite being unemployed, individuals with high psychological capital are confident about their abilities and competencies, remain optimistic about their future, persevere in their job search, and are able to find multiple pathways to overcome obstacles during job search. Their positive mental state motivates them to continuously seek opportunities rather than externalizing blames and wallowing in self pity.

One practical implication of these findings is that not only is there a need to increase human capital for displaced employees but that there is also a need to manage their psychological capital. Luthans, Avolio, and Patera (2008) explained that psychological capital can be developed through training and interventions. This means that apart from providing traditional forms of employment assistance such as resume workshops and job placements, career counselors and employment agencies should design intervention programs targeted at increasing the psychological capital of displaced employees. Improving mental state of displaced employees will help them to stay motivated in their job search. Such interventions may also result in long-term positive consequences for family members, especially their children. Past research has shown that children will develop negative money motives when their parents experience financial hardship (Lim & Sng, 2006). Specifically, children whose parents have experienced financial hardship are more likely to seek money to overcome their self-doubts as well as view money as a tool to gain power over others. Keeping displaced employees positive and ensuring that they find a desired job quickly can minimize the negative impact of financial hardship on their children, indirectly helping these young members of the family to adopt positive attitudes toward work and money.

Our study showed that seeking employment assistance seems to predict preparatory job search (β = .67, p < .01) more strongly than active job search (β = .60, p < .01). This implies that information sought on job search techniques helps displaced employees more in preparing for their job search than in actually looking for a job. One possible explanation for this is that active job search is an action-oriented activity that depends on job seekers’ level of proactivity and their commitment to action (Brown et al., 2006; Song, Wanberg, Niu, & Xie, 2006). Asking experienced job seekers about job search will provide displaced employees with useful information on both preparatory and active job search. However, whether displaced employees utilize the gleaned information and knowledge to actively look for jobs depends on their abilities to initiate and commit themselves to job search and their ability to manage their time and avoid distraction (Song et al., 2006). Translating information gleaned from experienced job seekers to actively looking for jobs is more difficult and requires a higher level of commitment than merely preparing to look for a job. An important implication arising from this finding is that, together with enhancing psychological capital,
career counselors and unemployment agencies should also target their efforts to increase displaced employees’ level of proactivity and commitment to reemployment. This is important because reemployment success hinges on both preparatory and active job search. Although displaced employees with positive mindset may spend time learning and preparing for job search, an activity which in itself is important in determining long-term reemployment success, it is also important that they actively engage in job search so as to secure reemployment (Saks & Ashforth, 1999).

**Limitations**

Results of our study should be viewed within the study’s limitations. First, we recognize that the cross-sectional and self-reported nature of our data precludes us from drawing casual inferences about the relationship between the variables. To draw better inferences on how psychological capital influences the job search and reemployment process, a longitudinal diary or multi-wave study is necessary. Such approach will allow us to better understand how psychological capital affects job search activities and other related reemployment outcomes over time. Despite this limitation, our study provides an interesting glimpse of how a positive state of mind can sustain displaced employees in the stressful activity of looking for jobs. We hope that our findings serve to fuel interest in this topic and encourage other scholars to adopt a longitudinal research design in examining these issues.

Second, we have to acknowledge the challenge we faced in adapting prior validated scales, in particular, psychological capital, to our study. As the original psychological capital scale was developed for employed individuals, its adaptation to a job search study is challenging. Although we have successfully adapted the sub-dimensions of hope, resilience, and optimism to the context of our study, the adaptation of the self-efficacy poses more challenge. This is because the self-efficacy sub-dimension was used to measure employees’ confidence in performing in their existing job. To adapt self-efficacy to our scale, we have to modify the items to measure displaced employees’ confidence in performing in their future job after reemployment. Although assessing self-efficacy of future jobs seems at odd with the other three sub-dimensions, at the domain level, self-efficacy of future jobs measures displaced employees’ positive state of mind toward a future event or outcome. This is similar to the underlying positive psychological state that the other three sub-dimensions are assessing. These arguments are supported by the corrected item-total correlation, which suggests that all our items correlate well with the overall scale. As well, our second-order confirmatory factor analyses show that the four sub-dimensions of our adapted scale loaded significantly onto the second-order factor, psychological capital. Furthermore, psychological capital, as a second-order construct, successfully predicted the hypothesized relationships in our model. The validity of our adapted scale lends confidence to our effort to adapt the psychological capital scale to a sample of displaced employees.

Third, we did not examine actual reemployment outcomes. Although we examined the distal impact of psychological capital on preparatory and active job search, these are, at best, proxy measures for the potential to be reemployed (Blau, 1994). Examining actual reemployment outcomes (e.g., quality of reemployment, intentions to remain in the new job, and well-being after reemployment) is important in testing the positive influence of psychological capital on reemployment. This is an important future research agenda that will help establish the theoretical relevance of psychological capital to job loss and reemployment research.

Fourth, as we drew our sample from a government-affiliated unemployment agency, our respondents are likely to be more proactive in securing reemployment than other unemployed individuals who did not approach the same agency. Although our sample may potentially limit the generalizability of this study, we believe that this is not a major concern. This is because even though our sample is skewed toward a particular group of displaced employees, that is, those who approached the government unemployment agency, we continue to find interesting variances and results. These results suggest that our respondents are heterogeneous in their attitudes and job search behaviors despite being less representative of the general population. To better test our model, especially the symptom-focused pathway, future research should adopt a random sampling approach that taps into a wider spectrum of displaced employees. This will allow for a more robust test of our model and theory.
Fifth, as suggested by a reviewer, it is possible that respondents who completed our survey possess higher psychological capital than non-respondents. This suggests that our study may potentially suffer from range restriction. As noted by Rousseau and Fried (2001), studies that involve sampling inevitably runs into problem of range restriction, especially if the study is contextualized in a particular organizational setting or context. As our study utilized a highly contextualized sample-displaced employees from an unemployment agency, the range of the variables are likely to be restricted. Although in any research, researchers should ideally have a sample that is as representative of the population as possible, in practice, researchers are rarely able to obtain data for a perfectly representative sample. More often than not, researchers ended up inferring their results from the validity statistics of a restricted sample (Thorndike, 1949). It is important to note that more variations within variables are not necessarily better. “What is important in well-specified theory and research is sustained and systematic attention given to factors that causes [or resulted from] these variations” (Rousseau & Fried, 2001, p. 4).

In this study, we have paid systematic theoretical attention on how psychological capital influences perceptions of employability and other related outcomes. By providing strong theoretical arguments to support our empirical findings, we are able to mitigate possible repercussions of range restriction. To lend further credibility to our claims, we compared the mean and standard deviation of psychological capital in our study with those found in published research. For example, in Avey et al. (2010), psychological capital has a mean of 4.63 and a standard deviation of 0.67. In Avey et al. (2009), psychological capital has a mean of 4.77 and a standard deviation of 0.57. Our results are comparable with those found in prior studies.

Sixth, there is a possibility that respondents’ psychological capital and their subsequent attitudes toward job search are artifacts of their past job experiences, that is, respondents who have performed well in their previous job tend to possess higher levels of psychological capital, which in turn affect their levels of perceived employability, types of coping strategies, and job search. To address this concern, future researchers should obtain performance ratings of individuals in their previous job and control for the impact of this past performance on their present psychological capital and subsequent outcomes.

Future Research

Although our findings show that psychological capital significantly influences job search only through problem-focused pathway, it remains theoretically meaningful for us to consider the negative impact of symptom-focused pathway. This is because in theory, adoption of symptom-focused strategy has long-term negative impact (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Despite arguing that symptom-focused pathway will impede reemployment, we did not examine this argument explicitly. To better examine the negative impact of symptom-focused pathway, we need to investigate how it may encourage procrastination and reluctance to be reemployed. Examining symptom-focused pathway in this manner will better inform us on how it hinders reemployment.

It would be interesting to investigate how psychological capital can potentially hamper reemployment. In their book, Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007) directed our attention to potential pitfalls of having excessively high levels of psychological capital. Luthans, Youssef, et al. (2007) cautioned that excessive amount of psychological capital may lead to counterproductive consequences such as unrealistic confidence, false hope and optimism, and the commitment of energy to goals that are beyond reach despite multiple setbacks. Applying these potential pitfalls to our current study, displaced employees with excessively amount of psychological capital may overestimate their abilities and set unrealistically high reemployment expectations. In the long run, these unrealistic expectations may lead to disappointments, frustrations, and depressions, especially when they are unable to find jobs that match their expectations. Rather than instilling displaced employees with a positive state of mind, excessively high amount of psychological capital may lead to depression, cynicism, and bitterness in the long run. These arguments suggest that psychological capital may not always have a positive influence on displaced employees. Instead, its impact is likely to follow an inverted-U shape curve that increases initially and falls subsequently. Future research should investigate this potential dark side of psychological capital through a longitudinal study.
As psychological capital is developmental, it is important to examine how reemployment successes/setbacks lead to psychological capital accumulation/depletion and the consequences of this feedback. Small successes such as being called up for interviews during job search may lead to gains in psychological capital that motivate job seekers to further persist in their job search efforts. Such gains in psychological capital create a positive spiral of actions and thoughts that enhances reemployment and job search behaviors. Conversely, constant reemployment setbacks such as rejections may deplete individuals’ psychological capital. This creates a negative spiral that reduces their job search efforts and their motivation to be reemployed. Examining how reemployment successes accumulates or setbacks deplete psychological capital over time will allow scholars to better understand the process in which psychological capital affects reemployment.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the current economic environment makes it important for employees to actively manage their careers. With the pervasiveness of organizational restructuring and corporate transformation, it is likely that an average employee will inevitably encounter episodes of job loss and reemployment throughout their work life. Insights gleaned from this study showed that psychological capital not only influences individuals’ outlook in life but also has implications on how they manage job loss and reemployment. As the economy becomes more turbulent, psychological capital is likely to remain an important resource that individuals can tap on to cope with this increasing uncertainty.

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**References**


Appendix

Psychological capital \( (z = .90, \text{corrected item-total correlation ranges from .49 to .72}) \)

Note: Items denoted with (R) are reverse coded.

Self-efficacy

1. I feel confident analyzing a long-term problem to find a solution.
2. In my future job, I feel confident in representing my area of work in meetings with management.
3. In my future job, I feel confident that I am able to contribute to discussions about the company’s strategy.
4. In my future job, I feel confident about helping to set targets/goals in my area of work.
5. In my future job, I feel confident contacting people outside the company (e.g., suppliers, customers) to discuss problems.
6. I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues in the future.

Hope
1. If I should find myself facing a problem in my job search, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
2. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my job search goals.
3. There are lots of ways around my job search problem.
4. Right now, I see myself as being pretty successful in my job search.
5. I can think of many ways to reach my current job search goals.
6. At this time, I am meeting the job search goals that I have set for myself.

Resilience
1. When I have a setback in my job search, I have trouble recovering from it. (R)
2. In my job search, I usually manage difficulties one way or another.
3. I can be “on my own”, in my job search, if I have to.
4. I usually take stressful things in my job search in stride.
5. I can get through difficult times in my job search because I’ve experienced difficulty before.
6. I feel I can handle many things at a time in my job search.

Optimism
1. When things are uncertain for me in my job search, I usually expect the best.
2. If something can go wrong for me during my job search, it will. (R)
3. I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job search.
4. I’m optimistic about what will happen to me in my job search.
5. During job search, things never work out the way I want them to. (R)
6. I approach job search with the attitude that something positive will always turn out no matter how difficult it might be.

Perceived employability ($\alpha = .80$, corrected item-total correlation ranges from .45 to .67)
1. There is generally a strong demand in the job market for people like me at the present time.
2. There are plenty of vacancies in the area where I am looking for a job.
3. I can easily find out about opportunities in my chosen area of work.
4. The skills and abilities I possess are what employers are looking for.
5. I am generally confident of success in the job interview and selection process.
6. I feel I could get any job as long as my skills and experiences are reasonably relevant.

Seeking employment assistance ($\alpha = .92$, corrected item-total correlation ranges from .54 to .85)
In the last 3 months, I...
1. . . . asked a more experienced job seeker for information regarding job search
2. . . . asked a more experienced job seeker for tips on how to look for a job.
3. . . . paid attention to how other job seekers looked for jobs.
4. . . . socialized with other job seekers in order to learn how they looked for jobs.
5. . . . observed what other job seekers did in their job search and used this as a clue to what I should do.
6. . . . asked another job seeker for tips on how to look for a job.
Seeking financial assistance ($\alpha = .92$, corrected item-total correlation ranges from .63 to .88)

*In the last 3 months, I...*

1. often asked others to assist me with my financial difficulties.
2. often seek financial assistance from community and government help groups (e.g., CDC ComCare) to handle my financial difficulties.
3. have on several occasions requested others for loans to tide over my financial difficulties.
4. requested for financial assistance when I get behind in my bill payments.
5. frequently asked for financial assistance to purchase daily necessities.

Preparatory job search ($\alpha = .87$, corrected item-total correlation ranges from .51 to .56)

*In the last 3 months, I...*

1. read classified ads in newspapers, journals or professional magazines.
2. prepared/ revised my resume.
3. read books or articles about getting a job or changing jobs.
4. talked to friends or relatives about possible job leads.
5. spoke with previous employers or business acquaintances about possible job leads.
6. used the internet to locate job openings.

Active job search ($\alpha = .94$, corrected item-total correlation ranges from .53 to .68)

*In the last 3 months, I...*

1. posted my resumes on recruitment websites.
2. sent my resumes to potential employers.
3. filled out a job application.
4. had an interview with a prospective employer.
5. contacted an employment agency or an executive search firm.
6. telephoned or emailed a prospective employer.
7. attended company recruitment talks.
8. attended career exhibitions or job fairs.