

Inside Job Search:  
Impacts of the Work-Nonwork Interface and Goal Adjustment

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## **Abstract**

Inside Job Search: Impacts of the Work-Nonwork Interface and Goal Adjustment

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This study examined the impact of the work-nonwork interface on job search behaviour. Specifically, I investigated the effects of work-nonwork conflict and enrichment on job search intensity, job search quality, and haphazard job search, as well their indirect effects on these variables via downward and upward adjustment of job search goals. I also explored the role of three career motives, authenticity, balance, and challenge, as moderators of the relations between conflict and enrichment, and goal adjustment. Survey data were collected from 308 participants who were employed and actively looking for a new job. A correlational, sequential, time-lagged design was used, with three surveys distributed at one-week intervals. I found that conflict is positively related to haphazard job search, which is low quality job searching, whereas enrichment is positively related to job search quality, which is high quality job searching. In addition, I found that upward goal adjustment serves as a linking mechanism between enrichment and both job search intensity and quality. No support was found for the proposed moderation hypotheses, although some direct effects of career motives on job search goal adjustment were found. This research provides job seekers with insight into how their experiences with conflict and enrichment can shape their goal adjustment patterns and job search behaviours. Findings offer practical guidance on how people can adapt their behaviour to foster achievement of their goals and choose strategies to enhance the quality of their job search.

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## Introduction

Job search represents a series of behaviours that require time and effort with the goal to obtain information about the labor market and generate new employment (Boswell et al., 2012). This is a practice in which most individuals will engage in their lifetime, whether they are transitioning from school to the labour pool, re-entering the workforce after job loss, or changing jobs to reduce existing demands or chase new opportunities for growth (Boswell et al., 2012; van Hooft et al., 2021). In fact, many workers will partake in job search activities several times over the course of their careers and will devote substantial energy and attention to the pursuit of their employment goals.

Given its widespread relevance, job search has been the subject of extensive research, and interest in this topic is growing in the aftermath of events that have threatened employment security, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Koopmann et al., 2021). Research on job search strategies and behaviours is therefore increasingly valuable for employees facing a dynamic labour market and conditions of economic instability. In addition, changes to the nature of work, such as remote work, are blurring the boundaries between work and personal life (Cho, 2020). Whereas blurred boundaries are advantageous for some, they create obstacles for others, shifting the work-life interface for better or for worse. Thus, the current study will explore the impact of two facets of the work-life interface, work-nonwork conflict and work-nonwork enrichment, on job search behaviour. To date, little work has examined how conflict, which implies a negative interplay between the two domains, and enrichment, which implies a positive interplay between them, act as hindrances or drivers of successful job search.

The present research is particularly relevant in a post-pandemic world, as conflict and enrichment between work and other life domains may present themselves for different reasons

and in different patterns than in the past. During the pandemic, many companies implemented work-from-home policies, and employees were required to do their jobs in the same environment in which they would normally disconnect from work (Cho, 2020). This work-from-home shift, along with its associated increased reliance on technology, promoted blurred boundaries between life domains, as remote work practices represent a key avenue through which individuals can quite literally bring the office home (Cho, 2020). This may set prime conditions for conflict or enrichment, depending on factors such as the nature of job tasks, hours worked, and satisfaction with one's job (Xu et al., 2022). The pandemic also stimulated changes in people's career perspectives, such as their desire for flexibility and attachment to their jobs, prompting many employees to reflect on their preferences for role boundaries and refine their boundary management styles (Cho, 2020). Employees' experiences with the work-nonwork interface may therefore influence their desire to stay at or leave their jobs, as well as affect how they pursue their goals when seeking new employment (Hirschi et al., 2022). The present study aims to offer insight into how the job search process is affected by the interplay of work and nonwork roles. Specifically, this study seeks to elucidate how work-nonwork conflict and enrichment prompt people to adjust their job search goals, and how this, in turn, affects their job search outcomes.

This study examines the effects of work-nonwork conflict and enrichment on the self-regulatory aspects of job search. That is, this research aims to shed light on how employed individuals regulate their behaviours and adapt their goals during the search for new employment in response to the interplay between work and nonwork demands (Hirschi et al., 2022). Hirschi's (2019) theory of action regulation at the work-family interface (AR-WF) highlights the relevance of adjusting one's goal-directed actions in the joint pursuit of work and family goals, and how demands within these contexts impact one's available resources. Further, research on job search

underscores the importance of self-regulatory ability, which is the capacity to regulate and manage one's own behaviours with respect to goal setting and adjustment during job search (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; van Hooft et al., 2021). More precisely, individuals set goals for their job search and adjust these goals downward or upward in response to emerging demands and circumstances (e.g., Lord et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2010). Though goal adjustment has been investigated in relation to job search and to the work-life interface separately, it has not been examined as the unifying mechanism between them. I contend that bringing these concepts together can help clarify how the experiences of work-nonwork conflict and enrichment might impede or facilitate job search, particularly when changing jobs represents the next step in one's career, and attaining job search goals is an important part of their current work sphere. Thus, this study emphasizes the role of job search goals and how these may be prioritized or deprioritized in the face of one's existing work and nonwork demands, thereby influencing the time and effort devoted to job search activities.

The current study combines work-nonwork conflict, work-nonwork enrichment, goal adjustment, and job search into one model, suggesting that the work-nonwork interface impacts how people adjust their job search goals, which, in turn, determines the intensity and quality of their job search. In addition, this study explores the role of individuals' career motives as moderators that influence these relations. Motives were chosen because they underlie career choices and may affect how those choices are impacted by conflict and enrichment, as well as how an individual adjusts their job search goals in response to these experiences. By exploring the pathways through which conflict and enrichment influence job search, this study links three vast but scarcely connected streams of research (i.e., work-nonwork interface, goal adjustment, and job search). In doing so, it offers new insights regarding the interplay of work and nonwork

roles as it pertains to the job search process, which has not been studied enough despite the fact that it affects many people who must balance searching for a job with meeting their current work and nonwork demands. Findings will offer practical guidance for individuals to maximize their job search, highlighting the conditions for effective (and ineffective) job search behaviours. This will hopefully help job seekers achieve their career goals and be aware of barriers to job search success. Specifically, understanding how work-nonwork conflict and enrichment influence goal-directed behaviours can help job seekers set and adapt their proximal goals (e.g., browsing job boards, preparing resumes, researching companies, networking with contacts) for an organized and productive job search, which will then drive the achievement of their distal job search goals (i.e., finding a new job).

## **Literature Review**

### **Job Search**

Research has frequently conceptualized job search as goal-oriented behaviour, examining the goal-setting processes and behavioural adjustments used by individuals as they navigate their job search (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2010; van Hooft et al., 2021). When searching for a job, individuals must decide when to allocate resources to job search activities, and evaluate whether their goals can reasonably be achieved throughout different phases of their job search (Niessen et al., 2009; van Hooft et al., 2021). When one's job search goals become unattainable, they may choose to withdraw energy and attention from these goals, whether temporarily or permanently, or they may modify their goals. Conversely, when one's job search goals fit their current needs and abilities, they may choose to devote more resources to the pursuit of these goals, and as a result may progress faster toward goal attainment. Job search often involves cycles of upgrading and downgrading one's goals, a process referred to as goal adjustment

(Niessen et al., 2009; van Hooft et al., 2021). Job search goals are susceptible to changing circumstances within and around the individual, as well as to success or failure in various aspects of their search, which can lead them to increase or decrease the priorities of their goals (Niessen et al., 2009; van Hooft et al., 2021; Wanberg et al., 2010). For example, an employed job seeker looking to switch jobs may aim to apply to several new jobs in a week, but this goal is subject to change; if they receive a difficult assignment at their current job, then they may have less time and energy to prepare job applications. On the contrary, if they finish a work project before the deadline, then they may be able to send out more job applications that week.

Much of the extant literature on job search has focused on the impact of job search strategies, such as networking, answering online job advertisements, and attending job fairs, on employment speed (i.e., how quickly one finds a job) and quality (i.e., how good the job is in terms of wages, compatibility of one's goals and values with their job tasks, satisfaction with their job, and other elements that are meaningful to the individual; see reviews by Wanberg et al., 2020; van Hooft et al., 2021). Many of these studies aimed to identify which job search methods are most effective and most likely to result in jobs with which employees feel satisfied, and that they intend to keep (Wanberg et al., 2020; van Hooft et al., 2021). In addition, much research has explored outcomes of job search behaviours, most notably employment success, and the factors that influence this achievement. For example, greater scope and frequency of job search (i.e., job search intensity) and greater rigour and preparedness in job search (i.e., job search quality) are linked to positive outcomes, such as more job offers, higher employment status, and better employment quality (van Hooft et al., 2021).

Research has also identified several personal antecedents of job search success, including job search self-efficacy, which is one's confidence regarding their ability to perform job search

activities (Fort et al., 2011), learning goal orientation, which is one's drive to develop new skills and improve their competencies (Creed et al., 2009), and self-regulation, which is one's ability to understand and manage their affect and behaviour (Heslin & Keating, 2016). Furthermore, contextual antecedents that have been found to influence job search behaviour include social pressure and social support. Social pressure, which is characterized by external pressure from one's network to engage in job search, has been found to have a negative impact on job search outcomes (van Hooft et al., 2021). On the contrary, social support, which is characterized by emotional and instrumental support from one's network during job search, has been found to have a positive impact on this process (Kanfer & Bufton, 2015; van Hooft et al., 2021).

Evidently, job search is a dynamic process containing cycles of positive and negative feedback, which requires job seekers to continuously adapt their cognitions, emotions, and effort (Wanberg et al., 2010). This often persists over the course of many days, weeks, or months, as job search is not always a linear pursuit, and there may be periods during which the job seeker is engaging more or less frequently in job search activities. As a result, one's progress toward their end goal of finding a job is not necessarily steady. Given its dynamic nature, job search can be investigated over both longer (e.g., month to month) and shorter (e.g., day to day) periods to uncover how job search behaviour is regulated and adapted according to internal and external circumstances, including one's goals and motivation, existing work and personal demands, and opportunities and rejections on the job search front (Wanberg et al., 2010). The current study will examine job search on a week-to-week basis. This time frame was chosen to account for the fact that people who are already employed may not search for a new job every day, thus making a daily time frame too brief for them, but also to ensure that the time frame was not so long that they would have difficulty recalling the time that they did spend on their job search. As well,

many work and nonwork activities occur on a weekly basis, such as work schedules, social events, community involvements, hobby groups, and children's school and extracurriculars. Thus, the weekly time frame makes sense for this study to examine the work-nonwork interface.

When looking for work, job seekers make choices by strategizing, prioritizing, and implementing behaviours that reflect their job search goals (van Hooft et al., 2021). These goals must be feasible in the sense of suiting the individual's needs and abilities, but they must also be adaptable given that personal and environmental conditions can change over the course of one's job search (van Hooft et al., 2021; Wanberg et al., 2010). Additionally, job search may not always be an individual's central focus, and they may need to adjust their goals as problems or opportunities arise; for example, one may choose to devote fewer hours to job search activities due to emerging conflicts at work, or they may find a new lead and increase their job search activity accordingly (Koopmann et al., 2021; Wanberg et al., 2010). As such, job seekers must regulate their emotions and behaviours to adequately devote resources, including time, energy, and attention, to job search activities to ensure effective pursuit of their job search goals (Kanfer et al., 2001). For instance, research indicates that the use of self-regulation strategies, such as motivational and emotional control, is positively associated with job search intensity (Creed et al., 2009). As well, one's mindset and self-perceptions can impact their quality of self-regulation when faced with setbacks, which, in turn, affects job search outcomes such as speed and quality of employment (Heslin & Keating, 2016). The idea that self-regulation is imperative to job search success is widely acknowledged in the literature (see reviews by Kanfer & Bufton, 2015, and Wanberg et al., 2010), and is a key component of this study.

### ***Self-Regulatory Theory of Job Search***

Extant research on job search is grounded in theoretical perspectives that explain how individuals set goals for employment and expend personal resources to attain their goals. Most notably, the self-regulatory theory of job search elucidates the mechanisms underlying effective engagement in job search practices, suggesting that job search is a self-regulatory process in which individuals adapt their behaviour in pursuit of employment goals (Kanfer et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2014; van Hooft et al., 2021). Self-regulation, which is the ability to identify and commit to goals and to regulate one's own affect, attention, and behaviour in favour of achieving those goals, is therefore purported to be the key to successful job search (Kanfer et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2014; van Hooft et al., 2021). During this process, job seekers engage in diverse activities and use resources including their time, energy, and social connections with intent to find employment (Kanfer et al., 2001). Specifically, the dynamic nature of job search and its associated behaviours suggests that individuals' employment goals and their choice of job search strategies are prone to change over time (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2020). For instance, one may aim to find a job within a few months by committing to regular job search tasks such as browsing job postings and sending out resumes, but they may adapt this goal as they encounter time-consuming obstacles, or they may start their search by looking for jobs online but later on shift to building connections within their network to find new prospects if progress is slow (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2020). Thus, the self-regulatory sequence involves adapting one's goals and strategies throughout different phases of the job search until the target of finding a job is either achieved or abandoned (Kanfer et al., 2001).

The self-regulatory properties of job search imply fluctuating patterns of thinking and behaviour among employment seekers, whose job search activities can be assessed based on



effort, which refers to frequency and intensity, or based on content, which refers to type and quality (Kanfer et al., 2001). Job search behaviour has predominantly been operationalized in the literature as job search intensity, which is the amount of time and effort put into job searching as measured by hours spent on job search or by tasks accomplished, such as reading job postings, preparing resumes, researching companies, attending job interviews, and networking with others (Creed et al., 2009; Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2020). However, recent studies have suggested that examining job search from this lens prevents researchers from distinguishing between productive and unproductive job search activities, rendering findings less useful in practice (van Hooft et al., 2022). Thus, scholars have proposed a shift toward exploring job search quality, a process that involves establishing clear goals, selecting specific strategies, and reflecting on successes and failures during job search (van Hooft et al., 2022). The current study will heed this call by examining both job search intensity and quality, thereby enhancing construct validity by measuring job search more comprehensively.

Recent research has advocated focusing on job search quality rather than quantity, given that more time devoted to job search does not always translate into more effective searching (van Hooft et al., 2022). However, little work has made a point to distinguish between high and low quality job search, or to examine how these may be differentially related to self-regulatory behaviours. Though assessment tools for job search quality have been validated, these measures have typically used positively-framed items to identify job search behaviour that is strategic, organized, and efficient. For example, van Hooft and colleagues' (2022) measure of job search quality evaluates whether an individual seeks thorough information, uses diverse search methods, looks for ways to improve, persists when facing setbacks, and considers internal (i.e., feelings and goals) and external (i.e., availability of opportunities and resources) circumstances.

Thus, job search quality has frequently been operationalized in the literature as high quality searching, as opposed to low quality searching.

Despite the predominant focus on high quality job search, unsystematic and inconsistent job search strategies have been connected to unfavourable outcomes, including poorer quality of reemployment and fewer job offers (Koen et al., 2010). Given this, it is vital to assess low quality job search in addition to high quality. In line with this approach, Crossley and Highhouse's (2005) measure of haphazard job search strategy consists of negatively-framed items to evaluate job search behaviour that is random, disorganized, and unstructured, such as making little effort to gather information, making no strategic plans, and searching in an aimless way without considering one's goals or chances of success or failure. While the two constructs may appear on the surface to represent opposite ends of a single spectrum, they loaded on separate dimensions in Crossley and Highhouse's (2005) work. To date, high quality and low quality job search have rarely been studied together in relation to self-regulatory job search processes, but there is evidence that each is influential in determining job search success (Koen et al., 2010; Stremersch et al., 2020). Considering this and with the goal to capture job search quality more comprehensively, the current study examines both.

The current study explores relations between employed job seekers' active self-regulation and their job search intensity (i.e., time spent searching), job search quality (i.e., high quality searching), and haphazard job search (i.e., low quality searching). In doing so, this study aims to paint a clearer and more comprehensive picture of individuals' job search effort, including the different facets of job search and the positive and negative patterns of behaviour that shape the job search process, which have been underexplored in previous studies. Moreover, past research has investigated self-regulatory job search patterns at different career stages, such as upon entry

into the workforce, in the aftermath of unemployment, and during career transitions (Boswell et al., 2012). However, this study will focus on the job search behaviour of individuals who are already employed. It has been suggested that job-to-job changes account for up to half of all hiring (Faberman et al., 2022). These job seekers may desire new employment for various reasons, including dissatisfaction with their salary or job tasks, poor fit with their job or organization, a need for change, or personal demands (Faberman et al., 2022). Engaging in job search while employed is purported to be particularly challenging due to barriers that may not be present to the same extent when unemployed, such as limited time and energy to devote to job search activities (Boswell et al., 2012; Wanberg et al., 2012). Thus, the job search patterns of employed job seekers are expected to differ from those of unemployed job seekers due to differences in the distribution of resources and the presence of added responsibilities, which may require employed job seekers to adapt their job search goals in different ways to accommodate their work and nonwork situations (Boswell et al., 2012; Wanberg et al., 2012). For this reason, the work-nonwork interface was chosen as the key independent variable in this study.

### **Work-Nonwork Conflict and Enrichment**

In the literature, components of the work-life interface are often divided into work and nonwork. Whereas work refers one's job and to the tasks, roles, and obligations associated with it, nonwork refers to family, relationships, personal commitments, community involvements, and other domains in which people are engaged. Employees evaluate the work-life interface based on the extent to which their affective experiences, involvement, and effectiveness in their work and nonwork roles corresponds to the perceived value of these roles (Casper et al., 2018). Conflict and enrichment are valuable constructs for enhancing understanding of the interplay of work and nonwork roles, as they are key contributors to one's overall appraisal of their work-life balance

(Carlson et al., 2009; Hirschi et al., 2019). However, whereas balance represents a cumulative assessment of one's engagement in work and nonwork spheres, conflict and enrichment serve as linking mechanisms between one's work and nonwork roles; that is, these constructs emphasize individuals' experiences with work roles negatively or positively impacting their nonwork roles, and vice versa (Carlson et al., 2009). Conflict and enrichment are the focus of the present research, and although the nature of the work-nonwork interface is bi-directional (Carlson et al., 2009), the present study focuses specifically on the influence of the work domain on the nonwork domain. In doing so, this study aims to explore how the impact of one's current work on their nonwork life is connected to other outcomes within the work domain, particularly job search outcomes.

### ***Work-Nonwork Conflict***

The current study examines conflict that occurs when work impedes on nonwork activities. Though the nonwork domain extends beyond family, much of the existing research has examined work and family as the primary domains that interact to produce conflict. Work-family conflict is characterized by perceptions of incompatible demands between work and family roles that inhibit effective performance of one's duties (Liao et al., 2019; Shockley et al., 2011). This conflict is bidirectional, meaning that work can interfere with family just as family can interfere with work (Shockley et al., 2011). The different types of conflict include time-based, in which time demands of one role restrict time allocated to the other, strain-based, in which strain arising in one role is transferred to the other, and behaviour-based, in which behaviour that is appropriate in one role is inappropriately applied to the other (Greenhaus et al., 2006).

While there are many known precursors to work-family conflict, the predictors that are contextually important to the present study include work demands, which are the physical, social,

and psychological obligations of a job, and work role overload, which occurs when employees have too many demands and lack adequate resources to fulfil them (Liao et al., 2019; Michel et al., 2009). These antecedents are thought to generate conflict through the depletion of resources, including personal characteristics, time, and energy, thereby preventing individuals from successfully performing their prescribed roles in work and family domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Liao et al., 2019; Michel et al., 2009). This is often referred to as the resource drain model (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

When one lacks resources to support effective engagement in different life domains, they are liable to experience unfavourable outcomes. In line with this, work-family conflict has been linked to lower employee commitment, reduced job satisfaction, greater turnover intention, and poor performance in work and family roles (see meta-analytic reviews by Amstad et al., 2011; Liao et al., 2019; Shockley et al., 2011). Two opposing perspectives on reasons for these unfavourable outcomes of work-family conflict exist. The cross-domain hypothesis suggests that conflict primarily affects the receiving role, meaning that if work interferes with family, then repercussions will be felt in the family domain (Amstad et al., 2011). Conversely, the matching-domain hypothesis suggests that conflict primarily affects the sending role, meaning that if work interferes with family, then repercussions will be felt in the work domain, as the person attributes responsibility to their work for creating the conflict (Amstad et al., 2011). Whereas evidence exists in support of both perspectives, meta-analyses offer greater support for the matching hypothesis (Amstad et al., 2011; Shockley & Singla, 2011).

### ***Work-Nonwork Enrichment***

The current study also examines enrichment that occurs when work facilitates nonwork activities. As previously mentioned, though the nonwork domain extends beyond family, a large

body of literature has examined work and family as the primary domains that interact to generate enrichment. Work-family enrichment is characterized by positive interactions between work and family roles, in which experiences in one domain enhance fulfilment and facilitate performance in the other (Lapierre et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). Enrichment is also bidirectional, and thus work roles can enhance fulfilment and effectiveness in family roles and vice versa. The different types of enrichment include affective, in which positive affect arising in one role enhances functioning in the other role, and instrumental, in which perspectives and skills are transferred from one role to the other (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Although there are many known antecedents of work-family enrichment, the predictors that are contextually important to the present study include those related to the work domain, such as work engagement, job autonomy, and family-friendly work policies and culture, as well as social support at work and from family (Lapierre et al., 2018; Vaziri et al., 2022). These factors are thought to generate enrichment through resource gains, which protect against stressors and allow individuals to acquire resources for effective participation and fulfilment in work and family roles (Lapierre et al., 2018; McNall et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2018). When one's resource pool is full, they are liable to experience favourable outcomes. In line with this, work-family enrichment has been linked to greater organizational commitment, higher job and family satisfaction, and better performance in work and family roles (see meta-analytic reviews by McNall et al., 2010, and Zhang et al., 2018). As with work-family conflict, findings support both the cross-domain and matching hypotheses; however, meta-analyses offer greater support for the latter (Shockley & Singla, 2011).

Scholars have proposed a dynamic framework of the work-life interface, in which the degree of conflict and enrichment between work and nonwork roles fluctuates on a day-to-day

basis (Butler et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2007). Daily job characteristics, including job demands and resources, have been found to influence the levels of conflict and enrichment that individuals experience on a given day (Butler et al. 2005). Specifically, the amount of work in which people engage and the degree of control they have over their work both influence daily work-nonwork conflict, while the use of work-related skills and perceptions of control positively influence daily work-nonwork enrichment (Butler et al., 2005). Moreover, daily affective states that are generated at work, as well as daily workloads, shape individuals' experiences of conflict in nonwork spheres later that day (Ilies et al., 2007). Existing evidence supports the conclusion that conflict and enrichment vary from day to day due to different work experiences, characteristics, and resources. Thus, the same way that job search warrants examination on a short-term basis to account for the dynamic nature of this process (Wanberg et al., 2010), research on work-nonwork conflict and enrichment should also consider the frequent variations associated with these constructs. To align with the dynamic nature of job search, the current study will examine how conflict and enrichment impact individuals' allocation of time and effort to their job search on a weekly basis. Additionally, given that areas beyond family occupy one's time and are meaningful components of life outside of work, this study broadens focus to work-*nonwork* conflict and enrichment rather than focusing solely on family.

### ***Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory***

The ways in which conflict and enrichment are linked to one's supply of resources, and how this influences participation in work and nonwork activities, can be explained using conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). COR theory proposes that people are motivated to protect their resources and acquire new ones, and that they are threatened by potential or actual resource loss (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Past research on the work-nonwork interface has applied COR theory by linking conflict to resource loss and enrichment to resource gain (Chen & Powell, 2012; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Oren & Levin, 2017). These resources include, but are not limited to, time, energy, mood, knowledge, skills, social support, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Although COR theory involves many different resources, these are some of the ones that job seekers are likely to use during their job search.

COR theory can also be connected to the self-regulatory theory of job search. When work-nonwork conflict is present and resources are strained, people will seek to protect their resources by withdrawing them from discretionary activities, such as job search (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Grawitch et al., 2010). Given that job search is self-initiated behaviour and is not dictated by external forces, particularly in the case of employed job seekers, it is often not as immediately demanding as the requirements of one's current job (Wanberg et al., 2010). Further, job search falls under the work domain, which is likely to be blamed for creating conflict and to suffer the consequences, according to the matching hypothesis (Amstad et al., 2011; Shockley & Singla, 2011). On the contrary, when work-nonwork enrichment is present and resources are accumulated, people will seek to add to their resource supply by devoting resources to discretionary activities, such as job search (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Grawitch et al., 2010). In this case, the work domain is likely to be credited for creating enrichment and to reap the benefits (Shockley & Singla, 2011).

Resources are an integral part of both the work-nonwork interface and job search, with employed job seekers having to navigate their work and nonwork spheres while allocating resources strategically to minimize losses and maximize gains across domains (Kanfer & Bufton, 2015; Wanberg et al., 2012; Wanberg et al., 2020). Previous research supports the link between



the state of one's resource supply and their job search behaviour, suggesting that a reduction in personal resources requires that individuals modify their job search goals and reduce their job search efforts (Kanfer & Bufton, 2015). Conversely, resources such as support from one's social network have been found to positively impact their goal-oriented decisions and commitments during job search (Kanfer & Bufton, 2015). Using COR theory, conflict and enrichment can be understood as a reduction and accumulation of resources, respectively, which can, in turn, influence job search outcomes through one's motivation to conserve and acquire resources (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Chen & Powell, 2012; Oren & Levin, 2017). Resources travel in caravans, meaning that they are gained or lost in tandem based on social and environmental conditions, which may foster or suppress resource creation and maintenance (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018). When one is already lacking resources due to the state of their environment, they are vulnerable to resource depletion and are more inclined to withdraw resources from activities that further drain their resources. However, when one has plentiful resources within their current ecological conditions, they are protected against resource depletion and are more motivated to invest resources to enhance their resource pool (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

With respect to work-nonwork conflict, it is expected that one's job search will fall by the wayside when their work is negatively impacting their nonwork sphere. Specifically, if the work domain is already creating conflict and draining one's resources, then adding additional work demands through job searching is likely to deplete their resources further. Job seekers are more motivated to engage in job search behaviours when they believe that they possess the resources required to perform them effectively and successfully (Liu et al., 2014; van Hooft et al., 2021). Therefore, without adequate personal resources, individuals will be less likely to participate in

job search. As postulated by COR theory, individuals are primarily motivated to protect against resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). When experiencing conflict caused by work, individuals are likely to remove resources from discretionary work activities due to the threat of resource loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018), thus inhibiting them from devoting key resources such as time, energy, and attention to their job search (Kanfer et al., 2001; Kanfer & Bufton, 2015). This is reflected in previous research, which suggests that employed individuals experiencing stress due to work-related challenges exhibit lower job search activity (Boswell et al., 2012). Thus, I hypothesize that when the work domain is causing conflict, individuals will be motivated to protect their limited resources by withdrawing them from their job search, which will decrease their job search intensity and quality, as well as increase their haphazard job search behaviour.

H1. Work-nonwork conflict is negatively related to job search intensity (H1a) and job search quality (H1b), and positively related to haphazard job search (H1c).

With respect to work-nonwork enrichment, it is expected that one's job search will be prioritized when their work is positively impacting their nonwork sphere. Specifically, if the work domain is already creating enrichment and generating greater resources, then these resources can be devoted to other activities, such as job search, which requires intentional devotion of personal resources to ensure effectiveness and success (Kanfer et al., 2001; Kanfer & Bufton, 2015). When experiencing enrichment caused by work, individuals are likely to allocate more resources to discretionary work activities because they have a larger resource reserve and are not in danger of losing key resources; this is essential because individuals' primary motivation is resource protection (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Given that resource gain is a secondary motivation, individuals who feel protected from resource loss are more likely to try to generate new resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018), which can be accomplished through job search activities.

Some of the resources that may be derived from job search include knowledge, social support, and psychological capital like efficacy, resilience, self-esteem, and hope for the future (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Schmidt & Flatten, 2022). Thus, I hypothesize that when the work domain is causing enrichment, individuals will have ample resources and be more motivated to devote them to their job search, which will increase their job search intensity and quality, as well as decrease their haphazard job search behaviour.

H2. Work-nonwork enrichment is positively related to job search intensity (H2a) and job search quality (H2b), and negatively related to haphazard job search (H2c).

### **Goal Adjustment**

As highlighted above, setting goals is an integral part of the job search process. Goals are future-oriented, representing the desired results that an individual hopes, intends, and commits to achieving through action (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022). Goals are also motivators of adaptive behaviour, thus giving direction to an individual for how to behave, which, in turn, influences their performance in any given domain (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022). For example, during job search, one's ability to set and adapt their goals is essential to successfully finding a job (Kanfer et al., 2001). Adapting goals may be necessary as internal and external circumstances change over time, and this can influence the personal and contextual resources that an individual has at their disposal, which may require them to adjust their goals to reflect their current needs and abilities (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022). Depending on one's available resources, individuals may choose to persist in achieving a goal, or disengage from a goal and reengage in a more feasible goal (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022; Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). Goal adjustment involves each of these processes, and one's ability to execute such adjustment strategies represents adaptive self-regulation (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). Self-regulation is vital

to job search, as job seekers are required to direct their thoughts and actions toward achieving their job search goals and regulate their behaviour across changing circumstances (Kanfer et al., 2001; Liu et al., 2014; van Hooft et al., 2021). This may be especially challenging when already employed, as job search is voluntary and self-initiated behaviour that is not controlled by external forces and is not as pressing as one's current work obligations (Wanberg et al., 2010).

The approaches to goal striving used by an individual can help propel them toward goal attainment or can inhibit goal achievement (Wrosch et al., 2000). Goal persistence involves consistent attention and effort toward a goal despite obstacles or distractions, reflecting one's willingness to modify their environment to make it fit with personal needs or desires (Wrosch et al., 2000). Persistence is important insofar as a goal is reachable, valuable, and does not deplete an individual of resources needed for physical and mental well-being (Wrosch et al., 2000; Wrosch et al., 2003). However, in some cases, goal disengagement, which involves retracting one's effort from goals that are no longer achievable, may be a more adaptive strategy (Wrosch et al., 2003). Goal disengagement serves to free up resources that can be used to pursue other goals that are more beneficial to well-being (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). Although a goal might seem attainable when initially committing to it, its pursuit may become difficult or inaccessible over time, or changing priorities may render the goal less valuable or appealing (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022). In these situations, disengaging from a previous goal can enhance the availability of personal resources and reduce stressors that act as barriers to goal achievement (Wrosch & Scheier, 2020). Disengagement from one goal may also allow the individual to reorient themselves toward more worthwhile alternative pursuits, a process known as goal reengagement (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022). Goal striving is a continuous process that involves expending and withdrawing one's resources and regulating the amount of effort given

to a goal; thus, there is a trade-off between different goal adjustment strategies. Given that people normally have many goals across life domains and a finite number of resources, they must decide when it is appropriate to engage in each strategy (Brandstätter & Bernecker, 2022).

In the context of job search, people must decide what resources to expend on job search activities and whether their goals can reasonably be achieved. When goals are unattainable, people may need to adjust their goals downward in favour of more important goals or to avoid resource strain (Hirschi et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2014). Conversely, when goals are personally valuable and can be accomplished using one's available resources, people may desire to adjust their goals upward to maximize goal attainment, which heightens satisfaction and self-efficacy, and further reinforces goal striving behaviour (Hirschi et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2014). Employed individuals who are engaging in job search are likely to have many goals across work and nonwork domains that require strategic distribution of resources, and for which there are demands in each domain that may shape and modify these goals (Hirschi et al., 2019). As such, these individuals may engage in both downward and upward adjustment of various goals throughout the job search process. Hirschi and colleagues' (2019) AR-WF theory explains how people jointly pursue goals in work and family domains, proposing that balance hinges on successful allocation of resources to both domains. This theory proposes specific goal achievement strategies that may be used by individuals to manage work and family goals, suggesting that one can allocate resources simultaneously to both sets of goals (Hirschi et al., 2019). Because it forms one of the theoretical foundations for this study, I turn to a detailed explanation of the AR-WF theory next.

### ***Action Regulation at the Work-Family Interface (AR-WF)***

Hirschi and colleagues' (2019) AR-WF theory is grounded in action regulation theory (ART; Hacker, 1985), which suggests that people regulate their behaviour through cognitive processes, such as developing, pursuing, and adjusting goals based on internal and external events and feedback. However, research based on ART has overlooked the idea that individuals often pursue multiple goals at the same time, within and across work and family domains (Hirschi et al., 2019). The AR-WF theory addresses this by illustrating when and how people use specific action strategies to concurrently achieve their work and family goals. Within this theoretical framework, the authors identify four different types of action strategies (i.e., allocating, changing, sequencing, and revising) that individuals use to disperse their resources in order to attain their goals across work and family contexts. The former two are engagement strategies, whereas the latter two are disengagement strategies. *Allocating* involves intentional devotion of existing resources to accomplish work and family goals, and *changing* involves intentionally seeking to add to one's resource pool or reduce barriers to achieve work and family goals. *Sequencing* involves prioritizing specific work or family goals in the short term and saving other goals for the long term, and *revising* involves intentional revision of current work or family goals and selecting new ones (Hirschi et al., 2019).

Whereas past theories have concentrated on the use and loss of resources in the pursuit of work and family goals, and the management of the two domains, AR-WF theory emphasizes the role of personal resources in the application of action regulation strategies used to accomplish goals across both roles (Hirschi et al., 2019). This theory integrates goal adjustment with the work-life interface, describing action regulation strategies as intentional distributions of resources in different ways to facilitate progress toward one's goals in both domains (Hirschi et

al., 2019). The present research is one of few studies to empirically test the AR-WF theory by exploring how the interplay of work and nonwork roles influences the pursuit of job search goals, and empirically examining both upward and downward patterns of goal adjustment.

The present study also makes a novel application of the AR-WF framework to explore how people adapt their goals during the job search process. Whereas the importance of goal setting and goal adjustment during job search is widely documented, limited research exists on short-term goal adjustment. Studies often examine goal adjustment strategies from the lens of long-term goals and individuals' persistence and disengagement from these goals, which may extend across life stages in areas such as employment, relationships, finances, or health (Wrosch et al., 2000; Wrosch et al., 2003). For example, distal employment goals may include being promoted to upper management or acquiring leadership experience, and individuals may take on new tasks at work or attend leadership seminars in service of these goals. However, within the job search domain, individuals also have proximal goals that are more dynamic and prone to change; these represent steps toward achieving the distal goal of finding a job or getting a promotion (König et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2010).

Within the overarching goal of finding a job, one often has smaller goals, such as specific job search tasks that are vital steps toward job search success (König et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2010). For example, job seekers may set goals to look through job postings, reach out to contacts in their network, or prepare resumes in specific quantities, as previously noted. These goals may pertain to a particular time frame, such as a day, week, or month. Although research on long-term goal adjustment is plentiful, short-term goal adjustment has been studied less frequently, especially in the context of job search (König et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2010). Thus, the current study will focus on how individuals upgrade or downgrade their goals in the short-term

and on a more frequent basis. In doing so, this study aims to elucidate how one's weekly behaviours and regular patterns of engaging in (or disengaging from) proximal job search goals can contribute to the efficiency and quality of their job search over time.

Given the self-regulatory nature of job search, I contend that people will use different action strategies depending on their experiences of conflict or enrichment between work and nonwork roles. Specifically, I propose that job seekers will increase their use of disengagement strategies when they are experiencing work-nonwork conflict, which means that they will withdraw resources from their proximal job search goals to preserve their limited resource pool or expend them on other goals that are more rewarding for their current situation. When work is interfering with the nonwork domain and thus depleting one's resources, they are left with fewer resources to devote to job search, which aligns with the matching hypothesis perspective that negative consequences will arise in the work domain (Amstad et al., 2011; Shockley & Singla, 2011). More precisely, due to the work domain being the source of resource depletion, the person will be less willing and able to allocate their limited resources toward searching for work.

Conversely, I propose that job seekers will increase their use of engagement strategies when they are experiencing work-nonwork enrichment, which means that they will accumulate more resources and devote them to their job search goals. When work is enriching the nonwork domain and thus enhancing one's resources, they are left with ample resources to expend on job search, which aligns with the matching hypothesis perspective that positive consequences will arise in the work domain (Shockley & Singla, 2011). More specifically, due to the work domain being the source of their resource supply, the person will be more willing and able to allocate their resources toward searching for work. In what follows, I explain my logic in more detail.



### *Linking Conflict and Enrichment to Job Search via Goal Adjustment*

The present study investigates how goal adjustment may serve as a mechanism that links work-nonwork conflict and enrichment with job search outcomes for individuals seeking to change jobs. Employed people were chosen because of the existing interplay between their work and nonwork spheres, which individuals who are unemployed or who have not worked before are unlikely to experience, making the proposed relations less pertinent for those groups. Further, limited empirical attention has been devoted to employed job seekers compared to those who are unemployed, despite job-to-job changes accounting for a substantial portion of all hiring (Faberman et al., 2022). Additionally, the choice to examine this population was motivated by the relevance of changing jobs in the current socioeconomic landscape, as trends suggest that employees are exhibiting greater willingness and ability to switch jobs in pursuit of better opportunities (Lanke & Nath, 2023).

Theoretically, this research is based on Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory and Hirschi and colleagues' (2019) AR-WF theory. Based on these theories, I reason that when individuals experience conflict between work and nonwork domains, this will trigger their motivation to protect their resources because their personal resources, including time, energy, and mood, will be depleted (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). This will then lead them to use disengagement strategies with regards to their proximal job search goals (e.g., preparing fewer applications, browsing fewer job boards, networking with fewer contacts, etc.). The logic that the presence of work-nonwork conflict should generate disengagement from work-related activities such as job search, given that work is the source of the conflict, is consistent with the matching hypothesis (Shockley & Singla, 2011). Disengagement from job search goals when resources are depleted is especially likely given that job search is discretionary and self-initiated behaviour,

requiring intentional devotion of one's personal resources toward their job search goals and tasks (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2012). When one is lacking adequate resources due to work-nonwork conflict, they must reduce their resource allocation and goal-directed behaviour, thus preventing active participation in their job search, a process that is goal-dependent and self-regulatory in nature (Hirschi et al., 2019; Kanfer & Bufton, 2015; Liu et al., 2014). People adjusting their goals downward in response to resource depletion is supported by AR-WF theory, which states that a reduced resource pool limits active engagement in one's goals and promotes disengagement from goal-directed activities (Hirschi et al., 2019).

I further reason that adjusting one's proximal job search goals in a downward manner will result in a decrease in job search intensity and job search quality (i.e., high quality search; van Hooft et al., 2022), as well as an increase in haphazard job search behaviour (i.e., low quality search; Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). Job search is a self-regulatory sequence, requiring adaptation of both internal states (i.e., feelings) and external actions (i.e., behaviours) throughout the process (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2010). Previous research indicates that job seekers' self-regulatory and adaptational responses, including managing their mood, setting goals, seeking assistance from their network, and reflecting on and adapting their job search methods, influence their job search intensity and quality (Wanberg et al., 2012). Considering this, I propose that when individuals adjust their job search goals downward, their job search intensity and quality will drop accordingly. Altogether, I propose that adjusting one's job search goals downward (i.e., using disengagement strategies) in response to work-nonwork conflict is expected to decrease job search quantity and quality. Specifically, I hypothesize that there is a negative indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search intensity and job search quality, and a positive indirect effect on haphazard job search, via downward goal adjustment.

H3. There is a negative indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search intensity (H3a) and job search quality (H3b), and a positive indirect effect on haphazard job search (H3c), via downward goal adjustment.

On the other hand, when individuals experience enrichment between work and nonwork domains, then they will amass a large resource pool that protects them from resource loss and orients them toward resource gain (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). I reason that this experience of enrichment will then lead them to use engagement strategies with regards to their proximal job search goals (e.g., preparing more applications, browsing more job boards, networking with more contacts, etc.). More precisely, the presence of work-nonwork enrichment should promote engagement in work-related activities such as job search, given that work is the source of enrichment, as advocated by the matching hypothesis (Shockley & Singla, 2011). Given that job search requires intentional devotion of one's resources, such as time, energy, and attention, an accumulation of resources derived from work-nonwork enrichment would allow them to expend resources on job search activities and increase their goal-directed behaviour, thus actively engaging in their job search goals (Hirschi et al., 2019; Kanfer & Bufton, 2015; Liu et al., 2014). People adjusting their goals upward in response to resource gains is supported by AR-WF theory, which states that a substantial resource reserve allows people to actively engage in their goals by dedicating resources to goal-directed activities (Hirschi et al., 2019).

Further, I propose that adjusting one's proximal job search goals in an upward manner will result in an increase in job search intensity and job search quality (i.e., high quality search; van Hooft et al., 2022), as well as a decrease in haphazard job search behaviour (i.e., low quality search; Crossley & Highhouse, 2005). As previously discussed, past research suggests that one's adaptational responses during job search, which include processes such as emotional and

motivational control, goal setting and adjustment, and modification of job search methods and strategies, influence their job search intensity and quality (Wanberg et al., 2012). Given that adaptation of job search goals and strategies influences job search outcomes (Wanberg et al., 2012), adjusting one's job search goals upward (i.e., using engagement strategies) in response to work-nonwork enrichment is expected to increase job search quantity and quality. Specifically, I hypothesize that there is a positive indirect effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search intensity and job search quality, and a negative indirect effect on haphazard job search, via upward goal adjustment.

H4. There is a positive indirect effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search intensity (H4a) and job search quality (H4b), and a negative indirect effect on haphazard job search (H4c), via upward goal adjustment.

### **Career Motives: Authenticity, Balance, and Challenge**

Thus far, something that has not been discussed is the driving force behind an individual's desire to switch jobs while already employed. It may be that the person's job is not meeting their current career or personal priorities, or it may be that there are external circumstances motivating the job change. Ultimately, there are many reasons why people seek new jobs. One factor in which I was interested is career motives, which are the values and beliefs that guide people's career decisions, and that may spur individuals to make transitions in their careers (Sullivan et al., 2009). Research suggests that differences in individuals' motivations can lead to variations in how they approach their job search, the strategies they use, their consistency and time spent job searching, and their perseverance when faced with obstacles (van den Hee et al., 2020). As well, people's motivational orientations, namely preventing losses and prioritizing security versus striving for growth and success, have been linked to experiences of work-life

conflict and enrichment (Hauser et al., 2018). Motives are noteworthy because they involve both work and nonwork domains, and thus may be relevant to the impact of work-nonwork conflict and enrichment on job search processes. I adopted the kaleidoscope career model (KCM; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) as an organizing framework for career motives, which posits that there are three main career motives that guide career decisions, namely authenticity, balance, and challenge. The authenticity motive reflects the extent to which an individual strives to act in a way that is genuine and aligns with their values. The balance motive reflects the extent to which an individual strives to achieve equilibrium between work and personal demands, and the challenge motive reflects the extent to which an individual strives for stimulating work and career advancement (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

The KCM holds that the profile of the three motives changes over an individual's lifespan, like the image that changes when turning a kaleidoscope, to create the unique pattern of their career (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). The theory states that one's primary career motive will shift over time, as it is dependent on their internal state and on external circumstances. Thus, people will be more motivated by authenticity, balance, and/or challenge depending on what is most fitting for their current demands, relationships, opportunities, interests, and values. Although the KCM was initially conceptualized to describe differences in the changing patterns of career motives between men and women over time, and to explain prevalent differences in the trajectories of their careers (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005), it can also be leveraged to understand career motives at a moment in time. This is the approach that was taken in the current study. This study integrates the features of the KCM because the theory is relevant to career transitions and the motivation behind them. Specifically, I propose that career motives, including authenticity, balance, and challenge, have the potential to moderate how the job search process is impacted by

work-nonwork conflict and enrichment, as well as goal adjustment, based on the notion that these motives are drivers of career changes (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Specifically, I predict that career motives will influence the relations between work-nonwork conflict and enrichment and goal adjustment. I outline a brief rationale for each career motive next.

### *Authenticity*

Individuals with a strong authenticity motive strive to have careers that allow them to act in accordance with their values and beliefs (Sullivan et al., 2009). However, work-nonwork conflict depletes one's personal resources and impedes successful participation in work and nonwork roles (Carlson et al., 2009; Liao et al., 2019). Considering this, individuals who value authenticity may be more sensitive to the resource depletion that results from work-nonwork conflict because it may disrupt their attempts to be authentic by preventing them from engaging effectively in their elected roles (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). This may create greater strain on their psychological resources and exacerbate limits on the resources that they have available to allocate to their job search goals. Thus, I hypothesize that that the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment is moderated by authenticity, such that this relation will be stronger as authenticity orientation increases.

H5. Authenticity orientation moderates the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment, such that the relation strengthens as authenticity orientation increases.

In contrast to conflict, work-nonwork enrichment enhances fulfillment and performance in work and nonwork domains by increasing one's personal resources (Carlson et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2018). Considering this, I anticipate that individuals who value authenticity may benefit more from having a greater supply of resources derived from work-nonwork enrichment

because this enables them to participate more fully in their elected roles and allows them to engage in the activities they value. This may create a greater increase in their psychological resources and boost the additional resources that they have available to allocate to their job search goals. Thus, I hypothesize that the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment is moderated by authenticity, such that this relation will be stronger as authenticity orientation increases.

H6. Authenticity orientation moderates the positive relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment, such that the relation strengthens as authenticity orientation increases.

### ***Balance***

Individuals with a strong balance motive strive to have careers that allow them to participate fully in their life outside of work (Sullivan et al., 2009). Because of this, they may be more sensitive to the depletion of resources associated with work-nonwork conflict (Chen & Powell, 2012; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Oren & Levin, 2017), which suggests that they are not achieving their career goals. Considering this, I anticipate that the more an individual strives to achieve balance, the more likely they will be to downgrade their job search goals in response to work-nonwork conflict to prevent further interference between work and nonwork roles. Thus, I hypothesize that the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment is moderated by balance, such that this relation will be stronger as balance orientation increases.

H7. Balance orientation moderates the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment, such that the relation strengthens as balance orientation increases.

Individuals with a strong balance motive may also be less sensitive to the increased resources associated with work-nonwork enrichment. When work facilitates nonwork, this should be associated with the person feeling that they are achieving their career goals. Considering this, I anticipate that the more an individual strives to achieve balance, the less likely they will be to upgrade their job search goals in response to enrichment, instead allocating their resources toward personal goals rather than job search goals to maintain balance between work and nonwork domains. Thus, I hypothesize that the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment is moderated by balance, such that this relation will be weaker as balance orientation increases.

H8. Balance orientation moderates the positive relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment, such that the relation weakens as balance orientation increases.

### ***Challenge***

Individuals with a strong challenge motive strive to find stimulating work and achieve career advancement (Sullivan et al., 2009). Because of this, they may prioritize their job search goals even in the face of depleted resources associated with work-nonwork conflict (Chen & Powell, 2012; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Oren & Levin, 2017). Considering this, I anticipate that the more an individual seeks challenge, the more persistence they will show in the pursuit of their job search goals despite existing conflict, still allocating their limited resources to these goals to support their career advancement. Thus, I hypothesize that the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment is moderated by challenge, such that this relation will be weaker as challenge orientation increases.



H9. Challenge orientation moderates the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment, such that the relation weakens as challenge orientation increases.

Individuals with a strong challenge motive may also be more sensitive to increased resources associated with work-nonwork enrichment. This is because job search is a challenge in and of itself and, as a result, individuals may seek any and all available resources to apply to it. Considering this, I anticipate that the more an individual seeks challenge, the more likely they will be to allocate their ample resources toward their job search goals in pursuit of new opportunities for stimulation and growth. Thus, I hypothesize that the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment is moderated by challenge, such that this relation is stronger as challenge orientation increases.

H10. Challenge orientation moderates the positive relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment, such that the relation strengthens as challenge orientation increases.

My research hypotheses and theoretical frameworks for work-nonwork conflict and work-nonwork enrichment are depicted in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

Figure 1. Research model depicting the effects of work-nonwork conflict on job search intensity and quality.

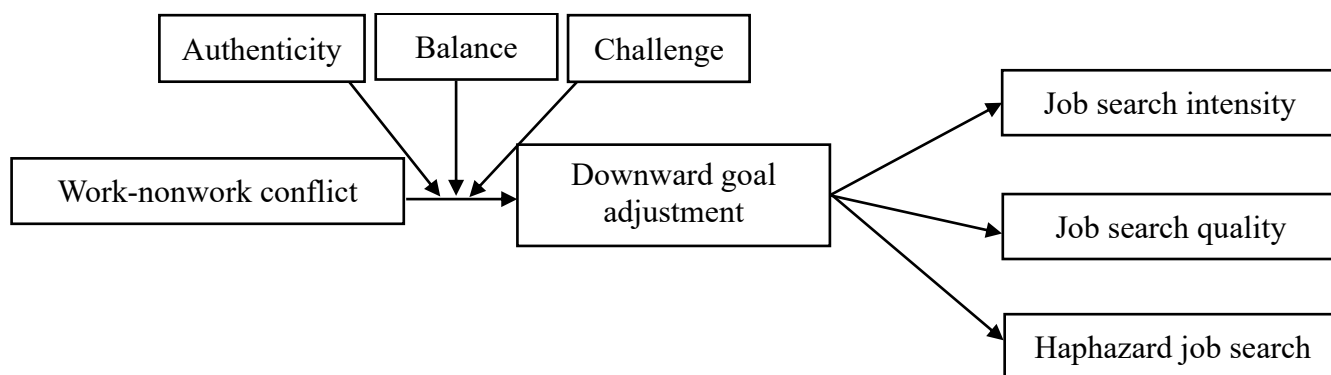
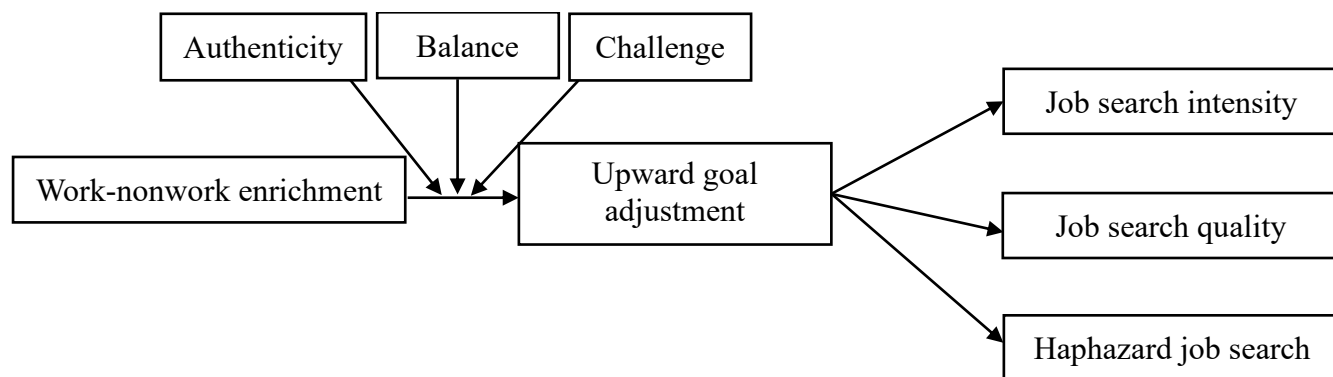


Figure 2. Research model depicting the effects of work-nonwork enrichment on job search intensity and quality.



## Method

### Participants

Participants aged 25 years and older, who were employed and actively looking to change jobs, were recruited using the Leger Opinion (LEO) panel. Initially, 2763 people logged into the first survey, but participants were screened out at the beginning if they were not between the ages of 25 and 55, as well as if they were not both employed and looking for a new job. In total, 461 participants met the inclusion criteria and completed the first survey. The sample was then reduced to 313 participants after removing those who did not complete all three surveys from the dataset. These participants' data were screened for carelessness, and 'careless' participants were excluded from analysis based on three criteria: (1) completed the surveys in less than one-third of the median time, (2) failed attention checks, and (3) indicated that their data should not be used. Among the 313 participants, four participants met at least one of these exclusion criteria and were omitted, reducing the sample to 309 participants. These data were analyzed to identify any multivariate outliers on the study variables. One multivariate outlier was identified based on the Mahalanobis distance ( $MD = 1.07, p < .001$ ). This outlier was excluded from all analyses. The final sample used for all analyses included 308 participants.

The final sample ( $N = 308$ ) was composed of 53.1% male and 46.9% female participants, who ranged in age from 25 to 55 years old ( $M = 39.45, SD = 8.67$ ). Among these participants, 62.3% were married or living as married, 27.6% were single, 4.9% were divorced, 3.0% were separated, and 1.3% were widowed. Moreover, 55.2% of participants had children, compared to 44.8% who did not. The average number of children in this sample was approximately two ( $M = 1.74, SD = 0.88$ ). Additionally, 82.8% of participants worked full-time and 17.2% worked part-time. The number of hours worked per week ranged from 7.5 to 70 hours with a mean of 36.46

hours per week ( $SD = 8.45$ ). Participants worked in various industries, such as professional, scientific, and technical services (14%), health care and social assistance (11.3%), finance and insurance (11.3%), and manufacturing (9%). Participants also reported varied job titles, with common ones including administrator, supervisor, manager, healthcare professional, and customer service representative.

Among these participants, 27.0% worked for a small organization (2-100 employees), 33.8% for a medium organization (101-1000 employees), and 32.9% for a large organization (above 1000 employees), in addition to 6.3% who were self-employed. Moreover, 36.4% of participants held a managerial position, whereas 63.6% did not. As well, 72.1% of participants worked one job, whereas 27.9% worked more than one job. Regarding job search, the average job search length was 4.45 months ( $SD = 4.00$ ), with 62.7% of participants looking for full-time employment and 37.3% looking for part-time employment. The commonly reported reasons why participants were searching for a new job included: seeking a higher salary (62.7%), seeking more flexibility (35.4%), seeking better benefits (33.12%), seeking to work from home (38.3%), and seeking better work-life balance (32.8%). This study was approved by the Concordia University Research Ethics Board and supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

### **Procedure and Design**

Three online surveys were conducted to understand how employed individuals who are looking to change jobs manage their job search efforts while balancing work and nonwork demands. The three surveys were conducted in April 2023 with approximately a one-week lag in between, with each survey taking approximately 15 minutes to complete. This weekly time interval was chosen based on the goal of studying short-term job search goals and processes, as

well as to avoid attrition that can result from longer lags. Prior to participation, participants were screened to ensure their eligibility based on their current employment status and pursuit of new employment. Once they answered the screening questions, eligible participants were required to provide their informed consent. Participation was voluntary and participants were compensated in accordance with the practices of the LEO panel for completing surveys.

The first survey measured work-nonwork conflict and enrichment, job search intensity, job search quality, haphazard job search, downward and upward goal adjustment, and career motives, as well as various demographic variables (e.g., age, gender, education, marital status, parental status, job tenure, job industry, organization size, etc.). One week after taking the first survey, participants received a link via email inviting them to complete the second survey. The second survey measured the same variables (except for career motives and demographics), in addition to core self-evaluations and proactivity; these were selected as control variables because they predict job search behaviour and are related to goal engagement and disengagement (van Hooft et al., 2013; Wanberg et al., 2020). Specifically, core self-evaluations are linked to goal-setting behaviour and to goal-directed motivation and effort, and proactivity is linked to goal development, persistence, and adjustment (Erez & Judge, 2001; Presbitero, 2015). Both variables have also been connected to the work-nonwork interface (Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Cunningham & De La Rosa, 2008; Lau et al., 2013). These controls were measured in the second survey to balance the lengths of the surveys. Finally, one week after the second survey, participants who had completed the first survey received the link to the third survey. The third survey was nearly identical to the second (except that core self-evaluations and proactivity were not measured again). All survey measures were taken from published research, with some adapted to the job search context as needed (see Appendix A). We adopted a sequential, time-lagged study design

(see Cain et al., 2018) using the measures of conflict and enrichment from Survey 1, downward and upward goal adjustment from Survey 2, and job search variables (DVs) from Survey 3, as well as the moderator variables from Survey 1 and the control variables from Survey 2.

## **Measures**

Cronbach alphas for all survey measures can be found in Table 1.

### ***Work-Nonwork Conflict***

This variable was assessed using the shortened version of Carlson et al.'s (2000) work-nonwork conflict scale, validated by Matthews et al. (2010). This scale is composed of 3 items (e.g., "I have to miss non-work activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work"). For each item, participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7).

### ***Work-Nonwork Enrichment***

This variable was assessed using the shortened version of Carlson et al.'s (2006) work-nonwork enrichment scale, validated by Kacmar et al. (2014). This scale is composed of 3 items (e.g., "My involvement in my work makes me feel happy and this helps me do better in my nonwork roles"). For each item, participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7).

### ***Job Search Intensity***

This variable was assessed using Wanberg et al.'s (2010) one-item measure of job search time (e.g., "How many hours have you spent on your job search in the past week?"). Participants indicated the number of hours they spent on job search in the past week in whole or half hour amounts (e.g., 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5 hours).

### ***Job Search Quality***

This variable was assessed using van Hooft et al.'s (2022) job search quality scale, which is composed of 20 items (e.g., "I had a clear idea of the type of job I wanted to find"). For each item, participants indicated their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

### ***Haphazard Job Search***

This variable was assessed using the haphazard job search subscale of Crossley and Highhouse's (2005) job search strategies scale. This subscale is composed of 4 items (e.g., "My approach to gathering job-related information could be described as random"). For each item, participants indicated their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

### ***Downward and Upward Goal Adjustment***

These variables were assessed using an adapted version of König et al.'s (2010) 5-item goal adaptation scale. The scale adapted for the current study is composed of 10 items reflecting job search goal adjustment, including 5 items for downward goal adjustment (e.g., "This past week, I postponed my job search goals to a later point in time") and 5 items for upward goal adjustment (e.g., "This past week, I increased the priorities of my job search tasks."). For each item, participants rated the degree to which they adjusted their goals on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "For none or almost no job search goals or tasks" (0) to "For all or almost all job search goals or tasks" (4).

### ***Career Motive: Authenticity***

This variable was assessed using an adapted version of Van den Bosch and Taris' (2014) authenticity at work scale, which is adapted from Wood et al.'s (2008) authentic personality



scale. The scale adapted for the current study is composed of 4 items (e.g., “I want a career that allows me to be myself at work”). For each item, participants rated the accuracy of the corresponding statement on a 5-point scale ranging from “Not at all accurate” (0) to “Completely accurate” (4).

***Career Motive: Balance***

This variable was assessed using the work-life balance subscale of Abessolo et al.’s (2021) career values questionnaire. This scale is composed of 4 items (e.g., “Compared to other things, it is a priority for me to have a balance between work and family life”). For each item, participants rated the accuracy of the corresponding statement on a 5-point scale ranging from “Not at all accurate” (0) to “Completely accurate” (4).

***Career Motive: Challenge***

This variable was assessed using the challenge subscale of Sullivan et al.’s (2009) career motives scale. This scale is composed of 5 items (e.g., “I continually look for new challenges in everything I do”). For each item, participants rated the accuracy of the corresponding statement on a 5-point scale ranging from “Not at all accurate” (0) to “Completely accurate” (4).

***Core Self-Evaluations***

This variable was assessed using Judge et al.’s (2003) core self-evaluations scale (CSES), which is composed of 12 items (e.g., “I am confident I get the success I deserve in life”). For each item, participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7).

***Proactivity***

This variable was assessed using the shortened version of Bateman and Crant’s (1993) proactive personality scale, validated by Seibert et al. (1999). This scale is composed of 10 items

(“e.g., I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life”). For each item, participants indicated their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7).

## Results

### Analytic Strategy and Bivariate Correlations

Prior to conducting the main analyses, Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed for all the variables. The correlational analyses revealed that job search intensity (time) and job search quality were positively correlated ( $r = .39, p < .001$ ), which aligned with the expectation that they are related constructs. Haphazard job search was not significantly correlated with job search intensity or quality, which justified the analysis of this construct as distinct from the other job search outcomes. Regarding the predictors, work-nonwork conflict and enrichment were negatively correlated ( $r = -.13, p = .02$ ). Furthermore, work-nonwork conflict was positively correlated with haphazard job search ( $r = .18, p = .002$ ) and job search quality ( $r = .14, p = .02$ ). Work-nonwork enrichment was positively correlated with job search quality ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ). Additionally, downward goal adjustment and upward goal adjustment were positively correlated ( $r = .21, p < .001$ ), which was contrary to expectations. However, downward goal adjustment was positively correlated with work-nonwork conflict ( $r = .15, p = .01$ ), but not enrichment. Downward goal adjustment was also positively correlated with haphazard job search ( $r = .39, p < .001$ ). Conversely, upward goal adjustment was positively correlated with both enrichment ( $r = .24, p < .001$ ) and conflict ( $r = .13, p = .03$ ). Upward goal adjustment was also positively correlated with both job search intensity ( $r = .27, p < .001$ ) and quality ( $r = .65, p < .001$ ). All bivariate correlations and descriptive statistics for the final sample ( $N = 308$ ) are reported in Table 1.

Hypotheses were tested using regression analyses through the PROCESS Macro for SPSS. Prior to running the regressions, Z-scores were computed for all predictors. Confidence intervals for indirect effects were calculated by running 10,000 bootstrap samples. All regression

analyses were performed with and without core self-evaluations and proactivity as covariates; per the PROCESS macro, covariates are entered in the same step as the main independent variables and are not entered in a separate first step. Results with covariates (i.e., core self-evaluations and proactivity) are reported; unless otherwise noted, the same pattern was observed when they were not included. PROCESS Model 4 was used to test Hypotheses 1 through 4, and PROCESS Model 7 was used to test Hypotheses 5 through 10. Model 4 tests a simple mediation model, including the direct effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable and the indirect effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable through a mediator. Model 7 tests a moderated mediation model, including the interaction of an independent variable and a moderator on a mediator variable, as well as the conditional indirect effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable via a mediator at different levels of a moderator. Although not formally hypothesized, these indirect effects were generated by PROCESS. The main analyses were performed separately for all three dependent variables (i.e., job search intensity, job search quality, and haphazard job search), and for all three moderator variables (i.e., authenticity, balance, and challenge). The moderators were analyzed separately to isolate their effects due to the strong positive correlations between them. Simple regression analyses were also performed to assess the direct links between the moderators and the mediators (i.e., downward goal adjustment and upward goal adjustment) when there were no significant interactions. Of note, consistent with PROCESS, I use the term total effect to refer to the initial relation between the independent and dependent variable with no other variables, and the term direct effect for the remaining path after all indirect effects are accounted for.

## **Main Analyses**

### ***Work-Nonwork Conflict and Job Search***

The first hypothesis stated that work-nonwork conflict is negatively related to job search intensity (H1a) and job search quality (H1b), and positively related to haphazard job search (H1c). As shown in Table 2, the total effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search intensity was non-significant ( $b = -.28, p = .33$ ), indicating that work-nonwork conflict was not related to job search intensity. Thus, Hypothesis 1a was not supported. The total effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search quality was positive and significant ( $b = .13, p = .03$ ; see Table 2), indicating that work-nonwork conflict was positively related to job search quality. Although significant, this is the opposite of what was predicted. Thus, Hypothesis 1b was not supported. The total effect of work-nonwork conflict on haphazard job search was positive and significant ( $b = .13, p = .04$ ; see Table 2), indicating that work-nonwork conflict was positively related to haphazard job search. Thus, Hypothesis 1c was supported.

### ***Work-Nonwork Enrichment and Job Search***

The second hypothesis stated that work-nonwork enrichment is positively related to job search intensity (H2a) and quality (H2b), and negatively related to haphazard job search (H2c). As shown in Table 3, the total effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search intensity was non-significant ( $b = .07, p = .81$ ), indicating that work-nonwork enrichment was not related to job search intensity. Thus, Hypothesis 2a was not supported. The total effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search quality was positive and significant ( $b = .19, p = .001$ ; see Table 3), indicating that work-nonwork enrichment was positively related to job search quality. Thus, Hypothesis 2b was supported. The total effect of work-nonwork enrichment on haphazard job

search was non-significant ( $b = .10, p = .12$ ; see Table 3), indicating that work-nonwork enrichment was not related to haphazard job search. Thus, Hypothesis 2c was not supported.

### ***Mediating Effects of Downward Goal Adjustment***

The third hypothesis stated that there is a negative indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search intensity (H3a) and job search quality (H3b), and a positive indirect effect on haphazard job search (H3c), via downward goal adjustment. As shown in Table 2, the indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search intensity via downward goal adjustment was non-significant ( $estimate = .000, 95\% CI = -.013, .011$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 3a was not supported. The indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search quality via downward goal adjustment was also non-significant ( $estimate = .003, 95\% CI = -.013, .023$ , see Table 2). Thus, Hypothesis 3b was not supported. The indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on haphazard job search via downward goal adjustment was also non-significant ( $estimate = .035, 95\% CI = -.008, .085$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 3c was not supported. Of note, downward goal adjustment was a positive predictor of haphazard job search, but it was not a significant predictor of job search intensity or quality, and work-nonwork conflict was not a significant predictor of downward goal adjustment. It is also worth noting that prior to including core-self evaluations and proactivity in the model as covariates, the indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on haphazard job search via downward goal adjustment was positive and significant ( $estimate = .059, 95\% CI = .016, .106$ ).

### ***Mediating Effects of Upward Goal Adjustment***

The fourth hypothesis stated that there is a positive indirect effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search intensity (H4a) and job search quality (H4b), and a negative indirect effect on haphazard job search (H4c), via upward goal adjustment. As shown in Table 3, the indirect effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search intensity via upward goal adjustment

was positive and significant ( $estimate = .191$ , 95% CI = .043, .397). Thus, Hypothesis 4a was supported. The indirect effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search quality via upward goal adjustment was also positive and significant ( $estimate = .092$ , 95% CI = .022, .170). Thus, Hypothesis 4b was supported. The indirect effect of work-nonwork enrichment on haphazard job search via upward goal adjustment was non-significant ( $estimate = .003$ , 95% CI =  $-.020$ , .030). Thus, Hypothesis 4c was not supported.

### ***Moderating Effects of Career Motives: Authenticity***

The fifth hypothesis stated that the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment is amplified as authenticity orientation increases (H5). Specifically, it was expected that the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment would strengthen as individuals sought greater authenticity in their careers. As shown in Table 4, authenticity orientation moderated the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment; the interaction between work-nonwork conflict and authenticity was significant ( $b = -.13$ ,  $p = .03$ ) and explained an additional 1.4% of the variance in downward goal adjustment. In contrast to the hypothesis, however, results of the Johnson-Neyman test for regions of significance showed that there was a significant positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment at values of authenticity below .10 (which is close to the mean given that the scores were standardized), and that this relation became non-significant as authenticity went up (i.e., it was a weakening effect; see Figure 3). Moreover, the index of moderated mediation was non-significant ( $estimate = -.004$ , 95% CI =  $-.025$ , .018). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

The sixth hypothesis stated that the positive relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment is amplified as authenticity orientation increases (H6). Specifically,

it was expected that the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment would strengthen as individuals sought greater authenticity in their careers. As shown in Table 5, authenticity orientation did not moderate this relation, as the interaction between work-nonwork enrichment and authenticity was not significant ( $b = -.05, p = .44$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported. Of note, the direct effect of authenticity on upward goal adjustment, after accounting for the effects of work-nonwork enrichment, core self-evaluations, and proactivity, was negative and significant ( $b = -.14, p = .02$ ).

### ***Moderating Effects of Career Motives: Balance***

The seventh hypothesis stated that the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment is amplified as balance orientation increases (H7). Specifically, it was expected that the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment would strengthen as individuals sought greater balance in their careers. As shown in Table 6, balance orientation did not moderate this relation, as the interaction between work-nonwork conflict and balance was not significant ( $b = -.09, p = .11$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 7 was not supported. Of note, the direct effect of balance on downward goal adjustment, after accounting for the effects of work-nonwork conflict, core self-evaluations, and proactivity, was negative and significant ( $b = -.24, p < .001$ ).

The eighth hypothesis stated that the positive relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment is weakened as balance orientation increases (H8). Specifically, it was expected that the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment would weaken as individuals sought greater balance in their careers. As shown in Table 7, balance orientation did not moderate this relation, as the interaction between work-nonwork enrichment and balance was not significant ( $b = .01, p = .79$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 8 was not



supported. Of note, the direct effect of balance on upward goal adjustment, after accounting for the effects of work-nonwork enrichment, core self-evaluations, and proactivity, was negative and significant ( $b = -.14, p = .01$ ).

### ***Moderating Effects of Career Motives: Challenge***

The ninth hypothesis stated that the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment is weakened as challenge orientation increases (H9). Specifically, it was expected that the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment would weaken as individuals sought greater challenge in their careers. As shown in Table 8, challenge orientation did not moderate this relation, as the interaction between work-nonwork conflict and challenge was not significant ( $b = .01, p = .84$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 9 was not supported. Of note, the direct effect of challenge on downward goal adjustment, after accounting for the effects of work-nonwork conflict, core self-evaluations, and proactivity, was non-significant ( $b = -.03, p = .66$ ).

The tenth hypothesis stated that the positive relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment is amplified as challenge orientation increases (H10). Specifically, it was expected that the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment would strengthen as individuals sought greater challenge in their careers. As shown in Table 9, challenge orientation did not moderate this relation, as the interaction between work-nonwork enrichment and challenge was not significant ( $b = .05, p = .26$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 10 was not supported. Of note, the direct effect of challenge on upward goal adjustment, after accounting for the effects of work-nonwork enrichment, core self-evaluations, and proactivity, was positive and significant ( $b = .14, p = .03$ ).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, internal consistencies, and correlations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1- Work-Nonwork Conflict	<b>.71</b>											
2- Work-Nonwork Enrichment	-.13*	<b>.84</b>										
3- Job Search Intensity (Time)	-.04	.05	—									
4- Job Search Quality	.14*	.30**	.39**	<b>.96</b>								
5- Haphazard Job Search	.18**	.06	-.02	.06	<b>.79</b>							
6- Downward Goal Adjustment	.15**	.00	-.01	-.01	.39**	<b>.85</b>						
7- Upward Goal Adjustment	.13*	.24**	.27**	.65**	.06	.21**	<b>.90</b>					
8- Motive: Authenticity	.05	.13*	.09	.05	-.01	-.22**	.00	<b>.82</b>				
9- Motive: Balance	.08	.14*	-.09	.03	.02	-.25**	-.00	.66**	<b>.80</b>			
10- Motive: Challenge	-.03	.39**	.18**	.32**	.00	-.11*	.28**	.51**	.42**	<b>.82</b>		
11- Core Self-Evaluations	-.18**	.32**	.04	.22**	-.18**	-.28**	.13*	.17**	.27**	.40**	<b>.83</b>	
12- Proactivity	.49**	.35**	.10	.37**	.08	-.07	.33**	.37**	.37**	.49**	.45**	<b>.91</b>
<i>M</i>	4.36	4.51	3.09	3.24	3.18	1.64	1.63	3.10	2.86	2.47	4.35	5.11
<i>SD</i>	1.26	1.37	4.53	.85	.86	1.00	1.07	.77	.85	.88	.96	.92

Note.  $N = 308$ .  $M$  and  $SD$  represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Cronbach's alphas are reported on the diagonal. \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

Table 2. Total, direct, and indirect effects of work-nonwork conflict on job search via downward goal adjustment.

	Downward goal adjustment		Job search intensity		Job search quality			Haphazard job search			
	Est	SE	Est	SE	Est	SE	Est	SE	Est	SE	
<b>Total effects</b>											
Work-nonwork conflict			-.28	.29	.13*	.06	.13*	.06			
<i>Covariates</i>											
Core self-evaluations			-.10	.30	.10	.06	-.23**	.06			
Proactivity			.54	.30	.31**	.06	.17**	.06			
<b>R-squared</b>			.01		.16		.08				
<b>Direct effects</b>											
Work-nonwork conflict	.10	.06	-.28	.29	.13*	.06	.09	.06			
Downward goal adjustment			.01	.27	.03	.06	.35**	.05			
<i>Covariates</i>											
Core self-evaluations	-.28**	.06	-.10	.31	.11	.06	-.13*	.06			
Proactivity	.05	.06	.54	.30	.31**	.06	.15*	.06			
<b>R-squared</b>	.09		.01		.16		.19				
			Est	LLCI	ULCI	Est	LLCI	ULCI	Est	LLCI	ULCI
<b>Indirect effects</b>											
Work-nonwork conflict via downward goal adjustment			.000	-.013	.011	.003	-.013	.021	.035	-.008	.080

Note.  $N = 308$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval.

Table 3. Total, direct, and indirect effects of work-nonwork enrichment on job search via upward goal adjustment.

	Upward goal adjustment		Job search intensity			Job search quality			Haphazard job search		
	Est	SE	Est	SE	Est	SE	Est	SE	Est	SE	
<b>Total effects</b>											
Work-nonwork enrichment			.07	.29	.19**	.06			.10	.06	
<i>Covariates</i>											
Core self-evaluations			-.04	.29	.03	.06			-.28**	.06	
Proactivity			.46	.30	.29**	.06			.17**	.06	
<b>R-squared</b>			.01		.17				.07		
<b>Direct effects</b>											
Work-nonwork enrichment	.16**	.06	-.12	.28	.10*	.05			.09	.06	
Upward goal adjustment			1.19**	.27	.57**	.05			.02	.06	
<i>Covariates</i>											
Core self-evaluations	-.06	.06	.03	.29	.07	.05			-.28**	.06	
Proactivity	.30**	.06	.10	.30	.12*	.05			.16*	.07	
<b>R-squared</b>	.13		.07		.46				.07		
			<b>Est</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
<b>Indirect effects</b>											
Work-nonwork enrichment via upward goal adjustment			.191	.043	.397	.092	.022	.170	.003	-.020	.030

Note.  $N = 308$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ . LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval.

Table 4. Moderated regression analysis of authenticity on downward goal adjustment and job search.

	Downward goal adjustment		Downward goal adjustment		Job search intensity			Job search quality			Haphazard job search		
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	
Work-nonwork conflict	.10	.06	.13*	.06	-.28	.29	.13*	.06	.09	.06			
Downward goal adjustment					.01	.27	.03	.06	.35***	.05			
Core self-evaluations	-.28***	.06	-.29***	.06	-.10	.31	.11	.06	-.13*	.06			
Proactivity	.13*	.07	.13	.07	.54	.30	.31***	.06	.15*	.06			
Authenticity	-.23***	.06	-.22***	.06									
WNWC X authenticity			-.13*	.06									
$R^2$	.13		.14		.01		.16		.19				
$\Delta R^2$			.01										
$F$	11.36***		4.79*		1.96		7.14**		4.96*				
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>					<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
					-.001	-.074	.065	-.004	-.025	.018	-.047	-.097	-.005

Note.  $N = 308$ . Est. = estimate. WNWC = work-nonwork conflict. LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

Table 5. Moderated regression analysis of authenticity on upward goal adjustment and job search.

	Upward goal adjustment		Upward goal adjustment		Job search intensity			Job search quality			Haphazard job search		
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	
Work-nonwork enrichment	.16**	.06	.17**	.06	-.12	.28	.10*	.05	.09	.06			
Upward goal adjustment					1.19***	.27	.57***	.05	.02	.06			
Core self-evaluations	-.06	.06	-.05	.06	.03	.29	.07	.05	-.28***	.06			
Proactivity	.35***	.07	.35***	.07	.10	.30	.12*	.05	.16*	.07			
Authenticity	-.14*	.06	-.15*	.06									
WNWE X authenticity			-.05	.06									
$R^2$	.15		.15		.07		.46		.07				
$\Delta R^2$			.00										
$F$	13.17***		.60		.01		2.41		1.46				
					Est.	LLCI	ULCI	Est.	LLCI	ULCI	Est.	LLCI	ULCI
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>					-.055	-.192	.074	-.026	-.087	.034	-.001	-.013	-.009

Note.  $N = 308$ . Est. = estimate. WNWE = work-nonwork enrichment. LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

Table 6. Moderated regression analysis of balance on downward goal adjustment and job search.

	Downward goal adjustment		Downward goal adjustment		Job search intensity		Job search quality		Haphazard job search	
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE
Work-nonwork conflict	.12*	.06	.13*	.06	-.28	.29	.13*	.06	.09	.06
Downward goal adjustment					.01	.27	.03	.06	.35***	.05
Core self-evaluations	-.24***	.06	-.25***	.06	-.10	.31	.11	.06	-.13*	.06
Proactivity	.12	.06	.12	.06	.54	.30	.31***	.06	.15*	.06
Balance	-.24***	.06	-.24***	.06						
WNWC X balance			-.09	.06						
$R^2$	.14		.14		.01		.16		.19	
$\Delta R^2$			.01							
$F$	11.92***		2.59		1.96		7.14**		4.96*	
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>					<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b> <b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b> <b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b> <b>ULCI</b>
					-.001	-.050 .049	-.003	-.019 .013	-.033	-.075 .005

Note.  $N = 308$ . Est. = estimate. WNWC = work-nonwork conflict. LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

Table 7. Moderated regression analysis of balance on upward goal adjustment and job search.

	Upward goal adjustment		Upward goal adjustment		Job search intensity			Job search quality			Haphazard job search		
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	
Work-nonwork enrichment	.16**	.06	.16**	.06	-.12	.28	.10*	.05	.09	.06			
Upward goal adjustment					1.19***	.27	.57***	.05	.02	.06			
Core self-evaluations	-.04	.06	-.04	.06	.03	.29	.07	.05	-.28***	.06			
Proactivity	.35***	.06	.35***	.06	.10	.30	.12*	.05	.16*	.07			
Balance	-.14*	.06	-.14*	.06									
WNWE X balance			.01	.05									
$R^2$	.15		.15		.07		.46		.07				
$\Delta R^2$			.00										
$F$	13.28***		.07		.01		2.41		1.46				
					<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>					.017	-.102	.141	.008	-.050	.065	.000	-.008	.008

Note.  $N = 308$ . Est. = estimate. WNWE = work-nonwork enrichment. LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .



Table 8. Moderated regression analysis of challenge on downward goal adjustment and job search.

	Downward goal adjustment		Downward goal adjustment		Job search intensity		Job search quality			Haphazard job search			
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	
Work-nonwork conflict	.10	.06	.10	.06	-.28	.29	.13*	.06	.09	.06			
Downward goal adjustment					.01	.27	.03	.06	.35***	.05			
Core self-evaluations	-.27***	.07	-.27***	.07	-.10	.31	.11	.06	-.13*	.06			
Proactivity	.06	.07	.06	.07	.54	.30	.31***	.06	.15*	.06			
Challenge	-.03	.06	-.03	.07									
WNWC X challenge			.01	.06									
$R^2$	.09		.10		.01		.16		.19				
$\Delta R^2$			.00										
$F$	7.37***		.04		1.96		7.14**		4.96*				
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>					<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
					.000	-.028	.024	.000	-.007	.011	.004	-.034	.043

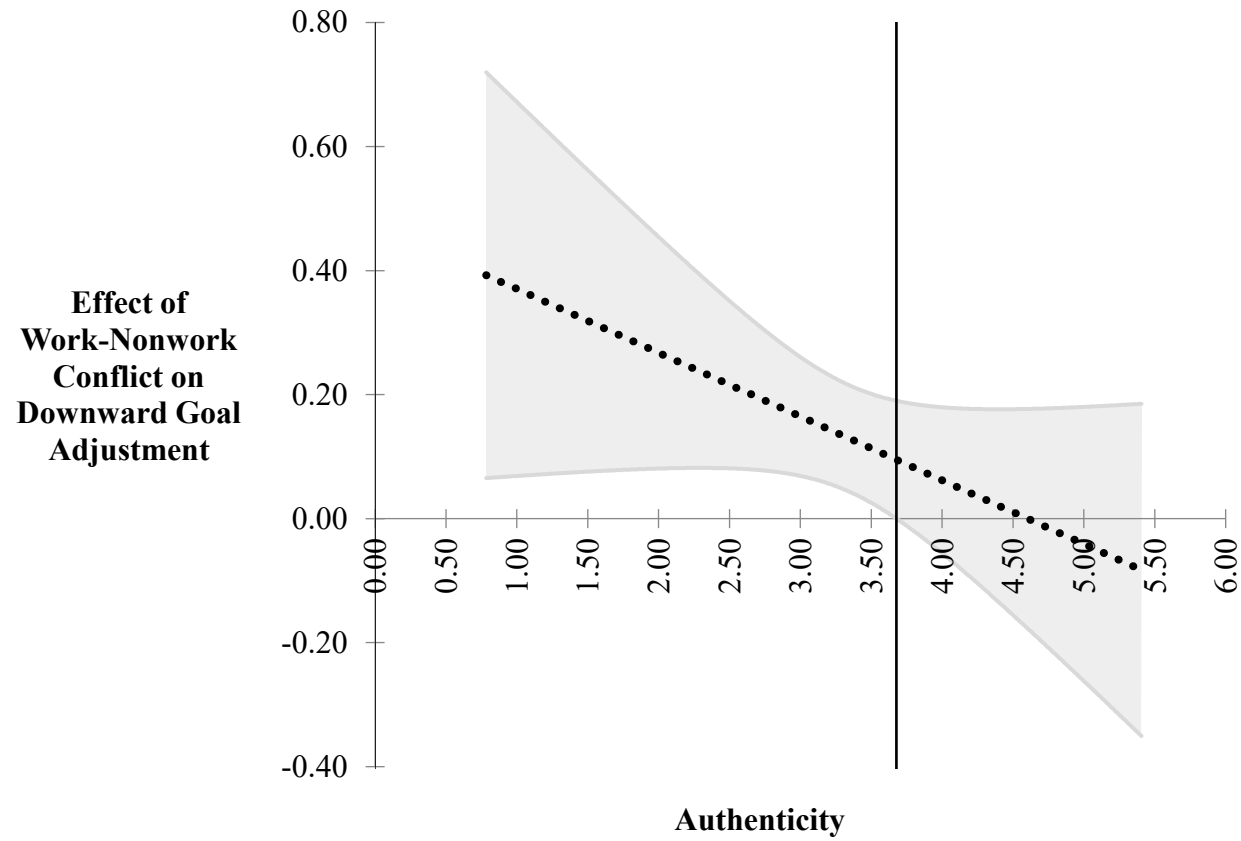
Note.  $N = 308$ . Est. = estimate. WNWC = work-nonwork conflict. LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

Table 9. Moderated regression analysis of challenge on upward goal adjustment and job search.

	Upward goal adjustment		Upward goal adjustment		Job search intensity			Job search quality			Haphazard job search		
	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	Est.	SE	
Work-nonwork enrichment	.13*	.06	.13*	.06	-.12	.28	.10*	.05	.09	.06			
Upward goal adjustment					1.19***	.27	.57***	.05	.02	.06			
Core self-evaluations	-.08	.06	-.08	.06	.03	.29	.07	.05	-.28***	.06			
Proactivity	.26***	.07	.26***	.07	.10	.30	.12*	.05	.16*	.07			
Challenge	.14*	.06	.15*	.06									
WNWE X challenge			.05	.05									
$R^2$	.15		.15		.07		.46		.07				
$\Delta R^2$			.00										
$F$	12.81***		1.27		.01		2.41		1.46				
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>					<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>	<b>Est.</b>	<b>LLCI</b>	<b>ULCI</b>
					.064	-.050	.178	.031	-.024	.081	.001	-.009	.012

Note. N = 308. Est. = estimate. WNWE = work-nonwork enrichment. LLCI = Lower level of 95% confidence interval, ULCI = upper level of 95% confidence interval. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

Figure 3. Relation of work-nonwork conflict to downward goal adjustment at different levels of authenticity.



## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to test hypotheses about relations between the work-nonwork interface, notably work-nonwork conflict and enrichment, and job search behaviour among individuals looking to change jobs. The study further aimed to examine how downward and upward adjustments of job search goals serve as linking mechanisms between conflict and enrichment, on the one hand, and job search outcomes, including job search intensity, job search quality, and haphazard job search, on the other. Past research proposes that job seekers regulate their behaviours and adapt their goals in a downward or upward manner during their job search in response to work and nonwork demands (Hirschi et al., 2022; Lord et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2010). Thus, I expected that work-nonwork conflict has a direct effect on job search outcomes, as well as an indirect effect through downward goal adjustment. In parallel, I expected that work-nonwork enrichment has a direct effect on these same job search outcomes, as well as an indirect effect through upward goal adjustment. These hypotheses were partially supported, with conflict being linked to negative job search outcomes, and enrichment to positive outcomes. More precisely, conflict was related to haphazard job search, which is low quality search behaviour, whereas enrichment was related to job search quality, which is high quality search behaviour. Some indirect effects via goal adjustment were also found. Specifically, there was a positive indirect effect of enrichment on both job search intensity and job search quality via upward goal adjustment.

A secondary purpose of this study was to test hypotheses about whether career motives moderate how job search outcomes are impacted by conflict and enrichment. Specifically, I expected that authenticity, balance, and challenge motivation orientations would moderate the relations between conflict and downward goal adjustment, as well as between enrichment and

upward goal adjustment, but findings did not support these hypotheses. However, career motives were found to be direct predictors of goal adjustment. Below, I elaborate on these findings.

### **Work-Nonwork Conflict and Job Search**

The first set of hypotheses pertained to the direct effects of work-nonwork conflict on job search outcomes. I hypothesized that conflict is negatively related to job search intensity (H1a) and job search quality (H1b), and positively related to haphazard job search (H1c). Contrary to H1a, the relation between work-nonwork conflict and job search intensity was not significant. This was a surprising finding, as previous research has suggested that employed job seekers who are experiencing stress due to work-related challenges exhibit lower job search activity (Boswell et al., 2012). Thus, I expected that the resource depletion associated with conflict would decrease job search intensity (Chen & Powell, 2012; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Oren & Levin, 2017). It is possible that the chosen temporal delay, with work-nonwork conflict and job search intensity measured two weeks apart, was not the right lag to accurately capture this relation. It could be that the strain on one's resources that arises from conflict may vary depending on when the conflict began to occur and for how long it has been present (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For instance, if the conflict developed recently, then it may take longer than a couple of weeks to impact job search, as one may not reduce their job search time right away. Conversely, if the conflict developed long before the study began, then individuals may have already returned to a regular amount of job search activity due to having already adapted to their conflict levels (Hobfoll et al., 2018). As well, people may not accurately remember how much time they spent job searching, when asked for a retrospective account over a period of one full week, which can reduce the reliability of the measure, and this may have led to an underestimation of the relation.

Next, in contrast to H1b, the relation between work-nonwork conflict and job search quality was positive rather than negative. At the same time, in line with H1c, the positive relation between work-nonwork conflict and haphazard job search was supported. I initially expected that people experiencing high levels of conflict would be less likely to devote their limited resources to their job search (as noted earlier), and therefore be less likely to engage in high quality job searching and more likely to engage in low quality searching. However, COR theory suggests that people are motivated to allocate resources to activities with the potential to generate other resources that are personally valuable to them (Grawitch et al., 2010). Thus, some people may be more inclined to devote resources to job search to acquire other psychological resources, despite the presence of conflict. For example, although resources such as time, energy, and mood may be depleted as a result of conflict (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll et al., 2018), the potential to generate other resources, including efficacy, resilience, self-esteem, and hope for the future (DiRenzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Schmidt & Flatten, 2022), may lead people to persist in their job search and devote their limited resources to these activities in both an organized and disorganized fashion, and to do so all the more as conflict increases. In addition, nearly 33% of participants in this study indicated that they were looking for a new job to attain better work-life balance. People who are seeking a new job for this reason may be inclined to pour more resources into their job search to achieve this objective—both in a high quality and haphazard manner, which may be further reinforced as conflict increases.

The positive relations between work-nonwork conflict and both job search quality and haphazard job search further suggest that these two constructs share a commonality. It seems that they are not opposite ends of a spectrum but rather can occur simultaneously, in line with past research (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; van Hooff et al., 2022). Taken together, these results are

not consistent with resource depletion; rather, they suggest that as conflict increases, people engage in more job searching of all kinds, diversifying their approaches and using strategies that require both higher and lower investment of resources (van Hooft et al., 2013). Indeed, job seekers selectively allocate resources to various job search activities at different times and for different purposes (Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hoyer, 2014). For example, they may reach out to contacts in their network, improve their skills to increase job prospects, persist after receiving negative feedback, and prioritize job search activities over other tasks, while at the same time, they may send out applications without researching the organizations or tailoring their resumes, or they may neglect to create clear and feasible goals with concrete steps to achievement (Stremersch et al., 2020; van Hooft et al., 2013; Van Hoyer, 2014). Both strategies may be engaged as conflict increases, because the experience of conflict may enhance time constraints and the pressure that one feels to find a new job, which may promote the use of more varied job search strategies (Boswell et al., 2012; van Hooft et al., 2013; van Hooft et al., 2021). Finding a new job may also be highly important to those working in unfavourable conditions, the effects of which may be heightened as conflict increases. In this case, job search may be essential to attaining their desired work outcomes, which may lead them to exhaust the possibilities for job search methods, allocating resources in both a random and strategic manner to achieve this goal.

### **Work-Nonwork Enrichment and Job Search**

The second set of hypotheses pertained to the direct effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search outcomes. I hypothesized that enrichment is positively related to job search intensity (H2a) and job search quality (H2b), and negatively related to haphazard job search (H2c). Contrary to H2a, the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and job search intensity was not significant. I expected that the accumulation of resources associated with work-nonwork

enrichment, including more time, higher energy, better mood, and better social support, would increase the number of hours that individuals spend job searching, given that they have more resources to allocate to their job search (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018). As was the case with conflict, however, my results did not support this hypothesis, and I found no relation between work-nonwork enrichment and job search intensity. I suspect that the reasons for this finding are the same as those noted above for conflict (i.e., issues with temporal delay, differing responses to enrichment in the short versus the long term, and error in the job search intensity measure).

In line with H2b, the positive relation between work-nonwork enrichment and job search quality was supported. However, in contrast to H2c, the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and haphazard job search was not significant. The former finding aligns with the matching hypothesis and with COR theory, which together suggest that resources emanating from work should lead to increased allocation of those resources to preferred or voluntary activities in the work domain, which could include searching for a new job (Grawitch et al., 2010; Wanberg et al., 2010). Further, enrichment may enhance positive emotions and reduce stressors due to fulfillment of one's prescribed and desired roles (Lapierre et al., 2018; McNall et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2018), and this could enable the individual to practice greater emotional control and minimize stressors and distractions, all of which could facilitate high quality job searching (van Hooft et al., 2013). The fact that enrichment was related to high quality search but not low quality search is in line with meta-analyses that link enrichment to primarily positive outcomes (McNall et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2018). This may explain why enrichment enhanced positive job search outcomes, such as job search quality, but was not associated with negative outcomes, such as haphazard job search.



Interestingly, unlike the positive relations of conflict with both high and low quality job search, enrichment had differential relations with high and low quality search. This suggests that although job search quality and haphazard job search share a commonality (as discussed above), they are still distinct constructs because the pattern of relations with enrichment is different. This is in line with past research, which suggests that they are distinct, albeit related, factors (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; van Hooft et al., 2022). Thus, enrichment may act through a different mechanism than conflict due to the presence of additional resources, thereby increasing high quality job search behaviours but not decreasing low quality job search behaviours.

### **Work-Nonwork Conflict, Downward Goal Adjustment, and Job Search**

The third set of hypotheses explored the impact of work-nonwork conflict on how individuals adjust their job search goals, and how this then relates to the nature of their job search behaviour. Specifically, I hypothesized that there is an indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on job search outcomes via downward goal adjustment, such that conflict increases downward goal adjustment, which, in turn, decreases job search intensity (H3a) and job search quality (H3b), and increases haphazard job search (H3c). These hypotheses were not supported.

The lack of support for these hypotheses is partly because work-nonwork conflict was not related to downward goal adjustment, and thus this first part of the mediation path is one place where the indirect effects break down. The chain further breaks down in the second part of the mediation path, for which I found that downward goal adjustment was not related to job search intensity or job search quality, although it was positively related to haphazard job search. Overall, the scarcity of evidence for the proposed indirect effects may be due to the time lag, which may be too long or too short to capture these relations. It is also plausible that the effects of conflict on job search are direct; rather than inciting people to adjust their job search goals

downward, it directly increases job search activity, of both high and low quality. Alternatively, it could be that there are mechanisms other than downward goal adjustment that link these variables, and future research could investigate this possibility.

Regarding direct effects, I found that downward goal adjustment was positively related to haphazard job search. This is consistent with AR-WF theory, as the use of disengagement strategies entails intentionally withdrawing resources from one's job search goals, which could be associated with low quality job search behaviour (i.e., haphazard job search) that requires a lower investment of resources (Hirschi et al., 2019; van Hooft et al., 2013).

Of note, the indirect effect of work-nonwork conflict on haphazard job search via downward goal adjustment (H3c) was initially supported, but this effect became non-significant with the addition of core self-evaluations and proactivity as covariates. When these covariates were added, I found a negative effect of core self-evaluations on downward goal adjustment. This means that higher core-self evaluations predict less downward goal adjustment, consistent with past research that suggests that people with more positive views of their abilities are less likely to reduce their goal-directed effort, even when faced with challenges (Chang et al., 2012).

### **Work-Nonwork Enrichment, Upward Goal Adjustment, and Job Search**

The fourth set of hypotheses explored the impact of work-nonwork enrichment on how individuals adjust their job search goals, and how this then relates to the nature of their job search behaviour. Specifically, I hypothesized that there is an indirect effect of work-nonwork enrichment on job search outcomes via upward goal adjustment, such that enrichment increases upward goal adjustment, which, in turn, increases job search intensity (H4a) and job search quality (H4b), and decreases haphazard job search (H4c). I found support for H4a and H4b, but not for H4c.

Looking at this in more detail, I found that work-nonwork enrichment was positively related to upward goal adjustment, indicating that the first part of all three indirect effects was supported. This aligns with COR theory, as well as AR-WF, both of which suggest that an accumulation of resources derived from enrichment can enable individuals to be more engaged with their job search goals (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hirschi et al., 2019; Hobfoll et al., 2018). This is also in line with the matching hypothesis because increased resources from the work domain appear to be reinvested in the same domain through adjusting job search goals in an upward manner (Shockley & Singla, 2011).

Regarding the second part of the mediation path, I found that upward goal adjustment was positively related to job search intensity and job search quality. These findings were in line with my expectations that planning to devote more resources to job search goals (i.e., upward goal adjustment) would result in a greater number of hours spent job searching and in higher quality job search behaviour. This can be connected to the COR theory tenet that more resources allocated to job search allows more resources to be generated that can be optimized for goal achievement (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018), resulting in greater job search quality. This can also be linked to AR-WF theory, as the use of engagement strategies entails intentionally increasing the resources allotted to one's job search goals, such that more energy and attention are available for these goals, which then facilitates more positive outcomes (Hirschi et al., 2019). This could include high quality job search behaviour that requires a greater investment of resources (van Hooft et al., 2013).

Conversely, I found that upward goal adjustment was not related to haphazard job search, which was contrary to my expectations. However, just as downward goal adjustment (i.e., plan to remove resources from job search goals) is related only to poor outcomes such as haphazard job

search, it is possible that upward goal adjustment (i.e., plan to add resources to job search goals) is related to only positive outcomes such as job search quality. In other words, similar to enrichment, adding resources via upward goal adjustment may lead to positive outcomes rather than to negative outcomes. Given that haphazard job search strategies require lower resource investment, (reduced) upward goal adjustment may not be the appropriate mechanism, and does not link enrichment to haphazard job search. Thus, it seems that upward goal adjustment does not directly reduce low quality search behaviours, but instead increases high quality search behaviours, which require greater resource investment (van Hooft et al., 2013). In view of this, it is important to distinguish between the different dimensions of job search quality, as haphazard and high quality job search do not share the same pattern of relations with the work-nonwork interface and goal adjustment.

### **Career Motives, the Work-Nonwork Interface, and Goal Adjustment**

The remaining hypotheses (H5–H10) were based on the KCM (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005) and pertained to the role of career motives, namely authenticity, balance, and challenge, as potential moderators of the relations between work-nonwork conflict and work-nonwork enrichment, respectively, and goal adjustment. According to AR-WF theory, individuals use different action regulation strategies in the simultaneous pursuit of work and nonwork goals (Hirschi et al., 2019). Specifically, disengagement strategies are used when seeking to prevent resource loss, whereas engagement strategies are used when seeking to promote resource gain (Hirschi et al., 2019). I expected that people would be more likely to withdraw resources (i.e., disengagement) or allocate resources (i.e., engagement) to their job search goals in response to conflict and enrichment depending on the desire to protect or acquire the resources that are the most valuable to them. I reasoned that career motives, which are the values and beliefs that guide

people's career decisions (Sullivan et al., 2009), would reflect such valuable resources and, therefore, would moderate the connection between the work-nonwork interface and job search goal adjustment.

### *Authenticity*

Authenticity orientation was examined as a moderator of the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment (H5). I expected that the positive relation between these variables would be stronger as individuals sought greater authenticity in their career. Contrary to H5, I found that authenticity weakened the relation, such that the relation was only significant when authenticity was below the mean and not when it was above the mean. Specifically, for people with a lower authenticity orientation (i.e., when they value authenticity less in their careers), the impact of conflict on downward goal adjustment was positive and significant, and this effect became non-significant as authenticity increased. Thus, H5 was not supported. This finding could be due to the fact that people who desire authenticity want a career that aligns with their values and beliefs (Sullivan et al., 2009). If these individuals are searching for a new job to be more authentic (i.e., this is motivating their job change), then they may be less willing to compromise on their job search goals by downgrading them, even when experiencing conflict (hence the lack of relation at higher levels of authenticity). Conversely, those who desire authenticity less may be more willing to adjust their job search goals downward when faced with conflict (hence the positive relation at low levels of authenticity). Further investigation could test this reasoning.

Next, authenticity orientation was examined as a moderator of the relation between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment (H6). I expected that the positive relation between these variables would be stronger as individuals sought greater authenticity in their

career. My logic was that individuals who value authenticity would receive a greater boost of resources from enrichment, leaving them with more resources to expend on their job search since they are already fulfilling their elected roles. H6 was not supported, as authenticity did not moderate this relation, but I found a negative effect of authenticity on upward goal adjustment after accounting for other predictors in the model (i.e., core self-evaluations and proactivity). This indicates that a higher authenticity orientation is related to less upward goal adjustment. This presents a puzzle if the explanation of the moderation with respect to downward goal adjustment presented above is correct. If individuals are seeking a new job to be more authentic in their work, then it is not clear why this would lead them to less upward goal adjustment. Further investigation is required to clarify why this pattern of relations was observed.

### ***Balance***

Balance orientation was examined as a moderator of the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment (H7), and between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment (H8). I expected that the positive relation between conflict and downward goal adjustment would be stronger, and the positive relation between enrichment and upward goal adjustment would be weaker, as individuals sought greater balance in their career. H7 and H8 were not supported, as balance did not moderate these relations, but I found a negative effect of balance on downward goal adjustment, as well as a negative effect of balance on upward goal adjustment. This indicates that a higher balance orientation is related to both less downward goal adjustment and less upward goal adjustment. At first glance, this may seem surprising because it may seem like people are unlikely to both downgrade their goals and upgrade their goals at the same time. However, one possible explanation is that, for those people who desire balance, the pursuit of job search goals may allow them to chase a desired future state

of balance by changing jobs, making them less inclined to remove resources from these goals (via downward goal adjustment). At the same time, refraining from devoting additional resources to job search (via upward goal adjustment) may allow them to allocate these resources toward nonwork goals to attain their desired state of balance in the present. In other words, leaving their job search goals as they are may be in line with their overall goal to maintain balance across work and nonwork spheres. This can be connected to AR-WF theory, which states that people strategically allocate their resources using different action regulation strategies to achieve balance through the joint pursuit of work and nonwork goals (Hirschi et al., 2019). Future research could test this reasoning.

### ***Challenge***

Challenge orientation was examined as a moderator of the relation between work-nonwork conflict and downward goal adjustment (H9), and between work-nonwork enrichment and upward goal adjustment (H10). I expected that the positive relation between conflict and downward goal adjustment would be weaker, and the positive relation between enrichment and upward goal adjustment would be stronger, as individuals sought greater challenge in their career. H9 and H10 were not supported, as challenge did not moderate these relations, but I found a positive effect of challenge on upward goal adjustment. This indicates that a higher challenge orientation is related to more upward goal adjustment. One possible explanation is that, for those people who desire challenge in their career, pursuing their job search goals may be a mechanism to find a more challenging job, which may be viewed as an opportunity for the stimulation and growth that they seek. Thus, they may be inclined to increase their job search goals in order to achieve the goal of a more challenging career, and this may be further reinforced by the fact that job search is a challenge in and of itself. This can be connected to AR-

WF theory, which states that individuals use different action regulation strategies (i.e., disengagement vs. engagement strategies) depending on whether they are trying to protect their resources or acquire new ones (Hirschi et al., 2019). Seeking a new job may be a way to obtain new resources, and having a challenge orientation may incite those individuals to seek the new resources that a new job will bring through goal engagement strategies. Future research could test this speculation.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Study Design**

The chosen study design, which is a correlational, sequential, time-lagged design, has both strengths and limitations that must be addressed. First, an important limitation of correlational studies is that correlation does not equal causation, and thus a number of other variables could have influenced work-nonwork conflict and enrichment, goal adjustment, and job search, thus casting doubt on whether conflict or enrichment were the causes of downward and upward goal adjustment, respectively, and job search outcomes. However, a correlational design was chosen to observe the relations between variables as they occur naturally rather than through experimental manipulation of conflict and enrichment, which in this case would not be feasible or reflective of real-life conditions and experiences. Future research could potentially examine goal adjustment in an experimental manner to observe its causal effects on job search outcomes.

Second, another important limitation pertains to the chosen time lag between surveys. This study used a one-week time lag between waves of data collection to test the proposed relations between conflict and enrichment on goal adjustment and job search behaviour in the short/medium term. This one-week interval was selected because employed individuals looking to change jobs may not participate in job search activities every day of the week, but a monthly assessment may be too long to reflect episodes of conflict and job search that are meaningful to



individuals. Further, a longer time frame may have increased the likelihood of people forgetting about the activities in which they did engage. Thus, the weekly time frame was selected strategically to increase the chances that participants would be able to recall and evaluate their recent job search behaviour, and to be more reflective of job search experiences, but this time lag may not accurately capture the relations between the work-nonwork interface and constructs such as time spent on job search if they are highly variable from one week to the next. In that case, the amount of conflict experienced in one week may not predict job search behaviours one or two weeks later, and it could be that measuring all the variables at the same time would uncover more accurate relations. It is also possible that these associations do evolve over time, but it may take longer than a few weeks and the relations may be stronger when assessed at longer intervals. The sequential time-lagged design was chosen because tests of mediation with cross-sectional data can be biased, and sequential designs are a good option when a full multi-level longitudinal test cannot be done (Cain et al., 2018), but the appropriate time lag remains difficult to determine.

The choice to measure all variables through self-report could also be a limitation because self-report data can be vulnerable to participant biases, including recall bias and social desirability bias, which, whether intentional or unintentional, could lead to error in participants' responses. Relatedly, the choice to give participants several days to complete each survey and to do each survey at separate times limited control over the timing of data collection, and participants could have completed the surveys at different times each week. As such, factors such as the time of day, their current mood, and any number of personal experiences from that day or week could have affected their responses, potentially introducing additional errors. However, self-report measures were chosen because they are still the most accurate assessment of the target

variables, as only the participants themselves possess the intimate knowledge of their experiences with the work-nonwork interface, goal adjustment tendencies, and job search behaviours (Cruz, 2022).

A major strength of this research was the use of various measures of job search, including time, high quality searching, and low quality searching, thus capturing both quantity and quality aspects of job search behaviour for a more comprehensive assessment of the construct. A final strength of this study was its sample size ( $N = 308$ ), as larger samples are more likely to represent the broader population.

### **Future Directions**

Future research should explore how associations between the work-nonwork interface and job search quality variables (e.g., low vs. high quality searching) influence other job search outcomes over time. Specifically, it would be pertinent to examine whether the path from conflict to haphazard job search, and from enrichment to job search quality, can impact more distal outcomes, such as reemployment quality (low vs. high) or satisfaction with one's new job (low vs. high). Research could also examine whether job searching when experiencing work-nonwork conflict or enrichment leads to lower or higher perceived fit between the employee and the new job or organization for which they work (i.e., person-job fit). Exploring such distal outcomes of low versus high quality job search behaviour could help clarify whether these approaches actually lead to poorer or better quality work experiences, respectively, in the long run, and could shed further light on the commonalities and distinctions between different dimensions of job search. Insights gained from testing these ideas could also help job seekers gain a deeper understanding of how the work-nonwork interface influences their job search behaviours and how their choice of job search strategies impacts their career outcomes. It could

also help to elucidate the role of proximal job search goals and action regulation strategies (i.e., disengagement vs. engagement) in forging one's career path.

Future studies should also consider that the impact of work-nonwork conflict and enrichment on goal adjustment patterns, as well as job search behaviours, may differ in the short and long-term, meaning that these effects may change if measured at different intervals. It seems reasonable to suggest that the strength of these relations would be affected if the variables were assessed on a more frequent basis, as the amount of time and effort devoted to job search can vary from day to day (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2010), as can perceptions of conflict and enrichment (Butler et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2007). For example, a daily diary study in which participants detail their experiences with the work-nonwork interface, goal adjustment, and job search could help clarify the relations between the constructs in the short(er)-term. At the same time, a longitudinal study with a longer time frame could be conducted to test how conflict and enrichment influence goal adjustment patterns and how this impacts job search behaviours, such as intensity and quality, over the course of a whole job search, which often lasts for months rather than weeks. This could help elucidate the short- and long-term impacts of goal engagement and disengagement on job search processes and successes (or failures).

Another area of research that is worthy of further pursuit is to continue to explore the role of career motives. Although I found little support for the proposed moderating role of motives, I did find that career motives (authenticity, balance, and challenge) are related to downward and upward adjustment of job search goals, suggesting that motives do matter in a job search context. Future research could explore the KCM theory from the perspective of the profile of motives a person has, and more specifically, which motive is dominant at a given point in time (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). This research could use a within-person design to evaluate the importance of

the three motives to each individual at different times, identifying which motive is dominant and how this affects goal adjustment patterns at different phases of job search, or different job searches throughout a whole career. This could potentially be accomplished by performing cluster analyses to identify profiles of motives across different people, thus examining career motives as a whole and studying how they work together, rather than separately, to impact engagement or disengagement in job search goals throughout the job search process.

Finally, the present study examined the work-to-nonwork direction of conflict and enrichment to determine how this impacts job search outcomes. This choice was made due to existing empirical support for the matching hypothesis, which indicates that the consequences of role conflicts and enrichments will largely be felt in the domain causing the conflict or enrichment (Amstad et al., 2011; Shockley & Singla, 2011). Based on the assumption that job search falls under the work domain, I examined how work-nonwork conflict and enrichment affect other work-related outcomes, notably job search behaviours. However, it would be pertinent for future research to explore the nonwork-to-work direction as well to elucidate how conflict and enrichment caused by one's nonwork roles shape their job search strategies and behaviours. Lastly, this study focused on employed individuals looking to change jobs, as conflict and enrichment between work and nonwork domains are experiences that are highly pertinent to this group of job seekers, but future research could investigate conflict and enrichment between job search (as a proxy for work) and nonwork (family, relationships, personal commitments, etc.) among unemployed job seekers to determine whether similar findings are observed for unemployed individuals.

## **Practical Implications**

The findings of the current study suggest that searching for a new job when work is conflicting with nonwork, and resource supplies are correspondingly limited, results in low quality job search behaviour. Unfortunately, job searching in a random and unstructured manner can lead to difficulty finding job opportunities that are appropriate and interesting to the individual, as haphazard job search has been linked to fewer job offers and lower satisfaction with the job search process (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010). Conversely, job searching when work is enriching nonwork, and resources are correspondingly abundant, fosters high quality job search behaviour. Fortunately, this type of (high) job search quality is linked to positive outcomes such as more job offers and better employment quality (van Hooft et al., 2021; van Hooft et al., 2022). Thus, although people may be inclined to rush to find a new job when work-nonwork conflict is high, as this experience generates frustrations due to the inability to adequately participate in meaningful roles (i.e., nonwork) and subsequent blaming of their work for creating conflict (Amstad et al., 2011; Shockley & Singla, 2011), this may actually sabotage their job search. Specifically, people experiencing conflict may be more likely to engage in low quality job search behaviours that require them to invest fewer resources, resulting in a less organized and attentive approach to job searching. Instead of falling into this path, these individuals should recognize the temptation to downgrade their goals and to employ haphazard strategies, and should try to devote whatever limited time and energy they have to high quality job search behaviours, such as seeking thorough information, pursuing opportunities to expand their network, reflecting on successes and failures, and considering internal states such as feelings and goals. Conversely, people experiencing enrichment should recognize that their positive work situation can be used to their advantage. That way, they can upgrade their goals

and strategically devote their resources to high quality job search activities, making thoughtful and purposeful efforts to find a new job, which will lead to better job search outcomes.

Understanding the role of goal-directed behaviours is also important because it allows job seekers to set and adapt their proximal goals, such as preparing resumes, researching companies, seeking feedback, developing skills, and networking with contacts, for an organized and productive job search. My findings suggest that upgrading one's proximal goals is linked to high quality job searching, whereas downgrading one's proximal goals is linked to low quality job searching. More specifically, planning to allocate adequate and appropriate resources to proximal job search goals encourages high quality job search behaviour, whereas withdrawing or failing to allocate sufficient resources to proximal goals fosters low quality job search behaviour. Whether an individual has few or many resources in their cache, they can use this information to optimize and strategically allocate their resources to promote high quality job search behaviours. To do so, individuals might work backwards by identifying high quality job search strategies and then setting specific goals in the interim to promote these behaviours. Individuals should focus on using their time wisely and being adaptable and intentional with the resources that they devote to their job search, committing to proximal goals that are personally valuable and feasible for their current situation (Hirschi et al., 2019).

## **Conclusion**

The present study explored how the work-nonwork interface influences the job search process, which is an underexplored phenomenon despite the fact that employed job seekers must balance searching for a new job with meeting demands in their current work and nonwork spheres. My findings highlight the challenges of job search when experiencing a negative interplay between work and nonwork (i.e., work-nonwork conflict), and the advantages of job

search when experiencing a positive interplay between them (i.e., work-nonwork enrichment). The results of this study suggest that conflict relates to increased haphazard job search, which represents low quality searching. On the contrary, enrichment relates to increased job search quality, which represents high quality searching. This study also makes a preliminary attempt to explore the impact of one's career motives on their goal adjustment patterns, though the role of motives in the associations between the work-nonwork interface and job search remains unclear. Overall, this research helped to identify obstacles that impede job search processes as well as drivers of successful job search, providing insight for job seekers about how experiences with work-nonwork conflict and enrichment can impact job changes and career paths through the quality of job search behaviour. Specifically, this study reveals that job seekers whose current work is interfering with other aspects of their life should be wary of downgrading their goals as this can lead to low quality job searching; instead, they should take care to intentionally devote their resources to high quality job search strategies. Conversely, job seekers whose current work is enriching their lives should recognize that they can use this to their advantage to enhance their job search, upgrading their goals and strategically allocating resources to high quality job search strategies to attain superior job search outcomes.

Taken together, the knowledge gained from this study can help individuals maximize their job search by highlighting the conditions for effective and ineffective job search behaviours, helping job seekers achieve their career goals and be aware of barriers to job search success. More precisely, these findings offer practical guidance to job seekers on how to adapt their job search behaviour to foster achievement of their goals and choose methods and strategies that enhance the quality of their job search. My results highlight the distinction between job search time and quality, as more time spent on job search does not necessarily translate to better

job searching if job seekers are not focusing on high quality strategies. Similarly, recognizing the distinction between high and low quality job searching can help people identify which of their job search behaviours are more or less productive. Job seekers can benefit from this knowledge by intentionally using high quality strategies that will increase their available resources, expand their knowledge base, and help them achieve their distal goal of finding a job, preferably one with which they are satisfied and that they intend to keep.



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## Appendix A

### Work and Non-Work Experiences

This section of the survey is about your experiences managing work and non-work roles.

Many of the items are similar, so please read each item carefully. Think about your experiences this week and indicate your agreement with each statement by selecting the appropriate response.

Response Scale: 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Slightly Disagree, 4- Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5- Slightly Agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly Agree

**Work-to-nonwork conflict** (3 items): Carlson et al. (2000), validated by Matthews et al. (2010)

*Due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities, I have to miss non-work activities.*

*I am often so emotionally drained after work that it prevents me from contributing to my non-work roles.*

*The behaviors that make me effective at work do not help me to do better in my non-work roles.*

**Work-to-nonwork enrichment** (3 items): Carlson et al. (2006), validated by Kacmar et al. (2014)

*My involvement in my work helps me to understand different viewpoints and this helps me be better in my non-work roles.*

*My involvement in my work makes me feel happy and this helps me be better in my non-work roles.*

*My involvement in my work helps me feel personally fulfilled and this helps me be better in my non-work roles.*

## Job Search

This section asks about your job search activities this week. There are many similar items. Please read each one carefully and indicate the extent to which you agree with it.

Response Scale: 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly Agree

### **Job search quality** (20 items): van Hooft, Van Hoyer, & van den Hee (2022)

*This week, I thought carefully about how best to present myself to potential employers.*

*This week, I carefully studied the website of organizations where I was going to apply.*

*This week, I approached contacts in my network to see if they had information about organizations I was applying to.*

*This week, when I applied for a job, I first tried to find out what the employer considers as really important in applicants.*

*This week, I prepared for applications by listing my qualities and thinking of examples for each quality.*

*This week, I persevered when looking for work, even though I was afraid things wouldn't work out.*

*This week, I persisted in my job search, even though it was unpleasant at times.*

*This week, when I felt bad, I tried to cheer myself up so that I could continue with my job search.*

*This week, I felt satisfied on days when I had put more effort into my job search.*

*This week, I tried to find out what I could improve in my job search.*

*This week, I asked others for advice and ideas on how to improve my job search.*

*This week, I thought about other ways to find a job beyond those I had already tried.*

*This week, I regularly asked myself if I had done everything I could to find a job.*

*This week, I was determined to find a job.*

*This week, I had a clear idea of the type of job I wanted to find.*

*This week, I thought about the intermediate steps needed to get a job.*

*This week, I searched for employment in a systematic way.*

*This week, I prioritized job search activities over other activities I had to do.*

*This week, I already knew exactly how I was going to handle my job search.*

*This week, I agreed with myself when I wanted to have completed certain job search activities.*

**Haphazard job search** (4 items): adapted from Crossley & Highhouse (2005)

*This week, my job search was more or less haphazard.*

*This week, my approach to gathering job-related information could be described as random.*

*This week, I used a ‘hit or miss’ approach when gathering information about my job.*

*This week, I did not really have a plan when searching for my job.*

**Job search intensity** (1 item): Wanberg, Zhu, & van Hooft (2010)

*How many hours have you spent on your job search in the past week?*

Response Options: None (0 hours), Half an hour (0.5 hours), 1 hour, 1.5 hours, 2 hours, 2.5 hours, 3 hours, 3.5 hours, 4 hours, 4.5 hours, 5 hours, 5.5 hours, 6 hours, 6.5 hours, 7 hours, 7.5 hours, 8 hours, More than 8 hours

### **This Week’s Job Search Goals**

When searching for a job, people may have smaller goals that they wish to accomplish within a certain time frame, such as looking at job ads, networking, contacting employment agencies, and submitting job applications.

Not everyone aims to do these things every week (or at all), but please consider things like these as you respond to the following questions about your own job search goals this week.

Response Scale: 0- For none of almost no goals or tasks, 1- For few goals or tasks, 2- For some goals or tasks, 3- For many goals or tasks, 4- For all or almost all goals or tasks

**Downward goal adjustment** (5 items): adapted from König, van Eerde, & Burch (2010)

*This week, I reduced my aspirations regarding the quality with which I reach my job search goals.*

*This week, I postponed my job search goals to a later point in time.*

*This week, I decided to abandon job search goals.*

*This week, I lowered the priorities of my job search tasks.*

*This week, I decided that it is okay to finish my job search tasks in a non-perfect way.*

**Upward goal adjustment** (5 items): adapted from König, van Eerde, & Burch (2010)

*This week, I increased my aspirations regarding the quality with which I reach my job search goals.*

*This week, I moved my job search goals up to an earlier point in time.*

*This week, I decided to set additional job search goals.*

*This week, I increased the priorities of my job search tasks.*

*This week, I decided that it is necessary to finish my job search tasks in a perfect way.*

## **Career Experiences**

In this section, we want to know about your experiences at work and your orientation toward your career in general. Please indicate the extent to which each statement describes you.



Response Scale: 0- Not at all accurate, 1- Slightly accurate, 2- Somewhat accurate, 3- Moderately accurate, 4- Completely accurate

**Career motive: Authenticity** (4 items): adapted from van den Bosch & Taris (2014)

*I want a career that allows me to be myself at work.*

*I want a career that allows me to stand by the things in which I believe.*

*At work, I want to be true to myself.*

*I want a career that is in accordance with my values and beliefs.*

**Career motive: Balance** (4 items): Abessolo et al. (2021)

*Compared to other things, it is a priority for me to have a balance between work and family life.*

*Compared to other things, it is a priority for me to work for an employer who has family-friendly policies.*

*Compared to other things, it is a priority for me to reconcile my personal, social and professional needs.*

*Compared to other things, it is a priority for me to work for an employer with fair and balanced work-life policies.*

**Career motive: Challenge** (5 items): Sullivan et al. (2009)

*I thrive on work challenges and turn work problems into opportunities for change.*

*I continually look for new challenges in everything I do.*

*I view setbacks not as “problems” to be overcome but as “challenges” that require solutions.*

*Most people would describe me as being very goal-directed.*

*Added work responsibilities don't worry me.*

## **How You See Yourself**

This section is about how you see yourself in general. Please read each item and indicate the extent to which you agree.

Response Scale: 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Slightly Disagree, 4- Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5- Slightly Agree, 6- Agree, 7- Strongly Agree

### **Core self-evaluations** (12 items): Judge et al. (2003)

*I am confident I get the success I deserve in life.*

*Sometimes I feel depressed.*

*When I try, I generally succeed.*

*Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless.*

*I complete tasks successfully.*

*Sometimes, I do not feel in control of my work.*

*Overall, I am satisfied with myself.*

*I am filled with doubts about my competence.*

*I determine what will happen in my life.*

*I do not feel in control of my success in my career.*

*I am capable of coping with most of my problems.*

*There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me.*

### **Proactivity** (10 items): Bateman & Crant (1993), validated by Seibert et al. (1999)

*I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.*

*Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.*

*Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.*

*If I see something I don't like, I fix it.*

*No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.*

*I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.*

*I excel at identifying opportunities.*

*I am always looking for better ways to do things.*

*If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.*

*I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.*