

The Työhön Job Search Program in Finland: Benefits for the Unemployed With Risk of Depression or Discouragement

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The impact of preventive interventions for the unemployed may vary depending on the context of the labor policies and benefit systems of the country where it is implemented. The Työhön Job Search Program was based on a method developed in the United States for recently unemployed workers. This study examined outcomes of the intervention in the context of the European labor market for participants who had been unemployed for a longer period. A total of 1,261 unemployed Finnish job seekers participated in a randomized field study. At the 6-month follow-up, the program had a beneficial impact on the quality of reemployment, especially among those who had been unemployed for a moderate time period. The program also significantly decreased psychological distress.

Unemployment has persisted as a major social and economic problem in modern economies (Price, Friedland, Choi, & Caplan, 1998), with substantial variations in unemployment rates over time as well as across nations. During the early 1990s, the unemployment rate in many European countries was 10% or higher. In Finland, for example, the unemployment rate was almost as high as 20%. At the same time, the rates in the United States were mostly around 8% (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 1995). Although the rates have declined in recent years, unemployment rates in the late 1990s in many European countries were still around 10%, whereas in the United States they declined to near 4% (OECD, 2000).

In addition to national differences in unemployment rates, there are large differences in the social policies and programs that various nations adopt to address the adverse economic, social, and psychological effects of unemployment. Compared with the United States, many European Union countries, such

as Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Finland, provide unemployed workers with a higher level of and substantially more prolonged unemployment benefits (European Commission, 2000; OECD, 1996). In addition, many European countries apply various labor market programs (e.g., job search and job training) more widely to promote active participation in the labor market and to develop resources for the unemployed. In contrast, labor market programs in the United States are typically directed only to high-risk unemployed populations (OECD, 1996).

Given the differences in unemployment rates and policies between the European and U.S. contexts, it is not clear if a program that has been shown to promote reemployment and prevent harmful mental health consequences among the U.S. unemployed workers would be similarly effective in the European context. Will the same principles of intervention that have been shown to promote reemployment in the U.S. context also work well in European countries, where the unemployment rate is higher and the unemployment benefits are provided for a substantially longer period of time than in the United States?

The higher unemployment rates in many European countries coupled with prolonged unemployment benefits may have also contributed to the creation of a large number of long-term unemployed individuals who feel discouraged about reentering the labor force. It is therefore important to find out if programs designed in the United States to promote rapid reemployment among recently unemployed workers could be equally effective in European countries for longer term unemployed individuals who are in danger of becoming discouraged workers. In this article, we report results of a program for the unemployed that was designed in the United States and implemented

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in Finland. We then examine the implications of our results in light of the social and labor policy differences in these countries.

The MPRC Job Search Program

The MPRC Job Search Program was designed at the Michigan Prevention Research Center (MPRC) in the United States as a preventive intervention for recently unemployed job seekers to facilitate their return to the labor market and to prevent the negative mental health consequences of unemployment. The program was tested in Finland because it was considered to be suitable to the Finnish context, and it had shown most promising beneficial effects on re-employment and mental health among U.S. unemployed workers.

The MPRC Job Search Program had been tested in two randomized field studies (Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & van Ryn, 1989; Price, van Ryn, & Vinokur, 1992; Vinokur, Price, & Schul, 1995). Compared with the control group, participants in the MPRC program experienced significantly greater increases in reemployment and decreases in depressive symptoms during the subsequent 2-year follow-up periods. In both studies the beneficial effects of the intervention were significantly more pronounced for those with elevated risk of depression assessed at pretest. Long-term follow-up studies demonstrated that the main positive effects persisted 2 years after the intervention and showed larger benefits for those who had initial low levels of job search motivation and mastery (Vinokur, van Ryn, Gramlich, & Price, 1991; Vinokur, Schul, Vuori, & Price, 2000). Other studies have examined the mediating mechanisms of the intervention and highlighted the important roles of job-search self-efficacy (van Ryn & Vinokur, 1992), sense of mastery, and inoculation against setbacks (Vinokur & Schul, 1997).

The Työhön Program in Finland

As in the United States, the Finnish study included a randomized field study design to test a Finnish version of the MPRC Job Search Program, named the Työhön Program. The Finnish word *Työhön* means "let's get to work" or "to work." The Työhön Program was guided by the same principles as the MPRC Program but included some minor procedural changes. The program aimed at supporting the role change of participants from passive unemployed individuals to active job seekers and was also aimed at inoculation against setbacks during the job-search

process. The main characteristics of the program are described in the Method section.

Because similar intervention methods were used in Finland and in the United States, it was expected that the program would produce similar main effects. However, the Finnish study was implemented in a vastly different labor market and social context than the U.S. studies. This context needs to be described more fully to appreciate how the main effects might be modified by the new context. First, unemployed Finnish workers usually have a relatively prolonged period of unemployment economic security. Previous union members are guaranteed earnings-related unemployment allowances up to 60%–70% of their previous total income for about 23 months (500 days). Nonmembers, consisting of less than 20% of the Finnish workforce, and those unemployed for more than 500 work days, get flat-rate allowances. These allowances amount to 35%–49% of previous total earnings (Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2000; Vähätalo, 1992). In contrast, in the United States, unemployed workers typically receive 65% of their previous after-tax income for a maximum of only 6 months. In addition, eligibility requirements are more strict in the United States than in Finland (Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2000; State of Michigan, 1998). Labor policies in these countries also differ regarding the use of labor interventions. In Finland, to avoid labeling individuals as high risk, there are usually no strong eligibility criteria for programs. However, labor officials often recruit such participants who have already been unemployed for a moderate period of time of 3 months or more. These individuals are seen to be at risk of becoming long-term unemployed workers, that is, reaching the official time limit of 12 months for long-term unemployment. In contrast to the Finnish labor policy, the U.S. labor market programs are primarily directed only to high-risk unemployed populations, such as welfare recipients (OECD, 1996).

Compared with their U.S. counterparts, substantially longer periods of financial security for the Finnish unemployed may reduce the incentive to reenter the labor market quickly (Groot & Jehoel-Gijsbers, 1992). In Sweden, where the unemployment benefit system is very similar to the Finnish system, a study by Carling, Edin, Harkman, and Holmlund (1996) showed that the exit rate from unemployment to employment increased as the time of benefit exhaustion was approached.

There is an increasing proportion of unemployed workers in Finland who have become passive in their job search and who have experienced major difficulties in reentering the workforce. These workers seem

to be trapped in long-term unemployment (Suikkanen, Linnakangas, Kallinen, & Karjalainen, 1998). In a recent Finnish study, Vesalainen and Vuori (1999) found that about half of those unemployed for 3 years or longer had not recently searched for a job. Passivity in job search can be seen as a form of self-selection into continuing unemployment (Eden & Aviram, 1993; Schaufeli & Van Yperen, 1992; Vuori & Vesalainen, 1999), which may lead to decreased self-confidence and eventually to worker discouragement in the labor markets.

The Finnish economic and labor policy context also has implications for worker mental health. There are no direct comparisons of the mental health consequences of unemployment between the United States and Europe. However, the Finnish unemployment workers receive substantial financial support for a much longer period of time, suggesting they experience less anticipation of future financial strain after the initial shock of job loss. In fact, Strandh (2001) showed that access to more generous earnings-related unemployment allowances protects against the negative effects of unemployment on mental health, but lower level flat-rate allowances do not have these positive effects. Instead, during prolonged unemployment, those with access to higher level allowances seem to suffer no further deterioration of mental health, whereas the mental health of those with access only to low-level flat-rate allowances seem to deteriorate (Strandh, 2001). Moreover, in a cross-cultural comparison of 11 countries, Gallie and Russell (1998) found that the impact of unemployment on life satisfaction and distress was particularly harsh when low benefits coincided with the unemployment of the main family wage earner or when both earners were unemployed.

Distress during unemployment may vary depending on crucial time periods associated with benefits and labor market opportunities. Both Cobb and Kasl (1977) in the United States and Arnetz et al. (1991) in Sweden found that the psychological distress is strongest during the anticipation phase, just before and during the job loss. In both studies, distress subsided somewhat following job loss. In Sweden, where unemployment security level is somewhat higher than in Finland, stress levels of the unemployed increased again before reaching the first year of unemployment. Arnetz et al. interpreted this as anxiety in anticipation of the movement to a new status as long-term unemployed. The transition over the 1-year time limit to long-term unemployment in the Finnish labor markets also involves a psychological threat to future employment prospects because people who have long-term unemployment are believed to lack skills

and motivation. In addition to weakening chances for getting a job, the transition to long-term unemployment in Finland also means imminent reduction in benefits and increase in financial strain.

In summary, the MPRC Job Search Program and its Finnish version, the Työhön Program, were both designed to increase job-search self-efficacy, motivation, and skills and to provide inoculation against setbacks during the job-search process. Compared with labor policies in the United States, in the Finnish context we find a prevailing pattern of more prolonged unemployment benefits. Prolonged high-level benefits during unemployment may lower initial motivation to search for a job, resulting in lowered job-search intensity. For some workers this may increase their risk of becoming unemployed long term. At the same time, the transition from employment to unemployment can still be considered a universally stressful major life event in which the extended financial support may buffer against the harmful effects of unemployment on mental health.

The testing of the Työhön Program in the Finnish context raises the question of whether the intervention is powerful enough to produce any results in this context or whether it will have pronounced effects for a longer term unemployed population. Other questions concern the effects of modifying factors on different subgroups of the unemployed: Will the intervention benefit those unemployed participants who are at greatest risk of depression and discouragement? Will the most beneficial effects be found among those who have already been unemployed for a somewhat longer time and are at risk of passing into long-term unemployment? These questions lead to the following hypotheses.

Hypotheses Regarding the Impact of the Työhön Program

Because the Työhön Program, like its original U.S. prototype, was designed to use an active learning process to boost job-search motivation and enhance job-search skills, we hypothesized that the Työhön Program will produce similar effects in Finland as the original MPRC Job Search Program produced in the United States in promoting reemployment and improving mental health. The original MPRC Job Search Program was tested only among recently unemployed workers; however, we also wanted to examine whether the Työhön Program could be equally effective for the longer term unemployed. Based on the above analysis regarding the effects of the prolonged financial security for the unemployed on their

job-search intensity and mental health, we hypothesized that the effects of the Työhön Program will be additionally moderated by job-search intensity and the length of unemployment.

Based on the main objectives of the Työhön Program and the results from the U.S. studies (Caplan et al., 1989; Vinokur et al., 1995), our specific hypotheses on the main effects of the intervention and on the moderating role of risk of depression are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The Työhön intervention will increase the level and quality of the reemployment in the experimental group compared with the control group.

Hypothesis 2: The Työhön intervention will decrease symptoms of depression and distress in the experimental group compared with the control group.

Hypothesis 3: Risk of depression, as assessed at pretest by a high level of depressive symptoms, will moderate the effects of the Työhön intervention on both reemployment and mental health outcomes. The intervention will benefit more those who are at higher risk for depression, both in terms of employment and mental health outcomes.

The discussion on the Finnish unemployment benefit system and labor politics compared with the United States highlighted the influence of these systems on the motivation and behavior of the unemployed. On the basis of this discussion, we propose three additional hypotheses on moderating factors. One concerns the moderating role of job-search intensity or passivity on reemployment. The other two hypotheses propose two different moderating effects of length of unemployment: one effect on reemployment and the other effect on mental health.

Hypothesis 4: Job-search intensity assessed at pretest will moderate the effects of the Työhön intervention on reemployment outcomes. The intervention will produce greater benefits for those who are more passive and do not engage in a vigorous job search. The intervention is designed to increase job-search efficacy and motivation, which, in turn, are more likely to increase the level of job-search intensity of those who are more passive during the pretest.

Hypothesis 5: Length of unemployment will moderate the effects of the Työhön intervention on reemployment outcomes. The intervention will produce greater benefits for those who have been unemployed for a moderate length of time than for those who have become unemployed recently or are long-term unemployed.

The effects of the intervention are hypothesized to be weaker for recently unemployed individuals who have not yet experienced such loss of confidence and who still see their financial outlooks quite reasonably stable for the foreseeable future. Intervention effects are also hypothesized to be weaker for long-term unemployed individuals because of their lack of con-

fidence and because long-term unemployment is a signal to employers of lack of skills and motivation. This signal influences employers' hiring decisions in ways that disadvantage the long-term unemployed person in the labor market, compared with others.

Hypothesis 6: Length of unemployment moderates the effects of the Työhön intervention on mental health. The intervention will benefit more those who have become unemployed recently than those who have been unemployed for a longer time.

Based on our earlier review of the literature, we expect the intervention to be most effective in the early stages of unemployment, when stress caused by job loss seems to be highest (Arnetz et al., 1991, Cobb & Kasl, 1977). After the initial phase of unemployment, the effect is expected to be smaller because of the modifying effect of a relatively secure financial outlook.

Method

Participants

Of 1,417 individuals who were initially recruited, a total of 1,261 (89%) were unemployed ($n = 1,164$) or had received termination notice ($n = 97$) between September 1996 and June 1997 and were qualified as participants in the field experiment. To become participants, respondents had to agree to the randomization procedure of the study and to turn in the baseline assessment questionnaire (Time 1 [T1]).

Because the goal of recruitment was to obtain a heterogeneous sample of the Finnish unemployed population, we used several recruitment methods to obtain the sample. Most of the respondents were recruited on the basis of invitations by mail and phone (almost 25%) and by direct contacts (about 35%) in four employment offices in southwestern Finland. We recruited all others (about 40%) in presentations of the program in employment offices; by contacting recently laid-off workers; by contacting recruiting services of the trade unions, associations of the unemployed, and universities; and by advertisements in newspapers, radio, and the Internet. Altogether, we estimate that our trainers contacted about 5,000 unemployed workers to find our volunteer participants.

Respondents varied in age from 18 to 61 years. The median age was 36 years ($M = 37.0$, $SD = 8.6$). Of the total sample, 981 (77.8%) were women and 280 (22.2%) were men. On their last job, the respondents worked an average of 35.4 hr/week ($Mdn = 37.5$, $SD = 7.6$). The average monthly salary of the participants in their last job was 7,307 Finnish Marks, or FIM ($SD = 2,932$; U.S. \$1,100). At the time of the intervention, the average monthly salary of the Finnish employees in regular employment was 10,800 FIM (U.S. \$1,700; Statistics Finland, 1998).

At the time of recruitment, the median duration of unemployment was 5 months ($M = 10.7$, $SD = 17.3$). Twenty-eight percent of the respondents were unemployed for 12 months or longer. About 70% of the respondents got a high-level union-based unemployment benefit, on average 4,467 FIM per month ($SD = 1,376$; U.S. \$700). In contrast,

28.8% of the respondents got low-rate benefits, about 2,600 FM (U.S. \$406) per month. Also, at that time 68.6% of the respondents were looking for full-time work only (37 hr/week in Finland), 29.6% were ready to accept both full-time and part-time jobs, and only 1.8% were looking just for a part-time job.

The educational and vocational distribution of our sample and the population of unemployed workers served by the four offices are presented in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, there was a selection effect into the research sample. Participants in the research group were better educated than local unemployed workers, and their vocational background more typically represented white-collar occupations. The relatively high rate of those with high earnings-related unemployment benefits (70% vs. 56% among local unemployed) also indicates the relatively strong position of participants in the labor market.

Randomization Procedure and Experimental Design

The 1,261 eligible respondents who completed the pretest questionnaire (T1) were randomized into an experimental ($n = 629$) and control condition ($n = 632$). Those randomized into the experimental condition were invited to participate in the Työhön intervention workshop. Those in the control condition received printed information that covered the intervention content. Two weeks after the intervention was completed, a follow-up posttest (Time 2 [T2]) was conducted using mailed self-administered questionnaire. Another follow-up (Time 3 [T3]) was conducted 6 months after the intervention.

A schematic presentation of the design of the study is presented in Figure 1. The figure includes information on the experimental design and the size of the various subgroups in each condition and at each of the follow-ups.

Experimental Condition

Respondents in the experimental condition were contacted by trainers and were invited to participate in a week-

long "Työhön" job-search training workshop. The Työhön Program, as is the original MPRC Job Search Program, is based on theories of active learning process, social modeling, gradual exposure to acquiring skills, practice through role playing, and inoculation against setbacks. A systematic presentation of the conceptual framework of the intervention and its design is available in Price and Vinokur (1995). The detailed intervention process was documented by Curran (1992) and by Mäkitalo, Tervahartiala, and Saarinen (1997).

The program is delivered by a cotrainer team, one male and one female, to groups of about 10–18 unemployed job seekers during five half-day sessions that focus on the enhancement of job-search skills. The intervention is designed to achieve its goals through the creation of a socially supportive environment that facilitates positive interactions and relationships between trainers and participants and among the participants. The training is designed to increase participants' job-search self-efficacy and motivation as well as to enhance the following job-search skills: (a) recognizing and communicating one's marketable skills, (b) identifying and using one's social network to find job openings, (c) contacting promising employers, (d) drawing up a job application and resume, and (e) preparing for successful job interviews.

The Työhön intervention was delivered by three cotrainer teams. Trainers changed teams throughout the project. Each group was evaluated for trainer actions during at least 1 day of the week by a trainer supervisor or an observer from the research group.

The trainers were selected from Finnish unemployed job seekers with the help of labor administration. The training of the trainers was provided by a training supervisor and lasted for 2 months. The training protocol is documented in Mäkitalo et al. (1997).

The workshops were organized in classrooms or similar sites at the home region of the participants in five 4-hr morning sessions from Monday to Friday. Breakfast, coffee, and sandwiches were also served in each session. A total of 43 workshops were conducted with groups varying in size from 6 to 17 participants. The median group size was 11 ($M = 10.3$, $SD = 2.4$). The program was delivered in 4

Table 1
Percentage Educational and Vocational Background of the Research Group Compared With the Local Unemployed

Variable	Male ($n = 280$)		Female ($n = 981$)	
	Local unemployed	Research sample	Local unemployed	Research sample
Level of education				
Primary	51.0	23.2	45.3	28.7
Secondary	40.9	61.1	43.6	56.4
Higher	7.5	14.6	10.5	13.8
Unknown	0.6	1.1	0.8	1.1
Vocational background				
Technical	10.6	22.5	8.4	12.7
Managers, administrative	6.3	15.7	17.9	31.0
Health and social	1.6	2.5	13.8	12.3
Commercial	13.5	19.6	28.6	20.4
Industry and traffic	53.9	24.3	18.1	8.2
No vocation	14.2	15.4	13.2	15.4

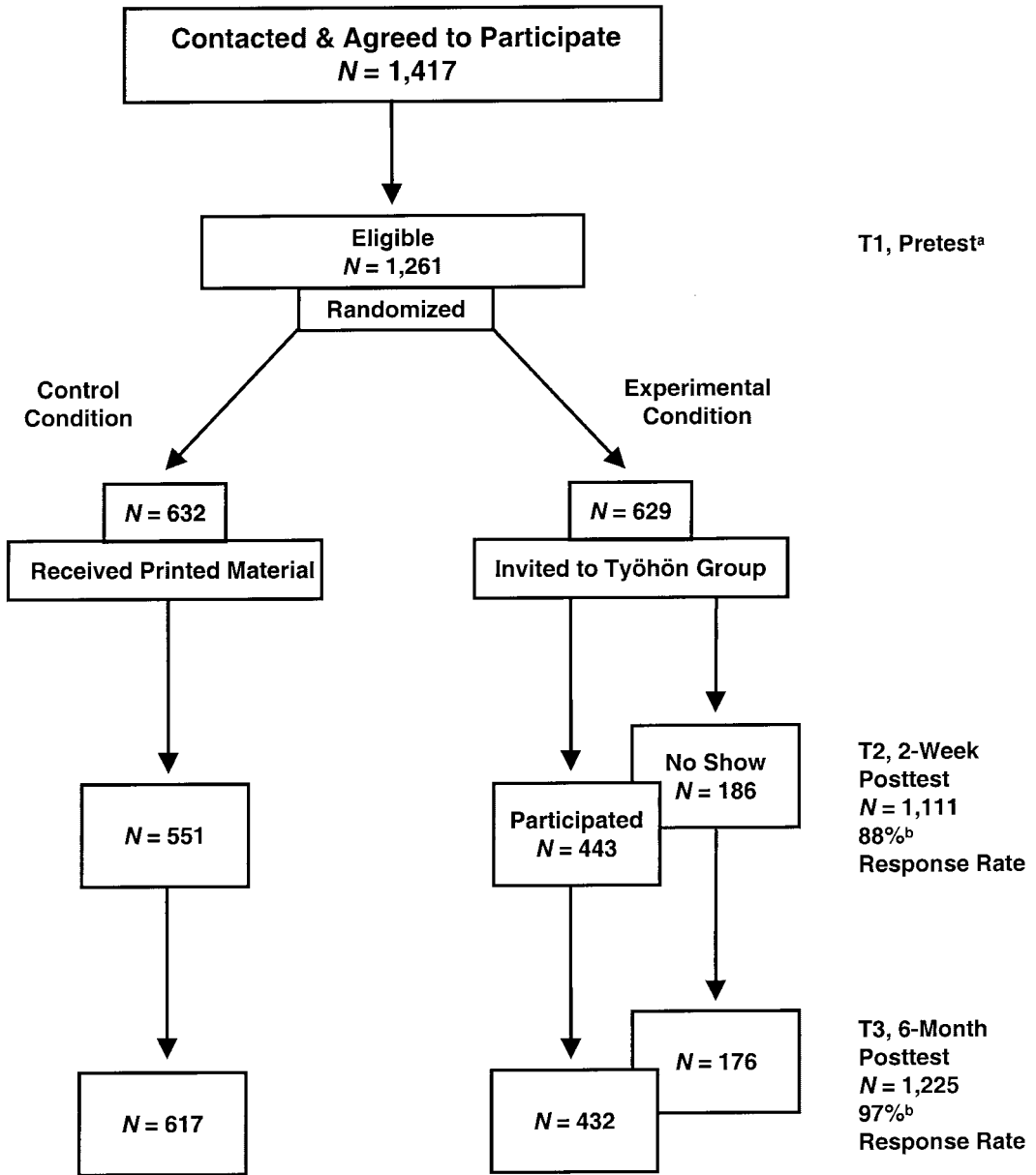


Figure 1. Schematic design of the study. T1 = Time 1, T2 = Time 2, T3 = Time 3. ^aPretest was conducted prior to randomization. ^bResponse rate calculated in T1 sample.

longer days in two intervention groups for people dismissed by notice, because the first day was used for dealing with workers' negative emotions raised by dismissal by notice with the use of debriefing.

Control Condition

Study participants in the control group were given a literature package, which corresponded to the basic themes

in job-search training and included four guides: a guide to the services of the Employment Agency, a guide to manage one's life situation while unemployed, an ABC guide for the job seeker, and a handout of job-seeking advice.

Data Collection

After agreeing to the terms of the study, participants were given the T1 pretest questionnaire. For returning T1 and all

subsequent questionnaires, they were offered a choice of free tickets to cultural or sports events or to a physical exercise program. The first follow-up questionnaires (T2) were mailed to the respondents just after the intervention and to the control group, approximately 2 weeks after the T1 pretest questionnaire. The T3 follow-up questionnaires were mailed to the respondents 6 months after the pretest questionnaire.

The T2 and T3 questionnaires were returned by 1,111 (88.1%) and 1,225 (97.1%) respondents, respectively. The higher response rate of T3 was the result of a shorter second-reminder questionnaire and a short phone interview questionnaire without the psychological measures. Consequently, 152 of the respondents at T3 did not respond to psychological measures.

Measures

Questionnaires included measures of sociodemographic characteristics, work and unemployment history, job-search intensity, reemployment, and mental health. The measures of job-search intensity and mental health were based on multi-item questions that provided internal reliability coefficients (Cronbach alpha) of .80 or above.

Demographic characteristics were assessed using standard survey questions for reporting age, gender, marital status, education, occupation, and length of unemployment.

Length of unemployment was measured in terms of the number of weeks of unemployment since the job loss. In addition, two dummy variables relating to length of unemployment were constructed for the analyses of the moderating effects of length of unemployment on mental health and on reemployment. In the first variable, recently unemployed respondents (i.e., less than 3 months) were coded 1, and everyone else was coded 0. In the second variable, respondents who were unemployed for moderate length of time, from 3 to 12 months, were coded 1, and everyone else was coded 0. The period between 3 and 12 months of unemployment is the risk period for becoming long-term unemployed when the individuals are facing a significant decrease in benefits. These two dummy variables regarding moderate length of unemployment and short-term unemployment were used, respectively, for the analyses of Hypotheses 5 and 6.

Reemployment status was determined based on the answer to the question "What is your employment status now?" Respondents were classified as reemployed (coded "1") if they described themselves "being employed without subsidy from the state" or were "running their own business." Respondents were classified as unemployed (coded "0") if they described themselves as "unemployed," "training in the labor market," "having a subsidized job," "studying," or "on maternity leave."

Quality of reemployment was assessed using three measures that included wage rate, job stability, and job satisfaction. *Wage rate* was a measure of earnings per hour computed from the reports of monthly salary and number of hours of work per week. Wage rate was computed only for respondents who worked for pay at T1 and T3, excluding those on subsidized work. *Job stability* was based on the respondents' report of whether their new job was a stable job or just a temporary job. In the Finnish labor markets, a stable job is generally desirable and secure and has a clearly higher status compared with temporary jobs. Termination of

a stable job is difficult because the law heavily restricts the reasons for layoffs. Also, layoff time in stable jobs varies from 1 month up to 6 months depending on time of employment.

Job satisfaction was evaluated both at T1 for the last job before becoming unemployed and at T3 for the new job of the reemployed. Job satisfaction was measured with a nine-item scale ($\alpha = .85$). The questions included the following: How satisfied are you/were you with your work-mates, with your workplace in general, with your work tasks, with your salary, with your career possibilities, with safety at your work, with the possibilities of using your skills, and with variety at your work? Each item was measured in a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *very unsatisfied* to 5 = *very satisfied*).

Job-search intensity was assessed at T1 and at T3 with a measure developed at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Vuori & Tervahartiala, 1995). This measure was based on respondent reports of the frequency of six major job-search activities in the past month using a 4-point rating scale. The rating categories included 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *once or twice*, 3 = *weekly*, and 4 = *daily*. The search activities covered the following six areas: looking for jobs at the local employment office, reading newspaper announcements of jobs, contacting employers without "official" advertisements of vacancies, asking friends and neighbors for job opportunities, looking for vacancies in other than the previous profession, and applying for job vacancies. The number of vacancies was rated on a 6-point scale (from 0 = *none* to 5 = *five or more*). The internal consistency of this measure was .83.

Psychological distress was measured both at T1 and at T3 with the 12-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12; Goldberg, 1972; Goldberg et al., 1997). It includes questions such as "Have you recently been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?" "Have you recently lost much sleep over worry?" "Have you recently been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?" or "Have you recently been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?" The measure was used as a continuous variable to indicate the level of distress (for details, see Goldberg, 1972). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .92 at T1 and .90 at T3.

The measure of *depressive symptoms* was a Finnish scale (Salokangas, Stengård, & Poutanen, 1994) based on mean ratings of 10 items from the Hopkins Checklist (Derogatis, Lipmann, Rickels, Uhlenhuth, & Covi, 1974). The measure required respondents to indicate how often in the last month they experienced each of the following 10 symptoms: had difficulty sleeping, felt blue, had the feeling that everything requires extra effort, felt a lack of energy, had the feeling of being alone, had the feeling of a hopeless future, was not enjoying life, felt worthless, had the feeling that all pleasure has disappeared from life, and felt that apathy did not disappear even with the help of family or friends. Respondents indicated their answers on a scale ranging from 0 = *not at all* to 3 = *very much*. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .92 and .91 for T1 and T3, respectively. This baseline measure was also used in the analyses as a measure of *risk for depression*.

Integrity of the intervention and its immediate impact were assessed using the reports of the participants 1 week after the last session of the intervention. Participants were asked to provide information on the extent to which various

aspects of the group process and the other participants' behavior were positive, rewarding, and relevant to their job-search efforts. Their answers were provided using twenty-one 5-point rating scales (1 = *most negative rating*, 5 = *most positive rating*). In addition, the participants rated the trainers and their fellow group members on their warmth, expertise, and helpfulness on 7-point scales (1 = *most negative rating*, 7 = *most positive rating*). Trainers were evaluated with 8 items and peers with 5 items.

Effectiveness of Randomization, Response Rates, and Attrition

Success of randomizing is critical for protecting the internal validity of our study's experimental design. Comparisons between the control and the experimental group did not reveal any statistically significant difference in sex, age, education, or salary level before the job loss. The average duration of unemployment seemed to be slightly longer in the control group (11.6 vs. 9.8 months), but the difference was not significant ($p = .07$) and was caused by three extreme cases in which individuals reported exceptionally long duration of unemployment (15 years or more). Consequently, this variable was recoded for statistical analyses. Those who reported over 5 years of unemployment (which equals about 3 standard deviations over the median) were recoded to have the value of 5 years of previous unemployment.

Similarly, there were no statistically significant differences at pretest (T1) in the psychological measures that were used in the study, which included job-search intensity, distress, and depressive symptoms. Consequently, the integrity of randomization to experimental and control condition was fully preserved.

The attrition in experimental design was analyzed following the recommendations of Hansen, Collins, Malotte, Jonson, and Fielding (1985). The dropout effects in T2 and T3 were controlled, as well as the no-show bias in the intervention. Compared with respondents who provided data for the T2 follow-up, dropouts were significantly more often men (29.3% vs. 21.2%, $p < .05$) and had significantly higher salary (7,827 FIM vs. 7,234 FIM [US \$1,220 vs. US\$1,130], $p < .05$). No other significant differences in demographic or output variables were found. In T3, there were even more significant differences between respondents and dropouts. Dropouts were more often men (44.5% vs. 21.5%, $p < .001$), they were significantly less often married (41.7% vs. 64.1%, $p < .01$), their job-search intensity and job-search self-efficacy had initially been significantly higher (14.3 vs. 12.6, $p < .01$ and 19.7 vs. 17.3, $p < .001$, respectively), as well as their inoculation against setbacks (2.4 vs. 2.8, $p < .01$). However, when we examined those who provided the full version of the questionnaire ($N = 1,073$), differences were found only in sex (male 34% vs. 20%, $p < .001$) and in general self-efficacy (37.4 vs. 36.1, $p < .05$).

Of the 629 participants in the experimental condition, 186 (29.6%) did not participate in the Työhön group. In comparing the demographic characteristics of participants and nonparticipants, we found only one statistically significant difference. Nonparticipants were younger (34.8 years old) than the participants (37.6 years olds). However, in all of our analyses, the comparisons are based on the complete

randomized experimental group that includes both the intervention participants and the nonparticipants to prevent selection bias. Consequently, the results give lower bound conservative estimates of the effects of the intervention.

Results

The correlations, means, and standard deviations among the study variables are provided in Table 2.

Integrity of the Intervention

Participants perceived the intervention very positively. The mean ratings of their responses on the 5-point scales regarding the group process, other participants, material, and discussions varied between 3.4 and 4.7 (SD varied between 0.41 and 0.93). For example, the participants found that they could actively participate in the group discussions ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.57$) and that the other participants listened to them ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 0.66$). They felt that the trainers understood their job-search problems ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.89$), and they thought that the Työhön group will increase their chances of finding a job ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.88$). The ratings about the trainers and their fellow group members on warmth, expertise, and helpfulness indicated very positive evaluations. The mean scores for trainers on the 7-point scales varied between 6.4 and 6.7 (SD varied between 0.78 and 0.87) and for fellow group members between 6.2 and 6.5 (SD varied between 0.79 and 0.86).

Analysis Plan

The effects of the intervention were examined by regression analyses. Logistic regression was used for dichotomous dependent variables. The analyses were done in two stages. The first analysis included independent variables assessed at baseline (Variables 1 to 7 and 16 from Table 2 and baseline control of the outcome variable) as predictors of dependent variables assessed at 6-month follow-up.

In the second set of analyses, the interaction terms between the experimental condition and the three moderating variables (job-search intensity, depressive symptoms, and duration of unemployment) were added simultaneously to each model. While testing the role of moderate length of unemployment (3 to 12 months) in moderating the effect of the intervention on reemployment (Hypothesis 5), we used the dichotomous moderate unemployment variable. When test-

Table 2
Matrix of Intercorrelations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Intervention	—																
2. Age	-.03	—															
3. Gender	.02	-.07*	—														
4. Education	-.02	-.26***	.02	—													
5. Marital status	-.03	.10**	-.04	.01	—												
6. Duration of unemployment	-.05	.17***	.11**	-.15**	-.04	—											
7. Job-search intensity	-.03	-.16***	.15***	.10**	-.02	-.07*	—										
8. Reemployment	.02	-.13**	-.03	.11**	.04	-.13**	.20**	—									
9. Stable job	.07*	-.06	.07*	.01	-.02	-.02	.10**	.55***	—								
10. Wage rate T1	.03	.19***	.15***	.19**	.04	-.03	-.06	-.02	-.03	—							
11. Wage rate T3	-.01	.09	.32**	.32**	.08	-.12*	-.01	NA	.08	.43**	—						
12. Job satisfaction T1	.03	.07*	-.04	-.01	.06*	.03	.03	.03	.02	.07*	-.03	—					
13. Job satisfaction T3	.05	.01	-.01	.01	.12*	-.08	.08	NA	.10	.07	.18**	.32***	—				
14. Psychological distress T1	-.00	.04	-.03	-.08**	-.05	.08*	.08**	-.02	.04	-.03	.01	-.12**	-.09	—			
15. Psychological distress T3	-.06	.05	.02	-.11**	-.11**	.15	-.02	-.16**	-.09**	-.05	-.01	-.07*	-.34**	.36**	—		
16. Depressive symptoms T1	-.03	.03	-.03	-.08**	-.13**	.09**	.04	-.02	.04	-.02	-.02	-.11**	-.09	.72**	.32**	—	
17. Depressive symptoms T3	-.05	.05	.04	-.06*	-.18**	.11**	-.04	-.19**	-.10**	-.04	-.07	-.14**	-.29**	.41**	.72**	.58**	—
<i>M</i>	0.5	37.0	1.2	3.6	0.6	10.1	12.6	0.3	0.1	49.6	41.6	32.1	34.1	13.2	11.0	7.7	6.1
<i>SD</i>	0.5	8.6	0.4	1.6	0.5	13.7	3.6	0.5	0.3	22.1	14.4	6.1	5.5	6.4	5.8	6.3	5.8
<i>N</i>	1,261	1,260	1,261	1,247	1,255	1,213	1,260	1,225	1,211	938	378	1,109	390	1,261	1,070	1,255	1,069

Note. T1 = Time 1; T3 = Time 3.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

ing the role of recent unemployment (less than 3 months) as a moderator of the effect of the intervention on mental health (Hypothesis 6), we used the dichotomous recent unemployment variable.

Table 3 reports regression coefficients as well as multiple regression coefficients and the adjusted explained variances for both the first set of analyses regarding the main effects. The lower part of the table reports the second set of regression analysis focusing on interaction summaries of the interaction models.

Hypotheses 1 and 2: Main Effects of the Intervention

Of all the study participants in the 6-month follow-up, 23.8% were reemployed, 25.3% were in subsi-

dized work or in labor market training, 4.4% were in other categories (e.g., maternity leave or the army), and 39.0% were unemployed. Reemployment in the experimental and control group was, respectively, 34% and 31.9%. The difference in any of the above labor market statuses between the experimental and the control group was statistically not significant.

The results displayed in the first row of Table 3 demonstrate that the intervention had a significant beneficial impact on stable reemployment and on psychological distress. These findings partially supported our Hypotheses 1 and 2. However, the results failed to show that the intervention would have a significant direct beneficial impact on reemployment, wage rate, job satisfaction, or depressive symptoms.

Table 3

Logistic Regression (B) and Ordinary Least Squares Regression Coefficients (β) of the Effects of the Työhön Intervention and Baseline Predictors on Reemployment and Mental Health Outcomes at Half a Year (T3) Follow-Up

Variable	T3 reemployment outcome				T3 mental health outcome	
	Reemployed ^a	Stable job ^a	Wage rate ^b	Job satisfaction ^b	Psychological distress ^b	Depressive symptoms ^b
Baseline predictor						
Intervention (0 = control, 1 = experimental)	.08	.44*	-.05	.04	-.06*	-.04
Age	-.02**	-.01	.12*	.03	.01	.04
Gender (0 = female, 1 = male)	-.28	.42*	.25**	-.00	.03	.05
Education	.08	-.03	.28**	-.03	-.07*	-.01
Marital status						
(0 = unmarried, 1 = married)	.23	-.03	.05	.06	-.08**	-.10**
Depressive symptoms	-.00	.02	-.01	-.07	.12**	.56**
Job-search intensity	.12**	.08**	-.05	.07	-.05	-.07*
Duration of unemployment	-.02**	-.00	-.11*	-.06	.05	-.04
Baseline control of outcome						
N	1,155	1,142	272	330	1,013	1,013
R ²	1,382 ^c	841 ^c	0.31**	0.12**	0.16**	0.35**
Adj. R ²	0.10 ^d	0.05 ^d	0.29**	0.09**	0.15**	0.35**
Interactions^e						
Int × Dep	.07	.13	-.04	-.07	-.11**	-.05
Int × JSearch Intensity	-.06	-.27	-.16*	-.22**	.01	-.02
Int × RUNemp					-.07*	-.04
Int × MUNemp	.69**	.77*	-.19**	-.03		
N	1,117	1,104	268	324	995	995
R ²	1,329 ^c	803 ^c	0.36**	0.15**	0.17**	0.35**
Adj. R ²	0.11 ^d	0.06 ^d	0.33**	0.11**	0.16**	0.35**

Note. T3 = Time 3; Int = intervention (control group = 0, experimental group = 1); Dep = depressive symptoms; JSearch = job-search intensity; RUNemp = recent unemployment (less than 3 months); MUNemp = moderate unemployment (from 3 to 12 months).

^a Values in this column are logistic regression coefficients (B). ^b Values in this column are standardized linear regression coefficients (β). ^c -2 log likelihood values. ^d Nagelkerke R² values. ^e Only coefficients for interactions and model summaries are displayed.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Hypotheses 3 to 6: Moderators of the Main Effects

In the second set of the regression analyses, we found that, in addition to the direct effects of the experimental condition on the quality of reemployment in terms of job stability and psychological distress, the beneficial effects of the intervention were also moderated by the impact of three psychological variables: risk for depression, job-search intensity, and length of unemployment.

As shown in the lower part of Table 3, the intervention had a significant interaction effect with baseline risk of depression on psychological distress at follow-up ($p < .01$), partially supporting our Hypothesis 3. Those participants at greater risk for depression benefited more from the intervention than those at lower risk.

The intervention (i.e., experimental condition) also had significant interactions with job-search intensity on both wage rate ($p < .05$) and job satisfaction ($p < .01$), partially supporting our Hypothesis 4 (Table 3). As hypothesized, for the passive job seekers, the intervention increased their wage rate compared with their counterparts in the control group more than it did for the active job seekers. Moreover, compared with the initially active job seekers, the passive job

seekers in the intervention had greater job satisfaction in their new job than their counterparts in the control condition.

Finally, the intervention had four significant interactions with the length of unemployment (see Table 3). For those who had been unemployed for a moderate time period, the intervention increased reemployment ($p < .01$) and reemployment to stable jobs ($p < .05$) more than for those who had become unemployed recently or already had passed into long-term unemployment. Both of these interactions had similar patterns and supported our Hypothesis 5. The interaction effect of the intervention and moderate unemployment on reemployment to stable jobs is presented in Figure 2. Additional t tests showed that in the group with a moderate unemployment period, reemployment to stable jobs was significantly more frequent in the experimental group than in the control group, $t(458) = -2.5$, $p < .05$, but regarding total reemployment, the respective difference was not quite significant, $t(462) = -1.8$, $p < .08$.

In terms of wage rate, those who had been unemployed for a moderate period, compared with their counterparts in the control group, benefited less than those who had become unemployed recently or already had passed into long-term unemployment ($p < .01$). However, additional t tests did not show signif-

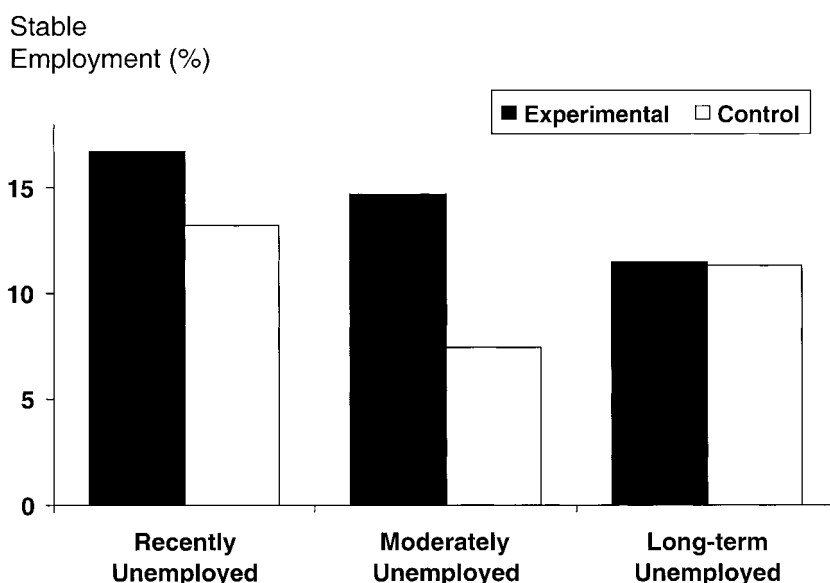


Figure 2. Interactive effect of experimental condition and length of unemployment at baseline on reemployment to stable jobs. Percentage of participants employed to stable jobs in all three subgroups of the length of employment.

icant differences between the experimental and the control group in any of the subcategories of the length of unemployment.

Finally, the last interaction effect of the intervention with the length of unemployment was found for psychological distress. Compared with their counterparts in the control group, the intervention participants who had become unemployed recently had lower levels of distress ($p < .05$) than those who had been unemployed for longer time periods. Comparisons among those who had recently become unemployed confirmed this finding showing that psychological distress decreased significantly more in the experimental group than in the control group, $t(383) = 2.3$, $p < .05$, supporting our Hypothesis 6.

Discussion

This study examined two broad questions. The first question was whether the Työhön Program, a Finnish adapted version of the U.S. MPRC Job Search Program, is also effective in promoting reemployment and preventing poor mental health in Europe with different labor markets, social security, and labor policies than the United States. The second broad question was whether the Finnish program could be equally effective for the longer term unemployed individuals in Finland who are in danger of becoming discouraged workers. For meaningful comparison with the results of the program in the United States, the Finnish intervention program was designed to be similar to the U.S. program in terms of the intervention methods and evaluation plan. Despite these similarities, there were two major differences that help to provide answers to the broad questions posed earlier. One difference is that the Finnish study recruited participants whose length of unemployment had a much greater range and variability (from 3 months before layoff to 5 years of unemployment) than the length of unemployment of the participants in the U.S. study (from 1 week to 4 months of unemployment). The other major difference is rooted in the broader social economic context of the study, that is, in differences between Finland and the United States in labor markets, labor policies, and social security systems of support for the unemployed.

We expected the main effects of the Työhön intervention in Finland to be similar to those found with the MPRC Job Search Program in the United States, but we also were expecting some differences reflecting the different labor markets, policies, and financial support provided to unemployed workers in the two countries. Whereas in the United States the intervention increased reemployment and decreased depres-

sive symptoms among those with high risk for depression, in Finland the intervention had a beneficial main effect on the quality of reemployment but not the proportion of participants reemployed. In addition, the Työhön Program reduced distress levels but did not reduce depressive symptoms. These results provide partial, but important, support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. In addition, in support of Hypothesis 3, the intervention also had a significantly stronger beneficial impact on the level of distress of participants who were at high risk for depression.

The differences in the effects of the intervention on unemployed job seekers in the United States and Finland may be explained by the contextual and policy differences in the two countries that were discussed earlier. The somewhat lower level of financial support and especially the substantially shorter period of time of support for unemployed workers in the United States, compared with those in Finland, make reemployment in the United States an urgent priority for laid-off job seekers. It is likely that this stressful situation for the U.S. unemployed workers also exacerbates their depressive symptoms and may explain why the MPRC Job Search Program has a greater impact on those with an elevated level of depressive symptoms. In Finland, where unemployed workers have significantly more time to regain employment before losing substantial financial support, the beneficial impact of the intervention is more salient for the quality of the jobs obtained. During the period of the intervention and shortly thereafter, there was a tight labor market in Finland. Obtaining stable employment in this market was considered important. Similarly, because of the length and size of financial support for unemployed workers in Finland, the intervention did not have a significant impact on depressive symptoms. Instead, the preventive effects of the Työhön intervention on mental health variables were manifested in decreased levels of distress.

In addition, in support of Hypothesis 4, we found that the Työhön intervention had a pronounced beneficial impact on reemployment quality of the initially more passive unemployed individuals, that is, on those who initially reported a low level of job-search activity. These more passive job seekers who participated in the intervention had a higher wage rate and job satisfaction than their counterparts passive job seekers in the control group.

The U.S. evaluation studies of the MPRC Job Search Program did not include unemployed workers who were unemployed for longer than 3 months. It was, therefore, not possible to examine how the intervention affects workers who are recently unemployed compared with workers who are unemployed

for several months and longer in the U.S. study. However, this examination was possible in the present Finnish study with recent as well as long-term unemployed workers. As suggested in our Hypotheses 5 and 6, the intervention had a pronounced beneficial effect on the reemployment outcomes of those who were unemployed for a moderate length of time (from 3 months to 1 year) and on the level of distress of the recently unemployed (those who had lost their job less than 3 months ago). Because distress is highest during the critical time period just before losing a job and during the initial period of unemployment (Arnetz et al., 1991), the intervention's success in reducing distress when it is high might be expected but is nevertheless important.

The more pronounced success of the intervention in improving the reemployment outcomes for those unemployed for less than a year could also be explained by contextual factors. At 1 year, unemployed workers are officially moved to the category of long-term unemployed, and sharper reductions in unemployment benefits seem closer at hand (Carling et al., 1996).

Overall, main effects of the intervention may appear relatively small in scale at the half-year follow-up. However, as noted earlier, because our analyses are based on the originally randomized design with nonparticipants in the experimental group, these effects are lower bound estimates for the real effects, which are likely to be larger. Moreover, because of the significant interactions found in our analyses, effects of the intervention within the groups showed considerably larger effects. This may suggest that high-risk participants should be primarily targeted for participation. However, a homogeneous high-risk group of participants might not provide enough mutual group support and could weaken the effectiveness of the intervention (Vinokur et al., 1995).

Because participation in this type of labor market intervention in Finland, as well as in many other European countries, generally is voluntary and free for everyone, we did not screen or select our participants. Consequently, those who volunteered to participate in our study were better educated and more often women than the average unemployed workers in the geographic area of study. Even with the limitations regarding the size of the main effects, as noted earlier, when the results are projected to larger populations, the overall impact on the population of unemployed workers is substantial. For that reason, the Työhön Program has already been implemented in Finland nationwide.

Another more general concern regarding program evaluations is that individuals who have undergone

time-consuming and intensive treatment may be motivated to report having benefited from the intervention to justify the investments made by themselves and by those delivering the program. This motivation was not likely to influence objective measures such as the main effect on stable employment or the interaction effect of the intervention and baseline job-search intensity on stable employment, but there is the possibility of some influences on subjective measures. However, the intervention was introduced to the participants as a job-search skill training workshop, and we emphasized objective outcomes in job-search skills. Moreover, in the Finnish labor markets, various interventions for the unemployed sponsored by the labor authorities are common, and participants were likely to perceive the Työhön Program as a usual program among many others.

In summary, the impact of preventive interventions for the unemployed may vary depending on the context, especially on the labor market policies and benefit systems of the country where it is implemented. The Työhön Program in Finland showed many similar effects to those found in the United States with the original MPRC Job Search Program. However, the differences in unemployment benefit systems and labor policies may have contributed to some of the differences in the results. In the Finnish context, with a substantially longer time of financial support for the unemployed, the intervention showed weak effects on the reemployment for those who were recently unemployed but a stronger one on those who had already been unemployed for a moderate length of time. In contrast, the mental health effects of the intervention were found among the recently unemployed. Because financial security can buffer psychological distress that results from a job loss, the relatively long-term financial support for the unemployed in Finland may have decreased distress during the relatively short follow-up period of the study for those who were unemployed over 3 months. It appears that in addition to promoting mental health during early acute stages of unemployment, the Työhön job-search intervention is also well suited to promote the reemployment process of those who are at risk of passing into longer term unemployment.

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