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Perception of organization's value support and perceived employability: insights from self-determination theory

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Perceived employability (PE; i.e. the worker's perception about available job opportunities) is portrayed as the upcoming resource for workers and organizations. However, organizations might particularly want to stimulate perceptions of job opportunities on the internal labor market (i.e. internal PE). In contrast, they may be hesitant in stimulating perceptions of job opportunities on the external labor market (i.e. external PE), as this might foster workers' voluntary turnover. The contextual influences adding to these different types of PE are relatively unknown. Building upon self-determination theory, we argue that the organization's support of intrinsic (e.g. personal growth) and extrinsic (e.g. status) values may play a critical role. In line with expectations, the results reveal a positive association of the perceived organization's support of intrinsic work values and a negative association of the perceived extrinsic value support with internal PE, both in terms of a similar job (i.e. internal lateral PE) and a better job (i.e. internal upward PE). Unexpectedly, perceived organization's support of extrinsic values did not relate negatively to external PE. These results show that employers can invest in the workers' employability without disadvantaging the organization. To arrive at a flexible workforce, the support of intrinsic values is of key importance.

Keywords: HR-policies; motivation; organizational culture; perceived employability; perceived job alternatives; values

Literature in the area of management science and work and organizational psychology has portrayed employability as the upcoming critical resource for employees (Fugate, Kinicki and Ashforth 2004; Van Dam 2004). Employability is generally seen as the employee's ability to retain a job or to get another job (Forrier and Sels 2003; Fugate et al. 2004). Ongoing changes in the labor market (e.g. restructurings, mergers and downsizings) have made jobs more volatile, which heightened the need for workers to be employable in order to achieve sustained employment (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte and Alarco 2008). Along this view, studies have focused upon individual factors that may enhance the workers' employability (Berntson, Sverke and Marklund 2006; Wittekind, Raeder and Grote 2010).

Employability may also present a competitive advantage for employers (Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden 2006): organizational success is conditional upon human capital and upon the capacity to adapt flexibly to changing circumstances. Therefore, it

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seems of utmost importance to understand how organizations may enhance and nurture employability, an issue that has attracted comparatively little attention. A particular challenge in this respect is that organizations may want to invest in the workers' employability without running the risk of losing competent workers to competitors. That is to say, organizations may be reluctant to contribute to employees' employability when this strengthens their profiles on the external labor market. This has been coined the 'cherry-picking problem' (Sieben 2007) or 'the free rider dilemma' (Kluytmans and Ott 1999).

In response, we aim to gain insight into how organizations might foster employability, perceived employability (PE) in particular. PE concerns the worker's perceptions about employment opportunities. In view of accounting for the fear of cherry-picking on the part of employers, we distinguish between employment opportunities on the internal labor market (internal PE) and on the external labor market (external PE). In view of inspecting possibilities for generalization across job opportunities, we furthermore distinguish between opportunities for similar jobs (lateral PE) and better jobs (upward PE). The organization's role is captured by employees' perceptions of organizational support for intrinsic (e.g. self-development, community contribution) and extrinsic (e.g. financial success, status) work values, as defined in self-determination theory (SDT; Deci and Ryan 2000; Vansteenkiste, Lens and Deci 2006).

Perceived employability

PE concerns the worker's perceptions of employment opportunities that are readily available to him or her. This definition includes two important aspects, which require further comment: the worker's perception and available employment opportunities.

First, we focus upon worker's perceptions as workers are likely to act upon their perceptions rather than upon any objective reality (Katz and Kahn 1978). In this respect, previous studies have demonstrated that PE relates to workers' well-being at work and exit (Berntson and Marklund 2007; De Cuyper and De Witte 2008; Berntson, Näswall and Sverke 2010; De Cuyper, Mäkikangas, Kinnunen, Mauno and De Witte 2012).

Second, available job opportunities can be described along two dichotomies (De Cuyper and De Witte 2008, 2011): opportunities (1) on the internal (internal PE) or instead on the external labor market (external PE), and (2) for similar (lateral PE) versus better (upward PE) jobs. The first distinction between internal PE and external PE has been widely discussed in theoretical and conceptual papers (Hillage and Pollard 1998; Kluytmans and Ott 1999; Van der Heijden 2002; Forrier and Sels 2003; Forrier, Sels and Stynen 2009) and has been successfully introduced in recent empirical papers (Rothwell and Arnold 2007; De Cuyper and De Witte 2008, 2011). Although they may share common ground, authors argue that perceptions of job opportunities on the internal or external labor market are at least partly based on a different set and combination of individual and organizational factors (Rothwell and Arnold 2007; Forrier et al. 2009). For example, internal PE is mostly seen as a responsibility that is shared by employees and employers: employers provide employees with training and opportunities for growth and development, and employees contribute by grasping such opportunities. In contrast, employees carry most responsibility for being employable on the external labor market: external PE is built on general skills and knowledge that are attractive also beyond the current job and organization. Employers are unlikely to invest in such general skills because a return on such investments is less likely when employees' profiles are in demand. This differentiation has also been empirically supported. Rothwell and Arnold

(2007) and De Cuyper and De Witte (2008, 2011), for example, established a clear split between items reflecting internal PE and external PE.

The second distinction between lateral versus upward PE has not yet attracted much research attention, and perhaps surprisingly so (for an exception, see De Cuyper and De Witte 2008, 2011). The perception of similar job opportunities and thus the prospect on lateral career moves provides the workers with minimal employment security that protects them from possible erosion of job quality. The perception of better job opportunities and the anticipated upward career transitions introduces a view on employee preferences, for example in terms of wage, status or aspired job quality, and the ability to match these preferences with jobs.

The combination of the 2×2 types leads to four types of PE: (1) *internal lateral PE* concerns perceived opportunities to get a job with the current employer; (2) *internal upward PE* concerns perceived opportunities to get a better job with the current employer; (3) *external lateral PE* concerns perceived opportunities to get a job with another employer; and (4) *external upward PE* concerns perceived opportunities to get a better job with another employer (De Cuyper and De Witte 2008, 2011). In line with the current state of the art, our main focus will be on the distinction between internal and external PE. The distinction between lateral and upward PE will be used to explore possibilities for generalization across different job opportunities and beyond job opportunities that provide minimal employment security. Given that few studies have accounted for these issues, we consider this a particular strength in our study.

Values in self-determination theory

Values are considered critical aspects for individuals' motivation (Latham and Pinder 2005). They serve as general standards or criteria that determine individuals' attitudes, preferences and behaviors (Feather 1999). Values may therefore also prime the type of employment opportunities individuals strive for and perceive (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, Lens and De Witte 2010). Moreover, we believe that specific types of values promoted in the work context as perceived by the workers will relate to different types of PE.

Values have been addressed in different ways. We follow SDT, which takes a qualitative approach to values by highlighting the content of values as opposed to a more quantitative approach in terms of *how much* workers value work (i.e. quantitative approach; Feather 1999). Specifically, SDT groups values in two broad classes. Values such as emotional intimacy, community contribution and personal growth are regarded as intrinsic, while strivings for financial success, status and power are labeled as extrinsic values (Kasser and Ryan 1996). Pursuing intrinsic values is considered to be inherently rewarding. These values may fulfill the basic psychological needs for autonomy (i.e. the inherent desire for volitional functioning), competence (i.e. the inclination to be efficacious) and relatedness (i.e. the propensity to care and to be cared for), all essential conditions for individuals to thrive (Deci and Ryan 2000). Extrinsic values, in contrast, concern external manifestations of worth. They prevent individuals to satisfy their basic psychological needs, and hence lead to ill-being and counterproductive behavior (Vansteenkiste et al. 2006).

Evidence in support of SDT's differentiation between intrinsic and extrinsic goals is abundant, and has been established in different domains (e.g. educational psychology, sport psychology, development psychology) and in experimental and applied research alike (for a review, see Vansteenkiste, Soenens and Duriez 2008). Research on intrinsic

and extrinsic values in the job context is comparatively sparse, though also in line with SDT: the pursuit of extrinsic (vs intrinsic) work values frustrates employees' basic needs and therefore hinders workers to realize their full potential and to function optimally. Optimal functioning is defined broadly in terms of well-being, attitudes towards the organization as well as towards the labor market. For example, extrinsic-oriented workers experience less satisfaction and engagement, are more prone to burnout and more likely to turnover (Vansteenkiste et al. 2007). They are also less likely to accept jobs that deviate from their ideal (Van den Broeck et al. 2010).

Research in the realm of SDT focuses mostly upon individuals' *personal* values (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste and De Witte 2008). Individuals' functioning may, however, also be influenced by the values that are considered important in the context. Evidence comes from research about parental values (Duriez, Soenens and Vansteenkiste 2007), values promoted in the educational context (Vansteenkiste, Timmermans, Lens, Soenens and Van den Broeck 2008) and societal values in general (Kasser, Kanner, Cohn and Ryan 2007). These studies indicate that contextual promotion of intrinsic values stimulates individuals' high-quality performance and persistence (Vansteenkiste et al. 2008), while a context highlighting particularly extrinsic values fosters a competitive atmosphere (Duriez et al. 2007).

Based on this literature, we suggest that workers may also feel that particular values are considered important in their work environment. Specifically, they might perceive that their organization finds intrinsic or extrinsic work values important, and thus promotes such values, for example, as part of the organization's climate. Workers may see their organization as stressing the importance of intrinsic values when it applauds signs of social support enhancing emotional intimacy, stimulates social charity or extra-role behavior to strengthen community contribution and/or provides training in the context of personal development. In contrast, an organization that builds its climate around financial success, and signals power differences in its hierarchy, might predominantly be seen as valuing and promoting extrinsic values. Although most organizations pursue extrinsic values such as financial success to remain viable, they may vary in the degree to which extrinsic values occupy a central place in the organizational climate.

Hypotheses

Employability scholars suggest that contextual aspects play an important role in the development of PE (Forrier et al. 2009), but empirical research is lagging behind (for an exception, see Berntson et al. 2006) and is almost absent when the role of the organization is concerned. In reply, and building on SDT, we suggest that the workers' perceptions about the values promoted by the organization may relate to PE. We see the associations as follows: we assume that workers who perceive that the organization promotes intrinsic values feel employable on the internal labor market. Our argument is based on dynamics related to social exchange and the norm of reciprocity (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005), namely the idea that employees reciprocate investments made by the organization. Organizations that emphasize the importance of intrinsic values likely provide a supportive environment. They may, for example, set up an HR policy that signals considerable investments in the current workforce and long-term commitment, much in line with the notion of the traditional career based on lifelong employment and career advancement as a function of tenure (Sparrow 1996; Sullivan 1999). These organizations likely provide more job opportunities for their workers, which obviously

strengthens internal PE. In addition, workers are likely to reciprocate investments on the part of the organization by loyalty, which implies a focus on the internal labor market: workers seek and pursue job opportunities on the internal labor market, and this likely leads to more perceived opportunities on the internal labor market and thus to higher internal PE.

Intrinsic values may relate to both internal lateral and internal upward PE. Intrinsically oriented organizations provide workers with possibilities to move between jobs, for example, based on their own economic needs or interests, or based on the assumption that job rotation might be highly stimulating for employees. Perceptions of intrinsic value support by organizations may furthermore provide workers with possibilities to develop skills, leading to better employment opportunities, along the traditional view of upward movement on the career ladder. This attests to internal lateral and internal upward PE, respectively. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: The perception of the organization's promotion of intrinsic work values associates positively with internal lateral (H1a) and internal upward (H1b) PE.

By way of contrast, employees who perceive that the organization is attaching most importance to extrinsic values may not feel employable on the internal or on the external labor market, rather to the contrary. The reason is that extrinsic value promotion thwarts the individual's skills, abilities and attitudes that are critical inputs for PE. In particular, the deliberate promotion of extrinsic values by the organization may create a competitive, dog-eat-dog atmosphere with few winners and many losers (Duriez et al. 2007). It may furthermore prompt a contingent self-esteem (Kernis 2003) and feelings of inferiority and incompetence (Vansteenkiste et al. 2006). Workers' experiencing extrinsic goal promotion may therefore not believe in their own abilities and lack the energy and motivation to search for other job possibilities. All these factors are, however, important to stimulate PE in general (Forrier et al. 2009; Wittekind et al. 2010) and the different types in particular. Therefore, the promotion of extrinsic values may relate negatively to all types of PE. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived extrinsic work value support associates negatively with internal lateral (H2a), internal upward (H2b), external lateral (H2c) and external upward (H2d) PE.

Method

Procedure and participants

Respondents were 246 workers from a large HR organization who voluntarily participated in a study on motivation and well-being at work. The workers completed an electronic questionnaire sent to their email address at work. Anonymity was guaranteed to encourage respondents' candidness. As the survey was launched in the period of summer holidays, response rate was rather low, i.e. 22%, but still within the range recommended by Baruch and Holtom (2008) and appropriate given the use of web-based surveys among non-managerial employees (Anseel, Lievens, Schollaert and Choragwicka 2010). As regards demographics, more women than men participated: 61% ($n = 151$). Most respondents obtained an academic degree (81%; $n = 203$). Mean age was 38 years ($SD = 9.3$) and mean tenure was 10 years ($SD = 9.3$). About three in four respondents worked full-time (76%; $n = 190$).

Measures

Perceived value support

The perceptions of the organization's intrinsic and extrinsic work values were based on the Aspiration Index assessing individuals' values (Vansteenkiste et al. 2007): rather than detailing their own values, respondents were asked to what extent three intrinsic and extrinsic work values were considered important in the organization. The items followed the stem 'To which extent does the organization consider it important ...'. The items for intrinsic work values were: 'to maintain good social relationships', 'to contribute in improving the society' and 'to invest in self-development'. The items for extrinsic work values were: 'to achieve financial success', 'to achieve esteem and respect' and 'to be in a position to influence others'. Responses were made on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important; 5 = very important).

Perceived employability

Perceived employability was measured with four items per type (De Cuyper and De Witte 2008). Internal lateral PE was measured with items such as: 'I can easily find another job here, instead of my present job'. A sample item of internal upward PE was 'I can easily find a better job here, instead of my present job'. External lateral PE included items such as 'I can easily find another job with another employer, instead of my present job'. For external upward PE, a sample item was 'I can easily find a better job with another employer, instead of my present job'. Workers rated their agreement with each of the items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

Analyses

Analyses were performed with structural equation modeling using the maximum-likelihood method (Jöreskog and Sörbom 2004). Data screening with Prelis 2.71 (Jöreskog and Sörbom 2004) revealed data non-normality at the univariate and multivariate level. Therefore, we used both the covariance matrix and the asymptotic covariance matrix, and we inspected the Satorra–Bentler scaled chi-square (SBS- χ^2 ; Satorra and Bentler 1994). Model fit was evaluated using the root mean square error of approximation (RSMEA), the comparative fit index (CFI), the non-normed fit index (NNFI) and the standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR; Hu and Bentler 1999). Following the recommendations by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we followed a two-step procedure: before testing our hypothesis in a structural model, we first evaluated the measurement model using confirmatory factor analyses (CFA).

Results

Preliminary analyses: correlations, means and standard deviation

Scale scores were computed as the mean of the items. Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas and correlations between scales are shown in Table 1. Perceptions of organization's intrinsic and extrinsic value support were positively related. This attests to workers sensitivity to work values in general (Vansteenkiste et al. 2007) and to the possibility that an organization may be perceived as stimulating both intrinsic and extrinsic values. Perceived organization's intrinsic value support related positively to internal lateral and upward PE, but not to external PE. Perceived organization's extrinsic values support was unrelated to all types of PE. In line with previous research (De Cuyper

Table 1. Correlations between scales ($n = 246$).

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Value orientation						
1. Organization intrinsic values	(0.71)					
2. Organization extrinsic values	0.38**	(0.80)				
Employability						
3. Internal quantitative	0.25**	-0.04	(0.93)			
4. Internal qualitative	0.25**	-0.02	0.68**	(0.91)		
5. External quantitative	0.06	-0.09	0.26**	0.20**	(0.96)	
6. External qualitative	-0.10	-0.09	0.01	0.18**	0.60**	(0.96)

Note: Scale reliabilities are shown on the diagonal.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

and De Witte 2008), the different types of PE were positively related, except internal lateral and external upward PE, which were unrelated.

Measurement model

To examine the divergent validity of our constructs, five alternative measurement models were tested. Model 1 was the hypothesized model. It included six latent variables represented by their respective items: the two types of perceived organization's values and the four types of PE. In Model 2, the four different types of PE were included, along with a latent construct including all value items. In Model 3, the PE items were modeled in terms of internal and external PE, along with the latent variables of intrinsic and extrinsic values. Model 4 included intrinsic and extrinsic values, and the PE items grouped in terms of lateral and upward PE. As detailed in Table 2, Model 1 showed a good fit to the data. The fit was better than the fit of the alternative models. All observed variables had significant loadings on their latent factor (mean $\lambda = 0.84$, all values of $p < 0.001$), which provides evidence for the validity of our measurement model.

Two additional analyses furthermore suggested that common method variance did not significantly alter the responses. First, the hypothesized model fitted the data better than the one-factor model (i.e. Harman test; Model 5). Second, the relative fit of the hypothesized model (PNFI = 0.79) was better than the fit of the common method factor model (PNFI = 0.70), in which all items loaded on their expected construct, as well as on a single common method factor, i.e. Model 6. This indicates that common method variance is rather unlikely to influence our results (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee and Podsakoff 2003).

Structural model

In line with the hypotheses, the structural model included paths from perceived organization's intrinsic value support to internal lateral and upward PE (Hypothesis 1) and from perceived organization's extrinsic value support to the four types of PE (Hypothesis 2). In line with previous research (De Cuyper and De Witte 2008), the internal and external as well as the lateral and upward types of PE were allowed to correlate among each other.

The hypothesized structural model yielded good fit to the data; SBS- χ^2 (198) = 582.68, $p < 0.001$; RSMEA = 0.08; SRMR = 0.07, CFI = 0.96 and NNFI = 0.94. The results largely supported the hypotheses (Figure 1). Perceived organization's intrinsic value support associated positively with internal lateral and

Table 2. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis: fit indices for alternative factor structures ($n = 246$).

<i>Model</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>NNFI</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	<i>p-value</i>
Model 1. Hypothesized model Including internal lateral PE, internal upward PE, external lateral PE, external upward PE, Intrinsic values, extrinsic values	465.54	194	0.001	0.08	0.96	0.05	0.96			
Model 2. Value model Including internal lateral PE, internal upward PE, external lateral PE, external upward PE, Values	609.09	199	0.001	0.09	0.94	0.08	0.93	5	181.94	0.001
Model 3. Internal-external model Including internal PE, external PE, Intrinsic values, extrinsic values	1.707.31	203	0.001	0.17	0.79	0.10	0.76	9	1653.89	0.001
Model 4. Lateral-upward model Including lateral PE, upward PE, Intrinsic values, extrinsic values	3.039.28	203	0.001	0.24	0.61	0.22	0.55	9	3255.06	0.001
Model 5. Harman model Including one single factor	3.600.84	209	0.001	0.26	0.53	0.24	0.48	15	4226.28	0.001
Model 6. Hypothesized model Including a common method factor	161.97	166	0.57	0.00	1	0.04	1	28	400.33	0.001

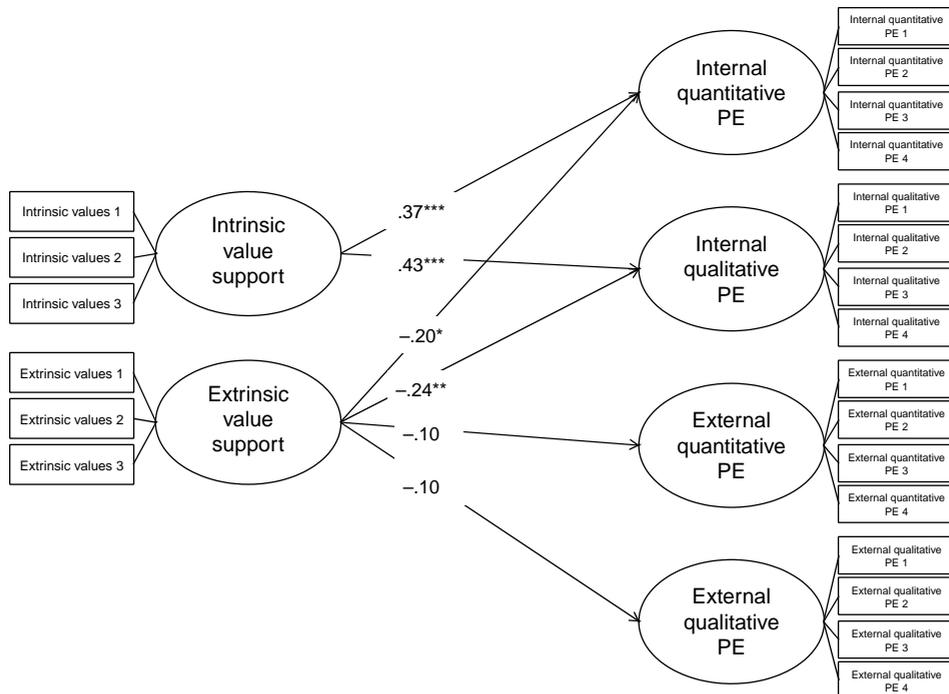


Figure 1. Structural relations among the perceptions of the organization's support of intrinsic and extrinsic values and different types of perceived employability.

upward PE, in line with Hypothesis 1. As expected, perceived organization's extrinsic value support related negatively to internal lateral and internal upward PE. However, they were unrelated to external lateral and external upward PE. Thus, hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Discussion

This study aimed to shed light on the role of perceived organization's value support in the development of PE. We adopted a broad perspective *vis-à-vis* PE, accounting for different dynamics on the internal (internal PE) and external (external PE) labor market (Rothwell and Arnold 2007; De Cuyper and De Witte 2008, 2011) and probing possibilities for generalization across future job quality in terms of lateral (lateral PE) and upward (upward PE) transitions (De Cuyper and De Witte 2008, 2011). Following SDT (Deci and Ryan 2000; Vansteenkiste et al. 2006), values were conceptualized in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic values the organization considered important, as perceived by the employee. In the following, we summarize our findings.

First, in line with Hypothesis 1, the organization's intrinsic values associated positively with internal PE, both lateral and upward. We reasoned that the support of intrinsic values leads workers to experience a supportive climate and high commitment from the part of the organization, much in line with the traditional view on careers (Sparrow 1996; Sullivan 1999). Workers then see internal career opportunities, and they are willing to pursue a career within the organization as a way to reciprocate investments on the part of the organization. The combination of seeing possibilities ('I can') and the

willingness to pursue them ('I want to') is critical to PE and to the prospect of making job transitions in general (Forrier et al. 2009). The implication for practitioners is that support of intrinsic values may help to build a retention strategy. In this respect, the promotion of intrinsic values ties in with recommendations to increase job embeddedness (Mitchell, Holtom and Lee 2001; Allen, Bryant and Vardaman 2010). This can be done by strengthening links that exist between workers and the organization, for example by promoting teamwork or stimulating a sense of community. Intrinsic values promote collaboration and team work (Sheldon and McGregor 2000), which is a critical condition to strengthen links between the focal employee, his coworkers and the organization. The promotion of intrinsic values may thus provide the organization with a unique supportive climate that employees may not find elsewhere. Such a climate is hard to sacrifice, and hence may be another way to stimulate commitment and retention.

Second, in line with expectations formulated in Hypothesis 2, the organization's support of extrinsic values related negatively to internal PE and across quality of internal job transitions. Contrary to expectations, no significant relations were found between extrinsic value support and external lateral or upward employability. Hypothesis 2 was thus only partially supported. These results align with the idea that extrinsic values may promote a competitive atmosphere, particularly on the internal labor market. Employees may feel that there are many competitors for potential job opportunities, and hence that there is only one winner and many losers. This may affect both perceived competence ('I can') and employees' motivation to seek job opportunities with the current employer ('I want to'), and hence also internal PE (Forrier et al. 2009). In line with this assumption, previous research in the realm of SDT showed that the pursuit of extrinsic values frustrates both feelings of willingness and competence (Vansteenkiste et al. 2007). Our findings furthermore align with the insight from SDT that individuals aim to avoid situations that forestall their optimal functioning (Deci and Ryan 2000). Organizations stressing extrinsic values seem to prevent employees' internal PE. Employees are therefore unlikely to develop new competencies, which leads to a workforce that is less flexible. Such organizations will therefore be less adaptable to changing economic demands.

We did not establish a relationship between support of extrinsic values and external PE, neither lateral nor upward. Even though explanations related to null findings are always tentative, one explanation could be that there are two conflicting dynamics at play. On the one hand, support of extrinsic values undermines the workers' perceived competence, which is critical to all forms of PE, also external PE. On the other hand, support of extrinsic values by the organization may lead workers away from the internal labor market and to the external labor market: workers may see job opportunities elsewhere that do promote optimal functioning.

These findings contribute to both the field of SDT and employability research. From the perspective of SDT, this study extends the research on work values (e.g. Vansteenkiste et al. 2007; Van den Broeck et al. 2010) by establishing the importance of perceived value support at work in general and the beneficial relations of perceived intrinsic value support in particular. Much like intrinsic values support in the context of parenting or education (e.g. Duriez et al. 2007), (perceived) intrinsic values support in the work context may foster individuals' optimal functioning, herein established in terms of internal PE. Internal PE may indeed be a component of adaptive functioning, both for the worker and for the organization: it may help employees to build a satisfactory career path and assist organizations in developing a flexible workforce.

The study's contributions to the employability domain are twofold. First, the results suggest that the organization may actively manage and nurture workers' internal PE by

supporting intrinsic values and discouraging extrinsic values. Such active management of internal PE is a critical asset in a modern retention strategy and performance management, and it fosters employee well-being. For example, De Cuyper and De Witte (2011) observed that internal PE related to affective organizational commitment and, through commitment, also to performance. In another study, De Cuyper and De Witte (2008) demonstrated a relationship between internal upward PE and job satisfaction, and between internal lateral PE and general well-being at work. In sum, unlike other studies that focused upon individual's capital and dispositions (Berntson et al. 2006; Wittekind et al. 2010), this study advances organizational factors and perceptions thereof as critical in the PE discourse and for the general HR strategy.

Second, we provided further evidence that the distinction between internal and external PE in particular is relevant: from this study, we learned that internal and external PE may have different correlates. As organizations may particularly want to invest in internal PE, they might in the first place promote intrinsic values. Moreover, they might refrain from stressing extrinsic values, as the environmental promotion of extrinsic values seems to forestall internal PE, while not decreasing external PE. As such, an organization promoting extrinsic values might run the risk of a rather inflexible workforce, with workers inclined to leave when better opportunities come along.

A particular observation in this study was that the distinction between lateral and upward PE was perhaps less critical, and this both for internal and external PE. For internal PE, the equal importance of lateral and upward PE may relate to the traditional view on careers and career management (Sparrow 1996; Sullivan 1999): many organizations invest first in making workers employable in different jobs (i.e. internal lateral PE). Organizations promote lateral moves, for example as a way to encourage the worker to explore, broaden and strengthen their skills, as a way to provide workers with new challenges or as a way to get acquainted with different departments and the organizational culture in general. Internal upward PE follows from these investments. A similar reasoning may go for external PE: external lateral PE is conditional for external upward PE. Here again, the non-significant relationships make any further interpretation tentative at best. However, this pattern of results may not lead to the conclusion that the distinction is not relevant or needed in general: lateral and upward PE related differently to a set of outcomes (De Cuyper and De Witte 2008, 2011). What is unclear so far and thus a topic for further research is the extent to which lateral and upward PE are predicted by different variables.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

The interpretation of the results is conditional upon some limitations. First, there is a risk of common-method variance and, hence, inflated relationships owing to the use of data from a single source. To reduce this risk, we followed the suggestions regarding questionnaire design (Podsakoff et al. 2003). For example, we encouraged the respondents' candidness by highlighting that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and by guaranteeing full anonymity. Furthermore, the one-factor measurement model provided a relatively poor fit to the data, while the common-method factor model did not show an incremental fit compared to our hypothesized model. This suggests that common-method variance does not downplay our results to any significant extent.

Second, another methodological constraint concerns the use of cross-sectional data. While we cannot draw causal conclusions from such data, we tend to believe, based on

SDT (Deci and Ryan 2000; Vansteenkiste et al. 2006) and the assumptions in the employability literature (Berntson et al. 2006; Forrier et al. 2009; De Cuyper, Raeder, Van der Heijden and Wittekind 2012), that the work environment may shape workers' PE, rather than the other way around.

Third, we sampled workers from one organization. Although the organization might intend to promote a particular set of values, the workers varied in the degree to which they perceived the organizations as supporting intrinsic or extrinsic values. This aligns with research indicating that workers may vary considerably in the way they perceive HR practices (Wright et al. 2001). Such variation might, for example, be attributed to the different configuration of particular HR practices for different groups of employees, the different styles of supervisors to implement these HR practices or to individual differences among the workers in attending to the HR practices provided (see also Kuvaas 2008). However, the variation in responses concerning perceptions of organization's value support is likely smaller in our sample than it would have been in a more heterogeneous sample, which might have attenuated our results. Therefore, a potential route for future research could be to test the generalizability of our results in other and preferably more heterogeneous samples.

In line with the call for more insight in the process through which HR practices might operate (Wright and Haggerty 2005), future research might also aim to unravel how and under which conditions perceptions of organization's value support may impact on workers employability. Based on SDT, one possibility could be that perceptions of organization's promotion of particular values influences workers' personal value pursuit, which then leads to PE. This reasoning is in line with previous research indicating that parents' value promotion also influences children's value pursuit (Duriez 2011). The satisfaction of the basic psychological needs might constitute an additional explanation (Vansteenkiste et al. 2007). Rather than examining mediating variables, future studies could also add to our understanding of this process by searching for potential moderators. Such studies might, for example, focus on differences among supervisors in stressing particular organizational values and workers' sensitivity to particular values as a means to understand how intended value promotion may differently be perceived by different workers.

Conclusions

Earlier writings portray (perceived) employability as beneficial to both workers and their organizations (Forrier and Sels 2003). However, recent findings indicated that particularly internal PE relates to favorable outcomes, particularly for employers (De Cuyper and De Witte 2011). The general conclusion from this study is that organizations can foster or forestall workers PE via the values they find important and promote, for example in their HR practices. Moreover, the current results indicate that organizations may foster particularly intrinsic values (e.g. self-development and affiliation) and refrain from stimulating extrinsic values (e.g. financial success, power) to enhance perceptions of internal PE. As such, the current study contributes to the PE literature and SDT alike in highlighting the importance of contextual variables, and in particular the organizations' promotion of intrinsic and extrinsic values, for the different types of employability.

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