The impact of perceived employability on the relationship between temporary employment and work related well-being.

Master’s Thesis


Student: Xanou Joosten – 257 175

Supervisor: dr. I. Arends

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Abstract

Temporary employment; a striking topic in today’s changing environments since the numbers of employees with a temporary contract are growing. This type of employment creates the need for a better understanding of the consequences a temporary contract may have. This research intended to explore how perceived employability influences the relationship between temporary employment and work-related well-being (respectively, job satisfaction, job strain, and relationship with colleagues and supervisor). Therefore, the direct effect of type of employment on perceived employability and the effect of perceived employability on work-related well-being were first examined. Second, the moderating effect of perceived employability on the relationship between temporary employment and work-related well-being was studied. Data were gathered from an online survey in a sample of 217 respondents. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted and indicated that type of employment was negatively related to perceived employability, which indicated that workers with a permanent contract had higher levels of perceived employability. Moreover, perceived employability showed a significant effect on job strain and relationship with supervisor. The moderating effect of perceived employability on the relationship between temporary employment and work-related well-being showed only a marginal effect on the dimension of job strain.

Keywords: temporary employment, perceived employability, work-related well-being, job satisfaction, job strain, relationship with colleagues, relationship with supervisor
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1. Introduction

Expanding globalization, accelerated technological changes, and increased competition in the labour market have made it necessary for organizations to adapt to the changing environment (Kauhanen & Nätti, 2015). Flexible forms of employment, for example temporary contracts, have become more common since these make it easier for firms to adjust to changing demands and economic fluctuation (Kauhanen & Nätti, 2015). Temporary contracts are described as contracts with a known expiration (Mooi-Reci & Dekker, 2015). Young workers are especially affected by the increase of forms of nonstandard employment, in general, and in particular by temporary employment (Nunez & Livanos, 2015). In 2013, 42% of the young workers in Europe were employed on temporary rather than permanent contracts, while this was merely 10% for workers aged 25 to 64 years (EMCC, 2014).

Compared to a permanent contract, temporary employment has been perceived less desirable from the perspective of the employees (Nunez & Livanos, 2015). This can be explained by a number of reasons. On average, temporary workers experience lower levels of satisfaction (Booth, Francesconi, & Frank, 2002), receive less training and lower wages (Guadalupe, 2003; Nollen, 1996), and suffer from more work-related health problems (Virtanen et al., 2005). Nonetheless, a number of studies have shown an alternative, more positive, view towards temporary employment. For instance, de Cuyper, de Witte, & van Emmerik (2011a) found that there is an equal number of studies finding a significant relationship between temporary employment and poor well-being at work as of studies that did not find any or even positive relationships.

The finding that some studies show negative relationships between temporary employment and work related well-being while others found positive relationships, prompts the question which factors might influence the relationship between temporary employment and work-related well-being. Employees’ work-related well-being is regarded as important by many organizations (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007). Managers believe that making employees happier and healthier will increase their effort and productivity (Fisher, 2003). Therefore, managers devote extensive organizational resources to increase employee well-being in various ways (Grant et al., 2007). Considerable evidence indicates that employee well-being has a significant impact on turnover, absenteeism, and on the performance and survival of organizations by affecting the costs related to illness and health care (Danna & Griffin, 1999).

One factor that positively relates to a worker’s well-being and can be especially relevant for temporary workers is perceived employability (de Cuyper et al., 2011a). It can be described as a worker’s perception of available job opportunities (de Cuyper & de Witte, 2010). Through being employable, employees can develop satisfaction and achieve optimal functioning (Forrier & Sels, 2003). Specifically, temporary employment might be less problematic in case of a higher perceived employability (Forrier & Sels, 2003). Perceived employability is seen as an upcoming critical resource for employees in times of high job insecurity (Silla, de Cuyper, Gracia, Peiró, & de Witte, 2009). It is
assumed that perceived employability offers workers a sense of career self-management (Fugate, Kinicki, & Ashforth, 2004), which is an essential competency for the development of a successful career (van der Heijde & van der Heijden, 2006). Consequently, perceived employability is of particular importance for temporary workers (Forrier & Sels, 2003). In spite of all the interest, perceived employability remains a relatively under-researched concept, and the role of perceived employability in the context of temporary employment has thus received only minor empirical research attention (Kinnunen, Mäkikangas, Mauno, Siponen, & Nätti, 2011).

The aim of this study was to shed light on the relationship between temporary employment and work-related well-being in young workers as they are more often employed on a temporary basis compared to older workers. In this paper, young workers between the age of 18 and 30 were taken into account since the level of temporary contracts in this category is relatively higher than of workers above 30 years (EMCC, 2014). Since perceived employability has been proposed as an important factor that can influence the work-related well-being of temporary workers, the research question of this study was: To what extent does perceived employability influence the relationship between type of employment and work related well-being?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Temporary employment
Temporary employment is defined as employment of limited duration (OECD, 2002), which is the case for fixed-term contract work or temporary agency work (de Cuyper & de Witte, 2008). The Netherlands can be differentiated from other European countries since the number of temporary contracts has grown significantly over time (EMCC, 2014). Unlike most other European countries where the use of temporary contracts has reached a stable level or has decreased (the European average was 42.1 percent in 2012), the use of temporary contracts for young people in the Netherlands grew progressively from 37.9 percent in 2004 to 51.4 percent in 2012 (EMCC, 2014). The reason for this extensive growth in the Netherlands may relate to the history of collective agreements, strong labour unions, and a generous welfare state that protects and compensates workers utilizing this type of employment (Mooi-Reci, 2012).

2.2 Perceived employability
Employability is concerned with an employee’s change of finding alternative employment, either on the internal (i.e. with the current employer) or external (i.e. with another employer) labour market (Forrier & Sels, 2003). The concept of employability has been measured using either objective or subjective indicators (Silla et al., 2009). When looking at the objective indicators of employability, authors have related the concept to human capital or career indicators, such as education, training, or the number of job changes (Elman & Angela, 2002; Forrier & Sels, 2003, van Dam, 2004). Others
define employability according to subjective indicators, such as the perception of available alternatives in the internal or external labour market (Bernston & Marklund, 2006; de Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, de Witte, & Alarco, 2008). In this paper, the subjective approach was followed for two reasons. First, the feelings and behaviors of individuals are determined by the way these individuals interpret reality (Silla et al., 2009). Even if an individual could easily find alternative employment when looking at objective indicators, the way they perceive themselves is still decisive in seeing themselves as employable. Second, employability is generally seen as dynamic, for example conditional upon time, individual circumstances, and context (de Cuyper, van der Heijden, & de Witte, 2011c). With subjective measurement, the interplay between contextual and individual factors is captured, which underlie all employability definitions (Trevor, 2001).

2.3 Temporary employment and perceived employability

It has been argued that perceived employability is more important for workers with temporary than permanent contracts (Kinnunen et al., 2011). Specifically, it has been suggested that temporary workers engage in attempts to increase their employability in order to compensate for job insecurity (Forrier & Sels, 2003). Furthermore, temporary employment presents a typical case of career entrepreneurship since temporary workers are the managers of their own career (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2010). However, the relationship between temporary employment and perceived employability has not been intensively studied, and the few existing findings are contradictory (Kinnunen et al, 2011). Following the view that perceived employability is generally important to temporary workers, it was expected that temporary workers invest considerably more in becoming employable than permanent workers (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2010).

\[ H1: \text{Temporary workers experience higher degrees of perceived employability compared to permanent workers.} \]

2.4 Work related well-being

Work-related well-being is defined as ‘the overall quality of an employee’s experience and functioning at work’ (Warr, 1987, in Grant et al., p.52, 2007). In Human Resource Management literature, three core dimensions of work related well-being are described: psychological (happiness), physical (health), and social (relationships) well-being (Grant et al., 2007).

\textbf{Happiness: Psychological well-being.} Psychological well-being can be described as the subjective experiences of individuals (Grant et al., 2007), and can be divided into two components: hedonic and eudaimonic (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonic component of psychological well-being can be defined as ‘subjective experiences of pleasure, or the balance of positive and negative thoughts and feelings in individuals’ judgments’ (Grant et al., p.53, 2007). The eudaimonic component is concerned with the fulfillment and realization of human potential (Grant et al., 2007). The focus of this paper will be on the hedonic component of psychological well-being. Specifically, the concept of
job satisfaction will be used.

Health: Physical well-being. In the social and natural science, physical well-being has been extensively studied in terms of both objective physiological and subjective experiences of bodily health (Testa & Simonson, 1996). The link between work and physical health is studied by organizational researchers in at least three ways (Grant et al., 2007). First, work is studied as a potential source of injury or disease (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Second, work can be a cause of stress (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Third, work can be a source of benefits that allow the purchase of healthcare services (Adler, Boyce, Chesney, Folkman, & Syme, 1993). In this paper, the focus will be on the stress dimension of physical well-being. Specifically, the concept of job strain will be used.

Relationships: Social well-being. The concept of social well-being is described as the quality of one’s relationships with others (Keyes, 1998). In contrary with the other components of well-being, social well-being is concerned with the interactions that occur between employees (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000). In this study, social well-being was explained in terms of the relationships with the supervisor and colleagues.

2.5 Perceived employability and work related well-being

2.5.1 Perceived employability and happiness

Workers who are under the impression that they are ‘locked up’ in jobs they do not prefer, and who find it difficult to gain new employment, reported lower job satisfaction (Aronsson & Göransson, 1999). This can be expected among less employable workers since these workers may experience difficulties in finding new employment and thus stay in jobs they do not prefer (Aronsson & Göransson, 1999). On the contrary, highly employable workers may experience higher job satisfaction since it is easier for these workers to find new employment which reduces the need to stay in a job they do not prefer (Bernhard-Oettel, de Cuyper, Berntson, & Isaksson, 2008).

H2a: Higher degrees of perceived employability are positively related to higher degrees of job satisfaction.

2.5.2 Perceived employability and health

Following several findings in the scientific literature, it can be expected that perceived employability will reduce job strain. First, Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) theory of stress provides an explanation for the association between employability and strain at work. According to this theory, when an organizational event occurs, individuals first appraise whether or not the event is irrelevant, positive, or stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). If the event is perceived as stressful, either as a threat or a challenge, a second judgment is made about the available options in handling the event. Furthermore, the individual assesses whether the coping resources are available that are needed to handle the event. When an event is determined as threatening, and coping resources are missing, this may have impairing effects on the individual’s well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Perceived employability can influence an individual’s appraisal of an event (Berntson, 2008). If individuals perceive
themselves as employable, they may consider a situation as less threatening compared to individuals who perceive their employability as low. Consequently, high perceived employability may prevent that various organizational events are being appraised as threatening and therefore may reduce strain (Berntson, 2008).

Second, research by Marler, Woodard-Barringer, and Milkovich (2002) provides support for the expected relationship between perceived employability and job strain. They suggest that perceived employability is a personal resource, since it generates control over one’s work life and over one’s career. Control in this interpretation can be seen as similar to the concept of resources as presented in influential theories in the realm of work and organizational psychology, for example the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R Model; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). This model assumes that high control may reduce job strain (Demerouti et al., 2001). Under the assumption that perceived employability is an individual resource, it can be expected that perceived employability reduces job strain.

\[H2b: \text{Individuals with higher degrees of perceived employability will experience lower degrees of job strain compared to individuals with lower degrees of perceived employability.}\]

2.5.3 Perceived employability and relationships

Individuals generally expect a good match between the resources offered by the organization and their personal resources (de Cuyper, Mauno, Kinnunen, & Mäkikangas, 2011b). This is a key assumption in general theories on social exchange, such as in psychological contract research (Rousseau, 1995) and research in person-organization fit (e.g. Kristof, 1996). It is therefore expected that highly employable workers who bring their set of skills and competence to the job (personal resources) are expected to be rewarded in terms of job resources (de Cuyper et al., 2011b). One aspect of job resources is the relationship with supervisors and colleagues. Following this, the following hypothesis was formulated:

\[H2c: \text{Higher degrees of perceived employability are related to higher degrees of supervisor and colleague social support.}\]

2.6 Temporary employment, perceived employability and work related well-being

Much research has been done concerning the relationship between temporary employment and job satisfaction (de Cuyper et al., 2008). Nonetheless, until now the results have been inconclusive. Some studies find lower job satisfaction among temporary workers than among permanent workers (e.g. Forde & Slater, 2006) while others find opposite results (e.g. de Cuyper & de Witte, 2005). Still other studies do not find significant differences (e.g. Claes et al., 2002). Perceived employability may be an important factor to comprehend the relationship between temporary employment and job satisfaction (Berntson & Marklund, 2007). Temporary workers who perceive themselves as employable are less likely to stay in a job they do not prefer (Aronsson & Göransson, 1999) and may be able to move
between jobs to attain job satisfaction (Berntson & Marklund, 2007). Conversely, non-employable individuals or those with low employability may not experience the option to change jobs.

_H3a:_ The negative relationship between temporary employment and job satisfaction is less strong for workers with a higher degree of perceived employability than for workers with a lower degree of perceived employability.

Temporary employment is often associated with strain, in the form of poor well-being at work (de Cuyper et al., 2008b). One core argument behind this assumption is that temporary workers experience feelings of job insecurity (de Witte & Näsvall, 2003). However, evidence of the relationship between temporary employment and job strain is still inconclusive (de Cuyper et al., 2008b).

In this respect, employability may provide a possible explanation for these inconsistent findings. Employability promotes a sense of control, and thus it will reduce job insecurity and work strain for temporary workers (Kinnunen et al., 2011). Unlike permanent workers who seek control from continuous employment in one organization, temporary workers may derive control over their careers across the boundaries of the organization (de Cuyper, de Witte, Kinnunen, & Nätti, 2010). This sense of control is conditional for the employability of temporary workers (de Cuyper et al., 2010). Thus, when temporary workers will experience higher levels of perceived employability, it will reduce their job strain.

_H3b:_ The positive relationship between temporary work and strain at work is less strong for workers with a higher degree of perceived employability than for workers with a lower degree of perceived employability.

The relationship between temporary employment and social support has rarely been studied. As described above, it has been suggested that highly employable employees are expected to be rewarded in terms of social support (de Cuyper et al., 2011b). Consequently, it was expected that temporary workers, who perceive themselves as highly employable, will experience more social support than employees with a lower perceived employability.

_H3c:_ The negative relationship between temporary workers and relationships at work is less strong for workers with a higher degree of perceived employability than for workers with a lower degree of perceived employability.
Conceptual models:

The conceptual models belonging to the proposed hypotheses are presented in figure 1 and figure 2.

**Figure 1:** Effect of perceived employability on temporary employment and the three dimensions of work related well-being.

**Figure 2:** Effect of temporary employment on the three dimension of work related well-being, moderated by perceived employability.
3. Methods

3.1 Study design
In order to study the proposed hypotheses, a quantitative and explanatory research was conducted. The data were collected together with three other master students by use of a questionnaire (See Appendix A) on one moment in time (i.e. a cross-sectional study design).

3.2 Participants
The participants in the present study were Dutch employees in the age of 18 until 30. Only respondents who have work as primary activity were taken into account. The aim was to recruit a sample of 300 respondents, thus 75 respondents for each student.

3.3 Procedures
The data was collected by use of the snowball sampling procedure. This procedure uses a process of chain referral whereby the questionnaires are spread among relatives and friends, which in turn are asked to distribute the questionnaires among other members of the target population (Singleton & Straits, 2005). The questionnaire was conducted online and the anonymity of the participants was guaranteed since respondents did not have to fill in personal data. An additional introduction letter was used to inform the respondents about the length of the questionnaire and the purpose of the study. In order to increase the response rate, a digital reminder was sent one and two weeks after distribution.

3.4 Instruments
Type of employment was measured based on items of the ‘national questionnaire labour conditions’ (Nationale enquete arbeidsomstandigheden; NEA, 2015). Respondents were answering whether they currently have a permanent contract and indicate the duration of their temporary contract.

Perceived employability was measured with eight items of a modified scale from De Cuyper and De Witte (2008) by Akkermans, Brenninkmeijer, Huibers, and Blonk (2013). Items such as ‘I could find another, better job if I wanted to’ were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘do not agree at all’ (1) to ‘agree entirely’ (5). A Cronbach’s alpha of .76 and a Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) value of .70 was found for this scale. PCA showed a two-factor solution for this scale, divided into internal and external perceived employability (see Appendix B, table A1). Since the focus of this study is on the concept of perceived employability as a whole, it is chosen to summarize the scale into one factor.

Work related well-being was measured by the Questionnaire on the Experience and Evaluation of Work (Dutch abbreviation: VBBA). This questionnaire was developed by Van Veldhoven and Meijman (1994), in order to make the questionnaire more practical, the VBBA was shortened in 2002. For this study, three scales of the VBBA 2.0 were used, which are described below.
**Happiness well-being** was measured by the ‘pleasure in work’ scale of VBBA 2.0 (Van Veldhoven et al., 2002) which had a Cronbach’s alpha of .81. Items such as ‘I still find my work stimulating, each and every day’ were measured using a 5-point Likert scale rating from (1) “strongly agree” to (5) “strongly disagree”. The KMO value was .81. A one-factor solution is provided by the analysis with a simple structure (factor loadings ≥ .30) (see Appendix B, table A2).

**Health well-being** was measured by the ‘recovery after work’ scale in VBBA 2.0 (Van Veldhoven et al., 2002). Respondents gave their answer on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from never (1) to always (4). An example question is: ‘By the end of the working day, I feel really worn out’. A Cronbach’s alpha of .81 was found for this scale and a KMO value of .76 was found. The analysis explained a one-factor solution with a simple structure (factor loadings ≥ .30) (See Appendix B, table A3).

**Relationship well-being** was measured by the ‘relationship with colleagues’ and ‘relationship with supervisor’ in VBBA 2.0. Items such as ‘If necessary, can you ask your colleagues for help?’ and ‘Can you count on your superior when you come across difficulties in your work?’ were measured using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘never’, ‘sometimes’, ‘often’, to ‘always’. A Cronbach’s alpha of .76 (relationship with colleagues) and .83 (relationship with supervisor) were measured for this scale. The KMO values were respectively .70 and .72. The analysis of the scales provided a two-factor solution for both scales (see Appendix B, table A4 and A5).

*The control variables* that were included in this research are: age, (18-30), gender (male/female), educational level (secondary education or below/vocational education/higher education), and number of working hours (35-40 hours representing full-time work and ≤34 hours representing part-time work following the definition of Statistics Netherlands (2016)). These variables were included since past research has shown that these variables significantly influence the relationship between temporary employment and work related well-being (e.g. de Cuyper & de Witte, 2008; Kinnunen et al., 2011).

### 3.5 Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of the study population. In addition, the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables were calculated. In order to test hypothesis 1 and 2 (figure 1), the relationship between perceived employability and temporary employment and between perceived employability and each of the three dimensions of work related well-being, hierarchical multiple regression analyses were used. For each analysis, the crude relationship between the independent and dependent variable was first analysed, followed by an analysis adjusted for the control variables. Significance of relationships was set at p<.05.

To analyze the moderation model (figure 2) a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted for each outcome measure. An interaction term was created for type of employment and perceived employability. In the first step of the regression, the control variables were entered. In the second step,
temporary employment and perceived employability were added. In the third step, the interaction of type of employment and perceived employability was added. When a direct effect of P<.10 was found between type of employment and the respective outcome variable and a moderation effect of P<.20, a scatterplot was created to clarify the relationships.

4. Results

In total, 298 respondents filled in the online survey. There were 217 (66.2%) cases that filled in the questionnaire completely; cases were deleted when respondents did not meet the criteria (work as a primary activity and age between 18-30 years) or when more than one item of a scale was missing. Of all the respondents, 88 were males (40.6%) and 129 were females (59.4%). The average age of the sample was 25.25 years old (SD = 2.78). In this study, 148 (68.2%) of the respondents worked more than 35 hours a week (full-time) while 69 (31.8%) worked part-time. In addition, 121 (55.8%) of them had a permanent contract and 96 (44.2%) of the respondents had a temporary contract. The education level of the respondents was relatively high, 141 of the respondents (65%) graduated from higher education or university.

In Table 1, the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables that are central in this research are presented. The table shows that type of employment is significantly correlated to perceived employability with temporary contract correlating with a lower perceived employability compared to a permanent contract (p = .003). However, type of employment did not significantly correlate with job satisfaction (p = .767), job strain (p = .093), relationships with colleagues (p = .880), and relationships with supervisor (p = .364). In addition, perceived employability was not significantly correlated with job satisfaction, job strain, and relationships with colleagues and supervisor (respectively p = .317, p = .141, p = .806, p = .166).
Table 1. Correlation Matrix including Mean and Standard Deviation of the main variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Type of employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Perceived employability</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>-.23**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Job satisfaction</td>
<td>26.56</td>
<td>15.63</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Job strain</td>
<td>28.83</td>
<td>18.01</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>.192**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Relationship with colleagues</td>
<td>19.29</td>
<td>14.93</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>.235**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Relationship with supervisor</td>
<td>19.74</td>
<td>17.72</td>
<td>-.069</td>
<td>-.105</td>
<td>.353**</td>
<td>.226**</td>
<td>.626**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * = p < .05 (2-tailed) ** = p < .01 (2-tailed)

Before performing the hierarchical multiple linear regression analyses, the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were tested and showed not to be violated. The results of the multiple linear regression analyses are presented in Table 2 and Table 3. The findings indicated that type of employment was significantly related to perceived employability (B = -.282, p = .009): participants with a temporary contract reported a lower perceived employability compared to participants with a permanent contract. As such, the relationship hypothesized in H1 was not confirmed, but the opposite was found: young workers with permanent contracts report a higher perceived employability compared to young workers with temporary contracts. Additionally, perceived employability was significantly related to job strain (B = -4.63, p = .025) and relationship with supervisor (B = -4.099, p = .046). However, perceived employability did not relate to job satisfaction (B = -2.789, p = .111) nor relationship with colleagues (B = -2.797, p = .657). Thus, hypothesis H2a was confirmed, hypothesis H2b was rejected, and H2c was partly confirmed through the relationship with supervisor.

Table 2. Model coefficients for the effect of type of employment (ToE) on perceived employability, controlled for age, gender, education level, and working hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perceived employability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>4.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToE (H1)</td>
<td>-.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F (7, 170)</td>
<td>6.972</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The outcomes of the moderation analyses are shown in tables 4.1 to 4.4 (only the final models including all variables are presented). The results indicated that type of employment was not significantly related to job satisfaction \((B= 1.615, p=.518)\), job strain \((B= 5.361, p= .066)\), relationships with colleagues \((B= .997, p= .697)\) and relationships with supervisor \((B= -2.578, p= .384)\). Furthermore, there was no significant moderation by perceived employability on the relationship between type of employment and job satisfaction \((B= -2.277, p=.500)\), job strain \((B= -5.730, p=.144)\), relationship with colleagues \((B= 1.916, p=.582)\), and relationship with supervisor \((B= 3.846, p=.336)\). Consequently, hypothesis 3a-c were rejected.
However, as there was a marginal significant effect between type of employment and job strain and a marginal significant moderating effect of perceived employability on this relationship, a scatterplot was created to clarify the relationship between these variables (Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Scatterplot of job strain, perceived employability, and type of employment.](image)

The scatterplot shows a stronger relationship between perceived employability and job strain for workers with a temporary contract compared to workers with a permanent contract. The level of job strain for temporary workers decreased more when higher levels of perceived employability were reported compared to permanent workers.
5. Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to provide insight in the relationship between type of employment and work-related well-being among young workers and whether this relationship was moderated by perceived employability. It was hypothesized that (a) temporary employment was positively related to perceived employability, (b) perceived employability was positively related to the three dimensions of work-related well-being (i.e. job satisfaction, low strain and relationships with colleagues and supervisor) and (c) that temporary employment was negatively related to the three dimensions of work-related well-being and that perceived employability moderated the relationship between temporary employment and work-related well-being.

In line with H1, a significant relation between type of employment and perceived employability was found. However, contrary to H1, perceived employability was higher for workers with a permanent contract than for workers with a temporary contract. These findings could be deemed as surprising given that Forrier and Sels (2003) found that perceived employability is more important for temporary workers compared to permanent workers in order to compensate for their job insecurity. An explanation may be that permanent workers more frequently receive training that is financed by employers than temporary workers (Forrier & Sels, 2003). Consequently, receiving less training may result in lower perceived employability for temporary workers.

The results confirmed the hypothesis that workers who perceive themselves as employable experience lower degrees of job strain. Additionally, higher degrees of perceived employability were related to higher degrees of social support from workers’ supervisor. These findings support proposed theories on the positive impact of perceived employability (e.g. Kinnunen et al., 2011; de Cuypers et al., 2008a). However, no significant effect was found between perceived employability and social support from colleagues and job satisfaction.

Contrary to the expectations, there was no statistically significant relationship between type of employment and work-related well-being. This may be due to the fact that the group of workers with a temporary contract in this study were a heterogeneous group, which may mask differences between different temporary employment contract forms. It may be that only certain types of temporary contracts are impacting work-related well-being compared to permanent contracts. Previous studies (e.g. Silla, Gracia, & Peiró, 2005) support the need for more consideration of the heterogeneous character of temporary workers when studying well-being. It could also be that especially in the group of young workers a temporary contract is not experienced as less desirable, as this group might already expect to start on a temporary contract. The numbers of young workers on a temporary contract are high compared to older workers, and it has become more standard in the current economic climate to this group of workers. This could influence their perception on temporary employment.
Furthermore, perceived employability did not significantly moderate the relationship between type of employment and work-related well-being. An explanation could relate to the lack of within-participant differences in this study owing to the cross-sectional design. It could be that within-participant compared to between-participant differences are critical in the case of employability. For instance, when temporary workers perceive an increase in their employability an increase in their job satisfaction may occur.

However, the effect of type of employment on job strain and the moderation effect by perceived employability were marginally significant. It was found that temporary workers were more likely to experience higher job strain than workers with a permanent contract. Furthermore, perceived employability buffered this effect as temporary workers with a high perceived employability experienced lower levels of job strain compared to temporary workers reporting lower perceived employability. As mentioned, these effects were only marginally statistically significant, but this may be due to the small sample size.

5.1 Limitations and strengths
This study has some limitations and strengths. A particular strength was the use of a sample of young workers, while most other studies have used workers of all ages. A first limitation of this research is its cross-sectional design, which makes it impossible to assume causal relationships. For instance, this study did not make it clear whether perceived employability caused a reduction of job strain or whether low job strain increased a workers’ perceived employability.

Second, heterogeneity of temporary workers was not taken into account. There are many types of temporary workers who will differ with respect to contract duration, employment prospects and contract preferences (de Cuyper et al, 2008b). For instance, different studies showed that only respondents who were involuntarily temporary workers experienced negative outcomes, such as psychological distress (e.g. Aronsson & Göransson, 1999; Isaksson & Bellagh, 2002).

Thirdly, there are some limitations associated with the size and composition of the sample. The questionnaires got distributed by means of convenience sampling among family members, friends, or acquaintances of the researchers. Furthermore, the total sample size, consisting of 217 respondents, can be considered relatively small. Consequently, the external validity of the sample suffered, which entails that the data cannot be generalized to the whole population of young workers.

5.2 Implications for practice and future research
This research has a number of implications. First, this study showed that individuals with higher perceived employability reported lower job strain and better relationships with their supervisor. It could be worthwhile for organizations to improve their workers’ employability as it may contribute to
better work-related well-being. Organizations recognize the importance of increasing workers’ work-related well-being (Grant et al., 2007) since the positive outcomes it could have, such as a decrease in turnover and absenteeism (Danna & Griffin, 1999). In this regard, organizations may need to pay more attention to the employability of specifically their temporary workers as this group was found to have a significantly lower perceived employability. Furthermore, it seemed that especially for temporary workers an improvement in perceived employability could contribute to reduced job strain.

Furthermore, it may be premature to reject the proposition of a relationship between temporary employment, perceived employability, and work-related well-being based on this study, given that more research is needed to clarify these relationships. Instead, future research should investigate these topics with a within-participant design (i.e. a longitudinal study) to get a better understanding of these topics. Based on this study’s results, it would be especially relevant to look into the relationship between temporary employment, perceived employability, and job strain since only this relationship showed a marginal significant effect. Additionally, the heterogeneity of temporary workers may be an interesting research domain in the realm of temporary employment studies. Effort should be invested in developing more consistent definitions of different types of temporary employment and to sample workers systematically according to this definition.

Another concept that could contribute in explaining the relationship between temporary employment and work-related well-being is person-environment (P-E) fit. P-E fit is a congruence, similarity, or match between a person and its environment (Edwards, Caplan, & van Harrison, 1998). Individuals seek out employment based on a career environment that matches their own interests (Sekiguchi, 2004). High levels of P-E fit result in several positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction (Sekiguchi, 2004). Therefore, P-E fit could contribute as an explaining factor in temporary employment and work-related well-being and should be seen as an interesting concept for future research.

Additionally, the design of future research could be more explorative to get an indication of factors that influence the work-related well-being of young workers. As said, the view of young temporary workers towards temporary employment could be more positive compared to older workers since it is more common for young workers to have a temporary contract. Therefore, factors that relate to their work-related well-being could be different than those of older workers. Since little empirical research is done on the topic of work-related well-being of young workers, interviews can be helpful in exploring factors that are of importance to young workers and their work-related well-being. Topics that then come forward, could serve as a starting point for future research.

Moreover, the line of thought of H1 suggested that perceived employability is more important for temporary workers. It was expected that temporary workers would invest more in their perceived employability and therefore had higher levels of perceived employability. Contradictory to what was
expected, the results showed that permanent workers experienced higher levels of perceived employability. It would be interesting for future studies to research if temporary workers experience obstacles in expanding their perceived employability which could explain why temporary workers do not invest more in their perceived employability.

6. References


De Cuyper, N., Van der Heijden, B. I., & De Witte, H. (2011c). Associations between perceived employability, employee well-being, and its contribution to organizational success: a matter of


being: Moderation by employability. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 10(6), 739-751.


Appendix A – Study questionnaire

Temporary Employment
Do you currently have a temporary or permanent contract?
   1. Temporary contract
   2. Permanent contract

Perceived Employability
Answer categories: Strongly agree – agree – neutral – disagree – strongly disagree
   1. I could easily find another job if I lose my current job.
   2. I could easily find another job if I would search one.
   3. I could easily find another, better job at a different company.
   4. I could easily find a better job if I wanted to.
   5. In my current job, I am capable of doing multiple tasks.
   6. In my current job, I am capable of pursuing a different function.
   7. In my current job, I am capable of doing a better function.
   8. I have career opportunities within the current organization.

Work-related well-being

Pleasure in your work (job satisfaction)
Answer categories: Strongly agree – agree – neutral – disagree – strongly disagree
   1. I still find my work stimulating, each and every day.
   2. I do my work because I have to, and that says it all.
   3. After five years, I’ve seen it all as far as this job is concerned.
   4. I enjoy my work.
   5. I have to continually overcome my resistance in order to do my work.

Recovery after work (job strain)
Answer categories: Always – often – sometimes – never
   1. I find it difficult to relax at the end of a working day.
   2. By the end of the working day, I feel really worn out.
   3. Because of my job, at the end of the working day I feel rather exhausted.
   4. I find it difficult to concentrate in my free time after work.
   5. I cannot really show much interest in other people when I have just come home myself.
   6. When I get home from work, I need to be left in peace for a while.

Relationships with colleagues (social support)
Answer categories: Always – often – sometimes – never
1. Can you count on your colleagues when you encounter difficulties in your work?
2. If necessary, can you ask your colleagues for help?
3. Do you get on well with your colleagues?
4. Do you have conflicts with your colleagues?
5. Is there a good atmosphere between you and your colleagues?
6. Have there been any unpleasant occurrences between you and your colleagues?

Relationship with your superior (social support)

Answer categories: Always – often – sometimes – never

1. Can you count on your superior when you come across difficulties in your work?
2. If necessary, can you ask your superior for help?
3. Do you get on well with your superior?
4. Do you have conflicts with your superior?
5. Is there a good atmosphere between you and your superior?
6. Have there been any unpleasant occurrences between you and your superior?
## Appendix B – Results of the factor analysis

### Table A1

*Factor analysis and reliability perceived employability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived employability</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I could easily find another job if I lose my current job.</td>
<td>.816</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could easily find another job if I would search one.</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td>-.311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could easily find another, better job at a different company.</td>
<td>.666</td>
<td>-.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could easily find a better job if I wanted to.</td>
<td>.711</td>
<td>-.476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my current job, I am capable of doing multiple tasks.</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my current job, I am capable of pursuing a different function.</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>.662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my current job, I am capable of doing a better function.</td>
<td>.403</td>
<td>.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have career opportunities within the current organization.</td>
<td>.463</td>
<td>.794</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Eigenvalue*  
2.996  
2.383

*Cronbach’s alpha*  
.755

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

### Table A2

*Factor analysis and reliability job satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job satisfaction</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I still find my work stimulating, each and every day.</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I do my work because I have to, and that says it all. .814
After five years, I’ve seen it all as far as this job is concerned. .714
I enjoy my work. .788
I have to continually overcome my resistance in order to do my work. .693

Eigenvalue 2.888
Cronbach’s alpha .805

Table A3

Factor analysis and reliability job strain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job strain</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I find it difficult to relax at the end of a working day.</td>
<td>.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the working day, I feel really worn out.</td>
<td>.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of my job, at the end of the working day I feel rather exhausted.</td>
<td>.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find it difficult to concentrate in my free time after work.</td>
<td>.661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot really show much interest in other people when I have just come home myself.</td>
<td>.741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I get home from work, I need to be left in peace for a while.</td>
<td>.711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalue 3.190
Cronbach’s alpha .818

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
### Table A4

**Factor analysis and reliability relationships with colleagues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you count on your colleagues when you encounter difficulties in your work?</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td>-.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If necessary, can you ask your colleagues for help?</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you get on well with your colleagues?</td>
<td>.793</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have conflicts with your colleagues?</td>
<td>.329</td>
<td>.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a good atmosphere between you and your colleagues?</td>
<td>.793</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have there been any unpleasant occurrences between you and your colleagues?</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.706</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Eigenvalue*

- Component 1: 2.823
- Component 2: 1.295

*Cronbach’s alpha*

- .757

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

### Table A5

**Factor analysis and reliability relationship with superior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Component 1</th>
<th>Component 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can you count on your superior when you come across difficulties in your work?</td>
<td>.827</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If necessary, can you ask your superior for help?</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you get on well with your superior?</td>
<td>.869</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have conflicts with your superior?</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a good atmosphere between you and your superior?</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have there been any unpleasant occurrences between you and your superior?</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.637</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Eigenvalue*

- Component 1: 3.285
- Component 2: 1.181

*Cronbach’s alpha*

- .833

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.