



Work does not speak for itself: examining the incremental validity of personal branding in predicting knowledge workers' employability

Sergey Gorbatov, Janneke K. Oostrom & Svetlana N. Khapova

To cite this article: Sergey Gorbatov, Janneke K. Oostrom & Svetlana N. Khapova (2024) Work does not speak for itself: examining the incremental validity of personal branding in predicting knowledge workers' employability, European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 33:1, 40-53, DOI: [10.1080/1359432X.2023.2276533](https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2023.2276533)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2023.2276533>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 05 Nov 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 3371



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 8 View citing articles [↗](#)

Work does not speak for itself: examining the incremental validity of personal branding in predicting knowledge workers' employability

Sergey Gorbatov ^a, Janneke K. Oostrom ^b and Svetlana N. Khapova ^a

^aSchool of Business and Economics, Management & Organization department, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; ^bTilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Social Psychology Department, Tilburg University

ABSTRACT

The changing context of contemporary knowledge work, including the massive adoption of home office work arrangements and a great resignation, calls for new research on the employability of knowledge workers. In this paper, we suggest that knowledge workers can no longer rely on developing their human capital and being intrapreneurial at work to secure their employability. With the aim to offer a new perspective, we test the incremental validity of *personal branding* in predicting employability over and above established predictors (i.e., human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours) and test the relationships in three studies (total $N = 883$), consisting of a supervisor sample (Study 1), a student sample (Study 2), and a time-lagged employee sample (Study 3). Results show that personal branding explains variance in employability over and above human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours. The results also show that the relationship between personal branding and employability is fully mediated by personal brand equity. The paper concludes with a discussion of the opportunities the concept of personal branding offers for employability research in the context of the contemporary world of work.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 26 December 2021
Accepted 22 October 2023

KEYWORDS

Employability; personal branding; personal brand equity; career; knowledge work

There has been a proliferation of research on employability in the past two decades (Fugate et al., 2021). Employability, defined as the ability to realize job opportunities within and between employers over time (Forrier et al., 2009), is currently considered one of the main topics in the careers literature (Akkermans & Kubasch, 2017). This is because social developments and economic changes have redefined traditional career paths of workers characterized by life-long employment, security, and predictability. Instead, contemporary career paths are characterized by flexibility, adaptability, and self-management (Hirschi & Koen, 2021). Consequently, employability demands have put a strain on less privileged groups of workers. As a result, employability researchers have been focusing on studying the employability of vulnerable groups (Croucher et al., 2018), such as ethnic minorities (Aeberhardt et al., 2017; Goldman et al., 2019), older workers (Guilbert et al., 2018), or dismissed workers (Bailey et al., 2012).

However, in this paper, we appeal for a shift of attention. We call for more research on the employability of knowledge workers (Coetzee & Engelbrecht, 2020). The Knowledge Work Demand Index¹ suggests there are over 100 million knowledge workers in the U.S. and over one billion globally. The term “knowledge work” was first introduced by Peter Drucker in the 1960s, who argued that knowledge work was becoming increasingly important in the modern economy (Regan, 2021). Knowledge workers are professionals who use their cognitive and creative abilities to solve complex problems and make strategic decisions. Knowledge work often contrasts with manual or routine work, which involves following predefined procedures or completing tasks that do not require significant

cognitive effort. The characteristics of knowledge work include autonomy, problem-solving, and creativity, associated with high levels of responsibility and decision-making. Examples of knowledge work include professionals such as doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, teachers, and architects, among others. However, knowledge work is not limited to these fields, and the term can be applied more broadly to any work that involves knowledge-intensive tasks, regardless of the industry or sector.

Thus far, research on the careers of knowledge workers has addressed this group as privileged with easy access to new job opportunities (Järleström et al., 2020). However, many social and economic changes have taken place in the past years that require a major shift in how researchers view and study the careers of knowledge workers. Specifically, two work-related developments require serious attention in employability research: a) the massive organizational adoption of home office work arrangements (Franken et al., 2021) and b) knowledge workers' voluntary turnover, often referred to as the “great resignation” (Ng & Stanton, 2023).

First, with the arrival of the global COVID-19 pandemic, much knowledge work has been transferred to home offices (Ameri & Kurtzberg, 2022). Many businesses gave up their office buildings to save corporate costs and to become more sustainable (Cappelli, 2021). Gartner, a technology research agency, suggests that more than 50% of all knowledge workers worldwide already work remotely.² Thus, instead of the traditional office space, which provided opportunities for knowledge workers' recognition through impression management (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2010) and networking (Jacobs et al., 2019), important predictors of employability, contemporary

knowledge work is increasingly at risk of invisibility (Leonardi & Treem, 2020) and alienation (Doberstein & Charbonneau, 2022).

Next, a recent burst of resignations or strong intentions to do so that became known as the “great resignation” (Liu-Lastres et al., 2022) has brought about much turbulence in the world of employment. No longer wanting to stay in miserable jobs (Srisuphaolarn, 2008), knowledge workers leave their corporate positions to pursue meaningful work for themselves and others (Lysova et al., 2019). The World Economic Forum notes that the Great Resignation is not over and that one in five workers quit their jobs in 2022.³ Consequently, today, employability is not only about being adaptable to the changing employment environment. It is also about being able to find better-fitting employment opportunities to pursue work with meaning and balance for oneself and others (Bailey et al., 2019).

The question is, what can knowledge workers do to build their employability in such employment contexts? Thus far, research on the predictors of employability has emphasized the roles of demographic characteristics, human capital, and social capital in predicting employability (Fugate et al., 2021). However, recent reviews noted that little knowledge is accumulated about individual workers’ initiatives and practices towards building their own employability (van Harten et al., 2022). Among plausible exceptions are studies concerned with cultivating proactive actions to steer one’s career trajectories (Peng et al., 2021), engaging with cognitive future-oriented activities to reduce cognitive job insecurity (Koen & van Bezouw, 2021), investing in the development of career competencies (Akkermans et al., 2015), and becoming more aware of personal career orientation (Cortellazzo et al., 2020). While these studies provide general guidance for all employees, a more advanced perspective on predictors of employability of knowledge workers is required that would consider the availability of career capital of knowledge workers (Brown et al., 2020) and would help to turn this capital into a practice.

To offer an original contribution, in this paper, we introduce the recently developed phenomenon of *personal branding* (Gorbatov et al., 2018) and propose that personal branding can be an important predictor of employability in the knowledge work context. We define personal branding as the process of “creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself [. . . to] signal a certain promise to the target audience” (Gorbatov et al., 2018, p. 6). We also introduce the concept of personal brand equity (PBE), defined as the perceived value of one’s personal brand (Gorbatov et al., 2021) and suggest that PBE mediates the relationship between personal branding and employability. We compare personal branding with human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours, showing that personal branding explains variance in employability over and above these traditional employability predictors.

With this paper, we make several important contributions to the employability literature. First, we contribute to the literature on specific groups of workers, specifically to research on white-collar or knowledge work (Le Blanc et al., 2020). We argue that in the context of contemporary work – characterized by remote work and trends like the “great resignation” – more research on the employability of knowledge workers is needed. We contribute to filling this gap by focusing on the effects of knowledge workers’ personal branding on employability. Next, this study is among the

first to connect personal branding and PBE in predicting employability. We show that PBE fully mediates the relationship, which means that signalling professional value is only effective when it becomes visible and creates the desired image in the minds of the target audience. Finally, this paper is the first to offer evidence of incremental validity of personal branding in relation to employability over and above established predictors (i.e., human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours). This finding is important in light of knowledge workers’ increasingly remote work, where extra efforts are needed to make one’s work visible.

Theoretical background

Employability

In the context of boundaryless careers (Arthur et al., 2005), employability is seen by researchers as an alternative to job security (Bernstrøm et al., 2018). Indeed, if frequent change in jobs and employers is the reality of modern work arrangements, then assurance in one’s ability to sustain the envisioned career trajectory is likely to stem from employability. Because changes may happen both within and outside the current organization, the literature distinguishes between internal and external employability (Forrier & Sels, 2003). In the present study, we focus on both types of employability: the internal employability of current employees and the external employability of job candidates and students entering the labour market within the next couple of years.

Employability can be further classified into objective and perceived employability (van Emmerik et al., 2012). Perceived employability refers to the employee’s own or others’ appraisal of their possibilities of obtaining and maintaining a job (Hazer & Jacobson, 2003; Vanhercke et al., 2014). Objective employability encompasses objective career assets relevant to obtaining or maintaining a job, such as education or labour market position (van Emmerik et al., 2012). The distinction between perceived and objective employability has significant implications on research as they may relate differently to an individual’s career outcomes. For example, while feeling employable may lead to a greater sense of agency or satisfaction, it does not always translate into actual internal or external job opportunities (Forrier et al., 2018). Thus, it is important to include measures of both perceived and objective employability when examining the effects of personal branding.

Personal branding

In this paper, we argue that with the increasing transfer of knowledge work from offices to employees’ homes, personal visibility or self-presentation is becoming increasingly valuable (Goffman, 1956; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Personal branding, as a more agentic and deliberate form of self-presentation, concerns creating and maintaining a positive perception of the professional self in the minds of others. No longer being a prerogative of celebrities (Johns & English, 2016), CEOs (Bendisch et al., 2013), or the self-employed (Gandini, 2016), personal branding has entered the world of work as a new career behaviour increasingly associated with career success. The agentic nature of personal branding meets the criteria of it being a proactive behaviour of “taking initiative in improving

current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to current circumstances” (Crant, 2000, p. 436).

Two recent literature reviews on personal branding attest to the timeliness and importance of research on this concept (Gorbatov et al., 2018; Scheidt et al., 2020). With the rise of the gig economy and digital freelance work, personal branding is considered a critical career tool to differentiate oneself in the competitive labour market (Gandini, 2016, 2018). Personal branding is increasingly considered a prerequisite for career success even in established professional fields, such as psychology (Cederberg, 2017), engineering (Sheikh & Lim, 2011), or journalism (Molyneux, 2019). The increase of invisible work poses the challenge of behavioural visibility, making personal branding even more important for employees to make themselves visible and appealing to their current employers and future potential employers.

Personal branding and perceived employability

Individuals primarily engage in personal branding to achieve career success by constructing a positive impression of oneself (Scheidt et al., 2020), which involves managing the current personal brand and envisioning its desired future state. Constructing a better version of the self may make individuals believe they are more employable, internally and externally, according to the positive illusion account (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Indeed, García et al. (2009) found that self-enhancement is positively related to perceived job alternatives. Because constructing the desired personal brand involves identity play (Ibarra et al., 2010), it helps individuals identify possible future career options within and outside the organization, regardless of whether this future entails remote work. By exploring these various options, one becomes aware of more suitable job opportunities, which should enhance self-perceived employability. Furthermore, personal branding entails a range of tactics, such as defining one’s personal brand statement or analysing the needs of the target audience within and outside the organization. Employees who engage in personal branding learn and practice these tactics and, thereby, acquire new skills that should result in increased self-perceptions of internal and external employability.

Drawing on signalling theory, we argue that personal branding will also enhance others’ perceptions of internal and external employability. Signalling theory (Spence, 1973) explains how information asymmetry between parties can influence (future) employers’ perceptions of employees’ employability. For many types of work, including knowledge work, the availability and quality of information regarding what employees do every day or what they could potentially contribute to the organization is relatively low. As missing information is often interpreted in a negative light (Jagacinski, 1991), employers might devalue employees’ work (Hatton, 2017) or applicants’ qualifications (Roth et al., 2016). Personal branding might be an effective signalling mechanism that decreases information asymmetry between how employees see themselves and how their (future) employer sees them and is, therefore, an effective way to avoid devaluing their work or qualifications. Furthermore, as a proactive behaviour, personal branding may signal agency and the internal locus of control and

a certain promise to their (future) employer through a differentiated narrative (Gorbatov et al., 2018), which are generally desirable qualities in the workplace. Indeed, proactive constructs positively relate to employee (Grant et al., 2009; Wihler et al., 2017) and applicant ratings (Hernandez Bark et al., 2022). Notably, employees can also use personal branding to send false signals, creating a more positive version of themselves than warranted. Indeed, personal branding closely relates to self-presentation constructs, such as impression management, positioning, and influence, which have been proven to positively influence how employees are perceived by others within the organization (Higgins et al., 2003; King, 2004; Wayne & Liden, 1995) and by hiring managers (Amaral et al., 2019; Bourdage et al., 2018). These arguments lead us to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Personal branding is positively associated with employability.

We further propose that personal branding will have incremental validity over two well-established predictors of employability: human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours. Human capital enables individuals to achieve their employment goals by monitoring and adapting to the job market (Fugate et al., 2004) and signalling to employers that they can do the work (Hogan et al., 2013). Indeed, the meta-analysis of Harari et al. (2021) showed that knowledge, skills, and ability – all components of human capital – are the most important predictors of employability. In the same study, proactivity also showed positive associations with employability. Intrapreneurship behaviours are proactive employee behaviours that lead to innovation, business growth, and pursuing new ventures; Antoncic and Hisrich (2001) referred to it as entrepreneurship within an organization. In the context of increasing ambiguity, organizations value employees who display intrapreneurship behaviours (Halme et al., 2012), which increases employees’ employability. Yet, personal branding is distinct from these two employee characteristics because (1) it has a specific purpose of creating a positive professional image of the self in the minds of others (Scheidt et al., 2020), and (2) while human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours contribute to one’s employability, personal branding is a signalling mechanism of a much broader set of valued employee characteristics. Therefore, personal branding encapsulates various aspects conducive to higher employability beyond human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours.

Hypothesis 2: Personal branding has incremental validity in predicting employability over and above human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours.

The mediating role of PBE

PBE is “an individual’s perception of the value of one’s personal brand derived from its appeal, differentiation, and recognition in

a given professional field” (Gorbatov et al., 2021, p. 4). To be effective, personal branding should lead to a professional image of the self that meets the criteria of optimal distinctiveness, i.e., simultaneously satisfying the needs of inclusion and differentiation (Brewer, 1991). In essence, PBE is the visible outcome of one’s efforts to build a personal brand (Scheidt et al., 2020). Hence, through PBE, personal branding enhances employees’ internal and external employability: If one’s efforts to build a personal brand are not effective, these efforts by themselves are unlikely to cause others to see one’s worth on the internal or external job market. Furthermore, as PBE emerges from defining one’s professional image, which requires a deeper understanding of one’s strengths, limitations, and potential career options, PBE may also explain why personal branding positively relates to self-perceptions of internal and external employability. Indeed, through a series of in-depth interviews with liberal arts undergraduates, Nicholas (2018) concluded that “projected employability emerged through narrative [...] construction of a marketable professional identity that could flex with changing conditions” (p. 10). Furthermore, Gorbatov et al. (2021) showed that PBE directly relates to employability. Hence, we expect that the visible outcome of personal branding (i.e., PBE) explains why personal branding positively relates to employability.

Hypothesis 3: PBE mediates the relationship between personal branding and employability.

Overview of studies

The hypotheses were tested in three studies, using a multisource and multimethod approach to provide both internal and external validity. Study 1 used a sample of UK supervisors in a policy-capturing experiment to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. In Study 2, a two-wave study among

Dutch university students, we examined the indirect effect of personal branding on perceived employability via PBE (Hypotheses 1 and 3). In Study 3, we examined Hypotheses 1 and 3 among an employed sample from a large multinational organization. The sequencing of the studies underscores their interdependence, fostering a nuanced comprehension of the interplay between personal branding and both internal and external employability. Initially, we focus on delineating the mechanisms pertinent to external employability in Studies 1 and 2. Building upon these initial insights, we extend our investigation to ascertain if analogous mechanisms can be extrapolated to the context of internal employability, as explored in Study 3. Figure 1 depicts our overall model.

For this research, we performed the online ethics self-assessment of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Based on the outcome of the self-assessment, no further ethical screening was required. We carried out all studies according to the ethical guidelines of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Furthermore, we obtained informed consent from all study participants. The data that support the findings of these studies are available from the corresponding author, SG, upon reasonable request.

Study 1

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which personal branding relates to (other perceptions of) external employability (Hypothesis 1) as well as the relative importance of personal branding in employability compared to two well-established predictors of employability, namely, human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours (Hypothesis 2). We used policy capturing (or judgement analysis) to test our hypotheses, which is a commonly used method to examine the importance people assign to cues (i.e., pieces of information about variables

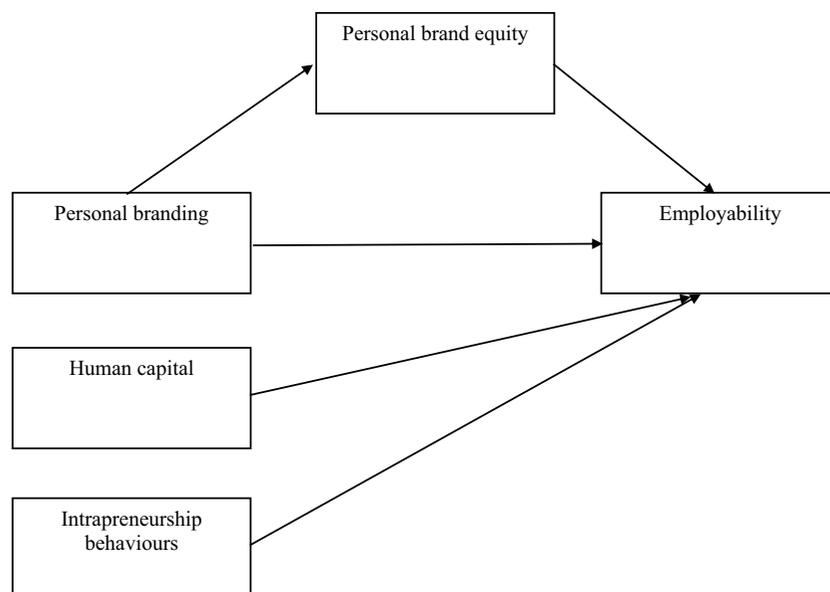


Figure 1. Hypothesised model. The direct relationship between personal branding and employability is tested in studies 1–3. The incremental validity of personal branding over and above human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours is tested in Study 1. The mediation effect of personal brand equity is tested in studies 2 and 3.

of interest) when making judgements and decisions in the workplace (Karren & Barringer, 2002). Importantly, policy capturing can establish causal relationships among variables and is more resistant to socially desirable responses than traditional self-report techniques (Karren & Barringer, 2002; Tomassetti et al., 2016).

Method

Participants

We recruited 249 participants residing in the UK through Prolific Academic, an online platform designed for online participant recruitment for academic research purposes (Palan & Schitter, 2018). Recent evidence shows that data collected with Prolific is at least as high quality as the traditional university student research pools (as in our Study 2) and demonstrates higher quality than similar platforms (De Cremer et al., 2018; Peer et al., 2017). Only those Prolific workers who indicated that they were employed in an employee supervision capacity were invited to participate. Two participants failed the attention check and were removed, resulting in a final sample of 247 supervisors: 48.2% female; $M_{age} = 43.5$ ($SD = 13.8$), $M_{work\ experience} = 22.2$ years ($SD = 12.6$).

Procedure

To examine the relative importance placed on personal branding, human capital, and intrapreneurship behaviours, we designed a policy-capturing study. In a typical policy-capturing study, participants are provided with a series of hypothetical profiles in which each sentence presents a cue pertaining to one of the variables of interest (Tomassetti et al., 2016). These cues exhibit different levels of the variable (in our case, high, medium, and low). Following each profile, participants are asked to form a judgement on the dependent variable. As personal branding, human capital, and intrapreneurship behaviours are independent constructs, we employed a fully crossed ($3 \times 3 \times 3$) design, resulting in 27 unique scenarios. This profile-to-cue ratio is above the minimum ratio of 5:1 recommended by Cooksey (1996).

For the personal branding cues, we used the personal branding scale items (Gorbatov et al., 2019); for intrapreneurship behaviours, we used the taking charge, voice, and individual innovation subscales of the proactive behaviours scale by Parker and Collins (2010); and to construct the human capital cues, we used the aspects of human capital that are most pertinent to employability, such as work-relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities (Harari et al., 2021). With the help of modifiers like “frequently”, “occasionally”, or “rarely”, we created the high, medium, and low-level cues, for example, “Sometimes seeks the endorsement of others to promote the quality of own work” (medium-level personal branding).

To create the 27 scenarios, we requested nine sets of numbers with unique unsorted random integers in each in the 1–9 range at www.random.org. Following the example of Tomassetti et al. (2016), we repeated two scenarios to assess test-retest reliability. The reliability coefficient for those scenarios was acceptable ($r = .63$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the subjects used stable judgements in their responses to the same

scenarios. We removed these two scenarios from further analyses. We used random letter-numeric identifiers (e.g., V37) to refer to different employees with he/him/his pronouns to minimize the external influence of names and gender. A sample scenario was:

Has received some training on the skills required in his job. Rarely tries to implement solutions to pressing organisation problems. Purposefully engages in experiences that can enhance own professional image.

We informed the participants that they would participate in a study about employability decisions. After obtaining their informed consent, we asked them to imagine themselves in the following scenario:

You work for an exciting, fast-growing, international company. Your company is particularly known for its commitment to people development through job rotations. Employees who are able to quickly move between different job opportunities are the most successful. Now, put yourself in the shoes of a hiring manager. A company recruiter has reviewed numerous resumes and identified 29 candidates. For each of these candidates, the recruiter has provided a few data points that are the most relevant to the hiring decision. Candidates are presented in random order and should be evaluated independently of one another. Consider how you would think, feel, and behave as you evaluate each candidate.

Next, we presented the scenarios in random order to mitigate the order effects. Finally, we asked the participants to complete the control and demographic measures.

Measures

Employability

We asked participants to evaluate the employability of a fictitious candidate in each scenario with two items from the employability scale by Hazer and Jacobson (2003): “How would you rate the applicant’s employability for this job?” (5-point scale; 1 = *not well at all*, 5 = *extremely well*) and “How satisfied would you be with hiring this candidate for the job?” (5-point scale; 1 = *extremely dissatisfied*, 5 = *extremely satisfied*); $r = .90$, $p < .001$. With these two items, we measured participants’ beliefs about the candidates’ ability to maintain and be successful in the job as described in the scenario.

Control variables

Age, gender, educational level, work experience, and self-ratings of personal branding and intrapreneurship behaviours were measured as potential control variables. We asked for age (in years), work experience (in years), and gender as controls because there is evidence that career stage (Manai & Holmlund, 2015) and gender (Molyneux, 2019; Thompson-Whiteside et al., 2018) are related to effective personal branding, while work experience and education are important components of human capital.

As self-schemas can guide judgements of others (e.g., Alicke & Largo, 1995; Fong & Markus, 1982), we also assessed participants’ self-perceptions of personal branding and intrapreneurship behaviours (note that human capital was already captured with educational level and work experience). We measured participants’ personal branding with the 12-item scale (*strategic* and *differentiated* factors) developed by

gorbatov et al. (2019). We collected the answers on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* ($\alpha = .93$). A sample item was "I make sure that what I do is recognisable". We measured intrapreneurship behaviours with a 10-item scale by Parker and Collins (2010). We collected the answers using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *very infrequently* to 5 = *very frequently*. A sample item was "How frequently do you promote and champion ideas to others?" ($\alpha = .92$).

Results and discussion

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations among all study variables. Of the control variables, only age ($r = -.08$, $p < .001$) and work experience ($r = -.08$, $p < .001$) were significantly correlated with employability ratings.

As we examined both within-person (i.e., three predictors) and between-person (i.e., controls) factors, we performed multilevel analyses to test our hypotheses (using SPSS v.26). Multilevel analyses take into account that the performance ratings are repeated within participants and are, thus, not independent of one another (Hox et al., 2017). We started with a random intercept-only or null model to calculate the intraclass correlation (ICC), which reflects the proportion of variance in the dependent variable attributable to between-person variables. The ICC computed from this unconditional model was .03, indicating that 3% of the variance in employability ratings is attributable to between-person variables. The remaining 97% of the variance is attributable to within-person variables, indicating that substantial variance in job performance ratings among participants depends on the three employee characteristics. Given the large sample size, such an ICC value is considered sufficient to proceed with the analyses. For example, Bliese (1998) demonstrated that ICC(1) as low as .01 can yield strong group-level estimates not evident at the lower levels.

Against the null model, we tested the model with personal branding, human capital, and intrapreneurship behaviours to examine their relationship with employability ratings. We predicted that personal branding would be positively associated with employability ratings (Hypothesis 1) and would be able to predict employability

ratings over and above human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours (Hypothesis 2). In policy-capturing studies, slope coefficients represent the average weight placed on each employee characteristic across participants; higher numbers indicate that a predictor is weighed more heavily in the judgement process. The results presented in Table 2 show significant slope coefficients for all three employee characteristics. Human capital ($\gamma = .79$, $p < .001$) showed the strongest slope coefficient, followed by intrapreneurship behaviours ($\gamma = .67$, $p < .001$) and personal branding ($\gamma = .21$, $p < .001$). Overall, the model explained 55% of the variance in employability ratings. These results confirm Hypotheses 1 and 2, as personal branding has predictive and incremental validity in predicting employability ratings over and above the two well-established predictors, human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours.

Control variables (i.e., age, gender, educational level, work experience, personal branding, and intrapreneurship behaviours) were added at Level 2. None of the control variables had a significant effect on employability ratings. Furthermore, adding these control variables did not change the validity of the three employee characteristics.

Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to examine the relationship between personal branding and (self-perceptions of) external employability (Hypothesis 1), as well as the indirect effect of personal branding on perceived employability through PBE (Hypothesis 3).

Method

Participants and procedure

We recruited participants from the business administration research pool at a large public Dutch university. They received study credits for completing the online survey. The survey was administered in two waves, five weeks apart. Out of 286 responses at Time 1 (T1), 22 contained missing data in the key variables of interest, so only 264 participants were invited to complete the Time 2 (T2) survey. Eighteen participants did not take the T2 survey, resulting in a total of 246 complete response sets (51.6% female)

Table 1. Correlations among and descriptive statistics for key Study 1 variables.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Employability rating	2.89	1.24	-									
2. Personal branding	0.00	0.82	.14**	-								
3. Human capital	0.00	0.82	.52**	-								
4. Intrapreneurship behaviours	0.00	0.82	.44**	-	-							
<i>Self-reported characteristics</i>												
5. Age	43.51	13.79	-.07**	-	-	-	-					
6. Gender	0.51	0.50	.01	-	-	-	-.04**	-				
7. Educational level	3.57	1.10	.00	-	-	-	-.02	-.01	-			
8. Work experience	22.24	12.53	-.08**	-	-	-	.93**	-.04**	-.02	-		
9. Personal branding	3.39	0.84	.01	-	-	-	-.08**	.04**	-.05**	-.03*	.93	
10. Intrapreneurship behaviours	3.77	0.74	-.01	-	-	-	-.08**	.08**	.00	.02	.54**	.92

N = 247 participants, rating 6,669 scenarios (for variables 1–4). Variables 5–15 are self-reported participants' characteristics. Because of a completely crossed design, correlations among independent variables (2–4) are zero by definition and, therefore, omitted. Reliability coefficients are in bold on the diagonal. Gender is coded as 0 = female and 1 = male. Educational level is coded as 1 = did not complete high school, 2 = some college, 3 = bachelor's degree, 4 = high school/GED, 5 = master's degree, and 6 = advanced graduate education or PhD.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 2. Results of Multilevel analysis predicting employability ratings.

	Null model		Level 1 model		Level 2 model	
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE
Intercept	2.89**	.02	2.89**	.02	3.08**	.18
Within-person predictors (conditions)						
Personal branding			.21**	.01	.21**	.01
Human capital			.79**	.01	.79**	.01
Intrapreneurship behaviours			.67**	.01	.67**	.01
Between-person predictors (self-reported)						
Age					.00	.00
Gender					.03	.04
Educational level					.00	.02
Work experience					-.01	.00
Personal branding					.02	.03
Intrapreneurship behaviours					-.03	.03
Variance components						
Level 1 (σ^2)	1.54		.79		.78	
Level 2 intercept (τ_{00})	.06		.09		.08	
Marginal pseudo R^2	.00		.48		.49	
Conditional pseudo R^2	.04		.55		.54	

$N = 247$ participants, providing 6,669 performance ratings. Unstandardised coefficients (γ) and standard errors (SE) are shown. Between-person predictors are self-reported participants' characteristics.

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

across the two waves. Participants' average age was 19.43 ($SD = 1.80$), and their mean work experience was 3.14 years ($SD = 2.11$). We asked participants to indicate their research ID and working experience in years at the beginning of the survey. Age and gender were matched anonymously from the research database.

Measures

The answers for all measures were collected on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* unless otherwise indicated. We presented the scales in random order, except for the cognitive ability measure, which was always last. We measured all variables at both T1 and T2, except for age, gender, work experience, cognitive ability, and conscientiousness.

Personal branding was measured with the 18-item scale by Gorbatov et al. (2019). A sample item was "I make sure that was I do is recognisable" ($\alpha = .90$ at T1 and $\alpha = .91$ at T2).

PBE was measured with the 12-item scale by Gorbatov et al. (2021). A sample item was "My professional strengths are clear" ($\alpha = .89$ at T1 and $\alpha = .88$ at T2).

Perceived employability was measured with a 5-item scale by Berntson and Marklund (2007), adjusted to ensure applicability to the student sample. A sample item was "My personal qualities make it easy for me to get a job" ($\alpha = .69$ at T1 and $\alpha = .68$ at T2).

Control Variables. Age, gender, work experience, career planning, and intrapreneurship behaviours were measured as control variables.⁴ We asked participants to indicate their work experience in years at T1 and matched age and gender from the research database. We found that both career planning and intrapreneurship correlated with perceived employability among higher-education students (DiFabio, 2014; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2020). Furthermore, as personal branding falls within the category of proactive career behaviours (Parker & Collins, 2010), it should be studied in conjunction with other

proactive career behaviours, such as career planning and intrapreneurship behaviours. Although we measured these two potential control variables at T1 and T2, we focus on the T1 measurement. We measured career planning with a 3-item scale by Hirschi et al. (2018). A sample item was "I have clear career goals" ($\alpha = .90$). Intrapreneurship behaviours were measured with the same scale as in Study 1 ($\alpha = .84$) with the items adjusted to reflect the student sample: The word "workplace" from the original scale was substituted with the name of the university and the references to the work problems were changed to issues affecting the study process.

Results and discussion

Table 3 presents the means, SD s, correlations, and reliability coefficients of all study variables. The measurement model consisted of three latent variables (namely, personal branding, PBE, and employability), where personal branding and PBE were modelled as hierarchical second-order reflective constructs.⁵ This model shows an acceptable fit with the data: $\chi^2/df = 1.78$, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .08.

To test Hypothesis 1, we conducted a series of regression analyses. As predicted, personal branding (T1) positively and significantly related to perceived employability at T2, $\beta = .47$, $t(244) = 8.40$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.08$, also after controlling for perceived employability at T1, $\beta = .15$, $t(243) = 2.81$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.36$. Similar effects were found when examining these relationships within the same time measurements. Furthermore, these relationships remained significant when controlled for age, gender, work experience, career planning, and intrapreneurship behaviours.

A regression-based path analysis was carried out to test Hypothesis 3. We used the PROCESS macro (Model 4; Hayes, 2013) to estimate the indirect effect, calculating bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) based on 5,000 bootstrap samples. As predicted, the indirect effect of personal branding (T1) on

Table 3. Correlations among and descriptive statistics for key Study 2 variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	19.43	1.80	-										
2. Gender	1.52	.50	-.08	-									
3. Work experience	3.14	2.11	.27**	-.01	-								
4. Career planning	3.60	0.98	.17**	.04	-.01	.90							
5. Intrapreneurship behaviours	2.91	0.67	.01	.02	-.06	.31**	.84						
6. Personal branding T1	2.91	0.62	.10	.11	-.11	.29**	.57**	.90					
7. Personal branding T2	2.99	0.63	.08	-.02	-.05	.27**	.46**	.62**	.91				
8. PBE T1	3.37	0.60	.06	-.01	.12	.38**	.42**	.54**	.41**	.89			
9. PBE T2	3.39	0.56	.05	.00	.15*	.27**	.33**	.31**	.51**	.59**	.88		
10. Perceived employability T1	3.37	0.69	.07	-.07	.11	.33**	.35**	.38**	.35**	.53**	.45**	.69	
11. Perceived employability T2	3.51	0.59	.08	-.07	.13*	.27**	.28**	.30**	.39**	.47**	.57**	.69**	.68

N = 246. Gender is coded 1 = male and 2 = female. Reliability coefficients are in bold on the diagonal.

p* < .05, *p* < .01 (two-tailed).

perceived employability (T2) via PBE (T1) was significant as the CI excluded zero, *indirect effect* = .22, *SE* = .05, 95% CI [.135, .322] (Figure 2).

The direct effect of personal branding on perceived employability became non-significant when PBE was entered into the model as a mediator ($\gamma = .06$, $p = .32$), indicating full mediation. We also found significant indirect effects when examining these relationships within the same time measurement and when controlled for either perceived employability at T1 or for age, gender, work experience, career planning, and intrapreneurship behaviours.

Overall, these results suggest that the effect of personal branding on perceived employability is channelled fully through PBE. This indicates that individuals consider themselves more employable in today's work environment when their personal branding activities are associated with a greater sense of value in their professional field. These results help us understand that personal branding activities *per se* do not directly lead to desired outcomes. This only occurs when personal branding creates a personal brand that is visible to the target audience (i.e., has high brand equity: appealing, differentiated, and recognizable).

However, Study 2 was conducted on a student population, limiting the generalizability of our findings. Therefore, we conducted Study 3 on an employed sample from a large organization.

Study 3

In this study, we further examine the relationship between personal branding and (objective) internal employability (Hypothesis 1), as well as the mediating role of PBE (Hypothesis 3). In doing so, we extend the findings from the

previous two studies to an organizational setting, using managers' ratings of job performance as an objective measure of employability. Job performance ratings are commonly used in the context of the performance management process in many companies, and they significantly impact an employee's career ranging from salary increases to being considered for promotion (Adler et al., 2016; Church et al., 2021). As the organizational context shapes employability (Delva et al., 2021), we argue that job performance ratings are a significant indicator of internal employability.

Method

Participants and procedure

Our study was conducted at a multinational firm headquartered in the United States in which knowledge workers who do not need to be physically present in the office are allowed to work remotely. The complexity of this firm's business operations, which heavily relies on knowledge work, requires close collaboration of multiple colleagues from various departments and countries who often have never met each other in person. Moreover, the supervisor and their employees would frequently be based in different locations, so the firm has developed the capability to manage and evaluate work that may be location independent. To facilitate internal moves, HR uses job performance data as the key input for promotion decisions: Employees with higher performance ratings are more likely to be selected for job opportunities, whereas those with low or average ratings are not prioritized or even considered. In other words, internal employability is determined by the employee's performance rating. Therefore, it is an adequate research setting for studying the relationship between personal branding and employability in the knowledge work context.

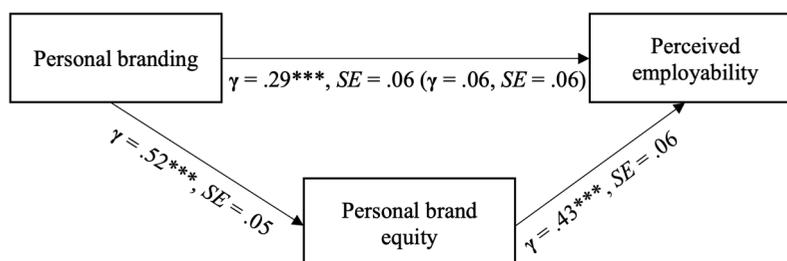


Figure 2. Path coefficients for the mediation analysis in Study 2. The value in parentheses represents the direct effect after including the mediator. *** *p* < .001.

The survey was shared with all employees who signed up to participate in a regular online seminar offered by the organization. These seminars are open to all employees globally, participation in this study was voluntary, and the employees consented to participate in the research. We received a total of 572 responses, and one year later, they were matched to archival job performance data by a company representative using a pseudo ID to maintain the anonymity of the responses. Because some data were not available (e.g., an employee left the company or was not eligible for a performance evaluation), the final dataset consisted of 390 complete responses (64.4% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 44.69$ ($SD = 8.83$); 65.1% had a Bachelor's degree or higher (32.1% undetermined); 59% came from the US, 16.8% from the EU, and the rest from 27 other countries).

Measures

Independent and mediating variables

Personal branding and PBE were measured with the same scales as in Study 2. For personal branding, the technologically savvy factor was not used, as it relates to the use of social media for external audiences and is less applicable in organizational settings. The alphas were .91 and .89, respectively.

Dependent variables

Job performance was operationalized as two indicators: goal ratings and behaviour ratings, which were collected one year after the survey as part of the annual performance management cycle. The goal ratings indicate the level of goal attainment (the "what" of performance) on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = *does not meet expectations* and 5 = *exceeds expectations*. The behaviour ratings indicate the level of adherence to the company's five behavioural standards (the "how" of performance) on a scale from 5 to 25, where 5 would indicate a consistent

violation of behavioural expectations, and 25 demonstrates exemplary behaviours on all five.

Control variables

We measured the same control variables as in Study 2: age, gender, organizational tenure (i.e., work experience within the organization), career planning (measured with the same scale as in Study 2; $\alpha = .91$), and intrapreneurship behaviours (measured with the same scale as in Study 2; $\alpha = .87$).

Results and discussion

Means, *SDs*, correlations, and reliability coefficients are shown in Table 4. The measurement model was identical to the one in Study 2. The data fit the model well: $\chi^2/df = 2.54$, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .08.⁶

In contrast to Hypothesis 1, personal branding was not significantly correlated with the goal ($r = .09$, $p = .07$) and behaviour ($r = .06$, $p = .23$) ratings. However, personal branding was significantly correlated with PBE ($r = .50$, $p < .001$), and PBE was significantly correlated with the goal ($r = .20$, $p < .001$) and behaviour ($r = .16$, $p < .01$) ratings.

The mediation analyses (following the same techniques as in Study 2) revealed a significant indirect effect of personal branding, via PBE, on both goal ratings (*indirect effect* = .08, $SE = .02$, 95% CI [.03; .14]) and behavioural ratings (*indirect effect* = .26, $SE = .10$, 95% CI [.08; .47]). See Figures 3 and 4 for the regression results. Adding the controls to the model did not change the results in a meaningful way. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

These results show that in an organizational setting that uses remote work, personal branding only positively affects performance ratings when personal branding creates a personal brand that is visible to the target audience. The indirect effect of personal branding on the behaviour ratings

Table 4. Correlations among and descriptive statistics for key Study 3 variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	44.69	8.83	-								
2. Gender	.36	.48	.01	-							
3. Tenure	9.94	7.50	.52**	.08	-						
4. Career planning	3.95	0.83	.04	-.01	.08	.91					
4. Intrapreneurship behaviours	3.87	0.54	.05	.08	.09	.30**	.87				
5. Personal branding	3.26	0.74	.02	.08	.01	.41**	.38**	.91			
6. PBE	3.83	0.56	.04	.07	.03	.31**	.44**	.50**	.89		
7. Goal rating	3.25	0.56	-.05	.02	-.08	.03	.02	.09	.20**	-	
8. Behaviour rating	16.52	2.28	-.07	-.04	.01	.09	.09	.06	.16**	.34**	-

$N = 390$. Gender is coded as 0 = *female* and 1 = *male*. Reliability coefficients are in bold on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

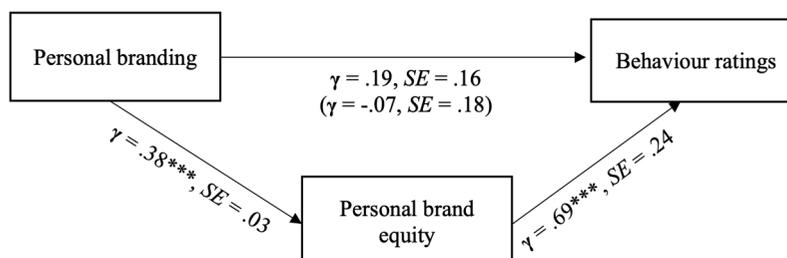


Figure 3. Path coefficients for the mediation analysis in Study 3, with behaviour ratings as the dependent variable. The value in parentheses represents the direct effect after including the mediator. *** $p < .001$.

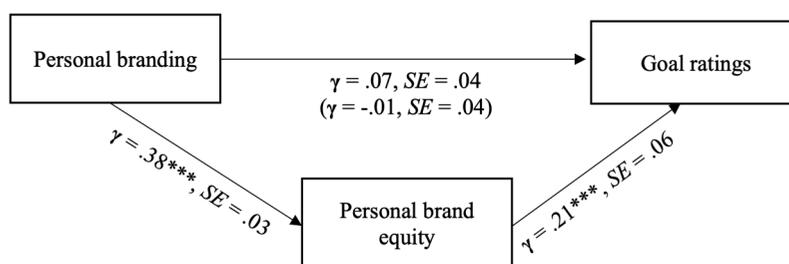


Figure 4. Path coefficients for the mediation analysis in Study 3, with goal ratings as the dependent variable. The value in parentheses represents the direct effect after including the mediator. *** $p < .001$.

is notably greater in magnitude compared to the effect on the goal ratings. Meta-analytical evidence suggests that the relationship between self-presentation and job performance ratings is stronger when self-promotional claims are harder to verify (Higgins et al., 2003). Arguably, goal ratings are a more objective measure of job performance because we can more easily link them to tangible outcomes. Thus, the behaviour ratings could be more susceptible to an employee's personal branding efforts.

General discussion

This paper aimed to examine the effects of employees' personal branding and PBE on subjective and objective employability within the knowledge work context. Based on three studies, consisting of a supervisor sample (Study 1), a student sample (Study 2), and a time-lagged employee sample (Study 3), we discovered that personal branding explains variance in employability over and above established predictors – human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours. Furthermore, we found that personal branding helps increase employability in the knowledge work context through PBE.

Theoretical implications

With this paper, we make several valuable contributions to the employability literature. First, we contribute to the literature on the employability of different groups of workers, specifically knowledge workers (Le Blanc et al., 2020). Since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of many knowledge workers has become remote and, therefore, virtually invisible (Hite & McDonald, 2020). The phenomenon of work invisibility is likely to increase the information asymmetry in organizations, pushing employees to exert extra effort, both physically and emotionally, to make themselves visible to their employers (Cristea & Leonardi, 2019). Signalling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973) posits that those who absorb higher signalling costs are more favourably positioned against competitors. Indeed, personal branding can increase visibility, but it also costs effort, time, financial resources, and emotional involvement (see Bridgen, 2011, for a discussion on personal branding and emotional labour). We demonstrated that those employees who can carry these extra costs are rewarded with higher

(perceived) employability (Studies 1–3), both in the job application and promotion settings. These findings show that personal branding is a significant yet overlooked predictor of (perceived and objective) employability in the knowledge work context, which is becoming increasingly remote and invisible.

Next, this study is among the first to connect personal branding and PBE in predicting internal and external employability. Building on earlier research linking personal branding with employability (Gorbatov et al., 2019) and face-to-face contact with supervisors with salary increases (Golden & Eddleston, 2020), we found that PBE fully mediates the relationship, which means that signalling professional value is only effective when it becomes visible and creates the desired image in the minds of the target audience. In fact, Study 3 showed that personal branding only has an indirect relationship with objective employability (i.e., job performance ratings). Thus, performing personal branding behaviours may not lead to the desired outcome unless they signal professional value to the target audience. Hence, in studies on intrapreneurship behaviours in the context of knowledge work, researchers may want to include measures of self-presentation behaviours (e.g., reputation, status, or PBE), as it is likely that intrapreneurship behaviours are not visible enough to directly influence employability-related outcomes. It is also beneficial to examine how personal branding can affect employability via other stakeholders than (hiring) managers, as workers in the gig economy or those pursuing non-traditional careers might experience increasing difficulty in making their work visible to direct management.

Finally, this paper is the first to offer evidence of incremental validity of personal branding in relation to employability over and above established predictors (i.e., human capital and intrapreneurship behaviours). Traditionally, knowledge, skills, and ability, all components of human capital, are the most important predictors of employability (Harari et al., 2021). Our study corroborates these previous findings but also shows that in light of knowledge workers' increasingly remote work, extra efforts are needed to make their work visible. Importantly, personal branding behaviours are not only valuable for current knowledge workers (Study 3) but also for job applicants (Study 1) and students soon entering the job market (Study 2). Hence, the current study also extends research on signalling effects in job selection contexts (e.g., Bangarter et al., 2012) and school-to-

work transitions (e.g., Steiner et al., 2022) by showing that traditional predictors of employability may no longer suffice if one wants to stand out for highly competitive jobs.

Practical implications

From the perspective of a (future) job seeker or employee, the balance of evidence from our three studies suggests that personal branding is a powerful mechanism to increase one's employability. Engaging in personal branding, which, in turn, increases PBE, makes job seekers, employees, their work more visible, and creates job and promotional opportunities. As the title of this paper suggests, good work will not necessarily speak for itself. Therefore, job seekers and employees should practice personal branding behaviours in the pursuit of greater employability. There is a range of support materials and courses available in support of strategic personal branding (Evans, 2017), but one may also start with simple actions to make their work visible in the context of remote work: ask questions during Zoom calls, copy important colleagues when there is a chance to showcase work, or sharing the latest research with colleagues in order to signal one's present, up-to-date, and rewarding. Furthermore, career counselling can be utilized to help individual job seekers and employees understand their strengths (e.g., Perdrix et al., 2012) and how to signal these strengths to employers.

From the employer's perspective, it is beneficial to understand how personal branding and PBE affect employability. Our findings suggest an incentive for managers to identify those employees sending true signals rather than false claims about the value of their work. In so doing, they can avoid some degree of bias in their employee ratings and make fairer decisions in terms of selection, promotions, or salary increases. To prevent unfair personnel decisions, procedures should emphasize objective tests and exercises in which job candidates' or employees' signals can be accurately benchmarked against performance, for example, using industry-specific knowledge tests, decision-making exercises, cognitive ability tests, work samples, and 360-degree feedback instruments. At the same time, personal branding is a valuable social skill contributing to a positive employee image where the organization can bask in reflected glory (Zinko & Rubin, 2015). Hence, some level of personal branding among employees, regardless of whether these signals are true or false, might be beneficial for organizations as well.

Limitations and future research

This research has several notable limitations. First, Study 2 was performed on students. While it is customary in social sciences to conduct preliminary research on student or crowdsourced populations before testing the hypotheses in organizational settings, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Moreover, the reliability coefficient of the employability measure was "adequate" (Kline, 2011, p. 70) but lower than for other variables, perhaps because some students were employed while others had no work experience.

Second, although, in Study 3, job performance ratings were archival, accounting for issues associated with single-source data, those are not always the most reliable indicators of actual performance. As those ratings are recorded in human resource management systems and often influence employee compensation, managers are known to distort those for various psychological and organizational reasons (Levy & Williams, 2004; Spence & Keeping, 2011). Thus, it is necessary to emphasize that we looked specifically at performance ratings, not objective performance itself. It would be interesting to examine actual job performance and behaviour evaluation outside of the performance appraisal context from various sources, such as peers, clients, and subordinates. In doing so, it would be interesting to examine a wider range of dependent variables, given that proactivity can lead to both positive and negative outcomes (Parker et al., 2019).

Another limitation relates to measuring PBE. Although there is evidence that many concepts from the same nomological field as PBE can be measured through self-reports with high accuracy and validity, such as social status or prestige (Anderson et al., 2006; Cheng et al., 2010), PBE is a reflection of one's professional value, and the value is determined by its receiver. Therefore, future studies could compare self- and other-reported measures of PBE and how these measures relate to employability.

Finally, our models did not consider any moderating variables. Future studies should examine how the context (e.g., face-to-face vs. remote, degree of visibility, etc.) would affect the relationship between personal branding and employability. Although there is evidence that impression management is more effective in face-to-face settings (Bolino et al., 2016), there is simply insufficient research on how it works in today's more common remote context.

Notes

1. <https://www.usebraintrust.com/knowledge-work-demand-index>
2. Gartner forecasts 51% of global knowledge workers will be remote by the end of 2021. Gartner. (2021, June 22). <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-06-22-gartner-forecasts-51-percent-of-global-knowledge-workers-will-be-remote-by-2021>
3. Ellerbeck, S. (2022, June 24). The great resignation is not over: Here's what employees say matters most at the workplace. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/06/the-great-resignation-is-not-over/>
4. We also measured cognitive ability and personality (i.e., conscientiousness) as potential control variables but did not include them in analyses for consistency reasons.
5. The CFA analyses revealed that the hypothesized 3-factor model demonstrated the best fit to the data with the chi-square difference tests being significant: $\chi^2 = 992.09$, $df = 550$, $\chi^2/df = 1.78$, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .08. Cf. 2-factor model (PBE and personal branding together): $\chi^2 = 1179.16$, $df = 552$, $\chi^2/df = 2.14$, CFI = .83, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .12, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 187.07$, $p < .001$; 2-factor model (PBE and employability together): $\chi^2 = 1,009.88$, $df = 552$, $\chi^2/df = 1.83$, CFI = .87, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .08, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 17.79$, $p < .001$; 2-factor model (personal branding employability together): $\chi^2 = 1,138.50$, $df = 552$, $\chi^2/df = 2.06$, CFI = .84, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .10, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 146.41$, $p < .001$; 1-factor model: $\chi^2 = 1,190.83$, $df = 553$, $\chi^2/df = 2.15$, CFI = .82, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .12, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 198.74$, $p < .001$.
6. The CFA analyses revealed that the hypothesized 3-factor model demonstrated the best fit to the data with the chi-square difference

tests being significant: $\chi^2 = 930.56$, $df = 366$, $\chi^2/df = 2.54$, $CFI = .91$, $RMSEA = .06$, $SRMR = .08$. Cf. 2-factor model (PBE and personal branding together): $\chi^2 = 1,073.02$, $df = 368$, $\chi^2/df = 2.92$, $CFI = .88$, $RMSEA = .07$, $SRMR = .09$, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 142.46$, $p < .001$; 2-factor model (PBE and employability together): $\chi^2 = 1,114.35$, $df = 368$, $\chi^2/df = 3.03$, $CFI = .88$, $RMSEA = .07$, $SRMR = .11$, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 183.79$, $p < .001$; 2-factor model (personal branding and employability together): $\chi^2 = 1,146.55$, $df = 368$, $\chi^2/df = 3.12$, $CFI = .87$, $RMSEA = .07$, $SRMR = .13$, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 215.99$, $p < .001$; 1-factor model: $\chi^2 = 1,281.71$, $df = 369$, $\chi^2/df = 3.47$, $CFI = .85$, $RMSEA = .08$, $SRMR = .12$, $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 351.15$, $p < .001$.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Sergey Gorbatov  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6584-5843>
 Janneke K. Oostrom  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0963-5016>
 Svetlana N. Khapova  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6842-6644>

References

- Adler, S., Campion, M., Colquitt, A., Grubb, A., Murphy, K., Ollander-Krane, R., & Pulakos, E. D. (2016). Getting rid of performance ratings: Genius or folly? A debate. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 9(2), 219–252. <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2015.106>
- Aeberhardt, R., Coudin, É., & Rathelot, R. (2017). The heterogeneity of ethnic employment gaps. *Journal of Population Economics*, 30(1), 307–337. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-016-0602-3>
- Akkermans, J., Brenninkmeijer, V., Schaufeli, W. B., & Blonk, R. W. B. (2015). It's all about CareerSKILLS: Effectiveness of a career Development Intervention for Young employees. *Human Resource Management*, 54(4), 533–551. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21633>
- Akkermans, J., & Kubasch, S. (2017). #trending topics in careers: A review and future research agenda. *Career Development International*, 22(6), 586–627. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-08-2017-0143>
- Alicke, M. D., & Largo, E. (1995). The role of self in the false consensus effect. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 31(1), 28–47. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1995.1002>
- Amaral, A. A., Powell, D. M., & Ho, J. L. (2019). Why does impression management positively influence interview ratings? The mediating role of competence and warmth. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 27(4), 315–327. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijssa.12260>
- Ameri, M., & Kurtzberg, T. R. (2022). Leveling the playing field through remote work. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 63(3), 1–3.
- Anderson, C., Srivastava, S., Beer, J. S., Spataro, S. E., & Chatman, J. A. (2006). Knowing your place: Self-perceptions of status in face-to-face groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(6), 1094–1110. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.91.6.1094>
- Antoncic, B., & Hisrich, R. D. (2001). Intrapreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 16(5), 495–527. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026\(99\)00054-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(99)00054-3)
- Arthur, M. B., Khapova, S. N., & Wilderom, C. P. M. (2005). Career success in a boundaryless career world. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(2), 177–202. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.290>
- Bailey, D., Chapain, C., & de Ruyter, A. (2012). Employment outcomes and plant closure in a post-industrial city: An analysis of the labour market status of MG rover workers three years on. *Urban Studies*, 49(7), 1595–1612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098011415438>
- Bailey, C., Yeoman, R., Madden, A., Thompson, M., & Kerridge, G. (2019). A review of the empirical literature on meaningful work: Progress and research agenda. *Human Resource Development Review*, 18(1), 83–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484318804653>
- Bangerter, A., Roulin, N., & König, C. J. (2012). Personnel selection as a signaling game. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97(4), 719–738. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026078>
- Bendisch, F., Larsen, G., & Trueman, M. (2013). Fame and fortune: A conceptual model of CEO brands. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47(3/4), 596–614. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561311297472>
- Bernstrøm, V. H., Drange, I., & Mamelund, S.-E. (2018). Employability as an alternative to job security. *Personnel Review*, R-09-2017–0279. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-09-2017-0279>
- Berntson, E., & Marklund, S. (2007). The relationship between perceived employability and subsequent health. *Work & Stress*, 21(3), 279–292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678370701659215>
- Bliese, P. D. (1998). Group size, ICC Values, and group-level correlations: A simulation. *Organizational Research Methods*, 1(4), 355–373. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109442819814001>
- Bolino, M., Long, D., & Turnley, W. (2016). Impression Management in organizations: Critical questions, answers, and areas for future research. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 3(1), 377–406. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-041015-062337>
- Bourdage, J. S., Roulin, N., & Tarraf, R. (2018). “I (might be) just that good”: Honest and deceptive impression management in employment interviews. *Personnel Psychology*, 71(4), 597–632. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12285>
- Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(5), 475–482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167291175001>
- Bridgen, L. (2011). Emotional labour and the pursuit of the personal brand: Public relations practitioners' use of social media. *Journal of Media Practice*, 12(1), 61–76. https://doi.org/10.1386/jmpr.12.1.61_1
- Brown, C., Hooley, T., & Wond, T. (2020). Building career capital: Developing business leaders' career mobility. *Career Development International*, 25(5), 445–459. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-07-2019-0186>
- Cappelli, P. (2021). *The future of the office: Work from home, remote work, and the hard choices we all face*. Wharton School Press.
- Cederberg, C. D. (2017). Personal branding for psychologists: Ethically navigating an emerging vocational trend. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 48(3), 183–190. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000129>
- Cheng, J. T., Tracy, J. L., & Henrich, J. (2010). Pride, personality, and the evolutionary foundations of human social status. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 31(5), 334–347. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2010.02.004>
- Church, A. H., Guidry, B. W., Dickey, J. A., & Scrivani, J. A. (2021). Is there potential in assessing for high-potential? Evaluating the relationships between performance ratings, leadership assessment data, designated high-potential status and promotion outcomes in a global organization. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(5), 101516. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101516>
- Coetzee, M., & Engelbrecht, L. (2020). How employability attributes mediate the link between knowledge workers' career adaptation concerns and their self-perceived employability. *Psychological Reports*, 123(4), 1005–1026. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294119844981>
- Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Ireland, R. D., & Reutzel, C. R. (2011). Signaling theory: A review and assessment. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 39–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310388419>
- Cooksey, R. W. (1996). *Judgment analysis: Theory, methods, and applications*. Academic press.
- Cortellazzo, L., Bonesso, S., Gerli, F., & Batista-Foguet, J. M. (2020). Protean career orientation: Behavioral antecedents and employability outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 116, 103343. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.103343>
- Crant, J. M. (2000). Proactive behavior in organizations. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 435–462. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600304>
- Cristea, I. C., & Leonardi, P. M. (2019). Get noticed and die trying: Signals, sacrifice, and the Production of face time in distributed work. *Organization Science*, 30(3), 552–572. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2018.1265>
- Croucher, R., Ramakrishnan, S., Rizov, M., & Benzinger, D. (2018). Perceptions of employability among London's low-paid: 'self-determination' or ethnicity? *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 39(1), 109–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X15609672>
- De Cremer, D., van Dijke, M., Schminke, M., De Schutter, L., & Stouten, J. (2018). The trickle-down effects of perceived trustworthiness on subordinate performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(12), 1335–1357. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000339>

- De Cuyper, N., & De Witte, H. (2010). Temporary employment and perceived employability: Mediation by impression Management. *Journal of Career Development, 37*(3), 635–652. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845309357051>
- Delva, J., Forrier, A., & De Cuyper, N. (2021). Integrating agency and structure in employability: Bourdieu's theory of practice. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 127*, 103579. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2021.103579>
- DiFabio, A. (2014). Intrapreneurial Self-Capital: A New Construct for the 21st Century. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 51*(3), 98–111. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1920.2014.00045.x>
- Doberstein, C., & Charbonneau, É. (2022). Alienation in pandemic-induced telework in the public sector. *Public Personnel Management, 51*(4), 491–515. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00910260221114788>
- Ellerbeck, S. (2022, June 24). The great resignation is not over: Here's what employees say matters most at the workplace. *World Economic Forum*. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/06/the-great-resignation-is-not-over/>
- Evans, J. R. (2017). A strategic approach to self-branding. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science, 27*(4), 270–311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21639159.2017.1360146>
- Fong, G. T., & Markus, H. (1982). Self-schemas and judgments about others. *Social Cognition, 1*(3), 191–204. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.1982.1.3.191>
- Forrier, A., De Cuyper, N., & Akkermans, J. (2018). The winner takes it all, the loser has to fall: Provoking the agency perspective in employability research. *Human Resource Management Journal, 28*(4), 511–523. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12206>
- Forrier, A., & Sels, L. (2003). The concept employability: a complex mosaic. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management, 3*(2), 102. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJHRDM.2003.002414>
- Forrier, A., Sels, L., & Styne, D. (2009). Career mobility at the intersection between agent and structure: A conceptual model. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 82*(4), 739–759. <https://doi.org/10.1348/096317909X470933>
- Franken, E., Bentley, T., Shafaei, A., Farr-Wharton, B., Onnis, L., & Omari, M. (2021). Forced flexibility and remote working: Opportunities and challenges in the new normal. *Journal of Management & Organization, 27*(6), 1131–1149. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2021.40>
- Fugate, M., Kinicki, A. J., & Ashforth, B. E. (2004). Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 65* (1), 14–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.005>
- Fugate, M., van der Heijden, B., De Vos, A., Forrier, A., & De Cuyper, N. (2021). Is what's past prologue? A review and agenda for contemporary employability research. *Academy of Management Annals, 15*(1), 266–298. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0171>
- Gandini, A. (2016). Digital work. *Marketing Theory, 16*(1), 123–141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593115607942>
- Gandini, A. (2018). Labour process theory and the gig economy. *Human Relations, 72*(6), 1039–1056. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718790002>
- García, M. F., Triana, M. D. C., Peters, A. N., & Sánchez, M. (2009). Self-enhancement in a job search context. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 17*(3), 290–299. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2389.2009.00471.x>
- Gartner. (2021, June 22). Gartner forecasts 51% of global knowledge workers will be remote by the end of 2021. <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-06-22-gartner-forecasts-51-percent-of-global-knowledge-workers-will-be-remote-by-2021>
- Goffman, E. (1956). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. University of Edinburgh.
- Golden, T. D., & Eddleston, K. A. (2020). Is there a price telecommuters pay? Examining the relationship between telecommuting and objective career success. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 116*(November 2018), 103348. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.103348>
- Goldman, B., Cooper, D., & Kugler, T. (2019). Crime and punishment: A realistic group conflict approach to racial discrimination in hiring convicted felons. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 30*(1), 2–23. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCM-04-2018-0055>
- Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., & Lysova, E. I. (2018). Personal branding: Interdisciplinary Systematic review and research agenda. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*(November), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02238>
- Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., & Lysova, E. I. (2019). Get noticed to get ahead: The impact of personal branding on career success. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10* (December), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02662>
- Gorbatov, S., Khapova, S. N., Oostrom, J. K., & Lysova, E. I. (2021). Personal brand equity: Scale development and validation. *Personnel Psychology, 74*(3), 505–542. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12412>
- Grant, A. M., Parker, S., & Collins, C. (2009). Getting credit for proactive behavior: Supervisor reactions depend on what you value and how you feel. *Personnel Psychology, 62*(1), 31–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2008.01128.x>
- Guilbert, L., Carrein, C., Guérolé, N., Monfray, L., Rossier, J., & Priolo, D. (2018). Relationship between perceived Organizational support, proactive personality, and perceived employability in workers over 50. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 55*(2), 58–71. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joec.12075>
- Halme, M., Lindeman, S., & Linna, P. (2012). Innovation for inclusive business: Intrapreneurial bricolage in multinational corporations. *Journal of Management Studies, 49*(4), 743–784. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2012.01045.x>
- Harari, M. B., McCombs, K., & Wiernik, B. M. (2021). Movement capital, RAW model, or circumstances? A meta-analysis of perceived employability predictors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 131*(September), 103657. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2021.103657>
- Hatton, E. (2017). Mechanisms of invisibility: Rethinking the concept of invisible work. *Work, Employment and Society, 31*(2), 336–351. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017016674894>
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. Guilford Press.
- Hazer, J., & Jacobson, J. R. (2003). Effects of screener self-monitoring on the relationships among applicant positive self-presentation, objective credentials, and employability ratings. *Journal of Management, 29*(1), 119–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630302900101>
- Hernandez Bark, A. S., Seliverstova, K., & Ohly, S. (2022). Getting credit for proactivity? The effects of gender. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 52*(8), 660–675. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12833>
- Higgins, C. A., Judge, T. A., & Ferris, G. R. (2003). Influence tactics and work outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 24*(1), 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.181>
- Hirschi, A., & Koen, J. (2021). Contemporary career orientations and career self-management: A review and integration. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 126*, 103505. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103505>
- Hirschi, A., Nagy, N., Baumeler, F., Johnston, C. S., & Spurk, D. (2018). Assessing key predictors of career success. *Journal of Career Assessment, 26*(2), 338–358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072717695584>
- Hite, L. M., & McDonald, K. S. (2020). Careers after COVID-19: Challenges and changes. *Human Resource Development International, 23*(4), 427–437. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1779576>
- Hogan, R., Chamorro-Premuzic, T., & Kaiser, R. B. (2013). Employability and career success: Bridging the gap between theory and reality. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 6*(1), 3–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/iops.12001>
- Hox, J. J., Moerbeek, M., & Van de Schoot, R. (2017). *Multilevel analysis: Techniques and applications* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Ibarra, H., Petriglieri, J. L., & Mainemelis, C. (2010). Identity work and play. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 23*(1), 10–25. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811011017180>
- Jackson, D., & Tomlinson, M. (2020). Investigating the relationship between career planning, proactivity and employability perceptions among higher education students in uncertain labour market conditions. *Higher Education, 80*(3), 435–455. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00490-5>
- Jacobs, S., De Vos, A., Stuer, D., & Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M. (2019). “Knowing me, Knowing you” the importance of networking for freelancers' careers: Examining the mediating role of need for relatedness fulfillment and employability-enhancing competencies. *Frontiers in Psychology, 10*(SEP), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02055>
- Jagacinski, C. M. (1991). Personnel decision making: The impact of missing information. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 76*(1), 19–30. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.76.1.19>
- Järllström, M., Brandt, T., & Rajala, A. (2020). The relationship between career capital and career success among Finnish knowledge workers. *Baltic Journal of Management, 15*(5), 687–706. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BJM-10-2019-0357>

- Johns, R., & English, R. (2016). Transition of self: Repositioning the celebrity brand through social media—the case of Elizabeth Gilbert. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 65–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.07.021>
- Karren, R. J., & Barringer, M. W. (2002). A review and analysis of the policy-capturing methodology in Organizational research: Guidelines for research and practice. *Organizational Research Methods*, 5(4), 337–361. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109442802237115>
- King, Z. (2004). Career self-management: Its nature, causes and consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 65(1), 112–133. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791\(03\)00052-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(03)00052-6)
- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Koen, J., & van Bezouw, M. J. (2021). Acting proactively to manage job insecurity: How worrying about the future of one's job may obstruct future-focused thinking and Behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12 (October), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.727363>
- Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(1), 34–47. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.1.34>
- Le Blanc, P., Van der Heijden, B., Akkermans, J., & De Vos, A. (2020). New frontiers in employability research: Towards a contextualized perspective of employability development. *EAWOP*. <http://www.eawop.org/news/call-for-papers-special-issue-on-employability>
- Leonardi, P. M., & Treem, J. W. (2020). Behavioral Visibility: A new paradigm for organization studies in the age of digitization, digitalization, and datafication. *Organization Studies*, 41(12), 1601–1625. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840620970728>
- Levy, P. E., & Williams, J. R. (2004). The social context of performance appraisal: A review and framework for the future. *Journal of Management*, 30(6), 881–905. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jm.2004.06.005>
- Liu-Lastres, B., Wen, H., & Huang, W.-J. (2022). A reflection on the great resignation in the hospitality and tourism industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 35(1), 235–249. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2022-0551>
- Lysova, E. I., Allan, B. A., Dik, B. J., Duffy, R. D., & Steger, M. F. (2019). Fostering meaningful work in organizations: A multi-level review and integration. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 110(October 2017), 374–389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.07.004>
- Manai, A., & Holmlund, M. (2015). Self-marketing brand skills for business students. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 33(5), 749–762. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2013-0141>
- Molyneux, L. (2019). A personalized self-image: Gender and branding practices among journalists. *Social Media + Society*, 5(3), 205630511987295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119872950>
- Ng, E., & Stanton, P. (2023). Editorial: The great resignation: Managing people in a post COVID-19 pandemic world. *Personnel Review*, 52(2), 401–407. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-03-2023-914>
- Nicholas, J. M. (2018). Marketable selves: Making sense of employability as a liberal arts undergraduate. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 109 (August 2017), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2018.09.001>
- Palan, S., & Schitter, C. (2018). Prolific.Ac—A subject pool for online experiments. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, 17, 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbef.2017.12.004>
- Parker, S. K., & Collins, C. G. (2010). Taking stock: Integrating and differentiating multiple proactive behaviors. *Journal of Management*, 36(3), 633–662. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308321554>
- Parker, S. K., Wang, Y., & Liao, J. (2019). When is Proactivity Wise? A review of factors that influence the individual outcomes of proactive Behavior. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 6(1), 221–248. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012218-015302>
- Peer, E., Brandimarte, L., Samat, S., & Acquisti, A. (2017). Beyond the Turk: Alternative platforms for crowdsourcing behavioral research. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 70, 153–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2017.01.006>
- Peng, P., Song, Y., & Yu, G. (2021). Cultivating proactive career Behavior: The role of career adaptability and Job Embeddedness. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(October), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.603890>
- Perdrix, S., Stauffer, S., Masdonati, J., Massoudi, K., & Rossier, J. (2012). Effectiveness of career counseling: A one-year follow-up. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 80(2), 565–578. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.08.011>
- Regan, J. R. (2021). Eupsychian Management in the age of the knowledge worker. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 63(4), 502–514. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678211012970>
- Roth, P. L., Bobko, P., Van Iddekinge, C. H., & Thatcher, J. B. (2016). Social media in employee-Selection-related decisions. *Journal of Management*, 42(1), 269–298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206313503018>
- Scheidt, S., Gelhard, C., & Henseler, J. (2020). Old practice, but Young research field: A systematic bibliographic review of personal branding. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(August). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01809>
- Sheikh, A., & Lim, M. (2011). Engineering consultants' perceptions of corporate branding: A case study of an international engineering consultancy. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(7), 1123–1132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.09.006>
- Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010>
- Spence, J. R., & Keeping, L. (2011). Conscious rating distortion in performance appraisal: A review, commentary, and proposed framework for research. *Human Resource Management Review*, 21(2), 85–95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmmr.2010.09.013>
- Srisuphaolarn, S. (2008). The three signs of a miserable job—a fable for managers (and their employees). *The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 13(2), 133–134. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/three-signs-miserable-job-fable-managers-their/docview/203916876/se-2?accountid=44866>
- Steiner, R., Hirschi, A., & Akkermans, J. (2022). Many roads lead to Rome: Researching antecedents and outcomes of contemporary school-to-work transitions. *Journal of Career Development*, 49(1), 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08948453211063580>
- Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1988). Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(2), 193–210. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.103.2.193>
- Thompson-Whiteside, H., Turnbull, S., & Howe-Walsh, L. (2018). Developing an authentic personal brand using impression management behaviours. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 21(2), 166–181. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-01-2017-0007>
- Tomassetti, A. J., Dalal, R. S., & Kaplan, S. A. (2016). Is policy capturing really more resistant than traditional self-report techniques to socially desirable responding? *Organizational Research Methods*, 19(2), 255–285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428115627497>
- van Emmerik, I. J. H., Schreurs, B., de Cuyper, N., Jawahar, I. M., & Peeters, M. C. W. (2012). The route to employability. *Career Development International*, 17(2), 104–119. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620431211225304>
- van Harten, J., de Cuyper, N., Knies, E., & Forrier, A. (2022). Taking the temperature of employability research: A systematic review of interrelationships across and within conceptual strands. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 31(1), 145–159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2021.1942847>
- Vanhercke, D., De Cuyper, N., Peeters, E., & De Witte, H. (2014). Defining perceived employability: A psychological approach. *Personnel Review*, 43 (4), 592–605. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-07-2012-0110>
- Wayne, S. J., & Liden, R. C. (1995). Effects of impression Management on performance ratings: A longitudinal Study. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(1), 232–260. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256734>
- Wihler, A., Blickle, G., Ellen, B. P., Hochwarter, W. A., & Ferris, G. R. (2017). Personal initiative and job performance evaluations: Role of political skill in opportunity recognition and capitalization. *Journal of Management*, 43(5), 1388–1420. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314552451>
- Zinko, R., & Rubin, M. (2015). Personal reputation and the organization. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 21(2), 217–236. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2014.76>