

Providing jobseekers with relevant labor market information and a brief socioemotional skills training raised job search effort and take-up of related services.

How can employment services help job seekers translate their goals into action?

In Turkey, the years between 2012 and 2017 saw a steadily rising labor force participation rate but also unemployment. New workers, including women and youth, joined those already in the market increasing the competition for available jobs. At the same time, employers, reported difficulties finding workers with appropriate workplace competencies when filling vacancies, particularly when it came to job-related behaviors.

The Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) and the World Bank teamed up to test whether providing jobseekers with more labor market information and with short training focused on socioemotional skills and goal-setting and planning could impact their job search intensity. This exercise aimed to inform İŞKUR's ongoing efforts to provide a broader package of services to jobseekers.

In 2015, the World Bank conducted an in-depth study to identify which behavioral factors were affecting Turkish jobseekers in their job search. The study found that there was a combination of limited self-awareness and lack of accurate information about local labor market leading to unrealistic job search goals, and lack of follow-through resulting in frustration and discouragement after job search setbacks. These two findings shaped the focus of the training program evaluated in this report. The first suggested that jobseekers would benefit from user-friendly information on the local labor market to improve the match between their aspirations and the local labor market reality. The second, that the provision of strategies for iterative goal-setting, identification of constraints, and creation of feasible plans to overcome them could increase persistence in job search. The pilot expected to address both challenges with the objective to increase job search breadth and intensity.

The Project

The final pilot intervention consisted of two parts – an informational brochure (or the Job Search Skills (JSS) Primer) and a socioemotional skills training (or the SES Training). The program was offered to newly registered jobseekers in 18 randomly-selected İŞKUR centers in five provinces across Turkey where trends in job creation suggested the presence of a dynamic labor market (Ankara, Bursa, Istanbul, Izmir, and Kocaeli).

The Job Search Skills Primer consisted of a brochure to be distributed to all newly registered jobseekers in the centers where the intervention was taking place. The main objective of the JSS Primer was to ensure that jobseekers have adequate and timely information to form and adjust their job search expectations, their job aspirations, and the expected returns to increased job search effort. In addition, the primer raised awareness about İŞKUR services and provided basic job search tips. It was delivered to jobseekers in either printed or online formats, depending on their method of registration (in person or online).

The objective of the Socioemotional Skills Training was to equip jobseekers with sustained motivation for job search and to provide them with a metacognitive strategy – on planning and acting on plans – in order to influence their job search intensity and their persistence and resilience in the job search. The training consisted of a single session of about 1.5 hours, delivered to groups of up to 15 newly registered jobseekers by a trained İŞKUR Jobs and Vocational Counselor (JVC). The session was divided into three modules: a brief self-affirmation exercise, an interactive discussion of job search barriers and solutions using case studies, and a step-by-step individual goal-setting and planning exercise. Newly registered jobseekers in treatment centers were recruited for the SES Training by either a combination of SMS and phone call invitations or through on-site invitations.

By the end of the intervention period (April-October 2018), the SES Training was delivered to 2,216 jobseekers, while the Primer was distributed to about 200 thousand new registrants. Take-up of the SES Training was low with only 4.5 percent of all who were reached attending the trainings. The final evaluation sample consisted of 3,994 jobseekers distributed among those who attended the SES Training; non-compliers with SES Training invitation; and individuals in the control group (newly registered jobseekers in the same five pilot provinces but who registered in the 10 İSKUR centers randomly selected not to receive the intervention).



The Results

The evaluation focused on two types of effects, given the observed challenges with SES Training take-up:

1. the impact of offering the intervention (JSS Primer and SES Training) and
2. the impact of exposure to SES Training (i.e. participation in this short training, which was more likely to be taken up by males, labor market entrants, and more highly educated jobseekers). The main results of the evaluation can be summarized as follows:



The offer of JSS Primer had a significant and positive effect on the take-up of almost all İŞKUR services, and the offer of SES Training increased the take-up of Job Search Skills courses. Jobseekers in treatment centers, all of whom were offered the JSS Primer when they registered, were 19 percentage points more likely to participate in the Job Search Skills course, 2 percentage points more likely to participate in Vocational Training courses, and 6 percentage points more likely to attend meetings with JVCs (i.e. job counselling sessions). Moreover, jobseekers were 4 percentage points more likely to attend an On-the-Job Training and 3 percentage points more likely to attend an entrepreneurship training. Given the low take-up rate for SES Training, the impact of simply offering this short training program did not result in much observable change, but the increase in Job Search Skills courses for those who did participate was large enough to be observed even when non-compliers were included in the analysis.



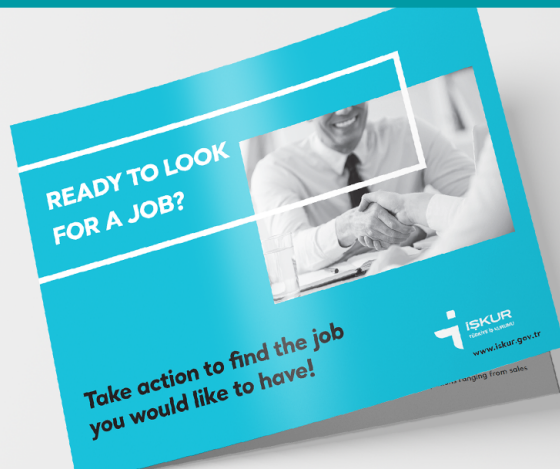
The exposure to SES Training had a significant impact on instilling a growth mindset (i.e. belief in personal change). When comparing of those who participated in SES Training to a subset of control group jobseekers (who would have been likely to take it up, “would-be takers”) the analysis shows a statistically significant treatment effect on growth mindset but not on other measured socioemotional skills. This finding suggests that the treatment was successful in broadening the mindset of the participants and potentially making them more open for their labor market search efforts and arising opportunities.



Exposure to the SES Training delivered large and statistically significant treatment effects on the take-up of a whole suite of İŞKUR services. SES Training graduates were significantly more likely to take up all other İŞKUR offers, relative to would-be takers. Treatment effects are particularly large for the immediate job search services, such as the Job Search Skills course and job counselling sessions with their JVCs, but also statistically significant for the three different types of training programs. These overall results hold equally for men and women. For younger jobseekers, there are significant and large treatment effects for the take-up of Job Search Skills training and for the take-up of on-the-job training. And older job seekers also see significant and large increases in the uptake of all types of İŞKUR courses.



The job search intensity impacts of exposure to SES Training were different for male and female jobseekers. One key mechanism for SES Training impacts seems to be a shift in the overall labor market activity towards job search. For the male participants, this shift seemed to come at the expense of dismissing short-term employment opportunities in favor of investing in job search. The shift towards an increased search intensity is reflected in the significantly increased use of job search channels for both genders. For female jobseekers the analysis also suggested an immediate rise in job applications per week.



Policy Implications

While challenges with take-up of training complicated the delivery and analysis of the pilot program, this work still delivered important lessons for policy makers seeking to improve their employment services:

- First, given that brochures are a relatively low-cost intervention, the observed impacts from offering the JSS Primer to newly-registered jobseekers are encouraging. When information is provided in a timely manner and with a user-centered design and language, jobseekers are more likely to take up intermediation and training services that could be important for their job search. Given these impacts and the relatively low cost of printing and distributing the JSS Primer, one recommendation of this study is to scale up the Job Search Skills Primer distribution to all newly-registered jobseekers.

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- Second, for policymakers considering a socioemotional skills training for jobseekers, the evidence provided by this project shows further design adjustments might be needed. While the *offer* of this very short training program did not result in significant behavioral changes, the *exposure* to it had impacts on job search behavior and take-up of employment services.

Some of the challenges that may enhance the impacts of these types of program going forward relate to increasing the take-up rate of these trainings, and tailoring interventions to different types

of jobseekers. Policy makers can perhaps consider providing information on the impacts of the training to potential enrollees to demonstrate its value, and creating more homogeneous training groups to enhance the quality of discussion among group participants. In addition, increased intervention intensity may be explored to improve impacts for participants.

About eMBed

The Mind, Behavior, and Development Unit (eMBed), the World Bank's behavioral science team in the Poverty and Equity Global Practice, works closely with project teams, governments, and other partners to diagnose, design, and evaluate behaviorally informed interventions. By collaborating with a worldwide network of scientists and practitioners, the eMBed team provides answers to important economic and social questions, and contributes to the global effort to eliminate poverty and enhance equity.

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