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Is the Job-Hopping Penalty Merited? Predicting Selection Decisions, Turnover, and Performance of Job Hoppers

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Despite the prevalence of job hopping in the modern world of work, it remains unclear whether penalizing applicants with a history of job hopping is merited. We conducted four studies to investigate the extent of the job-hopping penalty in the selection process and whether that penalty is merited when predicting turnover and performance. In Study 1, we reviewed definitions and gathered insights from human resource practitioners ($N = 61$) to offer a refined definition of job hopping. In Study 2, we implemented an experimental hiring scenario and found that hiring managers ($N = 85$) consistently rated job-hopping applicants lower than non-job-hopping applicants and that this occurred, in part, through lower expected commitment and performance. Although career progression did not weaken the impact of job hopping on application evaluations through expected commitment and performance, it did weaken the direct impact of job hopping on application evaluations. In Study 3, we analyzed data from job applicants for a sales position ($N = 30,640$) and found that job hopping related to fewer job offers, higher turnover, and lower job performance and predicted these outcomes beyond other selection procedures (e.g., a situational judgment test). Further, prehire experience moderated (weakened) the negative relationship between job hopping and job offers. In Study 4, we replicated these findings in a sample of job applicants for a retail manager position ($N = 37,105$). Together, these studies show that job hoppers are penalized, the penalty is warranted, and career progression and prehire experience can weaken the impact of the penalty.

Keywords: job hopping, employee selection, commitment, performance, turnover

During the selection process, hiring managers must evaluate applicants' employment history to determine their qualifications (Brown & Campion, 1994). Yet, hiring managers often must make these evaluations based on limited information, requiring them to use observable signals from an applicant's career history to draw inferences about their unobservable characteristics (Stiglitz, 1975; Zhang et al., 2024). For applicants who have pursued atypical career paths, these observable signals may be difficult to interpret and often result in a penalty—or negative evaluation—in the selection context (Hollister et al., 2025; Wechtler et al., 2022). One particularly salient atypical career mobility behavior is *job hopping*, defined herein as a

perceived pattern of behavior that reflects a relatively high frequency of voluntary and interorganizational job changes. Researchers and practitioners have tended to view job hopping as undesirable. For example, studies show that applicants who move jobs more frequently are less likely to receive callbacks (Cohn et al., 2021; Hollister et al., 2025). This suggests that decision-makers penalize applicants who demonstrate a history of job hopping.

However, it is unclear whether this penalty is merited based on the current job-hopping literature. First, the phenomenon lacks a comprehensive and consistent definition. For example, some researchers define job hopping by motivation (e.g., motive to advance;

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software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing and an equal role in conceptualization. Chad H. Van Iddekinge played a supporting role in conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing. Michael A. Campion played a supporting role in conceptualization, data curation, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing. Carter Gibson played a supporting role in conceptualization, data curation, resources, and writing—review and editing. Andrew Barsa played a supporting role in data curation, formal analysis, and resources.

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Gao et al., 2015) or frequency of movement (Becton et al., 2011). Others refer to job hopping according to the skills *not* gained due to frequent movement (e.g., Mtungwa, 2009). Collectively, this has resulted in conceptualizations that are deficient and/or contaminated, thereby limiting the accumulation of knowledge on the phenomenon and generalizability of findings. Second, because the literature appears to have concluded that job hopping is a negative signal (e.g., Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005; Judge & Watanabe, 1995), few efforts have been made to uncover how the penalty manifests in the minds of hiring managers or whether concerns about job hopping are indeed warranted. For example, it remains unclear whether hiring managers evaluate job hopping as a signal of poor organizational commitment, inadequate human capital, or failure in previous jobs. Moreover, research has not addressed whether job-hopping applicants actually demonstrate lower job performance or higher turnover compared to non-job-hopping applicants.

Considering these limitations, the purpose of this research is to evaluate how hiring managers penalize job-hopping applicants and the degree to which that penalty is merited. In doing so, we make three main contributions to the literature. First, we advance a comprehensive definition of job hopping based on empirical evidence to address the lack of consensus. Definitions of job hopping vary by amount, time, and motivation (Dhanapal et al., 2013; Lake et al., 2018; Pawar & Pandit, 2023), which prohibits a coherent and reliable body of comparable knowledge. We follow Podsakoff et al.'s (2016) process for revising construct definitions and leverage the literature and responses from human resource (HR) professionals to provide a clearer and more grounded definition of job hopping. We also distinguish job hopping from related concepts, such as turnover, mobility, and protean/boundaryless careers. The resulting definition informs our operationalization of job hopping and provides a foundation for future research.

Second, we test how job hopping manifests in hiring managers' evaluations of job applicants. We draw from screening theory (Stiglitz, 1975; Zhang et al., 2024) to explain that hiring managers use observable mobility information from applications (e.g., frequency of interorganizational movements) to infer characteristics that are undesirable but unobservable (e.g., lack of commitment, failure in past jobs). In line with screening theory and more recent work on career history "red flags" (Wechtler et al., 2022), we propose that hiring managers will rate job-hopping applicants lower and be less likely to select job hoppers due to concerns about low commitment and performance. This extends scholarship that has offered evidence of a job-hopping penalty but has not yet uncovered the basis of that penalty (e.g., Hollister et al., 2025; Wechtler et al., 2022). Moreover, we hypothesize that job hopping that involves moving hierarchically among jobs (e.g., career progression into leadership roles) and job-relevant experience may dampen hiring managers' negative perceptions because they signal a more typical career trajectory. This builds on recent attempts to identify potential boundary conditions of the job-hopping penalty (Hollister et al., 2025).

Finally, using data from two operational selection processes, we test whether the job-hopping penalty is merited based on its relationship to subsequent job performance and turnover. Importantly, we present evidence for the external validity of the findings across telecommunications and wellness retail industries, as well as in

entry-level and managerial jobs. Turnover prediction is important for entry-level jobs because turnover tends to be higher in such positions. Turnover is also important to managerial jobs because it tends to be more costly when managers depart. Further, we examine whether job hopping predicts outcomes beyond commonly used hiring procedures (i.e., situational judgment tests [SJTs], work style assessments, and problem-solving simulations). This will inform whether directly measuring job hopping during the selection process can provide unique predictive information. These applied studies also provide crucial generalizability evidence of the job-hopping penalty.

Theoretical Background

A Brief Introduction to Job Hopping

Like many phenomena in the organizational sciences, job hopping has evolved. Ghiselli (1974) initially referred to it as "hobo syndrome," defined as an individual's "periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place" (p. 81). This suggested that job hopping reflects a disposition, and subsequent research generally positioned it negatively (e.g., Judge & Watanabe, 1995). More recent definitions frame job hopping more positively as a strategy by which people explore employment options, gain skills, increase wages, escape work they find unsatisfactory, or seek protean or boundaryless careers (e.g., Dhanapal et al., 2013; Friedell et al., 2011; Lake et al., 2018; see Study 1 for how job hopping differs from these constructs). In all, early theorizing presented job hopping from the perspective of the job hopper.

Other research has focused on job hopping from the perspective of organizational decision-makers, which has influenced the construct's theoretical grounding. For example, Becton et al. (2011) conceptualized job hopping as job-changing behavior itself, not what drives the behavior, thus relying on the *observability* of job hopping. This focus has led recent studies to explore whether decision-makers penalize job hoppers for their relatively frequent interorganizational movement. For example, Hollister et al. (2025) found that job-hopping applicants received fewer callbacks than non-job-hopping applicants. Similarly, though not specifically about job hoppers, Wechtler et al. (2022) demonstrated that an applicant's atypical work experience (e.g., relative under- or overexperience) triggered a "red flag" wherein such workers were less likely to be interviewed or offered a position. Inherent in these studies is the notion that hiring managers must make sense of unobservable characteristics based on observable characteristics, which is a core tenet of screening theory.

Screening Theory

Screening theory describes the process by which "uninformed parties filter information to sort underlying differences" (Qian et al., 2021, p. 607). As a counterpart to signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2025; Riley, 2001) that focuses signal *senders* (e.g., job applicants), screening theory focuses on signal *receivers* (e.g., hiring managers). In the selection context, screening occurs when hiring managers identify and assign differential value to pieces of information about an applicant they believe are relevant to their decision making (Connelly et al., 2011). This process is made necessary by the *information asymmetry* present in selection contexts, or the

difference between what the applicants know about themselves (e.g., whether they are likely to change jobs again) and what the hiring managers know about the applicants (e.g., that they have changed jobs in the past). The core premise of screening theory is that screeners make inferences based on observable and implied information that they believe is correlated with unobservable attributes of interest (e.g., Weiss, 1995). In other words, the screening process involves a screener's *subjective* interpretation of the *objective* information available to them where recruiters *subjectively* interpret an applicant's *objective* movement among jobs. Therefore, job hopping is not strictly an objective behavior that occurs independent of a screener's interpretation, but rather it is an inference that screeners make based on information they observe (e.g., from an applicant's resume or application).

It is important to understand job hopping within this screening theory perspective because it has implications for the way job hopping is defined. What differentiates job hopping is not its objective components, but the way those objective components are interpreted. In other words, screening theory does not require that all defining attributes of a concept be objective or directly observable, but that the screener infers those observable behaviors as job hopping (Stiglitz, 1975). Therefore, although job hopping is ultimately a subjective inference, objective behaviors activate this inference. Indeed, screening theory fundamentally argues that screeners make inferences based on incomplete or ambiguous information (Zhang et al., 2024). This is analogous to other judgments in employee selection, such as inferring a job candidate possesses leadership abilities and skills based on observable past formal or informal leadership positions.

We acknowledge alternative theoretical approaches to understanding job hoppers. For example, researchers have used attribution theory (e.g., Heider, 1958) to explain how hiring managers make sense of and assign cause to applicants' atypical work experience (e.g., Wechtler et al., 2022). In this study, we are less focused on causal explanations hiring managers may form in their evaluation of candidate mobility. Rather, we focus on the strategic inferences hiring managers make about observable behavior and the implications those behaviors may have for the candidate's commitment and performance, if hired. For example, attribution theory would help a hiring manager answer the question, "What motivated this applicant to move from organization A to organization B?" whereas screening theory helps a manager answer the question, "How likely is it that this candidate will hop from our organization, too?" Put differently, screening theory is more appropriate for the present context because hiring managers are focused on whether job hoppers will leave their organization and not what might motivate them to do so. This shift in perspective prioritizes the distinction between the observable and unobservable to make strategic inferences (screening theory) rather than uncovering or assigning cause (attribution theory).

Study 1: Refining the Job-Hopping Construct Definition

The purpose of Study 1 was to develop a more precise definition of job hopping and situate it within the literature. Such a definition is needed due to the lack of consensus on several potential features of job hopping. First, the term "job hopping" has been used to describe a single instance of voluntary turnover (e.g., Gao et al., 2015), even though the theoretical underpinnings of the phenomenon imply that it

is a recurring experience (Ghiselli, 1974; Judge & Watanabe, 1995). Second, descriptions of job hopping are not consistent about what is being hopped from and to. Some researchers define job hopping exclusively as interorganizational moves (e.g., Fan & DeVaro, 2020; Steenackers & Guerry, 2016), while others do not specify whether job hopping includes inter- or intraorganizational moves (e.g., Becton et al., 2011). Finally, there is no agreement regarding the temporal aspect of job hopping; it is typically described vaguely such as "frequent" job changes (e.g., Lake et al., 2018; Steenackers & Guerry, 2016).

To resolve these inconsistencies, we used Podsakoff et al.'s (2016) multistep approach to create concept definitions. First, we searched the academic literature for definitions of job hopping (Table 1). Second, we gathered insights from practitioners regarding their definition and opinion of job hopping. Third, we thematically analyzed the existing definitions and practitioner insights to identify the key attributes of job hopping. Finally, we used the key attributes to form a definition for job hopping and compared it against similar concepts in the literature. We were also interested in understanding the nature of the job-hopping penalty, or what unobservable characteristics hiring managers infer from observable job-hopping behaviors.

Study 1: Method

Transparency and Openness

This and subsequent studies adhere to the methodological checklist put forth by the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Studies 1 and 2 received Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Iowa prior to beginning the research (Protocol No. 202309027, "Job-Hopping"; Protocol No. 202409517, "Job-Hopping During the Selection Process"). Data for Studies 3 and 4 did not require Institutional Review Board approval because they were archival and stripped of all personal identifying information. The raw data and analysis code for Studies 1 and 2 are available from the first author. The raw data and analysis code for Studies 3 and 4 are proprietary and not available. These studies were not pre-registered. Analyses were conducted via the *lavaan* package in R (Rosseel, 2012). Additional online material can be viewed on the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=e44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee.

Literature Search

To find definitions of job hopping, we searched APA PsycInfo, Business Source Complete, and Web of Science for peer-reviewed articles that contained "job hop" in any part of the publication. We also used Google Scholar to target our search within leading management journals.¹ These searches produced 336 articles, 27 of which defined job hopping (Table 1).

¹ These included the 10 journals in the Texas A&M/University of Georgia rankings as of January 2026: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Management Science*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Personnel Psychology*, and *Strategic Management Journal*.

Table 1*Summary of Existing Definitions for Job Hopping*

Citation	Definition	Key attribute(s) of definition	Components of job-hopping definition		
			Relatively frequent	Voluntary	Interorganizational
Becton et al. (2011)	"An employee's propensity to job-hop (which we label, going forward, as their degree of job mobility)" (p. 449).	Degree of job mobility	Implied	Implied	
Dhanapal et al. (2013)	"Employees who moved from one organization to another in search of better benefits or other basic requirements" (p. 71).	Frequent, interorganizational, advancement motive	Stated	Implied	Stated
Fallick et al. (2006)	"The practice of changing jobs frequently, especially as a means of quick financial gain or career advancement" (p. 71).	Rapid, between firms, within a geographic area	Stated	Implied	Stated
Fan and DeVaro (2020)	"The rapid movement of technically sophisticated employees between firms in the region" (p. 472).	Short tenure, voluntary, interorganizational	Implied	Stated	Stated
	"Switching employers after a short job tenure" (p. 84).				
	"The number of previous voluntary separations in a worker's job history" (p. 87).				
	"If a worker changes occupations but remains with the same employer, this is not defined as a job hop" (p. 87).				
Fahrenkopf et al. (2020)	"The rate at which individuals switch jobs" (p. 1601).	Rate of job change	Implied		
Friedell et al. (2011)	"Leaving an employer to advance one's career or increase one's personal career success" (p. 11).	Leaving employer, advancement motive		Stated	Stated
Gajda (2024)	"Within a short period of time, people employed in several companies were called job hoppers" (p. 148).	Short period of time, multiple employers, willingness to change	Stated	Stated	Stated
	"When work performed in one position does not last longer than two years. The essence of this phenomenon comes down to the willingness to change jobs frequently, resulting from the employee's own will" (p. 148).				
Gao et al. (2015)	"The case in which one executive leaves her current firm and subsequently takes an executive position in another firm the following year (in most cases, for greater pay and/or for a higher position)" (p. 203).	Leaves current firm for job in another firm, advancement motive, not forced		Stated	Stated
	"Some job-hopping events may be confounded with forced executive turnover ... an executive job-hopping event is regarded as 'forced turnover' if the press reports that the executive is fired, is forced out, or resigns due to pressure" (p. 206).				
Harrell (1960)	"Instability of residence" (p. 32).	Instability, multiple jobs within a time frame, applying for others	Stated		
	"This means having had three or more jobs during the preceding five years, or two jobs in the past two years and obviously to be applying for another" (p. 32).				
Hollister et al. (2025)	"Workers who continue to change employers frequently" (p. 232).	Continue to change, between employers, frequent	Stated	Implied	Stated
Hutami and Ramaditya (2025)	"Describes the tendency of employees to frequently change jobs, often within one-two years" (p. 258).	Tendency, frequent, proactive decision, alignment with goals	Stated	Stated	
	"A proactive decision by employees to seek roles that are better aligned with their personal and professional goals" (p. 258).				
Ivanovic and Ivancevic (2019)	"They move freely and frequently from company to company, not being attached to organizations and jobs" (p. 55).	Move freely, frequent, between companies, lack of attachment	Stated	Implied	Stated
Kalia et al. (2024)	"Frequent job change by the employees" (p. 103).	Frequent job change	Stated	Implied	

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

Citation	Definition	Key attribute(s) of definition	Components of job-hopping definition		
			Relatively frequent	Voluntary	Interorganizational
Khatri et al. (2001)	"An attitude or behaviour where employees migrate from one job to another irrespective of better alternatives or other apparently 'rational' motives" (p. 56).	Attitude or behavior, migration, lacks rational motive		Implied	
Krome et al. (2024)	"When professionals in any given field frequently move from one employment position to another quickly usually, within a year or two" (p. 75).	Frequent, not field specific, within a year or two	Stated	Implied	Implied
Lake et al. (2018)	"The practice of making frequent voluntary job changes" (p. 531). "Frequent movement from job to job" (p. 531).	Practice, frequent, voluntary	Stated	Stated	
Manjot and Sharma (2018)	"The process in which an individual changes his job frequently in a short span of time" (p. 33).	Process, frequent, short span of time	Stated	Implied	
Mtungwa (2009)	"Changing jobs very frequently without staying in one job for a reasonable time" (p. 64).	Very frequent, not staying for a reasonable time	Stated	Implied	
Mueller et al. (2021)	"Have been highly mobile across firm and industry environments throughout their professional career" (p. 1999).	High mobility, crosses firm and industry boundaries, longitudinal			Stated
Naresh and Rathnam (2015)	"Changing jobs frequently or moving from one job to another and between organizations. It is the practice of changing jobs frequently, especially as a means of quick financial gain or career advancement" (p. 38).	Frequently, between firms, advancement motive	Stated	Implied	Stated
Nguyen and Le (2022)	"The characteristic of a group of employees and workers to periodically switch position from one company to another, usually with the reasons of internal impulse and irrational thought" (p. 309).	Periodically, between companies, impulsive, irrational		Implied	Stated
Pandey (2019)	"The tendency of a person to work briefly in an organization in [a] particular position rather than staying in an organization for a longer time" (p. 41). "A tendency of switching over jobs in a given period of time" (p. 41).	Tendency, short tenure	Implied		Stated
Pawar and Pandit (2023)	"The frequent shifting of jobs by employees every one to two years, voluntarily" (p. 2). "The activity of changing jobs frequently within a period of two years" (p. 1). "An employee who works at his current job for less than one year can be termed a job hopper" (p. 2).	Frequent, within 1 or 2 years, voluntary	Stated	Stated	
Pranaya (2014)	"Someone who works briefly in one position after another rather than staying at any one job or organization long-term" (p. 67). "Although most people change jobs more frequently than was the case in the past, job hoppers do so more often" (p. 67). "A pattern of changing companies every year or two of one's own volition rather than as a result of something like a layoff or company closure" (p. 67).	Short tenure, relatively more frequent, pattern, between companies, every year or two, volitional	Stated	Stated	Stated
Steenackers and Guerry (2016)	"Frequently making voluntary inter-organizational transitions" (p. 495).	Frequent, voluntary, interorganizational	Stated	Stated	Stated
Tran et al. (2025)	"Employees tend to leave and seek new job vacancies regularly" (p. 1). "We solely consider voluntary inter-organizational changes when defining job hopping" (p. 3).	Leave and seek new jobs regularly, voluntary, interorganizational	Implied	Stated	Stated
Yuen (2016)	"Changing jobs frequently or within a short period of time is the core element when defining job hopping" (p. 10).	Frequently, within short period of time	Stated	Implied	

Participants and Procedure

We recruited HR practitioners from the authors' professional network via email or LinkedIn with an invitation to complete a survey housed in Qualtrics. We informed participants that the purpose of our research was to better understand how hiring managers view job hopping and provided them with a preliminary definition: "Job hopping refers to a pattern by which an individual frequently changes employers." We then asked four open-ended questions: (a) "What other features of job hopping might we be missing in our definition?"; (b) "When you are evaluating a resume, what do you see as indicators of job hopping?"; (c) "In your opinion, what rate of change constitutes job hopping (i.e., how many moves within what time frame?); and (d) "Do you view job hopping as inherently negative, positive, or neutral? Why do you think that?" Although we did not compensate participants, they appeared to take the survey seriously (e.g., median completion time was 8.47 min).

The survey was opened by 89 individuals, 28 of which did not answer any questions. Therefore, the final sample included responses from 61 HR practitioners who were 64% female (36% male) and 89% White (4% Black or African American, 4% Multiracial, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic/Latino). On average, participants were 37 years old ($SD = 11.77$). These demographics are in line with U.S. labor force statistics on HR workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025). Participants reported having hired an average of 272 individuals ($SD = 718.03$) throughout their career. Many industries were represented, with education (18%), finance and insurance (18%), and manufacturing (13%) being the most common.² Example job titles of participants included HR Generalist, Recruiting and Development Manager, and Talent Selection Analyst.

Practitioner insights were analyzed using inductive theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This involved a systematic process whereby the first two authors (a) independently analyzed the data for patterns of similar words, phrases, and sentiments; (b) organized the patterns of data into an initial set of themes; (c) coded the data to assess the prevalence of each theme; and (d) refined and named the final set of themes.³

Study 1: Results

The analysis revealed seven key themes related to job hopping. Three of the themes related to definitional components of job hopping, namely, that it represents (a) a pattern of *relatively frequent* job changes and job changes that are (b) *voluntary* and (c) *inter-organizational*. Two themes represented attributes that job hopping is perceived to reflect: commitment and performance. The last two themes related to potential boundary conditions that may influence the magnitude of the penalty imposed on job-hopping applicants: career progression and occupational change. Illustrative practitioner responses are presented in Table 2.

Defining Components of Job Hopping

Relatively Frequent Job Changes. The first component of job hopping focused on the relative frequency with which individuals have changed jobs. Most definitions of job hopping (81%) and nearly all the practitioners in our sample (97%) highlighted this component. Our use of the term "frequent" indicates that a single job change does not constitute job hopping, but rather a pattern of

changes that occurred within a short time frame. This is supported by the theoretical underpinnings of the phenomenon (e.g., Ghiselli, 1974; Judge & Watanabe, 1995) and research that has described job hopping as a tendency, pattern, or process (e.g., Pandey, 2019; Pranaya, 2014).

Recall that one challenge of current definitions is the lack of consensus on *how* frequently job hoppers move. To offer some resolution to this, we use the term "relatively" to indicate that job hopping is not defined by a specific frequency, but by a frequency that is higher than comparable others within a given context (e.g., the typical applicant pool, type of job; Wechtler et al., 2022). Because hiring managers pay attention to the sequence of positions that comprise applicants' experience (Van Iddekinge et al., 2019), they often have the information needed to identify applicants who changed jobs more frequently than others. As such, the exact lengths of tenure that define job hopping can vary by industry, vocation, or organization.

Voluntary Job Changes. The second component focused on job hopping as voluntary behavior such that job changes are employee-initiated rather than employer-initiated. Most (85%) job-hopping definitions (e.g., Gajda, 2024; Lake et al., 2018; Steenackers & Guerry, 2016) and almost half (47%) of the practitioners in our sample spoke to the voluntariness of job hopping either by directly stating it or implying it (Table 2). Voluntariness represents an important component of the job-hopping phenomenon because it captures one's agency to leave employers and ultimately is what drives hiring manager concerns about whether applicants would do so again if they were hired. As such, involuntary forms of turnover such as terminations and layoffs likely do not constitute job hopping because they are driven by organizations and not employees. The voluntary nature of job hopping presents a challenge to hiring managers when evaluating job hoppers. Although the frequency of previous job changes is observable, the voluntariness of those changes is generally not observable and must be inferred. Nevertheless, given the literature and our data, we consider voluntariness to be a core component of job hopping. Notably, voluntary turnover that occurs for reasons outside of an individual's control (e.g., health issues, moving away to follow a spouse; M. A. Campion, 1991) would not be considered job hopping.

Interorganizational Job Changes. The final component of job hopping focused on the interorganizational nature of job changes. More than half (59%) of job-hopping definitions and about half (45%) of the practitioners discussed job hopping as involving changes between organizations or employers. For example, practitioners described "leaving *employers*" or applicants having "multiple *companies* on their resume." This is an important distinction because most internal job changes (e.g., job rotations, exploratory programs) are based on the needs of the organization rather than employee choice (M. A. Campion et al., 1994). As such, hiring managers are not likely to view transitions between departments, teams, or units within an organization as separate experiences like they would interorganizational transitions.

² The industry and role of all participants can be found in additional online Table A1 at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=ef44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee.

³ A detailed description of our thematic analysis procedure can be found in additional online Table A2 at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=ef44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee.

Table 2*Illustrative Quotations From Practitioners About Job Hopping (Study 1)*

Component/attribute/boundary condition	Illustrative quotation
Components of job-hopping definition	
Relatively frequent changes (93% of respondents)	<p>"I consider someone a job hopper if they show multiple job changes in a short amount of time. I usually give one free pass, but if I see that there has been 2–3 changes in someone's employment where they were on board less than 2 years, I question their ability to stick out hard times." (P8)</p> <p>"I think for me its repetition. Three short jobs in a row (under 1 year each) would be job hopping for me. Sometimes there extenuating circumstances, so for me it really only counts as job hopping if it happens three or more times in a row." (P32)</p> <p>"A pattern that trends to multiple positions lasting sometimes less than a year or two to three years. That is what captures the resume reviewers' attention is the number of positions and the duration of the positions." (P34)</p> <p>"I look at patterns. Is this something that is consistent throughout the resume, or was it a situation where it happened for a short time period? I also look at work gaps and the time between jobs." (P49)</p>
Voluntary changes (47% of respondents)	<p>"With the potentially negative connotation of the phrase 'job hopping,' including something along the lines of '... by which an individual willfully changes employers frequently' helps capture intent. 'Hopping' seems to suggest intention and that should be reflected in the definition." (P15)</p> <p>"When I think of job hopping, I think of people that voluntarily do this; they're choosing to move from company to company as opposed to being laid off or fired." (P16)</p> <p>"I think it should also be stated that the employee voluntarily changes their job frequently. Not due to layoffs or termination." (P43)</p> <p>"Something that clarifies or emphasizes the action of switching employers is their choice, rather than being the result of potentially working for a series of failed startups where the need to find a new employer wasn't optional." (P56)</p>
Interorganizational changes (45% of respondents)	<p>"If someone changes jobs every year at different companies that constitutes job hopping in my mind." (P14)</p> <p>"I think a string of positions at different companies that last 1 year to 18 months. Seeing this 3+ times in a row will prompt me to ask why the candidate has left prior roles." (P15)</p> <p>"[A job hopper] works for a different company every 1–2 years." (P17)</p> <p>"Individuals who work at multiple different companies/positions for periods shorter than 1–2 years." (P40)</p>
Attributes signaled by job hopping	
Commitment (33% of respondents)	<p>"Job hopping causes an employer to question whether a candidate will stick around long enough to add value to the company." (P14)</p> <p>"Job hopping causes me concern when evaluating a resume because I'm afraid of their long-term future with our organization. If hiring someone, I'd like to be confident that we can invest training, education and professional development to create a long-term leader that benefits our organization and team." (P15)</p> <p>"A lot of the positions at our company take 2–3 years to be efficient at them. If the individual leaves all their jobs within 3 years of starting, the trend would be that they would just get competent at their job and then they would leave." (P39)</p> <p>"It is a red flag to me as a hiring manager to see multiple jobs in a short period of time as it may indicate lack of commitment or motivation." (P53)</p> <p>"If [an applicant] moved jobs once a year, I would be concerned about their commitment to the role they are applying for." (P60)</p>
Performance (28% of respondents)	<p>"Typically job hopping is a negative thing because it often means that the individual causes issues and can negatively affect the culture of the organization." (P4)</p> <p>"A person who frequently changes jobs shows a certain lack of stability and that's not good to work with or around." (P13)</p> <p>"If [an applicant had] 3 jobs in 1 year then I would view it as a performance flag." (P17)</p> <p>"Job hopping could be positive if it is done as career advancement. It can be negative if it does not provide a clear benefit. This could be indicative of a problem person who starts over due to the inability to maintain positive working relationships." (P55)</p> <p>"Less than 1 year at multiple jobs would be concerning. It would raise a red flag that the individual is changing jobs due to underperformance." (P57)</p> <p>"Companies don't usually lay off top performers. If you are joining more than 1–2 companies quickly doing layoffs you probably aren't doing your research before joining therefore, we assume job hopper." (P58)</p>
Boundary conditions influencing the job-hopping penalty	
Career progression (37% of respondents)	<p>"I typically consider job hopping to be anything under about 12–18 months at one job before moving on. I don't hold this against someone who shows their upward mobility through changing organizations." (P27)</p> <p>"It depends on what type of job they changed to. If it's clear that the changes in job were all promotions, I would view that as positive. To me, it means that they are good at what they do and quickly can learn. If it's lateral, I pause. If it's a demotion type of job, I view that negatively." (P31)</p>

(table continues)

Table 2 (continued)

Component/attribute/boundary condition	Illustrative quotation
Occupational change (17% of respondents)	"If a candidate is job hopping and clearly getting into positions with more responsibility than they had previously, I think of that as positive job hopping. Versus job hopping to various jobs, same levels of responsibilities, varied types of jobs would be negative." (P33)
	"Depends on the career path- if it was to move up it may be positive, if it is a lateral move it would be a red flag." (P37)
	"I also like to look at the trajectory of roles—are they working their way up a ladder or did they make a career change? That is more appealing to me than someone who just moves laterally from organization to organization for short periods of time with no clear path." (P50)
	"Frequent job changes in similar role types. If they are changing industry or position type, I am generally not worried. If they are going from one job to another in under six months and it is from one sales job to another, I view that as a red flag." (P3)
	"Usually the employers are quite different and the jobs may be very different." (P21)
	"Not only changes employers but may change career paths as well or completely different industries within a short time frame." (P42)
	"I also find it concerning when they completely change career paths/industries." (P47)

Based on these findings, we define job hopping as a *perceived pattern of behavior that reflects a relatively high frequency of voluntary and interorganizational job changes*. This definition recognizes that job hopping represents a subjective inference made by a hiring manager based on applicants' objective mobility behaviors. Screening theory supports this view with its fundamental argument that screener inferences are based on incomplete or ambiguous information and, thus, may be flawed, biased, or incorrect. Indeed, a key contribution of the present study is our examination of the validity of these inferences and whether they are merited.

Distinguishing Job Hopping From Other Concepts

Now that we have defined job hopping, it is important to understand its relationship with related but distinct concepts. Table 3 summarizes the similarities and differences between job hopping and these concepts. We leveraged our open-ended data and the literature in our evaluation of job hopping, and we relied on the literature in our evaluation of related constructs. We assessed whether the three components of job hopping just described are necessary and/or sufficient for related concepts. Perhaps the most closely related concept is "hobo syndrome," which was the origin of job hopping that positioned it as a disposition and from the perspective of the job hopper rather than organizational decision-maker (Ghiselli, 1974). Like job hopping, voluntariness is a necessary aspect of hobo

syndrome, yet the relative frequency and interorganizational nature of changes are not definitionally required (although often implied). Similarly, *voluntary turnover* represents a single, employee-initiated departure (Hom et al., 2017), while job hopping involves a pattern of relatively frequent voluntary departures.

The broader concept of *job mobility* describes the extent to which one has changed jobs, organizations, or occupations throughout their career (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Job mobility does not specify frequency, whether it is interorganizational, and whether it is voluntary. That said, job hopping could be considered an extreme form of mobility. Job hopping is also distinct from more specific forms and patterns of mobility. For example, *boundaryless careers* "involve sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings" (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994, p. 307), and *protean careers* are self-directed according to personal values and not organizational rewards (Hall, 2004). Boundaryless and protean careers may be conducive to job hopping yet are not bound by a relative frequency or interorganizational nature.

Overall, the definition we provide distinguishes job hopping from other constructs by focusing on the relative frequency of voluntary and interorganizational movements. Moreover, in line with screening theory, job hopping centers on the inferences recruiters make from observable behaviors (i.e., job changes) rather than on causes of movement (e.g., personal values), which are central to constructs such as protean careers.

Table 3
Necessary and Implied Components of Job Hopping

Concept	Components of job-hopping definition			
	Relatively frequent	Voluntary	Interorganizational	All three components
Job hopping	Necessary	Necessary	Necessary	Necessary
Hobo syndrome	Often implied but not necessary	Necessary	Often implied but not necessary	Often implied but not necessary
Voluntary turnover	Not necessary	Necessary	Often implied but not necessary	Not necessary
Job mobility	Not necessary	Not necessary	Not necessary	Not necessary
Boundaryless career	Not necessary	Necessary	Often implied but not necessary	Not necessary
Protean career	Not necessary	Necessary	Not necessary	Not necessary

Note. Components deemed "necessary" are essential to the job-hopping concept but may not be unique to job hopping. Components deemed "sufficient" are unique to the job-hopping concept (Podsakoff et al., 2016).

Unobservable Attributes of the Job-Hopping Penalty

Expected Commitment. The first and most prevalent unobservable attribute participants thought job hopping signaled was *expected commitment* (33% of respondents), or an individual's psychological attachment to an organization (Solinger et al., 2008). In various ways, participants indicated that a higher number and frequency of transitions caused them to question the level of dedication applicants will have to their organization and, thus, their retention potential. Given commitment is volitional (Klein et al., 2012), hiring managers view applicants with a history of job hopping as "flight risks" (Galperin et al., 2020). Indeed, research has supported the idea that higher levels of past mobility predict future mobility (e.g., Becton et al., 2011; Judge & Watanabe, 1995). Some participants took this further, suggesting that job hopping signals a lack of commitment and "shows a certain lack of stability that's not good to work with or around." Although employees feel and show commitment differently (e.g., Maertz & Campion, 2004), participants seem to penalize job hoppers by questioning their retention potential due to lack of commitment.

Expected Performance. The second attribute participants mentioned was *expected performance* (28% of respondents), or individual behavior that generates value for the organization. These responses indicated that job hopping could signal poor performance, even suggesting that applicants "did not achieve any significant outcomes while employed with previous employers." Responses also suggested that individuals might job hop because they are repeatedly frustrated by their own underperformance or inability to "get themselves figured out." Although participants agreed that job hopping is voluntary, some noted that it could raise the question of whether applicants "get fired a lot." Higher performing employees typically have more opportunities to make career transitions (Call et al., 2015); thus, hopping could alternatively represent "high-flyers" looking for job opportunities that match their capabilities. Generally, however, participants penalize job hoppers by questioning their past performance and future performance potential.

Potential Boundary Conditions Influencing the Job-Hopping Penalty

Our data revealed two key boundary conditions that may alter how hiring managers perceive job hopping. The first was *career progression*, which reflects whether an applicant's career transitions were upward or lateral (37% of respondents). Participants indicated that upward mobility buffers negative perceptions of job hopping. Some even remarked that they "don't hold [job hopping] against someone who shows their upward mobility." Participants also noted that job hopping in early career stages is less of a concern because that is a time when individuals are rapidly gaining knowledge and experience. Thus, changes in hierarchy or responsibility across jobs (or the lack of) meaningfully influence perceptions of job hopping.

The second was *occupational change*, which reflects whether individuals have changed or remained in the same occupation throughout their career (17% of respondents). Feldman and Ng (2007) suggested that occupational transitions "require fundamentally new skills, routines, and work environments" as well as "fundamentally new training, education, or vocational preparation" (p. 352). As such, occupational changes often represent larger transitions than job or organizational changes. Unlike career

progression, however, occupational changes across a job hopper's work history did not appear to uniformly influence participants' perceptions positively or negatively. On one hand, some remarked that occupational changes were concerning. For example, participants noted that they are more skeptical of applicants who have "roles unrelated to each other" and that occupational changes "make [them] question if they know what they want for a career." Other participants suggested that occupational consistency was a concern. As one participant remarked, "If they are changing industry or position type, I am generally not worried. If they are going from one sales job to another, I view that as a red flag." These differing views suggest that occupational changes within a job hopper's work history are salient to decision-makers, yet the implications of those changes may be unclear.

Study 1: Discussion

Based on a review of the definitions of job hopping and related concepts in the literature, as well as analysis of text-based data from HR practitioners, we clarify the construct of job hopping. We found that job hopping reflects a relatively high frequency of voluntary and interorganizational job changes and, along with a review of the current literature, advanced this as the definition of the construct. These findings track with the broader resume screening literature, which suggests that resumes offer valuable and verifiable information about an applicant's work history (Chen et al., 2011) and that hiring managers attend to work and educational experiences that influence perceptions of applicants' qualifications (Cole et al., 2007). We also uncovered that hiring managers may penalize job hoppers by interpreting their mobility as representing low commitment and poor performance. This underscored the importance of screening theory, which suggests that unobservable characteristics must be inferred from observable behaviors. Commitment and performance are two unobservable attributes that practitioners deemed relevant to predicting applicants' future turnover potential. This enriches our understanding of the nature of the job-hopping penalty. Finally, we found preliminary evidence that career progression and occupational changes (or the lack thereof) may dampen the degree of concern job hopping produces.

Study 2: Hiring Manager Perceptions and Evaluations of Job Hopping

In this study, we leverage the findings of Study 1 to test (a) the job-hopping penalty, (b) inferences that form the penalty (i.e., expected commitment and performance), and (c) whether career progression can dampen the penalty. Research suggests that job hoppers are less likely to receive callbacks (Hollister et al., 2025) or interviews (Wechtler et al., 2022), which offers initial evidence of the penalty. According to screening theory, this is because organizational decision-makers view observable behavior (e.g., job hopping) to represent undesirable unobservable characteristics (e.g., low commitment). Decision-makers then make the strategic inference that an applicant who hopped before will hop again. Thus, as a baseline hypothesis, we posit the following:

Hypothesis 1: Job hopping will be negatively related to applicant evaluations.

Expected Commitment and Performance as Mediators

In Study 1, we found that hiring managers interpreted job-hopping behavior as a signal of low commitment and/or poor performance. We theorize that these inferences drive how hiring managers evaluate job hopping and therefore partially explain the job-hopping penalty. Given the cost of turnover, hiring managers are interested in estimating the likelihood that an applicant would stay, if hired. Indeed, organizational commitment is a well-established antecedent of retention (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Screening theory proposes that hiring managers may view applicants' employment history—an observable attribute—as an indicator of past and future commitment. Given job hopping involves multiple relatively short employment relationships, hiring managers may question the future commitment of applicants. Individuals who have repeatedly left jobs in the past are likely to continue the pattern (Judge & Watanabe, 1995).

Job hopping may also produce concerns regarding applicants' past and future performance. For example, human capital theory (Becker, 1964) suggests that longer job tenure signals greater potential for productivity because employees develop knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics critical for performance over time. Therefore, a relatively high frequency of job transitions may cause hiring managers to wonder whether the applicant has spent enough time in their roles to become proficient. Further, hiring managers may interpret job hopping as a signal that applicants have not been successful in previous jobs due to poor performance (Griffeth et al., 2000). Taken together, we theorize that hiring managers will interpret job hopping as an indication of low commitment and poor performance, thus driving them to penalize job-hopping applicants. We hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Job hopping will be negatively related to hiring manager perceptions of expected (a) commitment and (b) performance.

Hypothesis 3: Job hopping will have an indirect effect on applicant evaluations through hiring manager perceptions of expected (a) commitment and (b) performance.

Career Progression as a Moderator

As uncovered in Study 1, hiring managers may be less likely to penalize job hopping if it seems to indicate career progression. Upward transitions (e.g., promotions) typically involve increased responsibility, which can positively impact outcomes such as pay and satisfaction (Bidwell & Mollick, 2015). As such, upward movements are observable behaviors that represent career advancement and may help explain why the applicant has moved more frequently (e.g., high performance; M. C. Campion et al., 2023; Ng et al., 2007). In contrast, lateral transitions do not represent changes in hierarchical level, nor do they typically involve increases in responsibility. Thus, lateral transitions do not convey clear information about desirable unobservable characteristics (Bidwell & Keller, 2025). Accordingly, evidence of career progression may weaken hiring managers' perceptions of low commitment and poor performance and, in turn, the extent to which they penalize job hoppers. Together, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 4: Career progression will moderate the negative effect of job hopping on (a) expected commitment and (b)

expected performance, such that the relationships will be weaker when applicants show career progression.

Hypothesis 5: Career progression will moderate the indirect effect of job hopping on applicant evaluations through hiring manager perceptions of expected (a) commitment and (b) performance, such that the indirect effect will be weaker when applicants show career progression.

Study 2: Method

This study used a vignette experimental design in which hiring managers made decisions about realistic hiring scenarios (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). This approach allowed us to control independent variables while maintaining experimental realism, thus enhancing both internal and external validity. We developed a set of fictitious resumes and carefully manipulated their content according to our hypotheses, and then, we recruited actual hiring managers to make judgments.

Manipulations

The *job-hopping manipulation* consisted of two conditions: job hopping and non-job hopping. We considered several factors when determining the frequency of movements within these conditions. First, we sought to reflect the fact that job hopping involves a higher frequency of career transitions relative to the norm. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) reports that individuals with a bachelor's degree hold approximately four jobs between the ages of 25 and 34. This aligns with the responses from Study 1, which suggested that career transitions every 2 or 3 years during this postgraduation timeframe would be considered typical. Therefore, the job-hopping condition included five jobs within 6 years, and the non-job-hopping condition included two jobs within 6 years, which were above and below the norm and still realistic.

The *career progression manipulation* consisted of two conditions: an applicant making upward transitions and an applicant making lateral transitions. The upward transition condition included two promotions out of six jobs for job-hopping applicants and one promotion out of two jobs for non-job-hopping applicants. Beginning positions were given the title of "marketing assistant" and included bullet points commensurate with an entry-level role. Jobs after promotion included elevated titles such as "marketing manager" and bullet points denoting increases in responsibility. The lateral transition condition included no such changes in responsibility or title.⁴

As manipulation checks in the pilot and the main Study 2, we asked questions pertaining to each manipulation after participants rated their four applicants. We did so at the end to avoid priming. These checks assessed whether participants recognized the objective information that may lead to the inference of job hopping, in line with our theorizing. To assess the job-hopping manipulation, we asked participants to indicate "about how many jobs did [fictitious applicant] list on their resume?" with options of "two," "five," and

⁴ The experiment also included an "occupational change" manipulation consisting of two conditions: an applicant changing their occupation between jobs and an applicant remaining in the same occupation across jobs. However, an anonymous reviewer noted that occupational change and career progression were potential confounds. As such, we did not examine occupational change as a focal variable but controlled for it in all analyses.

"I don't remember." To assess the career progression manipulation, we asked participants to indicate "which best describes the nature of [fictitious applicant's] jobs over time?" with options of "some upward movement (e.g., promotions, increases in responsibility)" and "only lateral movement (no promotions, no increases in responsibility)." We also used participants' open-ended responses as a secondary source of information to assess the efficacy of the manipulations.

Resume Development

Resumes were designed using a modern-looking template, which included sections for education, core skills, and work experience. We used common White male names to avoid gender and race effects (Dipboye et al., 1975). All fictitious applicants received a bachelor's degree in marketing from the same public university in 2018, which allowed us to standardize the amount of time applicants spent in the workforce after receiving their degree. In addition, all resumes listed 10 technical skills relevant to the marketing manager position. Example skills are Search Engine Optimization, Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Illustrator), and social media marketing (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube). All applicants displayed the same skills, which appeared on the resumes in randomized order.

The bullet points listed under each work experience were initially created by ChatGPT (Version 4o) and were reviewed and revised by the author team using O*NET to ensure accuracy of the job duties. We took careful steps to ensure that this information was realistic and similar across resumes, so as not to advantage any particular applicant. Each resume displayed the same total number of bullet points with roughly the same number of words. All resumes are provided in the additional online material at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=ef44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee.

It is worth noting that although voluntariness is part of our conceptualization of job hopping, there was no way to tell from the resumes whether movements were voluntary. Voluntariness was not explicitly communicated, which aligns with actual resume screening contexts. Despite this, participants still inferred voluntariness. We ran a topic model on the qualitative evaluations of the resumes from the main data in this study and found one topic representing concerns about voluntary movement. We tested whether the distribution of the topic probabilities between candidates with job-hopping resumes was statistically different from those without. We used the Mann-Whitney test to accommodate the bounded and skewed nature of probabilities (Chicco et al., 2025) and found that the two groups statistically differed on this topic ($U = 19,167, p < .001$). Details of these analyses are in the additional online material.

Pilot Test of the Experimental Materials

To test the efficacy of resume manipulations, we conducted a pilot study using the online platform Prolific ($N = 67$). Participants were compensated \$10 for completing the survey. We recruited only participants who indicated that they were full-time employees and had decision-making responsibilities related to hiring in their current role. Participants were presented with the resumes one at a time in random order and were asked to evaluate each. Of the 67 participants, 63 (94.02%) correctly identified the job-hopping manipulation check and 65 participants (97.01%) identified the career progression manipulation check.

Repeated-measures analysis of variance revealed mean differences consistent with our expectations. Specifically, participants rated job-hopping applicants lower than non-job-hopping applicants ($M = 2.96$ vs. 4.02), $F(1, 66) = 55.53, p < .001, d = 1.00$, and job-hopping applicants with career progression higher than job-hopping applicants without career progression ($M = 3.26$ vs. 2.74), $F(1, 33) = 10.32, p < .01, d = 0.42$. This provided evidence that our manipulation worked and supported use of this design in a study of hiring managers.

Participants and Procedure

The sample comprised 89 hiring managers participating in a university career fair during Spring 2025. We recruited participants in two ways. First, 1 month prior to the career fair, we emailed representatives of participating companies and invited them to participate in the study while at the career fair. Second, the first two authors attended the career fair and invited hiring managers to join the study. Four participants did not provide enough data to conduct comparisons (i.e., only rated one applicant), and one participant failed both manipulation checks. After excluding these cases, the final sample size was 84.

The sample was 79% female (21% male) and 88% White (5% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Multiracial, 2% Asian, 1% did not report). The average age was 36 years old ($SD = 10.34$). On average, participants had worked in a hiring capacity for 8 years ($SD = 6.49$) and hired 184 employees ($SD = 227.48$). An array of industries was represented, with educational services (18%), finance and insurance (18%), and manufacturing (13%) being the most common.

We administered the study in a room in the same building as the career fair. This helped enhance experimental realism by conducting the study in hiring managers' natural setting because they were recruiting for hiring in their organizations at the event. The experiment followed a 2×2 factorial design where the job-hopping conditions (job hopping vs. non-job hopping) were crossed with the career progression conditions (upward transitions vs. lateral transitions). Thus, each participant received four total resumes to evaluate, which were presented one at a time in random order. Participants were instructed to imagine that they were filling a position for a marketing manager. After each resume was shown, participants were asked to describe their first impressions of the applicant in a text box, rate commitment and performance, and make an evaluation. This procedure mimicked a real hiring scenario, which is important for obtaining realistic responses (Aiman-Smith et al., 2002). It took participants approximately 50 min to complete the study, and they were given a \$15 gift card for participating.

Measures

Given that participants were tasked with completing ratings for multiple applicants, we used concise scales to minimize fatigue and ensure clarity. All items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Expected Commitment. Two items adapted from Galperin et al. (2020) asked participants the degree to which they expected each applicant would "be committed to the organization" and "continue working for the organization long term." The average Cronbach's α across conditions was .83 (ranging from .77 to .91).

Expected Performance. Three items from Roth et al.'s (2020) in-role performance scale asked participants to rate the extent to

which they believed the applicant would “perform tasks that are expected of them,” “adequately complete assigned duties,” and “meet formal performance requirements of the job.” The average α was .90 (ranging from .87 to .92).

Applicant Evaluation. Participants evaluated each candidate using three items adapted from Stevens and Kristof (1995) and Higgins and Judge (2004). The items were “This person is attractive as a potential employee of the organization,” “It is likely that I would recommend this person should be hired,” and “I have a positive overall evaluation of this person.” The average Cronbach’s α across conditions was .91 (ranging from .87 to .94).

Controls. We also measured risk aversion, age, gender, and race due to their potential influence on the applicant screening process (Baert, 2018a, 2018b). However, no significant differences in these variables were found between groups, and the results of the hypothesis tests did not change when they are included in the analyses. Therefore, we test our hypotheses without these control variables. However, we controlled for occupational change (see Footnote 4).

Analytic Approach

Because participants rated multiple applicants, we used cluster-robust standard errors to account for within-person effects (McNeish et al., 2017). We used full information maximum likelihood estimation to account for missing data at the scale level (Newman, 2014). Mediation was assessed by constructing indirect effects path models and calculating confidence intervals using the parametric Monte Carlo method with 10,000 replications (Preacher & Selig, 2012). Due to our directional hypotheses, all analyses use one-tailed tests (Hales, 2024).

Study 2: Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 4.⁵ The means and standard deviations for all variables across experimental conditions are reported in additional online Table B2 at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=ef44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee. Confirmatory factor analyses of the measurement model demonstrated an acceptable fit, $\chi^2(17) = 54.26$ ($p < .001$), comparative fit index = .986, Tucker–Lewis index = .977, root-mean-square error of approximation = .081 (90% CI [.06, 0.11]), standardized root-mean-square residual = .017 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Table 5 presents the path analysis for the direct effects, and Table 6 presents the indirect and conditional indirect effects. Hypothesis 1 predicted that job hopping would be negatively related to applicant evaluations. Controlling for career progression and occupational change, applicants in the job-hopping condition received significantly lower evaluations ($b = -1.08$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$), such that job hoppers received applicant ratings 1.08 points lower than non-job hoppers. As such, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that job hopping would be negatively related to hiring manager perceptions of expected (a) commitment and (b) performance. Job hopping was negatively related to expected commitment ($b = -1.78$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$) and expected performance ($b = -0.38$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$), controlling for career progression and occupational change. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that job hopping would have an indirect effect on applicant evaluations through hiring manager perceptions of

expected commitment and performance. Table 6 shows that the indirect effects through both expected commitment ($b = -1.34$, $SE = .11$, $p < .001$, 90% CI [-1.53, -1.16]) and expected performance ($b = -0.36$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$, 90% CI [-0.48, -0.24]) were statistically significant, controlling for career progression and occupational change. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that career progression would moderate the relationship between job hopping and expected (a) commitment and (b) performance. Table 5 shows that career progression did not moderate the relationship between job hopping and expected commitment ($b = 0.22$, $SE = .16$, $p = .09$). However, its impact on the relationship between job hopping and expected performance was marginally significant ($b = 0.19$, $SE = .12$, $p = .05$). Thus, we found some support for Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that the negative indirect effect of job hopping on applicant evaluations through hiring manager perceptions of expected commitment and performance would be conditional on career progression. As shown in Table 6, the indirect effects were not conditional on career progression for either expected commitment ($b = 0.16$, $SE = .13$, $p = .11$, 90% CI [-0.06, 0.38]) or expected performance ($b = 0.16$, $SE = .13$, $p = .11$, 90% CI [-0.05, 0.38]), and thus, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

Supplemental Analyses

Although the indirect effects of job hopping on applicant evaluations through expected commitment and performance were not conditional on career progression, theory and the results of Study 1 support career progression as a potential moderator. Thus, we explored whether career progression moderated the direct relationship between job hopping and applicant evaluations. Career progression weakened the negative effect of job hopping on applicant evaluations ($b = 0.35$, $SE = .17$, $p = .02$). Simple slopes analysis revealed that the relationship was significant at both levels of career progression. However, the effect was more pronounced when there was no career progression ($b = -1.17$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$) than when there was career progression ($b = -0.82$, $SE = .16$, $p < .001$). This suggests that job hoppers with evidence of career progression received higher evaluation ratings than those without (see Figure B2 in the additional online materials).

Study 2: Discussion

Study 2 extended the findings of Study 1 by demonstrating that hiring managers penalize job-hopping applicants and that penalty is sizable with an average difference in application ratings of 1.09 points on a 5-point scale. Furthermore, hiring manager perceptions of applicants’ expected commitment and performance partially explained the negative relationship between job hopping and ratings. Although career progression did not moderate this indirect effect, career progression moderated the direct effect between job hopping and ratings. Job hoppers who progressed in their career

⁵ The correlation between job hopping and expected commitment was $-.86$. Our theorizing that job hopping may lead decision-makers to penalize job applicants (i.e., because they are expected to have low commitment) supports these two variables being strongly related. Moreover, research has found that variable manipulations in controlled settings often produce stronger relationships than expected in applied settings (e.g., Sauer & Drummond, 2020).

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (Study 2)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Job hopping	0.50	0.50	—					
2. Career progression ^a	0.50	0.50		—				
3. Occupational change ^b	0.50	0.50			—			
4. Expected commitment	2.92	1.14	-.86***	.12	.05	(.83)		
5. Expected performance	3.59	0.70	-.39***	.40***	-.23**	.49***	(.90)	
6. Applicant evaluation	3.11	1.00	-.67***	.35***	-.15	.77***	.72***	(.91)

Note. *N* = 335. Estimates are repeated-measures correlations. Variables 1–3 were coded as 1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*. Variables 4–6 were rated on a 5-point scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The average Cronbach's α across conditions is reported on the diagonal.

^a*n* = 168. ^b*n* = 168.

p* < .01. *p* < .001 (two-tailed).

were less penalized than those who had not. This suggests that although career progression may impact the relationship between job hopping and applicant ratings, it does not seem to operate through expected commitment or performance.

Study 3: Evaluating the Validity of the Job-Hopping Penalty in an Operational Context

Studies 1 and 2 revealed that HR practitioners tend to penalize job-hopping applicants. In this study, we test the merit of the job-hopping penalty by evaluating the relationship between job hopping and outcomes in an operational setting. This is important because hiring managers are often presented with a large pool of applicants possessing a wider range of characteristics than what we could simulate in Study 2. Further, actual hiring decisions are influenced by other information (e.g., applicant interview responses) and contextual factors (e.g., hiring needs). As such, it is important to determine whether job hopping influences actual hiring decisions.

Based on the same theoretical logic as Hypothesis 1, we theorize that decision-makers interpret applicants' observable behavior (e.g., job hopping) as representative of unobservable characteristics (e.g., expected commitment and performance). When these observable behaviors are interpreted as representing undesirable unobservable

characteristics, hiring managers are more likely to penalize applicants in the form of fewer job offers (Hollister et al., 2025). Given the totality of our findings thus far, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 6: There will be a negative relationship between applicant job-hopping scores and the likelihood of receiving a job offer.

The practitioners in Study 1 suggested that job-hopping applicants are at greater risk of turning over due to their multiple and frequent prior transitions. From a screening theory perspective, job hopping may no longer represent an unobservable attribute that the screener is inferring. Rather, job hopping is demonstrated by an observable history of turnover. According to behavioral consistency theory (Wernimont & Campbell, 1968), selection procedures offer the most criterion-related validity when they measure behaviors that "are as similar to the criterion or criteria as possible" (p. 373). Research on similar phenomena supports this perspective. For example, Arnold et al. (2021) found that "boomerang" hires—those who leave an organization and are later rehired by that same organization—are more likely to turn over than those who are promoted and external hires. In our case, job hopping (i.e., the

Table 5
Path Analysis Results for Direct Effects of Job Hopping on Applicant Evaluation, Expected Commitment, and Expected Performance (Study 2)

Variable	DV: Applicant evaluation		DV: Expected commitment		DV: Expected performance	
	H1	H2	H2a	H4a	H2b	H4b
Intercept	3.59*** (.08)	-.28 (.25)	3.75*** (.07)	3.78*** (.07)	3.73*** (.08)	3.75*** (.08)
Controls						
Career progression	0.36*** (.09)	.17** (.07)	0.11** (.06)		0.24*** (.08)	
Occupational change	-.08 (.09)	-.12* (.06)	0.18* (.08)	0.18** (.08)	-.06 (.08)	-.06 (.08)
Predictors						
Job hopping	-1.08*** (.09)	-.08 (.11)	-1.78*** (.08)	-1.84*** (.09)	-.38*** (.07)	-.43*** (.07)
Career progression				-.01 (.09)		0.15 (.09)
Mediators						
Expected commitment		.43*** (.06)				
Expected performance		.60*** (.07)				
Interaction term						
Job Hopping $\times$ Career Progression				0.22 (.16)		0.19* (.12)
<i>R</i> ²	.32	.70	.62	.62	.10	.11

Note. *N* = 335 observations from 84 raters. Unstandardized coefficients are presented with standard errors in parentheses. DV = dependent variable; H = hypothesis.

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001 (one-tailed).

Table 6

Indirect and Conditional Indirect Effects of Job Hopping on Applicant Evaluations (Study 2)

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	[90% CI]
Mediator: Expected commitment				
Indirect effect (H3a)	−1.34	.11	<.001	[−1.53, −1.16]
Conditional indirect effect				
No career progression (0)	−1.34	.11	<.001	[−1.53, −1.16]
Career progression (1)	−1.18	.14	<.001	[−1.43, −0.95]
Difference	0.16	.13	.11	[−0.06, 0.38]
Mediator: Expected performance				
Indirect effect (H3b)	−0.36	.07	<.001	[−0.48, −0.24]
Conditional indirect effect				
No career progression (0)	−0.36	.07	<.001	[−0.48, −0.24]
Career progression (1)	−0.20	.11	.04	[−0.39, −0.02]
Difference	0.16	.13	.11	[−0.05, 0.38]

Note. *N* = 335 observations from 84 raters. Unstandardized coefficients are presented; 90% CIs were calculated using 10,000 Monte Carlo replications. Difference refers to the absolute difference between the indirect effect when there is no career progression (0) and the indirect effect when there is career progression (1); *p* values are one-tailed. *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE* = standard error; CI = confidence interval; H = hypothesis.

predictor) and turnover (i.e., the criterion) are closely aligned behaviors, making job hopping one of the most direct screens available to decision-makers for predicting possible future turnover. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 7: There will be a positive relationship between applicant job-hopping scores and subsequent turnover.

Study 2 revealed that hiring managers associated job hopping with lower potential performance, and this was a key reason why they viewed job-hopping applicants less favorably. Unlike turnover where the screen itself (i.e., prior job hopping) represents the exact criterion (i.e., future turnover), predicting future performance requires decision-makers to infer applicant's capacity to perform. Research on mobility suggests that workers who spend less time in a job have fewer opportunities to become proficient due to the "ramp-up" period that must occur before a worker can perform fully (e.g., Bidwell, 2011). Literature on job rotations similarly shows that workers who spend less time in each job tend to have lower performance due to a learning curve (e.g., M. A. Campion et al., 1994; M. C. Campion et al., 2023). Decision-makers may interpret job hopping as representing a candidate's insufficient skill development, thus constraining their future performance (Griffeth et al., 2000). As such, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 8: There will be a negative relationship between applicant job-hopping scores and subsequent job performance.

In Study 2, we theorized that upward transitions signaling career progress would moderate the relationship between job hopping and applicant evaluations. We theorized that career progression conveyed increased responsibilities and knowledge, skills, and abilities relevant to future performance potential (Bidwell & Mollick, 2015; Ng et al., 2005). Due to the strength of the signal, we argued it would weaken the job-hopping penalty. Indeed, we found support that

career progression moderated the direct effect between job hopping and application evaluations.

In the present study, we examine entry-level workers who likely have not spent sufficient time in the workforce to move hierarchically. For entry-level positions, we argue that applicants' accumulated experience relevant to the position for which they are applying may similarly weaken the impact of job hopping because it conveys observable and desirable knowledge, skills, and abilities (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Consider two applicants for a sales role, each with three jobs averaging 20 months of tenure over the past 6 years. One applicant has worked in sales in three industries, while the other has worked in more disparate roles (e.g., barista, bank teller). Although both emit the same job-hopping signal, the first applicant's accumulated sales-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities should lessen the job-hopping penalty because the hiring manager has observable information that relates to the position. This reduces information asymmetry and makes a job hopper with relevant experience a more attractive applicant than a job hopper without it. As such, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 9: Relevant prehire experience will moderate the negative effect of job hopping on job offers, such that the relationships will be weaker when job-hopping applicants possess more job-related prehire experience.

Finally, we theorize that job hopping should predict the outcomes beyond selection procedures developed to measure job-related constructs that are different than job hopping. Typical procedures include SJTs that capture contextual judgment and procedural knowledge, work style (i.e., personality) assessments that capture stable individual traits, and problem-solving assessments that capture general mental ability. Each of these predictors correlates positively with job performance (e.g., Christian et al., 2010; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). From a screening theory perspective, these procedures reduce information asymmetry about the typically *positive* attributes they target (e.g., procedural knowledge, conscientiousness, cognitive ability). Job hopping, by contrast, is an observable behavior that potentially reflects *negative* attributes (e.g., lower commitment and potential performance). As such, a measure of job hopping should complement traditional selection tools. As such, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 10: Job hopping will incrementally predict (a) job offers, (b) turnover, and (c) job performance over other selection procedures.

Study 3: Method

Sample and Procedure

Our sample comprised 30,640 applicants for a sales position in a U.S.-based telecommunications organization between September 2021 and January 2024. Employees in this position were responsible for following up with customers and offering to sell them additional services. This provided an ideal context because high-turnover industries such as this are particularly sensitive to retention issues (e.g., Edsall et al., 2025; Jasmand et al., 2012). Therefore, identifying additional ways to predict retention during the selection process is valuable. Of the applicants, 3,478 (11%) were given job

offers and 3,075 (10%) joined the organization. Hires were 77% male (22% female, 1% did not report) and 34% Hispanic or Latino (28% White, 23% Black or African American, 6% Asian, 5% Multiracial, <1% other races, 3% did not report).

Measures

Predictors. *Job hopping* was measured with three biodata items. Although the exact items are proprietary, they were intended to measure job hopping and were theoretically aligned with the components of our definition. Each component—relative frequency, voluntariness, and interorganizational—was measured explicitly by at least one item and implied by others. An example item is as follows: “In the last four years, how many organizations have you left voluntarily?” Items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale where higher scores represented more job hopping. We standardized the items before creating the composite because two items captured number of years and one captured number of jobs. Cronbach’s α was .65 in the sample of applicants ($N = 30,640$) and .67 in the sample of hires ($N = 3,075$).

Prehire experience was measured with three biodata items that reflect experience in sales positions. These proprietary items asked applicants how much experience they have performing typical sales tasks, including building sales territories and presenting products and services (1 = none to 7 = more than 10 years of experience), and if they have experience demonstrating products (1 = yes, 0 = no). This measure has the advantages of capturing specific, historical data and thus avoiding overly generalized perceptions of oneself across many types of situations (Speer et al., 2022). We standardized these items before averaging them to create a prehire experience composite. The Cronbach’s α for this composite was .74 in the applicant sample ($N = 30,640$) and .62 in the hired sample ($N = 3,478$).

To test the incremental validity of job hopping (Hypothesis 10), we used scores from three assessments administered during the selection process: a five-item *SJT* (which focused on handling challenging circumstances, building relationships, and achieving sales performance),⁶ a 78-item *work style assessment* (which captured personality variables such as autonomy, optimism, and persistence; $\alpha = .89$ for the applicant sample and .80 for the employee sample), and a six-item *problem-solving simulation* (which captured cognitive ability; $\alpha = .64$ for the applicant sample and .61 for the employee sample). These assessments were designed by a team of selection practitioners to measure competencies relevant to the job and were based on numerous job analyses and validation studies. Details regarding these assessments can be found in additional online Appendix C at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=ef44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee.

Criteria. *Job offer* indicated whether applicants were given a job offer (0 = not given offer, 1 = given offer). We focused on job offers instead of actual hires because it more closely reflects the organization’s decision about each applicant. For example, there are many reasons why a desired applicant may not join an organization even though they were given an offer, such as accepting a better offer elsewhere (e.g., Murphy, 1986). In this sample, 11% of applicants were offered a job (88% of which accepted the offer).

Turnover reflected whether employees left the organization within 1 year of their hire date. We created a right-censored version of the variable for use in the hazard analysis. It is right-censored because the observation period for all participants began at the same

time (the day they were hired) but ended at different times, or did not end at all. This variable was coded as 0 = *did not leave within 1 year* and 1 = *left within 1 year*. The data set included whether each employee separation was recorded as voluntary or involuntary. Of those who left within 1 year, 1,304 (90%) did so voluntarily and 151 (10%) did so involuntarily. The most common reasons for leaving were dissatisfaction with the type of work, home duties, health, and hours or scheduling, which are consistent with research on reasons for turnover (M. A. Campion, 1991).

Job performance reflected the average number of monthly sales, which was the primary metric the organization used to evaluate employees. Sales were somewhat difficult to achieve because they required customers to purchase additional services beyond what they initially ordered. This resulted in a relatively low average monthly number of sales ($M = 18.26$, $SD = 10.10$). A service plan from this organization cost approximately \$50 per month with lifetime retention for services measured in years, meaning each sale is often worth thousands to the organization. Thus, although the rate of sales was low, sales represent an important financial outcome for the organization. Sales data were available for a 15-month period, and the average number of recorded performance months across employees was 5.21 ($SD = 3.79$). To estimate the reliability of the measure, we (a) calculated correlations between each pair of months across the 15-month period, (b) applied Fisher’s r -to- z transformation, (c) calculated the mean of the z -scores, (d) transformed the mean z -score back to a correlation using Fisher’s z -to- r , and (e) applied the Spearman–Brown formula to estimate the reliability for a measure with 15 months. The resulting correlation was .47, which is typical for objective measures of performance such as sales (Sturman et al., 2005).

Controls. We controlled for applicants’ gender (0 = male, 1 = female) and race (0 = non-White, 1 = White) to account for potential subgroup differences in job offers, voluntary turnover, and performance related to these attributes (Rubenstein et al., 2018). For analyses where job performance was the criterion, we also controlled for tenure to account for potential performance increases over time due to learning on job. Average tenure was 244 days ($SD = 199.38$).

Analytical Approach

We tested Hypotheses 6 and 9 (i.e., job hopping predicting job offers and prehire experience moderation of this relationship) using logistic regression because job offer was measured dichotomously. We tested Hypothesis 7 (i.e., job hopping predicting turnover) using survival analysis (i.e., Cox proportional hazard analysis) because our data included day-level binary indicators of turnover beginning from the point of hire. This approach allowed us to examine not only whether turnover occurred but also when it occurred (Morita et al., 1989). An additional benefit of survival analysis is that it captures partial information from “censored” cases, such as subjects who did not leave within the study period. We tested Hypothesis 8 (i.e., job hopping predicting job performance) using linear regression because job performance was measured continuously. Finally, we tested Hypothesis 10 using all three methods given their appropriateness for the outcome variables (job offers, turnover, and performance). Due to our directional hypotheses, all analyses use one-tailed tests.

⁶ Test–retest or alternate forms reliabilities are the most appropriate way to estimate measurement error for SJTs (Kepes et al., 2025). However, such estimates were not available for this SJT.

Study 3: Results

Preliminary Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 7. For correlations involving hires, we calculated observed validity estimates (i.e., raw correlations) and operational validity corrected for indirect range restriction in the predictors and measurement error in the criteria.⁷ These corrections are customary in selection research because using the scores for hiring causes restriction, and the goal is to predict true job performance as if it were measured without restriction and measurement error. Range restriction ratios (i.e., u values) were .91 for job hopping, .66 for prehire experience, .93 for the SJT, .67 for the work style assessment, and 1.01 for the problem-solving simulation. Consistent with Study 2, applicants with higher scores on the job-hopping measures were less likely to be offered a job ($r = -.07, p < .001$). For employees, job hopping was positively related to turnover (operational $r = .12, p < .001$) and negatively related to job performance (operational $r = -.19, p < .001$).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 6 predicted a negative relationship between job hopping and the likelihood that an applicant would receive a job offer. Controlling for gender and race, applicants with higher job-hopping scores were less likely to receive job offers (odds ratio [OR] = .81, 90% CI [0.77, 0.85], $p < .001$; Table 8). A one-unit increase in the job-hopping measure reduced the odds of receiving a job offer by 19% (i.e., 1.00–0.81). As such, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Hypothesis 7 predicted a positive relationship between job hopping and turnover. Job hoppers had a higher rate of turnover (hazard ratio [HR] = 1.16, 90% CI [1.08, 1.25], $p < .001$), controlling for gender and race (Table 8). A one-unit increase in the job-hopping measure corresponded to a 16% higher rate of leaving. The hazard curves in Figure 1 (Panel A) depict the probability of turnover within 1 year for employees who scored the mean and 1 standard deviation above and below the mean on job hopping. The curves show that, although those low versus high on job hopping have similar cumulative probabilities of early turnover, the difference between them increases over time. Thus, Hypothesis 7 was supported.

Hypothesis 8 predicted a negative relationship between job hopping and job performance. Controlling for gender, race, and tenure, job hopping was negatively related to job performance ($b = -1.35$, $SE = .45, p < .01$; Table 8). A one-unit increase in job hopping corresponded to 1.35 fewer sales (valued at \$810) per month and 10.82 fewer sales (valued at \$6,490) across an average employee's tenure. Thus, Hypothesis 8 was supported.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that prehire experience would moderate the relationship between job hopping and job offer. The interaction term in Table 9 was positive and significant ($OR = 1.21$, 90% CI [1.11, 1.33], $p < .001$). Simple slopes analysis indicated that the relationship between job hopping and job offer differed depending on the level of experience. Among applicants with less experience ($-1 SD$), job hopping was negatively related to receiving an offer ($OR = 0.84$, 90% CI [$-0.29, -0.07$], $p < .01$). Conversely, among applicants with more experience ($+1 SD$), job hopping was positively related to receiving an offer ($OR = 1.15$, 90% CI [0.08, 0.20], $p < .001$). Figure 2 (Panel A) shows that applicants high on job hopping who possessed more prehire experience were more likely to receive job offers. Thus, Hypothesis 9 is supported.

Hypothesis 10 predicted that job-hopping scores would provide incremental validity over the SJT, work style assessment, and problem-solving simulation. As shown in Table 10, job hopping incrementally predicted job offer ($\Delta\chi^2 = 35.66, p < .001$), turnover ($\Delta\chi^2 = 13.91, p < .001$), and job performance ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 10 was supported.

Supplemental Analyses

Because we defined job hopping as voluntary movement among organizations, we explored whether job hoppers were indeed more likely to turn over voluntarily than involuntarily. Controlling for gender and race, job hopping was positively related to both voluntary ($HR = 1.14$, 90% CI [1.05, 1.23], $p < .001$) and involuntary ($HR = 1.38$, 90% CI [1.10, 1.72], $p < .01$) turnover (additional online Table C2 at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=ef44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee). Although the estimate for involuntary turnover was larger (.32 vs. .13), the coefficients were not statistically different ($z = -1.50, p = .13$; Clogg et al., 1995), indicating that job hopping did not significantly differ in its prediction of voluntary and involuntary turnover.

Study 3: Discussion

The findings of Study 3 revealed that job-hopping applicants were penalized in that they received fewer job offers. Additionally, this penalty appears to be warranted such that compared to other employees, job hoppers were more likely to turn over within 1 year and exhibited lower job performance. Further, accumulated sales-specific experience weakened the penalty. The potential role of experience for entry-level workers in Study 3 follows similar logic to career progression found in Studies 1 and 2: Decision-makers are less likely to penalize job hopping if it is accompanied by more job-relevant experience. Together, these results support the findings of Studies 1 and 2 in an operational setting and provide credence to hiring managers who view job-hopping applicants with reluctance. Further, job hopping provided incremental prediction of turnover and job performance when used alongside other selection assessments (i.e., SJT, work style assessment, and problem-solving simulation). As such, organizations may benefit from explicitly measuring job hopping during the selection process.

Finally, although job hopping showed a slightly stronger relationship with involuntary turnover than voluntary turnover, it did not appear to differentially predict voluntary versus involuntary turnover. This has at least two theoretical interpretations. First, this result, along with the negative relationship between job hopping and performance, offers support for our model that job hoppers are perhaps rightfully penalized due to poor performance. Further, it suggests that although hiring managers generally viewed job hopping as voluntary in Studies 1 and 2, job hoppers are more likely to turn over regardless of whether it is voluntary or involuntary. This may appear to have implications for the definition of job hopping such that it may be better to conceptualize hopping as representative of voluntary and/or involuntary movement. However, we caution against this because job hopping represents a *pattern* of frequent

⁷ Estimates were corrected for univariate indirect range restriction (Case IV) based on Hunter et al.'s (2006) formula within the *psychmeta* R package (Dahlke & Wiernik, 2019).

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (Study 3)

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Applicants												
1. Job hopping	30,554	-1.94	0.77	—								
2. Prehire experience	30,640	-0.06	0.83	-.38***	—							
3. Situational judgment	30,640	-0.02	1.00	-.03***	.14***	—						
4. Work style	30,640	-0.05	1.01	-.17***	.38***	.23***	—					
5. Problem solving	30,640	-0.03	0.99	-.06***	.11***	.09***	.14***	—				
6. Job offer	13,041	0.27	0.44	-.07***	.20***	.03***	.16***	.12***	—			
7. Gender	30,122	0.29	0.45	.04***	-.08***	-.02**	-.05***	-.17***	-.06***	—		
8. Race	29,658	0.32	0.47	-.02***	-.02***	.01	.00	.15***	-.03***	-.07***	—	
Employees												
1. Job hopping	3,075	-0.87	0.70	—								
2. Prehire experience	3,075	0.41	0.55	-.36***	—							
3. Situational judgment	3,075	0.27	0.93	.05**	.01	—						
4. Work style	3,075	0.60	0.68	-.11***	.15***	.08***	—					
5. Problem solving	3,075	0.31	1.00	-.03	-.00	.04*	.04*	—				
6. Turnover	3,075	0.47	0.50	.08***	-.05**	-.01	-.03	-.05**	—			
7. Job performance	974	18.26	10.10	-.12***	.08*	.01	.07*	.01	-.23***	—		
8. Tenure	3,075	243.69	199.42	-.05**	.02	-.00	.04*	-.00	-.46***	.33***	—	
9. Gender	3,035	0.22	0.42	-.01	-.05**	.01	-.00	-.12***	.01	.00	-.00	—
10. Race	3,075	0.72	0.45	-.03	.03	-.02	-.01	-.13***	-.07***	.02	.03	.04*

Note. Variables 3–5 are standardized assessment scores. Job offer was coded as 0 = *no offer given* and 1 = *offer given*. Gender was coded as 0 = *male* and 1 = *female*. Race was coded as 0 = *racial-ethnic minority* and 1 = *White*. Turnover was coded as 0 = *did not turn over* and 1 = *turned over*. Job performance was measured as the average number of monthly sales. Tenure was measured in days. Values below the diagonal are observed validity estimates, and values above the diagonal are operational validity estimates.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 8*Job Hopping as a Predictor of Job Offer, Turnover, and Job Performance (Study 3)*

Variable	Logistic model: Job offer (<i>N</i> = 12,557)			Cox model: Turnover (<i>N</i> = 3,035) ^a				Linear model: Job performance (<i>N</i> = 963)	
	<i>b</i>	<i>OR</i>	[90% CI]	<i>b</i>	HR	[90% CI]	Wald	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
Intercept	−1.30*** (.06)							16.58*** (.74)	
Predictor									
Job hopping	−0.21*** (.03)	.81	[.77, .85]	.15*** (.04)	1.16	[1.08, 1.25]	3.95	−1.35*** (.45)	−3.00
Controls									
Tenure								5.73*** (.53)	10.82
Gender	−0.31*** (.05)	.74	[.67, .81]	.04 (.06)	1.04	[0.92, 1.18]	0.64	0.26 (.75)	0.35
Race	−0.19*** (.04)	.83	[.76, .90]	−.21*** (.06)	0.81	[0.72, 0.90]	−3.74	0.02 (.72)	0.03
χ^2	117.11*** (<i>df</i> = 3)			30.20*** (<i>df</i> = 3)					
Nagelkerke pseudo- <i>R</i> ²	.01								
<i>R</i> ²								.12	

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient; HR = hazard ratio; 90% CI = 90% confidence interval; χ^2 = chi-square test statistic.

^a *N* = 1,431 (47% of hires) turnover events within 1 year of hire.

** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001 (one-tailed).

departures, whereas the criterion in Study 3 represents only a single departure. The results of Studies 1 and 2 also reinforced the voluntary interpretation. We return to this in our discussion of future research.

Study 4: Evaluating the Validity of Job Hopping in a Second Operational Context

In this study, we aim to replicate the tests of Hypotheses 6 through 10 from Study 3. This study also allowed us to test the generalizability of the job-hopping penalty in a different industry and job (management).

Study 4: Method

Sample and Procedure

Our sample comprised 37,105 applicants for a retail store manager position in a U.S.-based organization between September 2021 and May 2025. Similar to Study 3, this industry was ideal due to its high-turnover problem, and decision-makers in high-turnover industries are motivated to address retention issues (Edsall et al., 2025). Further, this sample allowed us to test our hypotheses among managers to extend the generalizability of findings from Study 3, which were based on employees. Although high turnover is usually less common among managers, when it occurs, it may be even more costly. Managers are also typically more career-oriented and have more experience. As such, hiring managers may be less likely to penalize job-hopping managers. For these reasons, the Study 4 sample complements and extends Study 3.

Of the 37,105 applicants, 1,088 were hired. We excluded 159 rehires, leaving 929 new hires. Performance ratings and demographic variables were available for 302 of the hired managers. Of these, 50% were male (50% female) and 55% were White (21% Hispanic or Latino, 15% Black or African American, 6% Asian, 2% Multiracial, and <1% other races or preferred not to share). Age was only available for the managers with performance scores. Fifty-nine percent were younger than 40 years old. Tenure was only available

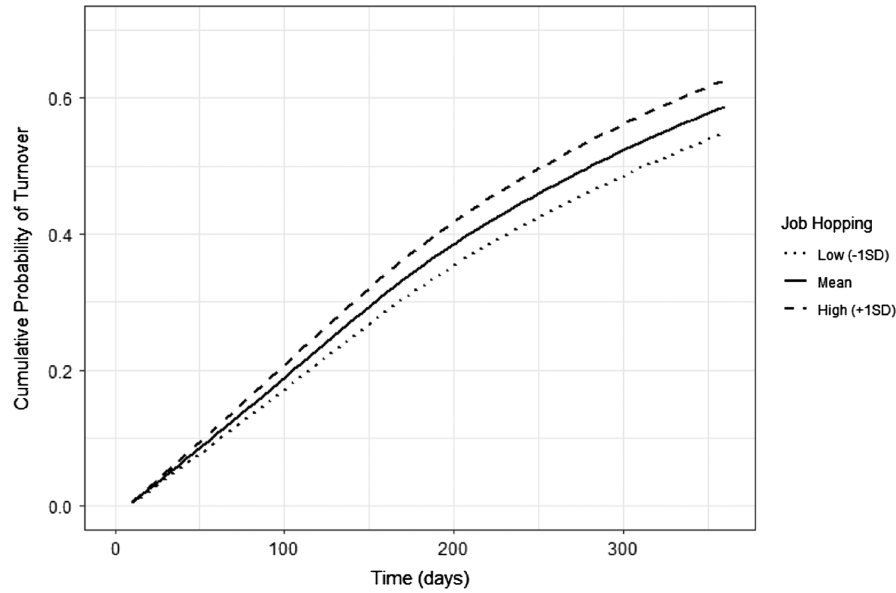
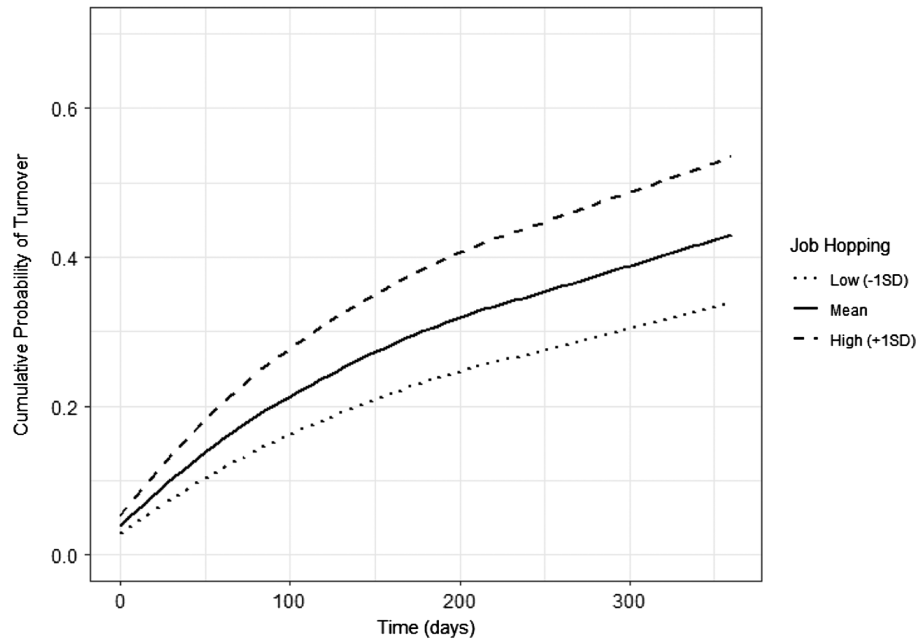
for the managers with turnover data. Average tenure was 198 days (*SD* = 164.15).

Measures

Predictors. *Job hopping* was measured with the same three items used in Study 3 and was again standardized due to different anchors (i.e., years and jobs). Cronbach's α was .65 in the job applicant sample (*N* = 37,105) and .68 in the hired sample (*N* = 929). *Prehire experience* was measured using three biodata items relating to typical management tasks. These proprietary items asked applicants how much experience they have scheduling work for team members and making product or service recommendations to customers (1 = *none* to 7 = *more than 10 years of experience*) and how many employees they have promoted to higher level positions (1 = *none* to 7 = *more than 50*). As with Study 3, the experience items attempt to measure objective data rather than self-perceptions. We standardized these items before averaging them to create a prehire experience composite. The Cronbach's α for this composite was .80 among applicants and .71 among hires.

To test the incremental validity of job hopping (Hypothesis 10), we used scores from three assessments administered during the selection process: an *SJT* (which focused on interpersonal and operational aspects of managing a retail store), a *work style assessment* (which captured personality variables such as adaptability, cooperation, and achievement orientation; α = .81 for the applicant sample and .71 for the employee sample), and a *problem-solving simulation* (which captured cognitive ability; α = .80 for the applicant sample and .81 for the employee sample). These assessments were designed by a team of selection practitioners to measure competencies relevant to the job and were based on numerous job analyses and validation studies. Additional details regarding these assessments can be found in additional online Appendix D at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=e44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee.

Criteria. *Hired* reflected whether applicants were selected and joined the organization (0 = *not hired*, 1 = *hired*). A total of 1,088 applicants (3%) were hired, 929 of which were new hires (not rehires) that we used in our analyses. This low hiring rate reflects the

Figure 1*Cumulative Probability of Turnover for Low, Mean, and High Job Hopping (Studies 3 and 4)**Panel A: Study 3**Panel B: Study 4*

small number of available positions (relative to entry-level roles) and thus the competitive nature of the position.

Turnover reflected whether employees voluntarily left the organization within 1 year of their hire date (0 = *did not leave within 1 year*, 1 = *left within 1 year*). Again, we created a right-censored version of the variable for use in the survival analysis. Of those who turned over, 276 (82%) did so voluntarily and 59 (18%) did so involuntarily. The most common reasons for leaving were personal reasons, pursuing a better opportunity, and job abandonment.

Managerial performance was assessed via supervisor ratings on seven items: three relating to task-focused leadership and four items relating to people-focused leadership. Ratings used a Likert scale (1 = *among the worst*, 7 = *among the best*) that showed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .96$). Ratings were available for 302 managers.

Controls. We could not control for gender or race because these data were collected only for a portion of those who were hired (see sample description above). However, data were available to control for age when predicting performance. We followed the same analytic approach as Study 3.

Table 9*Job Hopping by Prehire Experience Interaction as a Predictor of Job Offer (Study 3) and Hired (Study 4)*

Variable	Study 3: Job offer (<i>N</i> = 12,557)			Study 4: Hired (<i>N</i> = 36,793)		
	<i>b</i>	<i>OR</i>	[90% CI]	<i>b</i>	<i>OR</i>	[90% CI]
Intercept	−1.08*** (.07)			−3.72*** (.09)		
Predictors						
Job hopping	−0.01 (.03)	0.99	[0.93, 1.06]	−0.04 (.05)	0.96	[0.87, 1.06]
Prehire experience	1.18*** (.10)	3.26	[2.67, 4.01]	1.10*** (.10)	2.99	[2.45, 3.69]
Interaction term						
Job Hopping × Prehire Experience	0.19*** (.05)	1.21	[1.11, 1.33]	0.09 (.06)	1.10	[0.98, 1.23]
Controls						
Gender	−0.25*** (.05)	0.78	[0.71, 0.86]			
Race	−0.17*** (.05)	0.84	[0.77, 0.92]			
χ^2	$\chi^2 = 635.17^{***}$ (<i>df</i> = 5)			$\chi^2 = 512.97^{***}$ (<i>df</i> = 3)		
Nagelkerke pseudo- <i>R</i> ²	.07			.06		

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. 90% CI = 90% confidence interval; χ^2 = chi-square test statistic; *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient.

*** *p* < .001 (one-tailed).

Study 4: Results

Preliminary Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 11. Again, we calculated observed and operational validity estimates. Among hires, there was slight to moderate range restriction in the job-hopping measure ($u = .86$), prehire experience measure ($u = .81$), SJT ($u = .92$), work style assessment ($u = .76$), and problem-solving simulation ($u = .89$). Consistent with Study 3, job-hopping applicants were less likely to be hired ($r = -.06$, $p < .001$). For employees, job hopping was positively related to turnover (operational $r = .34$, $p < .001$) and negatively related to managerial performance (operational $r = -.13$, $p = .02$).

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 6 predicted that there would be a negative relationship between job hopping and the likelihood that an applicant would receive a job offer. Applicants with higher job-hopping scores were less likely to be hired ($OR = 0.60$, 90% CI [0.56, 0.65], $p < .001$; Table 12). A one-unit increase in the job-hopping measure reduced the odds of an applicant receiving a job offer by 40%. As such, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that there would be a positive relationship between job-hopping scores and turnover. Job hoppers indeed had a higher turnover rate ($HR = 1.53$, 90% CI [1.33, 1.76], $p < .001$; Table 12), such that a one-unit increase in the job-hopping measure corresponded to a 53% higher rate of turnover. The hazard curves depicted in Figure 1 (Panel B) illustrate the probability of turnover within 1 year for employees who scored at the mean, as well as 1 standard deviation above and below the mean, on the job-hopping predictor. Thus, Hypothesis 7 was supported.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that there would be a negative relationship between job hopping and managerial performance. Table 12 shows that, controlling for age, job-hopping scores negatively related to managerial performance ($b = -0.19$, $SE = .08$, $p = .02$). Thus, Hypothesis 8 was supported.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that prehire experience would moderate the relationship between job hopping and job offers. The interaction term in Table 9 was marginally significant ($OR = 1.10$, 90% CI

[0.98, 1.23], $p = .06$). This is notable given the very low base rate of job offers (3%), which limited the variance (and, in turn, statistical power) to predict this outcome. Figure 2 (Panel B) shows that among job-hopping applicants, those who possessed more prehire experience were more likely to be hired than those who possessed less prehire experience. Taken together, these results provide some support for Hypothesis 9.

Hypothesis 10 predicted that job-hopping scores would provide incremental validity over the other selection assessments. Table 13 shows job hopping incrementally predicted being hired ($\Delta\chi^2 = 77.12$, $p < .001$), turnover ($\Delta\chi^2 = 29.81$, $p < .001$), and managerial performance ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $p = .05$), although the latter was marginally significant. Thus, Hypothesis 10 was partially supported.

Supplemental Analyses

As in Study 3, we tested whether job hopping was more predictive of voluntary versus involuntary turnover (additional online Table D2 at https://osf.io/379hu/?view_only=ef44acd489fe432db27c13e98252c3ee). Job hopping was positively related to both voluntary ($HR = 1.42$, 90% CI [1.25, 1.62], $p < .001$) and involuntary turnover ($HR = 2.11$, 90% CI [1.61, 2.78], $p < .001$). Unlike Study 3 where we found no statistical difference between the coefficients, the effect in this study was significantly stronger for involuntary than for voluntary turnover ($z = 2.13$, $p = .03$). This pattern interestingly suggests that job hopping may be a stronger predictor of involuntary turnover than voluntary turnover in certain contexts.

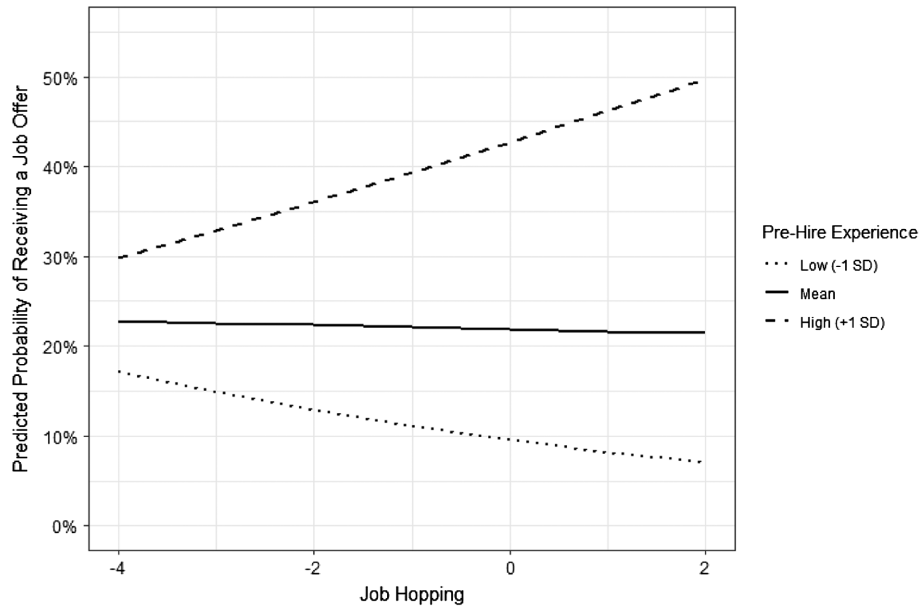
Study 4: Discussion

This study largely replicated the results from Study 3 such that hiring managers penalized job hoppers by selecting them at a lower rate than non-job hoppers. As in Study 3, there was some evidence that prehire experience reduced the job-hopping penalty, such that managers were more likely to hire job hoppers who possessed higher levels of job-relevant experience. In addition, we again found evidence that the penalty is warranted because job hoppers who were selected were more likely to turn over and demonstrated lower job performance. As in Study 3, job hopping predicted turnover

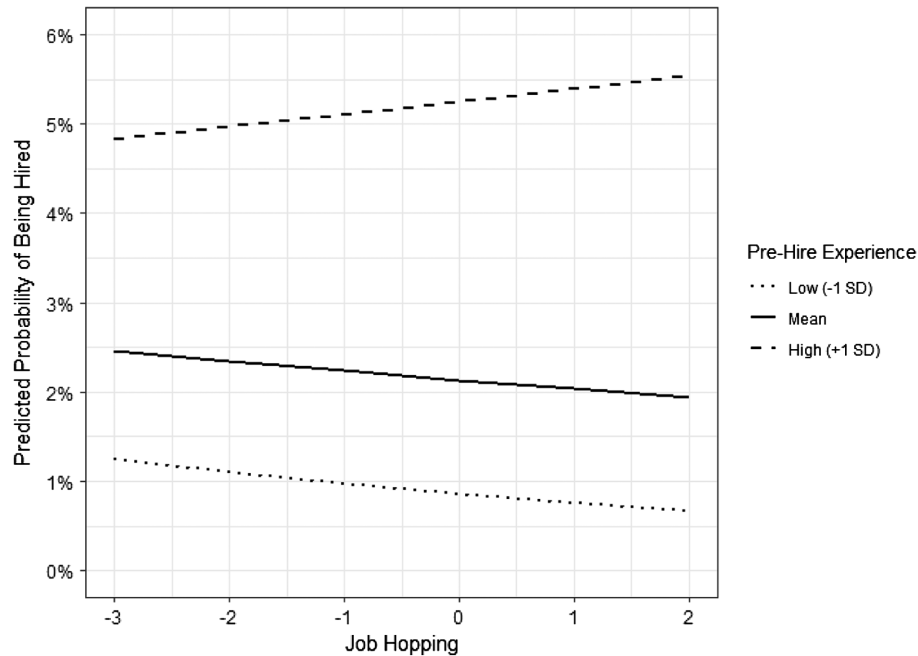
Figure 2

Moderating Effect of Prehire Experience on the Job Hopping–Job Offer and Job Hopping–Hired Relationships (Studies 3 and 4)

Panel A: Predicted Probability of Receiving a Job Offer (Study 3)



Panel B: Predicted Probability of Being Hired (Study 4)



Note. Lower values on the x-axis reflect less job hopping, and higher values reflect more job hopping.

beyond the other selection procedures, but this was not replicated for job performance.

General Discussion

Across four studies, we evaluated the extent and merit of the job-hopping penalty (Hollister et al., 2025). In Study 1, we developed an

updated definition of job hopping grounded in theory and qualitative data. We found that hiring managers infer unobservable attributes—low commitment and poor performance—from observable job change patterns, and Study 2 experimentally supported this. Studies 3 and 4 extended findings into operational contexts and showed that job hopping predicted job offers (Study 3) and being hired (Study 4). This suggests that hiring manager reluctance to hire job hoppers may

Table 10*Incremental Validity of Job Hopping as a Predictor of Job Offer, Turnover, and Job Performance (Study 3)*

Variable	Logistic model: Job offer (<i>N</i> = 12,557)				Cox model: Turnover (<i>N</i> = 3,035) ^a			
	Step 1		Step 2		Step 1		Step 2	
	<i>b</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>HR</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>HR</i>
Situational judgment	.05* (.02)	1.05	.06** (.02)	1.34	-.00 (.03)	1.00	-.01 (.03)	0.99
Work style	.53*** (.03)	1.70	.52*** (.03)	1.47	-.07 (.04)	0.93	-.05 (.04)	0.95
Problem solving	.28*** (.02)	1.33	.28*** (.02)	1.52	-.06* (.03)	0.94	-.06* (.03)	0.94
Gender	-.20*** (.05)	0.82	-.20*** (.05)	0.79	.02 (.06)	1.02	.02 (.06)	1.02
Race	-.28*** (.05)	0.76	-.28*** (.05)	0.78	-.24*** (.06)	0.79	-.23*** (.06)	0.79
Job hopping			-.17*** (.03)	0.84			.14*** (.04)	1.15
χ^2	585.21*** (<i>df</i> = 5)		620.87*** (<i>df</i> = 6)		23.66*** (<i>df</i> = 5)		37.57*** (<i>df</i> = 6)	
$\Delta\chi^2$			35.66***				13.91***	
Nagelkerke pseudo- <i>R</i> ²	.07		.07					

Variable	Linear model: Job performance (<i>N</i> = 963)			
	Step 1		Step 2	
	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>
Situational judgment	0.20 (.33)	0.61	0.31 (.33)	0.94
Work style	0.90* (.45)	2.01	0.75 (.45)	1.66
Problem solving	0.05 (.31)	0.15	0.02 (.31)	0.07
Tenure	5.87*** (.53)	11.09	5.73*** (.53)	10.82
Gender	0.31 (.76)	0.42	0.31 (.75)	0.42
Race	0.14 (.72)	0.20	0.07 (.72)	0.09
Job hopping			-1.30** (.45)	-2.87
<i>R</i> ²	.12		.13	
ΔR^2			.01	

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. HR = hazard ratio; χ^2 = chi-square test statistic; *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient.

^a *N* = 1,431 (47% of hires) turnover events within 1 year of hire.

* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001 (one-tailed).

be justified given they tended to turn over more than non-job hoppers, as well as demonstrate lower performance. In addition, job hopping predicted turnover and performance beyond other common selection procedures.

Our results also identified key boundary conditions of the job-hopping effect on selection decisions. Practitioners in Study 1 mentioned career progression as a potential buffer against the job-hopping penalty, and Study 2 provided support for this effect. Specifically, hiring managers were less likely to penalize applicants whose job hopping involved upward progression in roles across different organizations. In Studies 3 and 4, prehire experience similarly weakened the penalty, such that hiring managers were more likely to select job hoppers who accumulated job-relevant experience. Finally, supplemental analyses revealed some evidence that job hopping may be more strongly related to involuntary versus voluntary turnover. This finding may introduce some nuance into the job-hopping construct. Although we defined job hopping as a pattern of voluntary moves, its downstream consequences may manifest through either voluntary and/or involuntary separation. This may be due, in part, to the practitioners' belief that job hoppers are more likely to demonstrate low performance as suggested in Studies 1 and 2 and demonstrated empirically in Studies 3 and 4. In sum, hiring managers appear to draw reasonable inferences from applicants' mobility patterns, and those inferences correspond to real differences in posthire outcomes, thus meriting the job-hopping penalty.

Theoretical Implications

Our work provides several theoretical contributions to the study of job hopping and to the broader employee selection and career mobility literatures. First, we clarified the construct of job hopping. We defined it as a perceived pattern of behavior reflecting a relatively high frequency of voluntary, interorganizational job changes. Prior job-hopping definitions were inconsistent or vague with respect to features such as amount, time, and motivation (Dhanapal et al., 2013; Lake et al., 2018; Pawar & Pandit, 2023). Further, most definitions focus on the job hopper's perspective. We adopt an organizational perspective and clarify job hopping as a set of observable behaviors reflecting unobservable attributes decision-makers interpret during hiring. We hope this more specific and behavioral definition will provide conceptual clarity regarding what job hopping does and does not entail, as well as differentiate it from other constructs within the mobility domain. If so, this should encourage a more systematic accumulation of evidence regarding the antecedents and consequences of job hopping.

Second, drawing from screening theory (Stiglitz, 1975), we theorized and found that hiring managers infer job hopping as a "red flag" (Wechtler et al., 2022) that penalizes job hoppers. We found that organizational decision-makers view job hopping as a signal of potentially low applicant commitment and performance, which contributes to the growing body of knowledge around the psychological processes that translate observable behaviors into signals

Table 11
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (Study 4)

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Applicants												
1. Job hopping	36,793	-1.49	0.85	—								
2. Prehire experience	37,104	-0.10	0.85	-.59***	—							
3. Situational judgment	37,105	0.11	0.99	-.13***	.17***	—						
4. Work style	37,105	-0.04	0.49	-.20***	.38***	.21***	—					
5. Problem solving	37,104	-0.60	1.64	-.13***	.19***	.18***	.14***	—				
6. Hired	37,105	0.03	0.17	-.07***	.11***	.06***	.09***	.05***	—			
Employees												
1. Job hopping	929	-1.06	0.72	—					.34***	-.13*		
2. Prehire experience	929	0.30	0.69	-.52***	—				-.09**	.10		
3. Situational judgment	929	0.43	0.91	-.13***	.09**	—			-.09**	.25***		
4. Work style	929	0.21	0.37	-.11**	.28***	.08*	—		.02	.09		
5. Problem solving	929	-0.15	1.46	-.09**	.15***	.11**	.03	—	-.14***	.03		
6. Turnover	929	0.34	0.47	.21***	-.05	-.06	.01	-.09**	—			
7. Managerial performance	303	4.28	0.99	-.11*	.08	.23***	.07	.03	. ^a	—		
8. Tenure	929	198.27	164.23	-.10***	-.01	.08*	-.01	.06	-.43***	-.06 ^b	—	
9. Age	325	0.41	0.49	-.38***	.45**	.03	-.04	.06	-.09 ^c	-.00	-.01	—

Note. Variables 3–5 are standardized assessment scores. Hired was coded as 0 = *not hired* and 1 = *hired*. Turnover was coded as 0 = *did not turn over* and 1 = *turned over*. Managerial performance was measured from supervisory ratings on a 7-point scale. Tenure was measured in days. Age was coded as 0 = *under 40 years old* and 1 = *over 40 years old*. Values below the diagonal are observed validity estimates, and values above the diagonal are operational validity estimates.

^a Data were not available to calculate correlation. ^b $N = 79$. ^c $N = 89$.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 12*Job Hopping as a Predictor of Job Offer, Turnover, and Managerial Performance (Study 4)*

Variable	Logistic model: Hired ($N = 36,793$)			Cox model: Turnover ($N = 929$) ^a				Linear model: Managerial performance ($N = 302$)	
	b	OR	[90% CI]	b	HR	[90% CI]	Wald	b	t
Intercept	−4.32*** (.08)							4.18*** (.09)	
Predictor									
Job hopping	−0.50*** (.04)	0.60	[0.56, 0.65]	.42*** (.07)	1.53	[1.33, 1.76]	5.96	−0.19* (.08)	−2.17
Control									
Age								−0.11 (.12)	−0.88
χ^2	167.83*** ($df = 1$)			33.81*** ($df = 1$)					
Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2	.02								
R^2								.02	

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. HR = hazard ratio; 90% CI = 90% confidence interval; χ^2 = chi-square test statistic; b = unstandardized regression coefficient.

^a $N = 312$ (34% of hires) turnover events within 1 year of hire.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$ (one-tailed).

of nonobservable attributes in selection (e.g., Galperin et al., 2020). Our findings suggested that information asymmetry generally leads hiring managers to view job hopping as negative by default (Wechtler et al., 2022). That is, not knowing why applicants have job hopped leads hiring managers to infer the worst (i.e., applicants lack commitment or performance ability). However, we also found that this inference can be attenuated by a history of hierarchical movements (i.e., career progression) or job-relevant experience, both of which represent knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristic development that should translate to higher performance or potential (M. C. Campion et al., 2023; Ng et al., 2005).

Finally, our findings contribute to the literature on atypical work histories (Wechtler et al., 2022) by demonstrating that penalizing job-hopping applicants is merited. We show that across telecommunications and wellness retail industries, as well as in both entry-level and managerial jobs, job hoppers are more likely to turn over and demonstrate lower performance. Moreover, job hopping predicts these outcomes beyond existing assessments, a finding that contributes to recent efforts to understand the role of prehire experiences in selection (e.g., Sajjadi et al., 2019; Van Iddekinge et al., 2019). These results also contribute to research on prehire predictors of turnover (e.g., Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005).

Table 13*Incremental Validity of Job Hopping as a Predictor of Job Offer, Turnover, and Managerial Performance (Study 4)*

Variable	Logistic model: Hired ($N = 36,793$)				Cox model: Turnover ($N = 929$) ^a			
	Step 1		Step 2		Step 1		Step 2	
	b	OR	b	OR	b	HR	b	HR
Situational judgment	0.26*** (.04)	1.29	0.23*** (.04)	1.26	−.13* (.06)	0.88	−.08 (.06)	0.92
Work style	1.09*** (.07)	2.96	1.00*** (.08)	2.72	.10 (.16)	1.11	.19 (.16)	1.21
Problem solving	0.14*** (.02)	1.15	0.12*** (.02)	1.13	−.09* (.04)	0.91	−.08* (.04)	0.92
Job hopping			−0.36*** (.04)	0.70			.40*** (.07)	1.50
χ^2	438.68*** ($df = 3$)		515.80*** ($df = 4$)		12.01*** ($df = 3$)		41.75*** ($df = 4$)	
$\Delta\chi^2$			77.12***				29.74***	
Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2	.05		.06					

Variable	Linear model: Managerial performance ($N = 302$)			
	Step 1		Step 2	
	b	t	b	t
Situational judgment	.27*** (.07)	3.86	.25*** (.07)	3.64
Work style	.10 (.14)	0.70	.09 (.14)	0.65
Problem solving	.01 (.04)	0.27	.01 (.04)	0.19
Age	−.01 (.11)	−0.13	−.10 (.12)	−0.78
Job hopping			−.14 (.09)	−1.63
R^2		.05		.06
ΔR^2				.01

Note. Standard errors are in parentheses. HR = hazard ratio; χ^2 = chi-square test statistic; b = unstandardized regression coefficient.

^a $N = 312$ (34% of hires) turnover events within 1 year of hire.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$ (one-tailed).

Practical Implications

Our work has several practical implications for hiring managers and organizations. First, it suggests that job hopping should be formally considered during the selection process. We show that job hopping not only predicts future turnover and job performance, but that it does so beyond more typical selection procedures like SJTs, work style assessments, and problem-solving simulations. Job hopping captures different attributes that are negative (e.g., low commitment and performance), which further fill out the construct domain relevant to hiring and complement the traditional focus on knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics. We demonstrate that job hopping can be measured fairly efficiently by biodata-like items at the time of initial screening. Considering job hopping during the selection process may be particularly important for industries or jobs where turnover is excessively high (e.g., service, manufacturing, retail) or substantial investments are made in training new employees (e.g., public safety, health care, military).

Second, our work suggests that career progression and job-relevant experience may help to contextualize the validity of inferences around job hopping and reduce the penalty by hiring managers. Although it makes sense that hiring managers would favor applicants who possess relevant experience, our research shows that job hoppers are still a hiring risk given they are more likely to turn over (and may do so involuntarily) and demonstrate lower performance. Overall, hiring managers should be quite skeptical about job-hopping applicants and take steps to further vet such applicants.

Third, while direct questions about job hopping can be beneficial during prescreening (e.g., in the application), it may be valuable to also ask about job hopping in subsequent stages of the selection process. For example, the reasons for job hopping could be asked about in an interview or when checking references. However, candidates may attempt to tailor their answers to bring out the experience gained, masking the real reasons for turnover, or omitting relevant facts (Levashina & Campion, 2007). Interview questions and scoring can perhaps be designed to more objectively consider job hopping, and hiring managers can be trained accordingly.

Finally, our findings may be relevant for algorithmic approaches to selection. Modern hiring processes increasingly rely on artificial intelligence screening to parse resumes before human evaluation (M. A. Campion & Campion, 2023). Observable job history cues, such as the number of prior positions and tenure duration, can be scored using automation to alert hiring managers to potential job-hopping behaviors. Organizations should also attend to how job hopping is weighted at each stage of the process to ensure screening decisions are empirically grounded and legally defensible. Job hopping should be considered along with other information.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our work has some limitations that present promising avenues for future research. First, we could not measure why employees left each of their previous jobs. Future studies might consider measuring individuals' reasons for leaving past jobs or other psychological constructs (e.g., job-hopping motives) alongside job-hopping behavior. Doing so would allow researchers to more precisely examine the accuracy of hiring managers' attributions regarding job hopping.

Second, we could not test how the mediators (i.e., commitment and performance) in Study 2 influenced relationships between job

hopping and turnover and performance in Studies 3 and 4. Similarly, we could not test whether the career progression moderator from Study 2 generalized to the field settings in Studies 3 and 4, nor were we able to adequately isolate and test the potential moderating effect of occupational change that emerged in Study 1. Future research could build on our initial findings, such as by coding information from resumes and applications to further examine whether career progression lessens the extent to which hiring managers penalize job hopping and whether occupational change has any impact.

Third, although the job-hopping measure in Studies 3 and 4 shows promise for using biodata items to capture this construct, self-report measures are susceptible to response distortion when used in the selection context (Donovan et al., 2014). Thus, future research should continue to refine the operationalization of job hopping based on the definition we advanced. Further, more objective measures might be possible, such as the number of jobs applicants have held during a particular timeframe (e.g., Cox & Harquail, 1991; Murrell et al., 1996). However, this approach also would rely on applicants to accurately report prior movements and timing.

Fourth, we focused on two high-turnover industries: telecommunication sales and wellness retail. Future research should test the external validity of the job-hopping penalty and its merits in industries in which turnover may be less pervasive. For example, Hollister et al. (2025) found that decision-makers in the IT industry were less sensitive to job hopping, which they theorized was likely due to industry norms, the nature of short-term projects, and the speed of technological innovation. Other industries characterized by project-based labor or rapidly changing job skills (e.g., digital marketing) may similarly show smaller job-hopping penalties.

Finally, we focused on how decision-makers view job hopping and its effect on outcomes of interest to organizations. Future studies could examine job hopping from the applicants' perspective, such as by linking it with measures of subjective career success. More research is also needed to investigate job hopper motivations and how those motivations impact the organizations that might hire them. For example, future research could consider whether job hoppers are more or less likely to accept a job, if offered.

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