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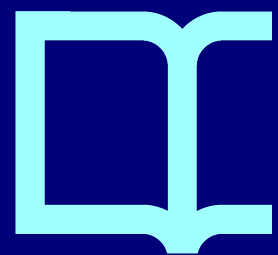
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Digital Inclusion for Better Job Opportunities? The Case of Women E-Included through Lifelong Learning Programmes

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Abstract

This chapter explores the contributions and limitations of digital inclusion for better job opportunities in terms of job searching. Using a qualitative approach based on the social stratification of Internet usage approach (Sassi 2005) and including a gender perspective (Wajcman 2004), the analysis focuses on disadvantaged women who attended a basic digital skills course through a lifelong training programme in Spain.

The results show that, although the acquisition of digital skills provides them with more autonomy, the women interviewed believed that, due the presence of other social inequalities, digital inclusion was not in itself a sufficient condition for improving their labour position. This analysis offers further evidence of the politics of contradiction regarding the implications of digital technologies in terms of labour opportunities for disadvantaged women.

Introduction

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the European Digital Policies have focused on providing digital skills to e-excluded social groups, particularly women, the unskilled, and the elderly, which are also socially disadvantaged groups (Van Dijk 2005; Van Deursen 2010). These policies assume that digital inclusion also helps these social groups to overcome their disadvantaged position because of the possibilities provided by the acquisition of digital skills in improving their position in the labour market (European Commission 2010). Ensuring a digitally skilled workforce is a priority for the European policies for job creation, and it is considered particularly relevant to cushion the effects of economic crisis (European Commission 2010, 2012, 2016; McCormac 2010). However, is digital inclusion truly a driving factor behind better job opportunities? This chapter provides some insight into

this question by focusing on the job search of women who acquired digital skills through a lifelong learning training programme in Spain. Placing the analysis' focus on these women is of particular interest because they belong to different socially disadvantaged groups.

There has been extensive literature on employment service digital platforms in the field of online job searches, but there is little empirical evidence based on the job search experience and its links to the improvement of job opportunities (Tso, Yau and Cheung 2010; Kuhn and Mansour 2014). The few studies that have been carried out are mainly quantitative studies performed in the United States (Stevenson 2008; Beard et al. 2012; Kuhn and Mansour 2014). There is a particular lack of evidence regarding the online job search of disadvantaged social groups located in European countries from a qualitative perspective (Campos, Arrazola and de Hevia 2014).

Studies aimed at assessing the changes introduced by the Internet for job seekers have concluded that the Internet has changed the way people search for employment. Their results show that the online job search has expanded quickly since the beginning of the present century (Stevenson 2008; Tso, Yau and Cheung 2010). In terms of the effects of the online job search, there are two analytical perspectives: studies that do not take into account social inequalities, and those from a critical perspective which incorporate the influence of unequal conditions.

On the one hand, the studies that only focus on the contributions of the online job search without taking into consideration the social context and its inequalities highlight that the Internet reduces the costs of a job search, multiplies the possibilities of contacting different employers, and facilitates access to information regarding job vacancies (Kuhn and Skuterud 2004; Tso, Yau and Cheung 2010; Stevenson 2008; Kuhn and Mansour 2014). Stevenson (2008) points out that the Internet allows job seekers to apply for positions at any time of the day without leaving their home while also allowing them to learn more about the organisational culture of the companies to which they are applying. Along the same lines, Feuls, Fieseler and Suphan (2014) highlight that the Internet has combated the social isolation linked to unemployment. Similarly, Beard et al. (2012) demonstrate that the Internet job search encourages job seekers to continue searching for a job, because the large quantity of

job offers challenges the idea that there are no jobs, preventing the unemployed from becoming discouraged.

On the other hand, the studies with a critical perspective examine how social inequality influences the effectiveness of the online job search. These have found that young people and those with a high level of education take better advantage of the Internet than older adults and those with a lower level of education (Green et al. 2012; Campos, Arrazola and de Hevia 2014). These results have added to existing evidence from the social stratification of the Internet usage approach, highlighting that digital inclusion is not a sufficient condition for overcoming existing social inequalities. It has been shown that the further resources and opportunities made possible by the Internet are unequally distributed due to the fact that Internet use differs according to age and socio-educational level. Therefore, the existing power and social structure are reproduced in the online sphere (Gurstein 2003; Sassi 2005; Di Maggio et al. 2004; van Deursen and van Dijk 2014; Selwyn and Facer 2007; Valenduc 2010).

Moreover, there are also studies from a critical perspective that focus on gender inequalities. Research such as this takes into account the practices and representations of women in relation to the Internet. From this perspective, women's Internet experience is influenced by the gender division of labour. This gender division of labour consists in an unequal distribution of the workload in which women are responsible for caregiving and housework – in addition to their jobs – while men are required to focus only on their work in the labour market. Given the unequal distribution of the workload, women with family responsibilities have fewer opportunities for taking advantage of the Internet (Bonder 2002; Wajcman 2004; Castaño 2008; Wyatt 2008; Casula 2011; Simões 2011). In addition, taking into account the subjective dimension, the women's inclusion perspective identifies that both digital technology and the subjectivity of women are constantly evolving and mutually influenced. It is believed that with the appropriation of technology, women adapt its use to their necessities while exploring new dimensions of themselves (Sørensen, Faulkner and Rommes 2011).

Using an approach based on the social stratification of Internet usage and including a gender perspective, this chapter seeks to analyse whether Internet use helps women from disadvantaged groups to improve their labour position.

Methodological Approach

The results of this chapter are based on episodic interviews with adult women who had participated in a basic digital skills course in the last 10 years in Spain.

The sample comprised 32 adult women who were active in the labour market, 17 of which were unemployed and 15 of which were employed. All of them were trained in basic digital skills through a lifelong learning course linked to a public employment programme.

As shown in Table 1, the participants came from different socio-educational backgrounds and age groups, but there is a higher representation of women with a medium or low level of education over the age of 45. The participants' ages ranged between 26 to 61 years old, but nearly three quarters of them were 45 years old (12) or older (11). With regard to the level of studies, these were equally distributed among women with a primary level of education or below (12) and women with a secondary education (12). Only eight of the participants had a higher education level.

Table 1. Distribution of the sample by age group and education level

	Primary education or below	Secondary education	Higher education	Total by age group
25-29	1	0	0	1
30-34	3	4	1	8
45-54	4	2	6	12
55+	4	6	1	11
Total by level of education	12	12	8	32

Another characteristic of the sample is that it also includes eight immigrant women from the following developing countries: Morocco, Armenia, the Philippines, Cuba, Bolivia and Colombia. This enables an analysis of whether the immigrant condition introduces new perspectives with regard to the Internet experience and job opportunities (Garrido et al. 2009).

Focusing the analysis on this group is particularly appropriate because of their disadvantaged position in the digital sphere and labour market. Ultimately, immigrant and low skilled women have the weakest position in the Spanish labour market (Torns and Recio 2012) and

women from older generations without a higher education have the highest digital gap (Arroyo and Valenduc, 2016). Even when they are e-included, the usage gap further contributes to the reinforcement of the knowledge gap and towards further social inequalities (Di Maggio et al., 2004; De Grip and Zwich, 2005; Selwyn and Facer, 2007; van Deursen and van Dijk, 2014; Arroyo and Valenduc, 2016).

Furthermore, it is relevant to look into the Spanish labour market because, not only is it one of the European countries with highest levels of long-term unemployment, but it also features levels of digital inclusion above the EU average (Campos, Arrazola and de Hevia 2014; Arroyo and Valenduc 2016).

The episodic interviews (Flick 2000) were structured into three parts. In the first part, the interviewees were asked about their ‘digital biography’ in order to learn about their Internet use trajectory and explore how they used the Internet in their everyday lives. The second part consisted of more narrowed questions focusing on the Internet as it is related to work and job searching in order to explore whether Internet use helps these women from disadvantaged groups to improve their labour position. At this point, both the objective and subjective dimensions were explored. This included questions on the specific uses of the Internet related to the job search process and employment issues, the material changes in their labour situation since becoming digitally included and its relation to Internet use, and their subjective vision of how the Internet can help them to find a job and improve their labour situation. Finally, the interview finished with a question that posed a hypothetical situation on the recommendations that they would give regarding Internet use to an e-excluded friend.

The interviews were coded using the qualitative data analysis software ATLAS.ti, adapting the main concepts of the social stratification of Internet usage approach (Sassi 2005; Valenduc 2010) from a gender (Wajcman 2004; Wyatt 2008) and women’s inclusion (Sørensen, Faulkner and Rommes 2011) perspective to the empirical material. To accomplish this, the codes were structured into three main codes: digital practices related to the job search, material changes in their labour position and a subjective dimension that included changes in their self-representations and discourses about the use of the Internet and the job opportunities.

Practices and Results of the Online Job Search for Disadvantaged Women

This section explores what contributions and what limitations job search-related digital practices offer the women interviewed in terms of material changes, discourses and self-representations. In accordance with the social stratification of the Internet usage approach (Sassi 2005; Valenduc 2010) and the gender perspective (Bonder 2002; Wajcman 2004; Wyatt 2008), the contributions of digital technologies are shaped by the social context and its social and gender inequalities. As the interviewees belong to different socially disadvantaged groups, the results offer nuanced evidence of how the different axes of inequality influence the Internet use and its results when carrying out a job search.

In terms of digital practices, the participants mainly used the Internet to send their CVs and to search for jobs through online platforms such as InfoJobs, Trovit, Facebook or LinkedIn. The women in the sample who were characterised as being more disadvantaged did not use the Internet to get more information on the organisational culture of the companies to adapt their job profile to offers. This result differs from the research performed by Stevenson (2008) reinforces the social stratification of the Internet usage approach.

With regard to material changes related to the use of the Internet, the online job search was only effective in five cases. These women found positions as commercial agents, school lunch supervisors, non-qualified factory workers and cleaners. In addition to the scarce job positions found, three of them reported that they rejected offers because the conditions were degrading in terms of salary or due to lack of respect:

[The offer] didn't interest me because I consider that it is true that there is a great need, there is a lack of jobs, but one has to be respected as a person. After all, we are all people. (41-year-old employed non-immigrant woman with a post-secondary non-tertiary education)

But sometimes they require something and you say, 'no, no, no, I don't play this game'. (38-year-old unemployed immigrant woman with a primary education)

In terms of discourse, some ambivalence can be detected with regard to the participants' opinions on the usefulness of the Internet in finding a job. When exploring the contributions of the online job search process, the women interviewed stressed that they believed the Internet is a useful tool for helping them in searching for a job, as the quantitative research

results demonstrated (Kuhn and Skuterud 2004; Tso, Yau and Cheung 2010; Stevenson 2008; Kuhn and Mansour 2014). The interviewees stated that they valued the large amount of job notice boards and the information about the companies who were recruiting personnel as well as the facilities offered by the Internet to contact companies and send CVs.

Despite the positive opinions that claimed it was a useful tool for the job search process, the women interviewed also pointed out that the Internet is the only option to search for a job today. They were very critical of the fact that companies no longer accept CVs delivered by hand and that they were forced to send their CVs online. Seven of them said they preferred face-to-face interaction with employers because they believe it is important that the company sees and meets them in person:

So everything is on the Internet. I don't like this very much. I liked it more before, when you went, delivered your CV by hand and they saw you in person. Now, they somehow reject you and send you messages. Some company rejects you based on what they're asking for, on your profile...In that sense, I don't like it. In the past, you went to a company and said 'I'm leaving my CV'. Not anymore. Now, they no longer accept it. Now everything has to be done via Internet... And there, you don't know if they've got it or if they delete it directly. (35-year-old unemployed non-immigrant woman with a secondary education)

This criticism of the Internet job search process leads us to revise the conclusion of Stevenson (2008) and Tso, Yau and Cheung (2010) regarding the online job search preference simply because it reduces the costs of submitting a CV to employers. On the contrary, the women interviewed valued face-to-face contact as a way of ensuring that applicants are assessed according to the complete set of skills that they possess (De Grip and Zwich 2005; Garrido, Sullivan and Gordon 2012). This may be relevant especially for women from disadvantaged groups, who are afraid of being automatically excluded from a job offer through the online selection process when the employer looks at their CV, without offering them the opportunity to meet in person.

However, while the Spanish women interviewed expressed a general preference for delivering their CVs by hand, this was not applicable in the case of the immigrant women. On the contrary, the immigrants interviewed highlighted the advantages of online communication when sending their applications. Unlike the other women, they believed that this was the best way to ensure that the company received their CV, unlike the cases when they tried to deliver

it in person and were rejected directly. They believed that they had a more equal opportunity to find a job and to avoid direct discrimination because of their immigrant status with this strategy.

Well, you find a lot of [job] offers through the Internet, but without the Internet you can't find any. Because now you go to the company to deliver your CV and they don't take it. But with the Internet, you send it and that's it. You find this easy. You feel calmer. You say 'look, today I've sent five, for example, and I'm happy. I've sent five'. Let's see if one of the five calls me. But without the Internet, all the doors are closed. Because I've tried this. I've taken the CV and delivered it by hand to the company and I say, 'Can I leave my CV?', and they say, 'No, no, no. We don't need anyone right now'. Then you become nervous. But not through the Internet. You send it over the Internet and you feel calmer, not nervous or...or upset. (38-year-old unemployed immigrant woman with a primary education)

Thus, although the women who identified some gaps in their profile were reluctant about online job submission and preferred face-to-face interaction to avoid direct rejection as candidates, the online job search was seen as a way of ensuring more equal opportunities in the case of immigrant women. The lack of social capital that characterised immigrant women and added more obstacles to finding a job than non-immigrants is also significant for analysing the immigrants' preference for online job applications (Garrido et al. 2009). In line with the results of previous research examining job seekers with low social capital (Campos, Arrezola and de Hevia 2014), the Internet can be a good tool through which people without a social network can access employment opportunities.

In terms of social networks, Feuls, Fieseler and Suphan (2014) highlighted that the Internet helps to combat social withdrawal and dampen the mental health problems that are a consequence of long-term unemployment. In the case of the women interviewed, they reported that the reinforcement of social networks when it came to facing social isolation was more linked to their involvement in a lifelong programme in which the participants shared the same unemployment status than to their use of the Internet. For instance, one of the interviewees reported that she took training courses not only 'to retrain as a worker' but also 'to avoid staying at home'. In addition, another long-term unemployed participant highlighted that the training course for the unemployed was very rewarding because she met other women in the same situation; they 'encouraged one another and this helped a lot':

I took this 50-hour course...she says, 'Are you interested in this [course]?', and I say, 'Yes, to be honest', so I don't stay at home and to always refresh yourself a bit. (59-year-old long-term unemployed non-immigrant woman with a post-secondary non-tertiary education)

The companionship helps a lot. In the Job Search [programme] we came to, and in this [Internet course], I had a good time. Not only because you learn something new, but also because you meet people...we encourage each other and that does a lot. (51-year-old unemployed non-immigrant woman with a primary education)

Regarding self-representations, women positively valued their Internet experience in terms of their autonomy. The interviewees with a lower level of education greatly appreciated the acquisition of digital skills because they helped them to be able to find a job on their own. As the women explored a new perspective on digital inclusion, this inclusion encouraged them to explore new dimensions of themselves that brought them more autonomy and self-esteem (Sørensen, Faulkner and Rommes 2011).

This empowerment through the acquisition of digital skills is also related to participation in a basic digital skills course linked to an employment programme. The interviewees said they valued the support of the instructors because they helped them to overcome their fear of not using the Internet properly. This also reinforces Sørensen, Faulkner and Rommes' (2011) idea regarding the necessity to further develop digital inclusion public policies to assure that the entire population – particularly women with fewer advantages – acquire the proper digital skills for their emancipation.

We took a course in basic informatics at the Employment Agency...and the truth is that it's great because I've learned how to look for a job, how to search. (46-year-old employed non-immigrant woman with a primary education)

Before, nothing. I wasn't even able to send a CV or anything. With this course, now I understand it pretty well...Now I'm able to look for a job by myself; I'm able to save my things. I've learned a lot, you know? Now I'm able to send my CV to companies. In the past, I always needed help with these little things. (49-year-old unemployed immigrant woman with less than a primary education)

In the case of immigrant women, they also highlighted the change that the use of the Internet introduced in order to be able to find the company's address and get there by themselves.

These women stressed the significant impacts that Internet use had on their autonomy and self-esteem:

It has changed because before, without the Internet, I didn't know how to do it. But now, now I'm good at the Internet, because I can, for example, go to a place, I search for it on the Internet, and it's easy for me. But before I couldn't, I had to ask for help, always with someone next to me. Not anymore. Now, with the Internet, I go by myself... Yes, the Internet has changed me a lot. Before, I was shy, fearful, like 'I'm scared'... But not anymore. Now I've changed a lot. (38-year-old unemployed immigrant woman with a primary education)

Analysing the contributions and limitations of the online job search according to the women interviewed revealed that how digital technologies were appropriated by users according their social context and opportunities had to be considered (Gurstein 2003; Wajcman 2004; Sassi 2005; Di Maggio et al. 2004; Valenduc 2010; Wyatt 2008). Although the Spanish women positively valued the Internet as a good tool for the job search, they preferred face-to-face interaction with the company in order to avoid exclusion because of the gaps in their employment profiles. However, immigrant women found the online option more inclusive. In terms of autonomy and self-esteem, both the immigrants and non-immigrants expressed having a positive experience in terms of their Internet usage. Usually, it was also linked to their participation in a lifelong learning programme with other women in a similar situation.

Beyond Digital Skills: Age, Education, Gender and Labour Opportunities

In accordance with the social stratification of the Internet approach (Gurstein 2003; Sassi 2005; Di Maggio et al. 2004; van Deursen and van Dijk 2014; Selwyn and Facer 2007; Valenduc 2010), the women interviewed considered the acquisition of digital skills to be an insufficient condition for finding a job because of other inequalities that prevent them from accessing job opportunities. They stressed the added difficulties that they face in the labour market on account of their age, their education level, their lack of language skills, their family responsibilities and the scarce labour opportunities in Spain due to the economic crisis.

Age discrimination was detected by five of the unemployed women who expressed that they felt they had fewer opportunities for finding a job than younger women. Not only did the oldest women of the sample (who were over 55 years old) detect this age discrimination, but

two immigrant women aged 49 and 38 also found that the job offers were targeted at younger women. In addition, one of them guessed that she was automatically eliminated from the selection processes when the employers identified her age on her CV.

I've never found a job through the Internet. I sent my CV and I've looked, but nothing came from it; there are no jobs. I think it's because you write your age and things like that, and my age and everything is on my CV. There are no job possibilities for me because of my age, you know? Not for me. After 40, it's more difficult to find a job. (49-year-old unemployed immigrant with less than a primary education)

The older participants also related age with level of studies. They believed that younger people have a higher level of education and can thus count on more labour opportunities. One 59-year-old woman interviewed stated that this situation is very depressing, because there are even younger women with a higher education who have not found a job, so her expectations decreased. She said that she continuously sends CVs online, but she does not receive any replies:

Yes, what happens is that it's depressing now because, look, in the last course that we did here, there were young women in their thirty-somethings, forties, and they didn't find anything either. They're administrative, and they are perhaps more up-to-date...because they've just finished their university degrees and everything, and they told me that it's depressing because you send 20 CVs and they don't even answer to say, 'hey, look, we're not interested'. Of course, it's true that if they received 200 CVs they're not going to call 200 people to say no. They're not going to say no 200 times. So I, well, I keep sending, to everything I see... (59-year-old long-term unemployed non-immigrant with a post-secondary non-tertiary education)

This quotation challenges what Beard et al. (2012) pointed out about the role of the Internet in preventing job seekers from discouragement because of the huge amount of job offers. As this women stresses, it is very frustrating to send many applications and get no answer. Therefore, not only is it important to detect job offers, but also to receive positive responses to stay encouraged.

In relation to the level of studies, there was one immigrant woman interviewed who studied a professional training programme in Business Administration in her country but was working as a domestic worker in Spain at the time of the interview. She stated that despite the

acquisition of digital skills, she still needed to learn the local language to be able to improve her labour position.

There, I worked in an office as a receptionist... Now, I'm working as a domestic servant here. It's very different...It's very different because here you have to learn more things, learn more languages. You need to learn Catalan and it's lacking...I have to study first before changing my job. (55-year-old employed immigrant woman with a post-secondary non-tertiary education)

In the case of non-immigrant respondents, they raised the issue of language in terms of their lack of foreign language skills such as English, French or German when looking for administrative jobs:

It's complicated. At my age it's more complicated. They require a lot of languages from you and I don't have any foreign languages. For any administrative position, you need English, German, French and perhaps I don't have the proper age...I do have the right age, but not to start studying a language...You start looking [for a job] and you say, 'This is my profile', but later, they require German, English, one thing or another and that's it. (59-year-old long-term unemployed woman with a post-secondary non-tertiary education)

Therefore, a lack of language skills in combination with the level of education can mitigate the effectiveness of the possibilities offered by digital skills in finding for these women in a labour market where communication skills are crucial (Di Maggio et al. 2004; De Grip and Zwich 2005; van Deursen and van Dijk 2014). As the social stratification of the use of the Internet approach suggests, workers with low levels of education or immigrants who are not fluent in the local language have additional difficulties in taking advantage of their e-skills in the labour market (Garrido et al. 2009; Selwyn and Facer 2007; Valencuc 2010). In addition, as pointed out by the gender perspective of Internet usage (Bonder 2002; Wajcman 2004; Casula 2011; Simões 2011), the women interviewed who have family responsibilities are only able to connect to the Internet when they finish their domestic and caregiving tasks. Thus, they admit to encountering difficulties finding a job due to their schedules and the demands of their responsibilities. For example, there was the case of an immigrant woman with children under the age of 10 who stated that she could not find a job because the working hours were not compatible with caring for her three children. In addition, there was another case of a non-immigrant woman who had to take care of her disabled son and her dependent mother and indicated that she could not find a job because of her family responsibilities.

Moreover, beyond their position in the social structure, the interviewees also highlight that there is a lack of job opportunities due to the depressed economy in Spain. This situation discourages the possibilities of finding a job despite the respondents' efforts to acquire new skills. This discouragement extended to unemployed women with every education level:

I don't know to what extent for finding a job [through the Internet]. I haven't tried it, either, but I don't know. It's just that I know very few people who have found a job just because of something like this. Plus, the situation is very bad. (51-year-old unemployed non-immigrant woman with a higher education)

Therefore, in order to put digital skills into practice to find a job, it is first essential to have job opportunities (Garrido, Sullivan and Gordon 2012). This condition is particularly critical in the case of older women with low levels of education, immigrant women or those with family responsibilities. Thus, as the gender perspective and social stratification of the Internet usage approach point out, it is important to take social and gender inequalities in the labour market into consideration when assessing the extent to which digital skills improve women's labour position.

Concluding Remarks

This qualitative study focused on women who acquired digital skills through a lifelong learning training programme in Spain. The results of the study add more nuanced evidence to the contributions and limitations of Internet use in finding better job opportunities when carrying out a job search. As the profile of the sample interviewed was mainly older women with low education levels who were looking for jobs – including immigrant women – this study has contributed to the analysis by adopting the perspective of these socially disadvantaged groups.

Despite the participants' positive evaluation of the Internet for searching for jobs, few of them have found a position using this method. Many of the Spanish women claimed they prefer face-to-face interaction for delivering their CVs because they were afraid of being automatically excluded in the online job selection processes due to there being something missing in their profile. However, more immigrant women preferred online job submissions

because they believed that the Internet allowed them to avoid direct discrimination and thought it could be a good resource in supplementing a lack of social capital.

In terms of subjectivity, the women interviewed valued the acquisition of digital skills in reinforcing their autonomy and self-esteem and combatting the social isolation linked to long-term unemployment, as the women's inclusion perspective pointed out (Sørensen, Faulkner and Rommes 2011). However, this positive consideration is not related to the use of the Internet in itself. Instead, it is linked more strongly to their participation in lifelong learning programmes in which they found other women in the same situation.

Although the acquisition of digital skills did help to strengthen their autonomy and self-esteem, the women interviewed highlighted that their acquisition did not ensure more job opportunities. They pointed out that there are other inequalities that hinder the possibility of finding a job, such as age discrimination, their level of studies and language proficiency, thus adding evidence to the social stratification of the use of the Internet approach (Gurstein 2003; Sassi 2005; Di Maggio et al. 2004; van Deursen and van Dijk 2014; Selwyn and Facer 2007; Valenduc 2010). In addition, the unequal distribution of work means that women are not able to take full advantage of the Internet, as the gender perspective indicates (Bonder 2002; Wajcman 2004; Castaño 2008; Wyatt 2008; Casula 2011; Simões 2011). Therefore, women with family responsibilities face added difficulties in finding a job.

This analysis offers further evidence of the politics of contradiction regarding the implications of digital technologies in terms of labour opportunities for disadvantaged women. Although digital technologies can be a way of improving the efficiency of a job search and contribute to the empowerment of women's self-representations, gender and social inequalities condition the potential of using the Internet to improve the labour position of job seekers.

These results have policy implications in two directions. On the one hand, it is crucial to continue developing lifelong learning programmes for digital skills that link employment skills to experience using the Internet and facilitate social interaction among people in similar conditions. On the other hand, digital programmes for better job opportunities must not only promote the acquisition of digital skills but also other basic skills such as knowledge of a

foreign language. Moreover, these policies have to be coordinated with other social policies that avoid age, race and gender discrimination.

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