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Effects, Experiences, and Ethical Aspects of Active Labor Market Programs in Social Work for Long-Term Social Assistance Recipients: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Purpose: To assess the effects of supporting labor market interventions for adults outside the labor market who are long-term social assistance recipients, and to present participant experiences of return-to-work interventions. **Method:** A systematic review where direct and indirect client interventions were synthesized. We included 26 quantitative studies (seven randomized and 19 based on register data about 5.8 million persons), and 14 qualitative studies. **Results:** Effective programs to enable long-term social assistance recipients to enter and retain employment are workplace training, extensive or long-term training, work support programs in regular activities (moderate certainty of evidence). Up until February 2022, this report updates previous knowledge about the effects of education, internships and work practice, and employer subsidies together with new knowledge about the effects of case managers' working methods for the target group. Evidence gaps are addressed. **Discussion:** Strengths and limitations, practice, policy and research implications, and ethical considerations are discussed.

Keywords

Intervention, welfare, quantitative, qualitative, RCT, social welfare policy, systematic review, welfare recipients, labor market

Active labor market interventions in high- or middle-income countries are a societal support for people of working age, deemed able to work, who do not regularly participate in the labor market. One such group comprises individuals receiving lasting social assistance, that is, the recipients of long-term social assistance. According to some national data from a Nordic welfare state, Sweden, unemployment is the most common obstacle to being able to earn a living (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2021). Unemployment is related to poorer quality of life as well as to symptoms of depression and anxiety (Janlert, 2016; Norström et al., 2019; Paul & Moser, 2009). For most adults, having a job means participating in meaningful tasks and being better off financially. Work can also affect health or vice versa: healthy people may find employment more easily, but work in itself may promote health (van der Noordt et al., 2014).

Rationale

Social assistance is the ultimate safety net in welfare systems. The overall aim of labor market programs, or interventions, is to (re)integrate welfare claimants, who can be hard-to-place or employ, into the labor market. This will reduce the welfare dependency of these claimants and help them achieve self-sufficiency (Huber et al., 2011). Strengthening the participants' position in the labor market may improve

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Registration and protocol

A protocol was preregistered, "Return to work—persons with long-term psychiatric (CMD) sick-leave or long-term welfare recipients". No deviations from the protocol were made. https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/display_record.php?RecordID=235586

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their chances of finding employment or progressing to further education (Mörk et al., 2021). Entitlement to welfare benefits may be conditional upon the claimants' efforts to find employment or on participation in a mandatory activation program. Failure to comply may result in financial sanctions. Some programs are based on benefit bonuses (Arendt & Kolodziejczyk, 2019), whereby participants receive regular benefits, such as 1 to 2 euros per hour (Dengler, 2019).

Social workers have a pivotal role in processing means-tested economic help to vulnerable groups in most western countries. The framework can differ due to structural and organizational settings but the same basic characteristics in social work methods and ethics affects how poor people's scarcities are been handled (Murugan et al., 2025).

The Intervention

Labor market interventions, that is, work-related interventions such as education, job-search assistance, job-search training, subsidized employment, job clubs, vocational training, occupational rehabilitation, workplace intervention, or validation, but also work programs such as Individual Placement and Support and Supported Employment, were considered relevant.

Labor market interventions, often referred to as ALMP, Active Labour Market Policy, are often national reforms with general interventions that are not individually adapted. The interventions are sometimes mandatory, that is, conditional. In addition to the security systems and financial incentives for the individual also the economy, such as a recession, may influence how the intervention might work. There are theories about work and its value for people, but for labor market intervention the theoretical connection is not that strong.

Unemployment is related to poorer quality of life as well as to symptoms of depression and anxiety (Janlert, 2016; Norström et al., 2019; Paul & Moser, 2009). For most adults, having a job means participating in meaningful tasks and being better off financially. Work can also affect health or vice versa: healthy people may find employment more easily, but work in itself may promote health (van der Noordt et al., 2014).

Some of the efforts aim to increase productivity via various training courses that are relevant to the labor market. However, the vast majority of courses are primarily aimed at helping jobseekers find a job. The main purpose of a labor market intervention is to increase the potential for an individual outside the labor market to gain and retain employment. From an ethical perspective, however, this purpose is an instrumental goal: fulfillment is of value only if it leads to other states which have a definitive or final value.

There are two different perspectives on what could constitute this final value: it may be strictly socioeconomic, or it may be based on the needs of the individual. It is important to note that the quality of the interventions varies. Active labor market interventions are neither treatment, nor are they manual based. The degree of individualization in the interventions also varies—a scale from low-quality intervention of the "one size fits all" model, to allowing adaptation to different degrees.

What is Already Known

Recipients of long-term social assistance are a vulnerable group. Smedslund et al. (2006) investigated the relative impact of two types of programs in their review based on randomized controlled impact evaluations of welfare-to-work programs, almost exclusively from the United States. The search period was from 2003 to 2005. The studies started during the period 1967–1996. The LFA approach (labor force attachment) had a slightly better effect on employment (risk ratio: 1.094, 95% confidence interval [CI]: 1.056–1.133) than the HCD approach (human capital development) (risk ratio: 1.049, 95% CI: 1.003–1.098), but the confidence intervals have a large overlap. The authors conclude that welfare-to-work programs in the USA have shown small, but consistent effects in moving welfare recipients into work, increasing earnings, and lowering welfare payments. The results are not clear for reducing the proportion of recipients receiving welfare. Little is known about the impacts of welfare-to-work programs outside of the USA: those focused on skill building (LFA) and those focused on labor market affiliation (HCD). The results indicated that LFA programs increased the chances of getting a job more than HCD. Card et al. (2018) studied effects of active labor market policies for a broader population, participants who enter from the unemployment insurance system, long-term unemployed and disadvantaged participant groups. They found that (1) average impacts are close to zero in the short run, but become more positive 2 to 3 years after completion of the program; (2) the time profile of impacts varies by type of program, with larger average gains for programs that emphasize human capital accumulation; (3) there is systematic heterogeneity across participant groups, with larger impacts for females and participants who enter from long-term unemployment; (4) active labor market programs are more likely to show positive impacts in a recession.

An update of the effects of multiple forms of active labor market interventions, also including the potential of other types than education and internship, is of value. These results could be a potential guide for decision making, both in social work practice and policy.

Objectives

The objectives of this systematic review were to

1. assess the effects of supporting labor market interventions for adults outside the labor market who are long-term social assistance recipients;
2. present participant experiences of return-to-work interventions;

3. investigate a basis of how the costs of the evaluated interventions relate to the effects, that is to say, the question of the cost-effectiveness of the efforts or socio-economic profitability; and
4. identify ethical aspects and values that can potentially be actualized when using the evaluated efforts and the results of the report.

Method

Eligibility Criteria

Types of Studies. Randomized controlled studies, RCT, quasi-experimental observational studies based on register data, as well as studies based on qualitative data were eligible. In quasi-experimental designs, either an external variation in treatment prevalence is used or the randomized experiment is recreated via detailed data ex post. The design of the first group is often described as natural experimental design while the second may be referred to as matching design. Natural experimental designs are (a) "Instrument Variable Design (IV)", (b) "Difference in Difference" design (DID), and (c) "Regression Discontinuity Design" (RDD).

A frequently used matching design is Propensity Score Matching (PS matching), whereby the estimated propensity for treatment, that is, PS, is used to find individuals who match those being treated. Also included as valid designs were Interrupted Time Series studies and so-called "Timing of Events" (TOE). Studies written in English, Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish were eligible. Interim reports and studies from the USA with data limited to follow-up of only one year, or data from only one state were excluded. Studies where randomization, or data collection in non-randomized studies, occurred before 1995 were excluded being out of date.

Types of Participants. Adults, aged 18–64 years, outside the labor market and receiving long-term social assistance, that is, at least 6 months if reported. Participants should be deemed capable of work. Studies focusing on newly arrived immigrants and people with functional limitations or severe mental disorders were excluded as well as studies of unemployed populations.

Types of Interventions. Labor market interventions reaching individuals, directly or indirectly. Four types of interventions, lasting for at least one month, were defined as:

- preparatory programs, for example, job search assistance or counseling;
- education or training;
- internship or workplace practice; and
- other interventions such as work-related rehabilitation, self-employment etc.

No intervention, intervention as usual, or other measures served as controls.

Types of Outcome Measures. Three separate primary outcomes were set:

(1) Return to work, that is, employment in the labor market; (2) ongoing or completed education; and (3) Income.

Additional, secondary outcomes were: health measures such as sleep, depression, anxiety, stress, quality of life, or capacity for work. Experiences based on studies from qualitative data were defined as a secondary outcome.

Follow-up time was categorized as

- Short term = ≤ 12 months
- Long term = ≤ 24 months
- Longer term = ≥ 24 months.

Types of Settings. No geographical constraints were applied. Please see the section Participants.

Information Sources

Electronic Searches. A systematic literature search was conducted in the databases Scopus (Elsevier), Ebsco Multi-Search (SocINDEX with Full Text; Academic Search Premier; ERIC), Sociological Abstracts (ProQuest) and EconLit (Ebsco) from year 1990 onwards with no limit to publication types (Search strategies). The database search was conducted in January 2021, with an update in February 2022. In order not to risk missing potentially relevant studies we found it adequate to start the search back at 1990. Important social reforms occurred in the USA at 1995 why this time point was chosen as a cut off for American studies.

An information specialist designed and carried out systematic literature searches in consultation with the project's experts and project manager. Great emphasis was placed on designing broad and unconditional search strategies with the aim of capturing as many relevant studies as possible. The experts checked, supplemented and decided on the search strategy. Regarding the search strategies we refer to SBU (https://www.sbu.se/contentassets/f8d13a9ccfd944cc9f4e1660c541d7cc/bilaga-1-litteratursokning.pdf).

Searching Other Resources. The literature search was supplemented by a citation and reference search in Scopus of included articles and relevant reviews. Websites from relevant organizations and research institutes in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany, and the UK were reviewed. The Swedish national database for academic publications, SwePub, was searched for Swedish reports. In addition, dialogues were held with reference groups representing client or patient perspectives, and perspectives were sought from other relevant Swedish authorities.

Selection Process

Initially, the two project managers independently screened and excluded titles or abstracts that were obviously irrelevant (e.g., tourism, surgery, etc.). In a second step, teams were formed (expert + project manager). The remaining material of titles and abstracts were independently screened by the team members. The Rayyan tool was used for the selection process. In a third step, the studies were independently rereviewed for relevance in full text according to PICOS (i.e., population, intervention, comparison, outcome, study design), publication form and time of data collection. Discrepancies in all three steps were resolved by discussion.

Assessment of Risk of Bias in Included Studies

Studies considered as relevant according to PICOS was then independently assessed for risk of bias by two review authors. The Cochrane risk-of-bias tool was used for randomized trials, RoB 2 (Sterne et al., 2019). A tool used for assessment of risk of bias in observational studies based on register data was developed at SBU (https://www.sbu.se/en/tools-to-assess-risk-of-bias/). Disagreements between the assessors over the risk of bias in particular studies were resolved by discussion, with involvement of one or more members of the project group when necessary. Studies with low or moderate risk of bias were included. Regarding excluded studies we refer to SBU (https://www.sbu.se/contentassets/f8d13a9ccfd944cc9f4e1660c541d7cc/bilaga-2-sammanstallning-av-studier-som-exkluderats-och-studier-som-inte-ingar-i-analyserna-pa-grund-av-hog-risk-for-bias.pdf).

Data Extraction and Management

One person extracted the data, while a second person checked the extracted information against the articles. The data extraction form included the following information: author and year; country of origin; design; number of participants; assessment points; participants' characteristics (age, gender, intervention or program, including level of support, duration, content of the usual intervention); primary and secondary outcome measures (including relevant outcome data); adverse events; attrition.

Measures of Treatment Effect

The results were mainly presented narratively, according to SWiM (Campbell et al., 2020), and usually not as calculated effect sizes. Detailed information about effects reported in the studies is provided in five Summary of findings-tables. The Random-Effects Model was used in the meta-analysis using Review Manager, version 5.3. Binary outcomes were reported as odds ratios, calculated when necessary to absolute numbers from study data reported as percentages.

The unit of analysis for this review is each study. In most of the included studies, the results were presented as estimated endpoints without raw data in the form of for example, mean values and standard deviation. This meant that it was essentially only possible to summarize results in syntheses without meta-analysis, that is, no calculation of the combined effect could be made. With a few exceptions, no numerical weighted endpoints could be presented. For this information we refer to SBU, Characteristics of quantitative studies (https://www.sbu.se/contentassets/f8d13a9ccfd944cc9f4e1660c541d7cc/bilaga-3-tabell-over-kvantitativa-studier.pdf).

When multiple time points were reported we selected the longest follow up. In case of multiple reports from a single study, data from the latest publication was used. The project group found the long-term effects of labor market interventions most interesting and valuable for practice. Different follow-up times are handled and reported separately. Missing data and drop out are reported in the study descriptions, considered in the risk of bias assessment and are thereby included in the GRADE assessment.

In the meta-analysis, the I^2 statistic was used for the assessment. In the case of unexplained heterogeneity, that is, where different directions in the results not could be explained, the certainty of the evidence was downgraded. Reporting bias was not assessed, as protocols from included studies were not available. However, the outcomes reported in the methods and results sections were compared. Publication bias was considered to be low, due to the comprehensive literature search which also included gray literature.

Data Synthesis

Each included study (i.e., studies holding sufficient quality) was summarized and described according to the characteristics of the participants, country, aim, interventions, follow up, and outcomes measured. Meta-analysis was conducted if data were sufficiently reported and homogenous. The results were synthesized for each specific intervention where study design also was taken into account. Studies need to be sufficiently homogenous regarding intervention, population, and outcome. The results are separate and based on independent groups. A synthesis without meta-analysis was conducted when study data were insufficiently reported, that is, in a way which enables a meta-analysis. The synthesis without meta-analysis, SWiM, is guided by the steps in the article of Campbell et al. (Campbell et al., 2020). We present and consider data about direction of the effect, the reported estimated effects including range or distribution in the Summary of Findings-tables. Comparisons based on one single study were assessed from the reported mean differences

and effect sizes. No subgroup analysis or sensitivity analysis was planned or conducted.

Summary of Findings and Assessment of the Certainty of the Evidence

The certainty of evidence was assessed using Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development and Evaluations, GRADE (Balshem et al., 2011). The syntheses are shown in tables for Summary of Findings (SoF) for each intervention type presenting the total number of participants, the effects per study, certainty of evidence followed by reason/s for downgrading and comments for each outcome.

Treatment of Qualitative Research

Criteria for Selection of Qualitative Studies. Perspective: adults, aged 18 to 64 years, outside the labor market and receiving long-term social assistance, that is, at least 6 months if reported.

Interventions: Labor market interventions. Comparison: No requirement.

Outcome: Experiences of the labor market intervention itself (result) as well as the path to intervention, for example about the investigation, the waiting time (process). The data must be of a qualitative nature, that is, consist of texts from interviews or observations that are described and interpreted.

Other delimitations: No requirements were made for qualitative studies to form part of the included quantitative studies.

Assessment of Methodological Flaws. A checklist in Swedish, developed by SBU, was used for assessment of methodological flaws in studies with qualitative data (https://www.sbu.se/en/tools-to-assess-risk-of-bias/).

(1) Consistency between philosophical stance/theory and selection and methodology in the study; (2) participants (selection); (3) methods used for data collection; (4) methods used for analysis; and (5) researcher background and competence.

The studies were reviewed by two project managers independently, followed by a consensus decision on the degree of methodological flaws. Studies with a high risk of methodological problems were excluded (https://www.sbu.se/contentassets/f8d13a9ccfd944cc9f4e1660c541d7cc/bilaga-2-sammanstallning-av-studier-som-exkluderats-och-studier-som-inte-ingar-i-analyserna-pa-grund-av-hog-risk-for-bias.pdf)

Data Extraction and Management. The starting point was the study's headlines and other data-related text that captured the central findings about experiences and experiences in all directions. The data-related text also included summary writing and the authors' reflections, but no quotations were used. These headings and text sections were copied and entered into the description of the study. Existing main and subheadings, which often correspond to themes in the study, are always reproduced. The description also includes a brief account of the studied group as well as of the intervention, that is, the program under the heading Return to Work. Entire or central parts of the authors' conclusion are also reproduced. The extractions were made by one of the authors and checked by another author. We did not include any qualitative data from the quantitative studies. The results were arranged according to countries where the studies were performed.

All the results have been reported descriptively, but no quotes are used. Some studies were focusing experiences from return-to-work interventions in a specific population, single mothers. Four studies presented experiences from broader populations and were chosen for a more thorough description. No synthesis is made, this being a secondary outcome. Consequently, no assessment has been made of the reliability of the results according to GRADE CERQual (Lewin et al., 2018).

Method for Economics

The review was limited to economic evaluations and cost studies. For economic evaluations, the relevant outcome measures were cost per effect or net cost. For cost studies, the relevant outcome measure was the cost of the intervention. Only studies of interventions that were included in the efficacy evaluation were included. No separate search for economic evaluations or cost studies was conducted. In reviewing the references identified in the project's main searches, project managers and experts noted economic evaluations and other articles that potentially contained information on health economic aspects or costs. The project's health economist reviewed the marked articles in full text and assessed their relevance based on the selected selection criteria and in consultation with an expert or project leader.

Assessment of Quality and Transferability. The studies deemed to meet the selection criteria were reviewed by three people (one health economist and two experts in the project) with the support of a selection of questions from SBU's review templates for health economics studies. The studies were discussed and assessed for quality of method (on the scale high, medium, or low) and transferability to Swedish conditions (according to the same scale).

Results

Study Selection

The database search disclosed a total of 22 218 records. After removal of duplicates, we screened 20 630 records from which we reviewed 718 full-text documents, and finally included 26 papers about intervention effects. With the exception of one study, no extra articles which fulfilled the

inclusion criteria were found in manual searching and other supplementary search activities. A flow chart illustrates the search process (Figure 1). Reasons for exclusion are population, intervention, comparison, outcome, study design or study age, publication type or high risk of bias.

Included Studies. Twenty-six quantitative studies were included, seven of which were randomized controlled studies (Bloom, 2002; Brenninkmeijer & Blonk, 2012; Breunig, 2003; Dorsett & Robins, 2013; Galasso et al., 2004; Malmberg-Heimonen & Tøge, 2016; Meckstroth et al., 2019) and 19 studies were observational studies, that is, nonrandomized studies, based on register data (Almeida & Galasso, 2010; Arendt & Kolodziejczyk, 2019; Autor & Houseman, 2005; Ayala & Rodríguez, 2013; Bernhard & Kopf, 2014; Cammeraat et al., 2021; Dengler, 2019; Graversen & Jensen, 2010; Hamersma, 2008; Harrer et al., 2020; Harrer & Stockinger, 2021; Heinesen et al., 2013; Hohmeyer & Wolff, 2012; Huber et al., 2011; Knoef & Ours, 2016; Kopf, 2013; Markussen & Røed, 2016; Mörk et al., 2021; Ravn & Nielsen, 2019). No multiple reports were included. For quantitative study characteristics we refer to SBU, https://www.sbu.se/contentassets/f8d13a9ccfd944cc9f4e1660c541d7cc/bilaga-3-tabell-over-kvantitativa-studier.pdf. Overview descriptions of participants and interventions are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Excluded Studies. For information of main reason for exclusion, PICOS or risk of bias, of each study we refer to SBU, https://www.sbu.se/contentassets/f8d13a9ccfd944cc9f4e1660c541d7cc/bilaga-2-sammanstallning-av-studier-som-exkluderats-och-studier-som-inte-ingar-i-analyserna-pa-grund-av-hog-risk-for-bias.pdf.

Risk of Bias in Included Studies. Risk of bias assessment is presented for each quantitative study in the study descriptions (characteristics of studies, we refer to SBU). Two studies were assessed as low risk of bias, the remaining 24 ones were assessed as moderate risk of bias. Risk of bias per domain in the studies is presented in Table 3.

Effects of Interventions

First, two main categories in five types of labor market interventions were identified which are described in more detail below.

Programs Applied Directly to the Client: Preparatory Programs, Education and Internship. Preparatory actions/interventions are shorter interventions. They involve identifying individuals' needs and conditions in terms of work ability, competence and interest. This may comprise working life contact in various forms, such as job search courses, study visits, study guidance or shorter educational courses. It may also comprise information about what it means socially and practically to work. Job training within or outside the regular labor market are other opportunities. Job coaching is another example.

Education can vary in content, scope and form. It may comprise training for a few days, up to a year or more. Three main types have been identified:

- classroom training with predominantly theoretical courses;
- work-related training that can include both theoretical and practical elements; and
- more extensive education such as vocational training.

Internship, or workplace practice, is a period of work experience for a limited period of time. It means that the person works full- or part-time in fixed-term employment, often up to 1 year. Some of these fixed-term employment contracts also aim to ensure that the participants thereby qualify for unemployment benefit. The person should undertake or participate in appropriate duties. Internships can take place at a regular workplace in the private or public sectors, but can also take place completely independently or geographically separately.

Programs Reached Clients Indirectly: Employer Subsidies and Case Manager Interventions. Wage subsidies are a financial contribution to employers as compensation for the employer when hiring a client as an employee. There are interventions to achieve effects for clients through the case managers. The interventions were about changed working methods and less workload.

Preparatory Interventions: Findings. Six studies from Germany (Bernhard & Kopf, 2014; Harrer et al., 2020), Spain (Ayala & Rodríguez, 2013), the USA (Autor & Houseman, 2005; Meckstroth et al., 2019), and Argentina (Almeida & Galasso, 2010) evaluated the effects of different types of preparatory interventions. The interventions were somewhat varied and dealt with working life contact, individual support and shorter training, support in looking for work, drawing up an individual plan and other activities or support to start your own business. The outcomes were entry or return to work and income measured after 12 to 30 months. A summary of findings is presented in Table 4.

Overall, the results from the syntheses without meta-analysis showed that preparatory programs consisting of work/life contact may lead to more clients gaining employment, compared to job search support (Autor & Houseman, 2005; Ayala & Rodríguez, 2013; Harrer et al., 2020). The effects of preparatory interventions in the form of individual support and training, support, and start-your-own-business capital support could not be assessed (Almeida & Galasso, 2010; Bernhard & Kopf, 2014; Meckstroth et al., 2019).

Education: Findings. Four studies from Germany (Dengler, 2019; Kopf, 2013), Denmark (Heinesen et al., 2013), and the Netherlands (Brenninkmeijer & Blonk, 2012) evaluated

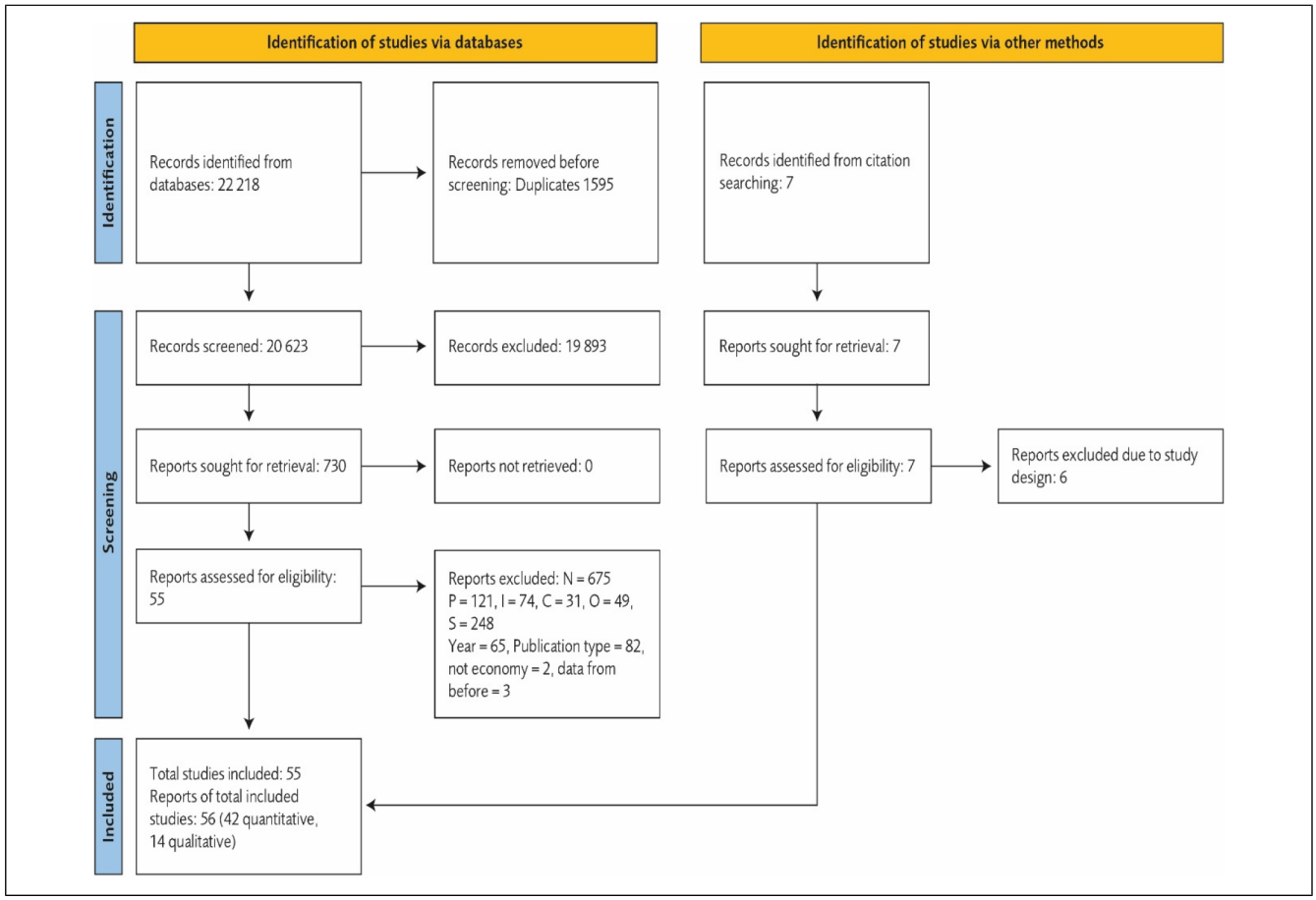

Figure 1. Illustration of study selection process.

the effects of different types of education. These focused on classroom training of varying content, combined with workplace internships of varying duration, as well as on more extensive education. The outcomes were entry or return to work and income measured after 12 to 18 months. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 5. Dengler (2019) evaluated effects from three types of education based on various, but large, datasets about extent and content. These results are presented in three meta-analyses of the effects of classroom training, workplace training, and extensive education among men and women in east and west Germany (Figures 2 to 4).

Overall, training linked to a workplace (Dengler, 2019; Kopf, 2013) as well as extensive training (Dengler, 2019; Kopf, 2013) resulted in more clients gaining employment than the usual intervention or no intervention. The effect of classroom training on employment can be non-existent or negligible, compared to the usual intervention or no intervention (Dengler, 2019; Heinesen et al., 2013; Kopf, 2013). All forms of training led to increased income compared to the usual intervention (Dengler, 2019).

Internship or Workplace Practice: Findings. Twelve studies from Germany (Dengler, 2019; Harrer & Stockinger, 2021; Hohmeyer & Wolff, 2012; Huber et al., 2011), the UK (Dorsett & Robins, 2013), the Netherlands (Cammeraat et al., 2021; Knoef & Ours, 2016), the USA (Bloom, 2002), Norway (Markussen & Røed, 2016), Denmark (Arendt & Kolodziejczyk, 2019; Heinesen et al., 2013), and Sweden (Mörk et al., 2021) evaluated the effects of internships or workplace practice. Four large German quasi-experimental studies were about One-Euro-Jobs (Dengler, 2019; Harrer & Stockinger, 2021; Hohmeyer & Wolff, 2012; Huber et al., 2011). The outcomes were entry or return to work and income measured after 1 to 5 years. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 6. One meta-analysis of the effects of One-Euro-Job among men and women in east and west Germany (Figure 5).

Overall, the results from the syntheses without meta-analysis showed that the effect on employment of One-Euro-Job or internship combined with some sort of a direct financial incentive for the client (Arendt & Kolodziejczyk, 2019; Bloom, 2002; Dengler, 2019; Dorsett & Robins, 2013; Harrer & Stockinger, 2021; Hohmeyer & Wolff, 2012; Huber et al., 2011; Knoef & Ours, 2016) and on income (Arendt & Kolodziejczyk, 2019; Bloom, 2002; Dengler, 2019; Dorsett & Robins, 2013; Knoef & Ours, 2016; Markussen & Røed, 2016) can be nonexistent or

Table 1. Sample Characteristics of the Included Quantitative Studies.

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention type	Number of participants target group (I); comparison (C)	Age Mean age (SD), mean age range, age categories	Females % (SD)
Observational studies, i.e., quasi-experimental studies based on register data					
Almeida and Galasso (2010), DID	Argentina	Preparatory program	N = 476 I = 178; C = 298	39.4 (10.5)	70 (46)
Arendt and Kolodziejczyk (2019), RDD	Denmark	Work practice/ internship	N = 11 109 observations Target = 7 920 Comparison = 3 570	Target: TW: 35.8, TN: 35.8 Comparison: CW: 34.4, CN: 34.8	Target: TW: 47%, TN: 48% Comparison: CW: 42%, CN: 45%
Autor and Houseman (2005), IV	USA	Preparatory program	N = 16 995 Target = 3 286 Comparison = 13 709	Not reported	Not reported
Ayala and Rodríguez (2013), PS	Spain	Preparatory program	N = 1 849 Target = 1 038 Comparison = 811	Five age categories for each group. The largest was consistently the 36–45 year group.	64.2–70.1
Bernhard and Kopf (2014), PS	Germany	Preparatory program	N = 328 826 Target groups: 5 000 ca Comparison: 323 000 ca	Five age categories for each group. The largest were consistently the 30–39 and 40–49 year groups	41.7–45.5
Cammeraat et al., (2021), DID	The Netherlands	Work practice/ internship	N = 767 710 Target = 376 083 Comparison = 391 627	Target: 25–26 Comparison: 27–28	Not reported
Dengler (2019), PS	Germany	Training Work practice	N = 3 045 669 CT = 30 570; C = 750 041 VT = 8 663; C = 726 361 OJT = 21 064; C = 741 848 OEJ = 41 741; C = 725 381	Not reported	Total: 50.1%
Graversen and Jensen (2010), IV	Denmark	Employer subsidies	N = 15 692 target (WS), private sector employment programs = 2 867 Comparison (non-WS) = 12 825	Five age categories for each group. The largest was consistently the 18–24 years group	WS: 44 Non-WS: 50
Hamersma (2008), PS + DID	USA	Employer subsidies	N = 6 118 Target = 897 Comparison = 5 221	30.23 (8.75)– 31.58 (7.65)	91.4 (28.1)– 91.9 (27.3)
Harrer et al. (2020), **PS**	Germany	Preparatory program	N = 213 726 Target: IFT = 22 181, PS = 84 682 Comparison = 106 863	Seven age categories for EA, WG and per sex for each group. The largest was consistently the 25–29 year age group	IFT: 39.4 PS: 41.3

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention type	Number of participants target group (I); comparison (C)	Age Mean age (SD), mean age range, age categories	Females % (SD)
Harrer and Stockinger (2021), **PS**	Germany	Work practice	N = 272 567 Target = 55 542 Comparison = 217 025	Not reported	56.4
Heinesen et al. (2013), **TOE**	Denmark	Work practice	N = 48 041 JC = 6 814 Comparison = 41 227	Four age categories per sex and per group. The largest was consistently the 25–34 year age group	
Hohmeyer and Wolff (2012), PS	Germany	Work practice	N = 355 844 One euro = 70 816 Comparison = 285 028	Four age categories for EA, WG and per sex for each group. The largest was consistently the 36–50 year age group.	42.3
Huber et al. (2011), PS	Germany	Work practice	N = 5 821 OEJ = 611 Comparison = 5 210	OEJ: 40 Comparison: 39	OEJ: 46 C: 59
Knoef and Ours (2016), DID	The Netherlands	Work practice	N = 7 439 Target = 6 473 Comparison = 966	Target (during): 33.4 Comparison (during): 41.7	100
Kopf (2013), PS	Germany	Training	N = 464 428 CAT = 5 355 CAA = 12 155 CST = 11 603 CCT = 12 201 IFA = 14 741 IFS = 5 602 Comparison = 402 771	Three age categories for EA, WG and per sex. The largest was consistently the 25–29 year age group	39.4
Markussen and Røed (2016), DID	Norway	Internship/work practice	N = 315 899 Target group = 8 896 Comparison = 307 003	Total: 33.7 Target: 32.5 Comparison: 36.7	Total: 44. 0 Target: 36.7 Comparison: 46.8
Mörk et al. (2021), TOE	Sweden	Internship/work practice	N = 23 507 Youth employment program = 965 Other municipal employment = 396 Stockholm hosts = 204 Comparison = 22 012	Youth: 21.00 Other: 41.52 Host: 40.25 All clients: 32.96	Youth: 43 Other: 61 Host: 27 All clients: 47
Ravn and Nielsen (2019), DID + PS	Denmark	Intervention for case managers	N = 3 927 Treatment municipality = 493 (49.1%) Control municipalities = 3 434 (49.1%)	T: 41.8 C: 42.0	49.1

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention type	Number of participants target group (I); comparison (C)	Age Mean age (SD), mean age range, age categories	Females % (SD)
Randomised controlled studies					
Reference	**Country**	**Intervention**	**Number of participants** Intervention (I); Control/ comparison (C)	Age Mean age (SD), mean age range, age categories	Females % (SD)
Bloom (2002)	USA	Internship/work practice	N = 4 803 Jobs first = 2 396 AFDC = 2 407	Mean age: 30.7	98.3
Brenninkmeijer and Blonk (2012)	The Netherlands	Training/education	N = 118 JOBS = 47 Voucher = 33 Control = 38	Mean age: 38	70
Breunig (2003)	Australia	Intervention for case managers	N = 4 740 I = 2 940 C = 1 800	Mean age: 35.7–36.7	25–31
Dorsett and Robins (2013)	UK	Internship/work practice	N = 6 754 ERA, employment retention and advancement = 3 348 C = 3 406	Not reported	95
Galasso et al. (2004)	Argentina	Employer subsidies	N = 848 Wage subsidy, WS, = 354 WS + training = 213 C = 281	WS: 32.24 (11.92) WS + training: 32.14 (11.15) C: 32.33 (12.12)	WS: 43.7 (49.0) WS + training: 43.7 (49.0) C: 47.0 (50.0)
Malmberg-Heimonen and Tøge (2016)	Norway	Intervention for case managers	N = 617 Intervention: N = 360 Control: = 257	35.5	50.9
Meckstroth et al. (2019)	USA	Preparatory program	N = 602 BNF = 358 C = 244	28	Total: 93 BNF: 95 C: 92

AFDC= Aid to Families with Dependent Children; BNF= Building Nebraska Families; CAA= Classroom aptitude assessment; CAT= Classroom application training; CCT= combination class room training; CN = comparison group to TN; CST= Classroom skills training; CW= comparison group to TW; DID="Difference in Difference" design; EG= East Germany; ERA= Employment Retention and Advancement programme; IFA= In-firm aptitude assessment; IFS= In-firm skills/combination training; IV= Instrument Variable; OEJ= One-Euro Job; OJT= on the job training; PS= placement services; RDD= Regression Discontinuity Design; TN= received social assistance for 329 to 334 days in the year before the program (narrow window); TOE= Timing of Events; TW= received social assistance for 329 to 349 days in the year before the program (wide window); VT= vocational training; WG= West Germany; WS= wage subsidy.

Table 2. Interventions in Included Studies.

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
Quasi-experimental studies based on register data				
Almeida and Galasso (2010), DID	Argentina	*Preparatory program.* Participants were provided with start-up capital through in-kind grants. The grants were up to 30 times greater than normal benefits. The program (MEP) also provided support from "tutors" who would teach participants to manage their new company so it would become a sustainable source of income. Six months' duration	Those who never received an MEP grant	Purely voluntary
Arendt and Kolodziejczyk (2019), RDD	Denmark	*Work practice/internship*. The employment bonus program automatically and immediately pays benefit bonuses of up to 6% of post-tax earnings to anyone qualified, for any hours worked. Benefits are paid regardless of whether the work is in regular employment or from subsidized employment schemes, provided they enter employment within the 2 years the program ran	Long-term unemployed people living in Denmark who had received social assistance for at least 308 to 328 days in the year before the program was rolled out on February 29, 2012	Bonus
Autor and Houseman (2005), IV	USA	*Preparatory program.* Temporary employment through a temp agency. Contractors usually provide job search assistance and 40 h of basic job search skills training	People who were employed directly	Conditional
Ayala and Rodríguez (2013), PS	Spain	*Preparatory program*. Work-first (WF): intensive activities aimed at getting recipients into the labor market as soon as possible (subsidized employment and job creation schemes, usually in the public sector)	Life skills only participants or no participation in any program	Conditional
Bernhard and Kopf (2014), PS	Germany	*Preparatory program.* Job search assistance (JSA) in general compared to Classroom application training (CAT) or individual counseling (IC). CAT: Includes lectures focused on general knowledge about applying for work, lecture notes, and, optionally, one IC interview or one application situation simulation. Up to 16 participants per course. Duration 2 days to 2 weeks, full or part-time. IC: Individually tailored job application support. Together with a counselor, the participant analyses previous job search activities to identify	JSA = intervention as usual	Failure to comply may result in financial sanctions

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
		ways to improve application strategies. Duration 4 weeks		
Cammeraat et al. (2021), DID	The Netherlands	*Internship/work practice*. Work-learn offers, consisted of public employment programs, apprenticeships and internships. Any wage earnings in these programs were supplemented up to the level of welfare benefits	No intervention	Benefit receipt is conditional on program participation
Dengler (2019), PS	Germany	*Training, three types*. (1) Classroom training, CT: a person may participate in multiple training programs, but the total time may not exceed 12 weeks. The 4 main kinds are: - Application training, intended to give on the job experience while testing if the person is suited to the specific job, duration $\leq$ 2 weeks - Aptitude testing, intended to test if the person is suited for a specific occupation or job, duration $\leq$ 4 weeks - Skills training, involves short-term courses improve computer, language, or occupation —to specific skills, duration $\leq$ 8 weeks. (2) On-the-job-training, OT, same types of training as available in a classroom (3) Extended vocational training, VT. Training programs, intended to provide professional and practical skills needed in the job market, duration *several months to 1 year, or extended training* programs, expected to result in a vocational degree, duration *up to 3 years*. *Work practice*. One-euro job, OEJ, is an ALMP (Active Labour Market Program) that subsidizes work opportunities in the public sector, and which would not otherwise exist. Job placements are expressly temporary (6 months maximum) and usually limited to 30 h per week, so the participant also has time to search for regular employment. Participants receive regular UBII benefits plus 1–2 euros per hour	Usual support/services as training and individual support. No labor market intervention	Failure or refusal to participate in an assigned ALMP can result in loss of benefits due to sanctions. Failure or refusal to participate in an assigned ALMP can result in loss of benefits due to sanctions

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Table 2. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
Graversen and Jensen (2010), IV	Denmark	*Employer subsidies*. Private sector employment programs, WS: participants in ALMP, which pay wage subsidies to private sector employers	Non-WS: participants in public sector job creation schemes (JC), classroom training (CT), and other, which includes a self-employment grant program to help welfare benefit recipients start their own business	
Hamersma (2008), PS + DID	USA	*Employer subsidies*. Work Opportunity Tax Credit, WOTC, is a subsidy to employers who hire new workers who are welfare recipients, food stamp recipients between 18 and 24 years old, or youth resident in disadvantaged areas, supplemental social security income recipients, and low-income ex-felons. Subsidies are based on the amount of time the person works over a 1year eligibility period: 40% of wages for ≥ 400 h worked, 25% for 120–399 h worked, and 0% for < 120 h worked. WTW tax credits are paid to employers who hire long-term welfare recipients (≥ 18 months). Subsidies are paid only if the person works at least 400 h/year: 35% of wages for the first year, 50% for the second year	No intervention	
Harrer et al. (2020), PS	Germany	*Preparatory program*. Schemes for activation and integration, SAI, may be provided by placement services (PS) or employers (IFT). PS: schemes which focus on improving skills, reducing individual employment barriers, and finding work for participants. Providers are free to combine elements to suit the individual participant. May include ≤ 4 weeks of practical skills training (IFT, or workshops), duration not limited unless aim is to teach skills for a particular profession where limit is ≤ 8 weeks (average duration = 2.5 months). IFT: unpaid internships, aims to accustom participants to regular work schedules and the employment situation at a specific company, and determine the participant's skills and suitability, duration ≤ 4 weeks	20% random sample of the eligible population who did not enter any SAI between January and March 2010. They may have been enrolled in other ALMP	
Harrer and Stockinger (2021), PS	Germany	*Work practice*. OEJ, temporary jobs (usually three to 12 months) in part time occupations (usually 20–30 h per week); participants receive a compensation of 1–2 euros per hour, not deducted from their	Persons not entering OEJ during July–October 2012, but could do so later	Sanctions with benefit cuts due to noncompliance

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Table 2. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
		welfare benefits. OEJs involve an important compulsory element and can be labeled a "workfare" program. A re-evaluation of the changed reform to stricter targeting very hard-to-place jobseekers		
Heinesen et al. (2013), **TOE**	Denmark	*Work practice.* Job creation schemes. Non-western immigrants	No ALMP participation	Failure to actively seek work may result in financial sanctions. Refusal to participate in an ALMP may result in disqualification for social assistance
Hohmeyer and Wolff (2012), PS	Germany	*Work practice.* OEJ is an ALMP which subsidizes work opportunities in the public sector that would not otherwise exist. Job placements are expressly temporary (6 month maximum) and usually limited to 30 h per week, so the participant also has time to search for regular employment	Persons who did not start an OEJ between February and April 2005	
Huber et al. (2011), PS	Germany	*Work practice.* OEJ is an ALMP which subsidizes work opportunities in the public sector that would not otherwise exist. It aims to improve participants' employability rather than their direct integration into the labor market. Job placements are expressly temporary (6 months maximum) and usually limited to 30 h per week, so the participant also has time to search for regular employment, mean duration 7 months in this analysis	Persons who were unemployed and receiving UBII who did not participate in any ALMP between October 2006 and March 2007	
Knoef and Ours (2016), DID	The Netherlands	*Work practice.* WTW program with two components: earnings disregard and job creation for single mothers with children under 12. ED: an earnings disregard policy. Those enrolled could earn up to €4/hour, max €120/month that would not be deducted from benefit payments, potentially allowing them to raise their net income by about 13%. Eligible women who were employed before the program started were also eligible for the ED. Implementation began early 2009. JC: a job creation scheme. Municipalities created new jobs, ≥ 12 h/ week, with regular employers through	No intervention	Bonus

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Table 2. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
		subsidies to employers, or within the municipality itself. Those who obtained a job through the JC scheme were also eligible for the earnings disregard. Implementation began January 2010 in most municipalities		
Kopf (2013), PS	Germany	*Training*. –CAT –Classroom aptitude assessment (CAA) –Classroom skills training (CST) –Combination classroom training (CCT) –In-firm aptitude assessment (IFA) –In-firm skills/combination training (IFS)	No intervention	Failure to comply may result in financial sanctions
Markussen and Røed (2016), DID	Norway	*Internship/work practice*. Participants develop a plan with a counselor who then follows their progress closely before, during, and after plan implementation. Participants receive a taxable QP benefit which is more generous than the standard social assistance benefits (about 2×). Wages earned outside of the program are deducted in proportion to the amount of time worked (e.g., 50% employment = 50% reduction)	No intervention	Incentive
Mörk et al. (2021), TOE	Sweden	*Internship/work practice*. Stockholm jobs. Most participants take part in an introductory phase consisting of general information about the UI system, unions, norms, and rights in the workplace and the program itself. Taking up a Stockholm job is voluntary and consists of employment in the municipal sector for 6–12 months, where the individual performs (quality-enhancing) tasks that would otherwise not have been performed. There are three different types of the program, in two of which (Youth employment and Other employment), participants work at a regular workplace, whereas in the third (Stockholm hosts), participants are employed at a workplace created especially for this purpose. The youth employment program targets individuals aged 16–29 in need of extra support to find and maintain employment. Participants are employed at a regular	All job center clients	Taking up a Stockholm job is somewhat financially beneficial for participants. The salary received is higher than the stipulated SA level and is not means-tested at the household level. When the Stockholm job ends, participants returning to unemployment are entitled to UI benefits, which will provide individuals with a higher disposable income compared to if they were to receive SA

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Table 2. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
		workplace such as childcare centres, schools, nursing homes, or the municipal administration. The employment lasts for 6 months, but the program may be prolonged for an additional 6 months if it is deemed beneficial for the individual. Other municipal employment is similar to the Youth employment program, except for the target group (SA-recipients in general) and the length of the program (typically 12 months). Stockholm hosts participants work outdoors, together in teams with other participants and supervisors. Their work tasks include picking up litter, clearing snow, and assisting tourists with directions. The employment lasts for 6 (2010–2011)/12 months (2012–2016)		
Ravn and Nielsen (2019), DID + PS	Denmark	*Intervention for case manager.* Increased investment in ALMPs at municipal level. Recruitment of additional caseworkers, which reduced caseloads by 50% and increased contact between caseworkers and clients	Services as usual (clients in municipalities that are part of the same labor market and from the same geographic region)	
Reference	**Country**	**Intervention/s** (type, frequency/length)	**Comparison**	**Comment**
Randomised controlled trials				
Bloom (2002)	USA	*Internship/work practice.* Jobs first is a time limited welfare-to-work program: 21 cumulative month limit per family on cash assistance. Aid to Families with Dependent Children, AFDC, is not time limited. Exemptions from the job search requirement are made due to family situations in both programs.	-	Benefit receipt is conditional on participation in employment services
Brenninkmeijer and Blonk (2012)	The Netherlands	*Training/education.* JOBS is a short, intensive manual-based group training program. Participants attended 5 half-day classes over 1 week. The program was altered by adding 1–2 individual consultations per month for up to 5 months after the course to offer support in overcoming barriers and to strengthen skills and knowledge provided in the JOBS training	Individuals had two appointments with a social services employee, who checked entitlement, time between appointments was 6 months	Not reported

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Table 2. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
Breunig (2003)	Australia	*Intervention for case manager*. Increased monitoring and counseling, IMC, consisted of a letter, 2 face-to- face interviews/ counseling sessions with trained caseworkers. Interview 1 (September to October 2000) gathered baseline information and explored aspirations and barriers to social participation and guided the development of a Participation Plan. Interview 2 monitored progress (November to December 2000)	Control group members received a letter in October 2000 asking if they could be interviewed. Those who agreed were interviewed by an independent marketing firm in the same time periods as for the face-to-face interviews	
Dorsett and Robins (2013)	UK	*Internship/work practice*. In-work advice and guidance plus a series of in-work retention bonuses to encourage sustained employment. Support for training was also available; ERA covered tuition costs and offered financial incentives for those in work to train. It also provided an in-work Emergency Discretion Fund designed to cover small financial emergencies that otherwise could threaten the individual's continued employment. Importantly, ERA services and financial assistance were available for only 33 months	Services as usual in NDLP-participants (New Deal for Lone Parents), were assigned a personal adviser (PA) through the public employment service office to provide preemployment job coaching services	Bonus and financial support
Galasso et al. (2004)	Argentina	*Wage subsidy*, WS, a nontransferable voucher for an employer wage subsidy was provided to group members. The voucher was worth 150 ARS / month for workers > 45 years old, 100 ARS for workers ≤ 45 years old, and was valid for 18 months. The subsidy was paid directly to the employee; the employer deducted that amount from the wages they paid. Payment was conditional on the employer formally registering the employee and subsequently paying the associated social security fees which amounted to 30% of gross wages. WS & training: people were provided with a voucher, and a significant training component including a mandatory 3-day labor market orientation workshop and an opportunity to receive vocational training (VT). The VT component lasted	The control group was not provided with a voucher or education	

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Table 2. (continued)

Reference, study design	Country	Intervention (type, content, frequency/duration)	Comparison	Comment (financial incentive; voluntarism/coercion)
		between 200 and 300 h, and participants received working materials plus 90% of their normal workfare benefits		
Malmberg-Heimonen and Tøge (2016)	Norway	*Intervention for case manager*. Implementation of a comprehensive methodological and principle-based approach (CMPA) for administration and followup of the normal welfare-to-work program (QP). 3 main components: building a relationship between counselor and participant; helping participants develop social networks and coordinate contacts between services; and administrative work. Social workers at offices allocated to implement CMPA were provided with training: 9-day program of 4 seminars over a 5-month period; and a 3-level supervision structure to support local implementation	QP as usual (without CMPA)	
Meckstroth et al. (2019)	USA	*Preparatory program*. BNF is an intensive life skills education and home visiting program, designed to complement TANF. Participation was mandatory after admission and counted as part of the required job-related activity. Participants also had access to the normal TANF services. BNF was individualized and focused on developing life skills and improving personal and family functioning. Life skills education in the home was based on: Survive, Strive, Thrive: Keys to Healthy Family Living	TANF-services as usual (without program services)	Mandatory

BNF= Building Nebraska Families; ERA = Employment Retention and Advancement programme; IMC = increased monitoring and counselling; MEP = microemprendimientos productivos; QP = qualification program; TANF =Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; UBII = unemployed welfare benefit; WS = wage subsidy; WTW = welfare to work.

Table 3. Risk of Bias per Domain in Included Quantitative Studies According to Study Design, RCT or NRS (Observational Studies Based on Register Data).

RCT Author + ref	Overallt risk of bias assessment	Randomization process	Deviation from intented interventions	Missing outcome data	Measurement of the outcome	Selection of reported results
Brenninkmeijer and Blonk (2012)	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Breunig (2003)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Dorsett and Robins (2013)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low
Galasso et al. (2004)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Malmberg-Heimonen and Tøge (2016)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate
Bloom (2002)	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High
Meckstroth et al. (2019)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
NRS Author + ref	**Overallt risk of bias assessment**	**Consideration of confounders**	**Deviation from intented interventions**	**Missing outcome data**	**Measurement of the outcome**	**Selection of reported results**
Almeida and Galasso (2010)	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Arendt and Kolodziejczyk (2019)	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Autor and Houseman (2005)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
Ayala and Rodríguez (2013)	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate
Bernhard and Kopf (2014)	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Cammeraat et al. (2021)	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Dengler (2019)	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Low
Graversen and Jensen (2010)	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Hamersma (2008)	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
Harrer and Stockinger (2021)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Harrer et al. (2020)	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Heinesen et al. (2013)	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Hohmeyer and Wolff (2012)	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Huber et al. (2011)	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Knoef and Ours (2016)	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Kopf (2013)	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate
Markussen and Røed (2016)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate
Mörk et al. (2021)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Ravn and Nielsen (2019)	Low	Moderate	Low	Low	Low	Low

NRS = non randomized study; RCT = randomized controlled trial.

negligible in the long term, compared to the usual intervention or no intervention. Compared to financial support, work practice resulted in more single, foreign-born mothers gaining part-time employment (Knoef & Ours, 2016).

Moreover, the effect of internships involving regular municipal activities without an explicit direct financial incentive for the client resulted in more adults (17%) and young people (23%) being employed and having a higher income compared to the effect of non-regular activities, that is, the usual intervention (Mörk et al., 2021).

Further, work practice in the public sector without a direct financial incentive for the person resulted in more rapid

Table 4. Summary of Findings—Preparatory Interventions.

Outcome	Number of participants (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (estimated effect, mean, mean difference, standard deviation confidence interval, estimated percent, multivariate regression)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
Employment intervention = preparatory program	N = 124 565 (3 studies, observational) (Autor & Houseman, 2005; Ayala & Rodríguez, 2013; Harrer et al., 2020)	*Welfare program, percent working*: Mean difference = 14.5 percent units (estimated effect = 60.4% *Temp job:* percent self-sufficient = 11.5 (11.1) *Direct hire:* percent self-sufficient = 24.6 (7/1) $p < .05$ *Employment services (SP) versus practice (IFT)*, estimated percent working: PS = women former west/east Germany % = 4.2/1.4; men west/east Germany % = 3.4/2.8 IFT = women, west/east Germany % = 17.4/20.8, men west/east Germany % = 16.4/19.4	Low	Bias, −2[a, b]	Various preparatory interventions result in more in employment for follow up at ≤ 20 months compared to job search support
Employment intervention = support + training	N = 602 (1 RCT) (Meckstroth et al., 2019)	*Number of months in work after 30 months*: Intervention = 15.0 Control = 14.8 Estimated effect, r = 0.3. Subgroup "very hard to employ": Intervention = 12.5 Control = 1.9 Estimated effect, r = 1.6	Very low	Precision, −1[c] Indirectness, $_{-2}$d, g	The effect on employment of preparatory programs in the form of individual support and work-training compared to the usual intervention could not be assessed
Employment intervention = support + training	N = 328 826 (1 study, observational) (Bernhard & Kopf, 2014)	Incomplete data. No effect of individual support, estimated effect of group training was negative, reduced probability of achieving employment by "1–4%"	Very low	Bias, −1[b] Precision, −1[e] Indirectness, −1[g]	The effect on employment of preparatory programs in the form of individual support and short training compared to the usual intervention could not be assessed
Employment intervention = support + start your own Business Capital	N = 476 (1 study, observational) (Almeida & Galasso, 2010)	Estimated percent without support compared to no intervention = −14.4 percent units Difference in number of hours worked compared to no intervention = 17.9	Very low	Bias, −1[b] Indirectness, $_{-2}$f, g	The effect on employment of preparatory programs in the form of work-support and capital to start your own business compared to no intervention could not be assessed
Income intervention = temporary job	N = 16 995 (1 study, observational) (Autor & Houseman, 2005)	*Weekly income, US dollar* Mean difference = 38.60, CI = 38.55 to 38,65 Corresponds to 14% increase in income.	Low	Bias, −1[a, b] Indirectness, −1[g]	Compared to direct hire, a preparatory program in the form of temporary job interventions results in higher income for the participant for follow up at ≤ 2 years
Income	N = 602	*Monthly income after 30 months, US dollar* Intervention = 495	Very low	Precision, −1[c]	The effect on income of a preparatory program in the form of individual support

(continued)

Table 4. (continued)

Outcome	Number of participants (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (estimated effect, mean, mean difference, standard deviation confidence interval, estimated percent, multivariate regression)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
intervention = support + training	(1 RCT) (Meckstroth et al., 2019)	Control = 504 Estimated effect, r = 0.2 Subgroup "very hard to employ," Intervention = 408 Control = 324 Estimated effect, r = 0.2		Indirectness, $_{-2}$d, g	and training compared to the usual intervention could not be assessed
Income intervention = support + start your own business capital	N = 476 (1 study, observational) (Almeida & Galasso, 2010)	Income difference compared to no intervention after 1 year = 30.3 ARS	Very low	Bias, -1[b] Indirectness, $_{-2}$f, g	The effect on income of a preparatory program in the form of support + start your own business-capital compared to the usual intervention could not be assessed

[a]Study attrition may have affected the result.
[b]Residual unknown confounding factors may have affected the result.
[c]Few participants in the subgroup.
[d]An older study from USA. Over time, support described as "intervention as usual," may have changed. Thus the control intervention may be different in older studies and this may affect the interpretation of the effect.
[e]Incomplete data.
[f]An older study from Argentina.
[g]The generalizability of a result was considered in terms of context and population when there was only one study, regardless of study design.
ARS = Argentinian pesos; CI = confidence interval; PS= placement services; RCT = randomized controlled trial.

Table 5. Summary of Findings—Educational Interventions.

Outcome	Number of participants (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (effect measures, standard error (SE), odds ratio, confidence interval, percentage)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
Employment intervention = classroom training	N = 1 246 807 (3 studies, observational) (Dengler, 2019; Heinesen et al., 2013; Kopf, 2013)	*Percent working* ATT = women, former West/East Germany = 4.0/2.3; men, former west/east Germany = 2.3/.8. Odds ratio = 1.19, CI = 1.11 to 1.28 *Percent in regular work, %:* women, former west/east Germany = 0/ −1; men, former west/east Germany = 0/−3 p <0.01 Denmark: *time to return-to-work*, marginal effect women = −1.5, SE = 0.2; men = −2.6, SE = .0.4	Low	Bias, −1[a] Inconsistency, −1[b]	The effect on employment from classroom training can be nonexistent or negligible compared to usual intervention or no intervention
Employment intervention = classroom training	N = 118 (1 study, RCT) (Brenninkmeijer & Blonk, 2012)	Percent in regular work, % intervention = 28%, control = 15%	Very low	Precision, −2[c] Indirectness, −1[d]	The effect of classroom training on employment could not be assessed
Employment intervention = workplace training	N = 1 180 424 (2 studies, observational) (Dengler, 2019; Kopf, 2013)	*Percent working* ATT = women former west/east Germany = 18.9/19.2, men former west/east Germany = 14.2/15.5 Odds ratio = 2.13, CI = 1.93 to 2.34 *Percent in regular work, %:* women former west/east Germany = 16/19 $p < 0.01/p <$ .01, men former west/east Germany = 13/14 $p < .01/p < .01$	Moderate	Bias, −1[a]	Workplace training results in more persons in employment after 12–28 months compared to usual intervention or no intervention. The effect was more pronounced for women
Employment intervention = extensive training	N = 1 143 397 (2 studies, observational) (Dengler, 2019; Kopf, 2013)	*Percent in work* ATT = women, former west/east Germany = 12.8/13.2; men former west/east Germany = 1.,2/15.3 Odds ratio = 1.83,	Moderate	Bias, −1[a]	Extensive training results in more persons in employment after 12 to 28 months, compared to the usual intervention or no intervention

(continued)

Table 5. (continued)

Outcome	Number of participants (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (effect measures, standard error (SE), odds ratio, confidence interval, percentage)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
		CI = 1.66 to 2.01 *Percent in regular work, %: women* former west/east Germany = 15/ 17 $p < .01$; men former west/east Germany = 13/15 $p < .01$			
Income **All forms of training**	N = 2 278 547 (1 study, observational) (Dengler, 2019)	*Mean income difference, ATT, Euro* Classroom training: women former west/east Germany = 63.8/60.5; men former west/east Germany = 30.8/54.2 Workplace training: women former west/east Germany = 327/335; men former west/east Germany = 406.4/355 More extensive training: women former west/east Germany = 192.8/179.8; men former west/east Germany =298.3/296.5	Low	Bias, −1[a] Indirectness, −1[d]	Compared to the usual intervention. all forms of training led to increased income after 12 months. The effect was more pronounced for males. The relative increase of income in the group which received training varied from 6%–94% depending on sex, country, and type of training

[a]There may be residual unknown confounding factors which affect the result.
[b]Inconsistency, that is, results go in different directions.
[c]Small study with few participants.
[d]The generalizability of a result was considered in terms of context and population when there was only one study, regardless of study design.
ATT = Average Treatment effect on the Treated; CI = confidence interval; RCT = randomized controlled trial; SE = standard error.

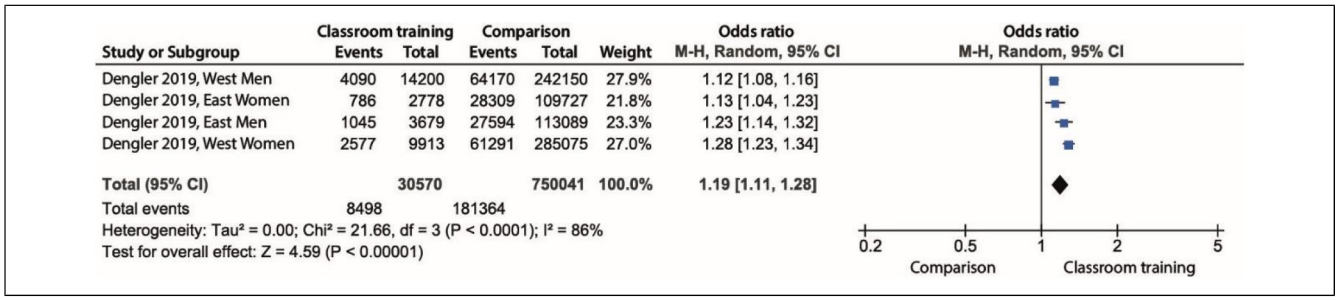

Figure 2. Effects (odds ratio) of classroom training on employment for men and women in east and west Germany.

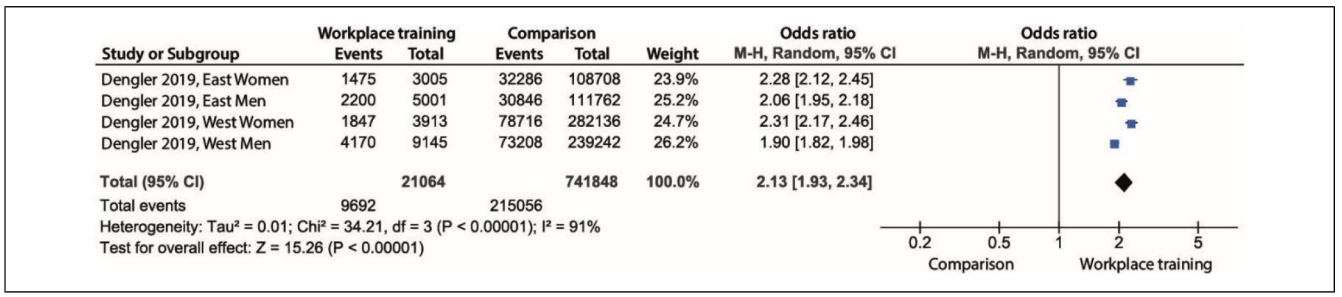

Figure 3. Effects (odds ratio) of workplace training on employment for men and women in east and west Germany.

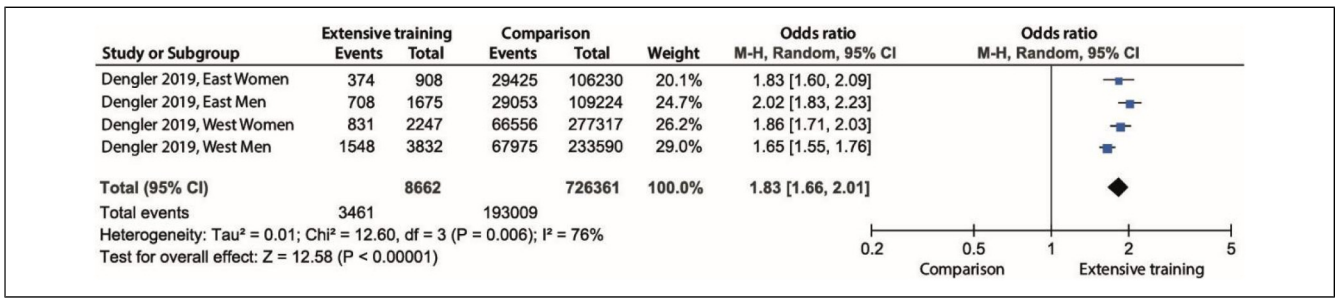

Figure 4. Effects (odds ratio) of extensive training on employment for men and women in east and west Germany.

employment for immigrants, not newly arrived, for follow up at ≤ 5 years compared to no intervention (Heinesen et al., 2013). In addition, during a recession the effect on employment or education of internships (without a direct financial incentive for the person) can for young people be nonexistent or negligible compared to no intervention (Cammeraat et al., 2021).

Employer Subsidies: Findings. Four studies from Denmark (Graversen & Jensen, 2010; Heinesen et al., 2013), Argentina (Galasso et al., 2004) and the USA (Hamersma, 2008) evaluated the effects of employer subsidies. The outcomes were entry or return to work measured after 12 to 24 months. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 7.

Overall, the results from the syntheses without meta-analysis showed that the effect of employer subsidies on client employment can be nonexistent or negligible in the long term, compared to the usual intervention or no intervention. The effect on income could not be assessed.

Case Manager (CM) Interventions: Findings. Three studies, from Australia (Breunig, 2003), Norway (Malmberg-Heimonen & Tøge, 2016), and Denmark (Ravn & Nielsen, 2019), evaluated the effect on clients of changed working conditions for case managers. The outcomes were the clients' entry or return to work and income measured after 6 to 24 months. A summary of the findings is presented in Table 8.

Overall, the results from the syntheses without meta-analysis showed that having fewer clients per case manager resulted in clients working more hours per week, compared to routine CM work. Compared to routine CM work, the effects on employment and income of comprehensive assessment and client follow up can be nonexistent or negligible.

Table 6. Summary of Findings—Internship/Workplace Intervention.

Outcome	Number of participants, (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (estimated percent, r; standard error (SE), ATT, ATET, odds ratio, confidence interval, mean difference)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
Employment intervention = workplace practice + a direct financial incentive for the person	N = 1 161 205 (6 studies, observational) (Arendt & Kolodziejczyk, 2019; Dengler, 2019; Harrer & Stockinger, 2021; Hohmeyer & Wolff, 2012; Huber et al., 2011; Knoef & Ours, 2016)	*One-Euro-Job*, percent in regular work: One-Euro-Job: 13% (n = 611), no intervention: 13% (n = 5 210). *Estimated percent in regular work:* ATT = women, former west/east Germany = 2.7/1.0, men, former west/east Germany = 0.6/ −0.3. Percent in work: odds ratio = 1.06, KI = 0.94 to .1,20. *Estimated percent in regular work:* ATT = total Germany = −0.22 to −5.53. *Subgroups:* –Unemployed last year ATT = −3.87 to −5.53 –Never employed women ATT = 1.20 *Program The Netherlands* estimated percent in part time work, single mothers: r = -.0.034, SE = 0.064, subgroup foreign born, r = 0.187**, SE = 0.078 *Program Denmark* weeks in regular work, standardized mean difference = −2.22	Low	Bias, −1[a] Inconsistency, −1[b]	The effect on employment of workplace practice combined with a direct financial incentive for the person can be nonexistent or negligible compared to the usual intervention or no intervention
Employment intervention = workplace practice + a direct financial incentive for the	N = 11 557 (2 studies, RCT) (Bloom, 2002; Dorsett & Robins, 2013)	*Program ERA, UK*, estimated effect on months in work: r = 0.12, SE = 0.22 *Program Jobs First Connecticut, percent in employment* Intervention: 56.3% (n = 2 381), Control: 49.1% (n = 2 392)	Low	Bias, −1[c] Indirectness, −1[d]	The effect on employment of workplace practice combined with a direct financial incentive for the person can be nonexistent or negligible in the long term compared to the usual intervention or no intervention
Employment intervention = workplace practice without a direct financial incentive for the person	N = 22 610 (1 study, observational) (Mörk et al., 2021)	*Swedish municipality* Municipal activities, number of months, ATET = 1.84, CI = 0.62 to 3.06. Subgroup youth: ATET = 2.76, CI = 2.08 to 3.44 Stockholm Job: ATET = −1.84, CI = 0.62 to .3.06	Moderate	Bias, −1[a, g]	Practice in regular municipal activities without a direct financial incentive for the person results in more adults (17%) and young people (23%) in employment for follow up at ≤ 3 years compared to the usual intervention

(continued)

Table 6. (continued)

Outcome	Number of participants, (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (estimated percent, r; standard error (SE), ATT, ATET, odds ratio, confidence interval, mean difference)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
Employment intervention = workplace practice without a direct financial incentive for the person	N = 23 657 (1 study, observational) (Heinesen et al., 2013)	*Danish public sector* Time to return-to-work, marginal effect: women = −3.7 months, SE = .0.5, *p* = <.05, men = −4.6 months, SE = 0.6, *p* <.01	Low	Bias, −1[a] Indirectness, −1[e]	Practice in the public sector without a direct financial incentive for the person results in quicker employment for immigrants for follow up at ≤ 5 years compared to no intervention
Employment intervention = workplace practice without a direct financial incentive for the person	N = 767 710 (1 study, observational) (Cammeraat et al., 2021)	*Youth during recession: Estimated percent in employment:* r = −0.0023, SE = 0.0066. *Estimated percent in training/education* r = 0.009, SE = 0.0051	Low	Bias, −1[a] Indirectness, −1[f]	The effect on employment or education of workplace practice (without a direct financial incentive for the jobseeker) can be nonexistent or negligible, for young persons during a recession, for follow up at ≤ 3 years, compared to no intervention
Income intervention = workplace practice + a direct financial incentive for the person	N = 1 155 384 (4 studies, observational) (Arendt & Kolodziejczyk, 2019; Dengler, 2019; Knoef & Ours, 2016; Markussen & Røed, 2016)	*Annual income, NOK* Mean difference = 50 540, SE = 27 860. *Monthly income, Euro* ATT = women, former west/east Germany = 27/6.9. men, former west/east Germany = −31.3/−51.1. *Income after 2 years, DKR:* Mean difference = −2 270 *Estimated effect, total income, Euro* Foreign born, coefficient = 0.095, SE = 0.027 Native born, coefficient = 0.062, SE = 0.022	Low	Bias, −1[a] Precision, −1[b]	The effect on income of workplace practice combined with a direct financial incentive for the jobseeker can be nonexistent or negligible for follow up at ≤ years compared to the usual intervention or no intervention
Income intervention = workplace practice + a direct financial incentive for the person	N = 11 557 (2 studies, RCT) (Bloom, 2002; Dorsett & Robins, 2013)	*ERA, Estimated effect, income/year, British pounds,* r(SE) range = −10(121) till 309(144) *Jobs First, Mean income, US dollar* Mean difference = 1 813	Low	Bias, −1[c] Indirectness, −1[d]	The effect on income of workplace practice combined with a direct financial incentive for the person can be nonexistent or negligible for follow up at ≤ 4 years compared to the usual intervention or no intervention
Income intervention = workplace practice without a direct	N = 22 610 (1 study, observational) (Mörk et al., 2021)	Municipal activities: ATET = 987 SEK/month, CI = −127 to 2 102 Subgroup youth: ATET = 1 650 KI =	Low	Bias, −1[a, g] Precision, −1[h]	Practice in regular municipal activities without a direct financial incentive for the jobseeker results in higher income for both adults (13%) and

(continued)

Table 6. (continued)

Outcome	Number of participants, (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (estimated percent, r; standard error (SE), ATT, ATET, odds ratio, confidence interval, mean difference)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
financial incentive for the person		1 026 to 2 274 Stockholm Job: ATET = −1 710, CI = −2 711 to 709 Relative income difference: youth 23% (p <.001) Other employment: 13% (p < .1)			young people (23%) for follow up at ≤ 3 years compared to the usual intervention

[a]There may be residual unknown confounding factors which affect the result.
[b]Inconsistency, for example, results go in different directions.
[c]The randomization procedure was poorly described.
[d]Increased risk of nontransferability due to one British study (15 years old), and one American study (25 years old).
[e]The generalizability of a result was considered in terms of context and population when there was only one study, and here also time (an old Danish study, 20 years).
[f]The generalizability of a result was considered in terms of context and population when there was only one study, regardless of study design.
[g]As the study is based on many participants and undertaken in Sweden there was no indirectness.
[h]The confidence interval was wide.
ATT = Average Treatment effect on the Treated; ATET = Average Treatment Effect on the Treated; CI = confidence interval; DKR = Danish crowns; ERA = Employment Retention and Advancement programme; RCT = randomized controlled trial; NOK = Norwegian crowns; SE = standard error; SEK = Swedish crowns.

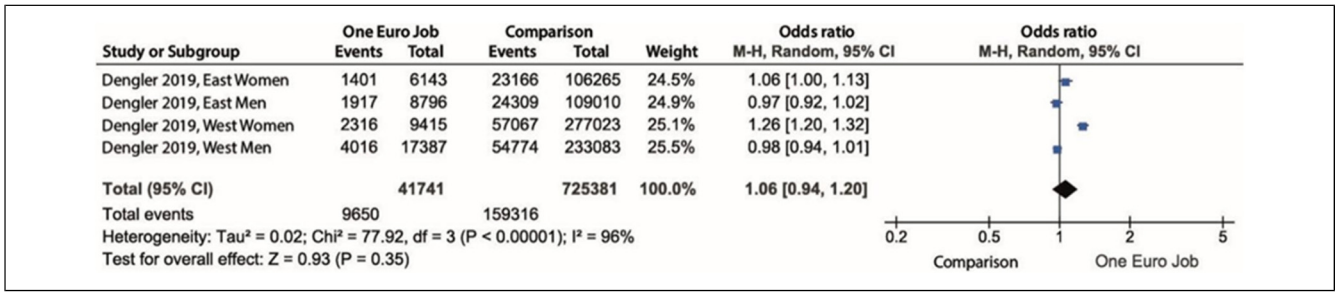

Figure 5. Effects (odds ratio) of One-euro job on employment for men and women in east and west Germany.

Table 7. Summary of Findings – Effects of Employer Subsidies.

Outcome	Number of participants, (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (estimated effect, percent, SE, Cohens d)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reasons for downgrading	Comment
Employment intervention = employer subsidies	N = 37 995 (3 studies, observational) (Graversen & Jensen, 2010; Hamersma, 2008; Heinesen et al., 2013)	*Time to return-to-work* Marginal effect: women = 9.9 months, SE = 1.3, men = 15.1, SE = 1.0 *Numbers employed* ATE = 0.20* SE (0.09) *Numbers in work/ quarter* DID = 0.085, SE = 0.147	Low	Bias, −1[a] Indirectness, −1[b, c]	The effect of employer subsidies on employment can be nonexistent or negligible at follow up ≤12 months compared to the usual intervention or no intervention
Employment intervention = employer subsidies	N = 548 (1 study, RCT) (Galasso et al., 2004)	*Percent employed* Estimated mean difference = 5.7 percent units	Very low	Bias, −1[d] Indirectness, −2[e]	The effect of employer subsidies on employment could not be assessed
Income intervention = employer subsidies	N = 3 567 (1 study, observational) (Hamersma, 2008)	*Quarterly income* Estimated effect, CSE = 105, 14 dollar, SE = 49.43	Very low	Bias, −1[a] Indirectness, −2[f]	The effect of employer subsidies on income could not be assessed
Income intervention = employer subsidies	N = 548 (1 study, RCT) (Galasso et al., 2004)	*Monthly income* Intervention = 123 ARS Control = 119 ARS	Very low	Bias, −1[d] Indirectness, −2[e]	The effect of employer subsidies on income could not be assessed

[a]There may be residual unknown confounding factors which affect the result.
[b]Increased risk of nontransferability, indirectness, due to two Danish studies and one American study, all three at least 20 years old.
[c]Results go in different directions (inconsistency).
[d]There is a risk that study attrition affects the result.
[e]Increased risk of nontransferability due to one Argentinian study, approximately 20 years old.
[f]Increased risk of nontransferability indirectness due to one American study, approximately 25 years old.
ARS = Argentinian pesos; ATE = Average Treatment Effect; DID = differences in differences (difference in the mean differences before and after); CSE = cross-sectional estimate; RCT = randomized controlled trial; SE = standard error.

Experiences of Interventions

In all, 14 articles based on qualitative data were included in the review. The data were derived mainly from individual client interviews, but also from field observations, group interviews and questionnaires. A total of 454 people were included, 364 of whom were women. Most studies were from the United States (Broughton, 2003; Fletcher et al., 2008; Hildebrandt & Kelber, 2005; Kissane, 2008; Medley et al., 2005; Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000) or Canada

Table 8. Summary of Findings—Case Manager (cm) Interventions.

Outcome	Number of participants, (number of studies, study design) (reference)	Effect (estimated effect, percent, SE, Cohens d)	Certainty of the evidence (GRADE)	Reason/s for downgrading	Comment
Employment intervention = less clients /case manager	N = 3 927 (1 study, observational) (Ravn & Nielsen, 2019)	Worked hour/ week, estimated effect Target group: r = 39.39, SE = 13 099 Control : r = 6.5, SE = 13 361	Low	Bias, −1[a] Indirectness, −1[b, c]	Fewer clients/CM compared to the usual CM caseload results in clients working more hours/week at 12 months follow up
Employment intervention = comprehensive assessment and client follow up	N = 5 357 (2 studies, RCT) (Breunig, 2003; Malmberg-Heimonen & Tøge, 2016)	Percent in work Estimated effect = −0.05, SE = 0.038 Percent in education Estimated effect = 0.053, SE = 0.030 Number of employed persons Cohens d = 0.237	Low	Inconsistency, −1[d, e] Indirectness, −1[f]	The effect, on employment, of comprehensive assessment and client follow up at ≤ 30 months can be nonexistent or negligible compared to routine CM work or no intervention
Income intervention = comprehensive assessment and client follow up	N = 4 740 (1 study, RCT) (Breunig, 2003)	Percent with income after intervention, AUD Estimated difference PIW = −0.024, SE = 0.017	Low	Indirectness, −2 [b, g]	The effect, on income,of comprehensive assessment and client follow up after 6 months can be nonexistent or negligible compared to other CM-intervention

[a]There may be residual unknown confounding factors which affect the result.
[b]The generalizability of a result was considered in terms of context and population when there was only one study.
[c]Large standard error in the control group.
[d]Results go in different directions.
[e]Some intervention dissimilarities.
[f]Increased risk of nontransferability due to one Australian and one Norwegian study undertaken in the 2000s.
[g]Increased risk of nontransferability due to one Australian study, approximately 20 years old.
AUD = Australian dollar; CM = case manager; PIW = proportion with income; RCT = randomized controlled trial; SE=standard error.

(Breitkreuz & Williamson, 2012; Breitkreuz et al., 2010; Cook et al., 2001) and reflect these countries' particular focus on support for single mothers. For descriptions of all 14 studies we refer to SBU, https://www.sbu.se/contentassets/f8d13a9ccfd944cc9f4e1660c541d7cc/bilaga-4-tabell-over-kvalitativa-studier.pdf. An overview description of the qualitative studies can be found in Table 9.

Four studies from Norway (Ohls, 2017, 2020), Denmark (Hansen & Nielsen, 2023), New Zealand (Baker & Tippin, 2002), and the Netherlands (Eleveld, 2021) were described more thoroughly. These studies were based on information from 216 people, including 169 women. The results of these four studies, presented in five articles, are briefly presented in Table 8, including information about interventions, participant characteristics, methods, and analysis.

There was a core message from the studies undertaken in the USA and Canada. Interventions aimed at helping single women achieve a tolerable existence for their family revealed conflicts between their role as employees in the labor market and their responsibility for family and children. Several studies (Broughton, 2003; Kissane, 2008; Pearlmutter & Bartle, 2000) highlighted women's frustration with rigid and low-quality program interventions, which differ from how they perceive their own situation and how they plan to

Table 9. Qualitative Studies: Description of Intervention, Participants, Method, and Major Results.

Article, year, country Methodological shortcomings	Intervention	Number of participants, gender, age	Method for data collection and analysis	Major results
Ohls (2017, 2020) Norway moderate	Qualification program at the activation center in Oslo. Job training, counseling, some training. Individual plans	N = 20; 13 women. Age: 30–50 years 13 had a foreign background and had lived in Norway for <7 years. With some exceptions, the level of education was low	Semistructured, individual interviews, 60–80 min. Interpretative, phenomenological analysis	Almost all had varying physical and/or mental health problems and several had problems with adequate housing and educational level. Throughout, the respondents expressed a clear desire to find lasting work. At the same time, they experienced a discrepancy between hopes and aspirations on the one hand, and their actual experiences in the labor market on the other hand. In the second article (Ohls, 2020), the results point to clear limitations for participants to exercise their autonomy and opportunities to choose or influence program elements. Poor language skills and limited knowledge of the Norwegian labor market may have affected participants' room for maneuvre. There were feelings of failure and being trapped, especially when work placements did not lead to employment. When it came to the staff's treatment, generally positive reviews were expressed, although actual changes in the respondents' life situation were absent
Hansen and Nielsen (2023) Danmark moderate	Work intervention. Gardening	N = 34 22 men, 12 women. 28 were ethnic Danes	Field observations for 1 year. Individual interviews in which 8 people were interviewed twice. Interviews with administrators, staff and supervisors. Ethnographic analysis, NVivo	The study concluded that; (a) the lived experience of the participants surveyed was in stark contrast to the description of the effort; (b) despite this paradox between rhetoric and practice, most were satisfied with the obviously low-quality effort, which can be explained by the emergence of a group solidarity and community of values in participation
Baker and Tippin (2002) New Zealand moderate	No particular labor market program	N = 120 Single mothers	Semistructured, individual interviews	The results showed varying flexibility in terms of job participation requirements. The demands were perceived by many respondents as unreasonable and unrealistic, given their family situation. The women repeatedly criticized the conflicting goals of the demands of work and their actual family situation

(continued)

Table 9. (continued)

Article, year, country Methodological shortcomings	Intervention	Number of participants, gender, age	Method for data collection and analysis	Major results
Eleveld (2021) The Netherlands moderate	MWP Mandatory work programs	N = 42 24 women, 18 men. Most were under 40, 32 were ethnic Dutch	Semistructured individual interviews for 1–2 h. Observations at the workplace and at social welfare offices. Interviews with administrators and supervisors and politicians. Coding in Atlas TI. Analysis in three steps according to Ritchie et al.	The overall results indicate that compulsory participation in given activities is contrary to and violates personal integrity. Nearly half the respondents felt that participation in the program did not facilitate their labor market participation. Some felt that compulsory participation blocked their efforts to establish themselves in the labor market (crowding out of work). An aggravating factor was that they did not receive any salary or additional compensation when participating in the conditional activities

solve their conflicting roles. Mentioned repeatedly as barriers to longer-term sustainable changes for these families were inadequate information, lack of support from government officials and the need to include childcare and health aspects. Stress and exhaustion were health-related aspects highlighted in several studies (Breitkreuz et al., 2010; Broughton, 2003; Cook et al., 2001; Hildebrandt & Kelber, 2005). Studies which followed up on the families' situation after the grant period have reported financial need and problems in coordinating personal and working life.

Economics and Ethics

Economic Assessment. Two financial evaluations of the studied labor market interventions were included (Bloom, 2002; Markussen & Røed, 2016). Both studies evaluated interventions in the category workplace practice combined with a financial incentive/bonus, for the individual. Both evaluations were simpler financial analyses of whether the participants' increase in income exceeds the intervention costs.

Ethics. The main purpose of a labor market intervention is to increase the potential for an individual outside the labor market to gain and retain employment. From an ethical perspective, however, this purpose is an instrumental goal: fulfillment is of value only if it leads to other states which have a definitive or final value. There are two different perspectives on what could constitute this final value: it may be strictly socioeconomic, or it may be based on the needs of the individual.

Discussion

Effective labor market interventions to support this population in taking up and retaining employment are workplace training, extensive or long-term training, work practice in regular jobs such as internship (moderate certainty of evidence), and reduced case manager workload, that is, fewer clients and the possibility of intensified management for each client (low certainty of evidence). Classroom training, work programs with bonuses, employer subsidies and extensive case manager assessment and follow up could have nonexistent or negligible effects (low certainty of evidence). The effects on entry or return to work for long-term social assistance recipients of various supportive preparatory programs, including start-up-capital intervention and job search assistance, could not be assessed based on the present data.

Client experiences are included, and ethics and economics are addressed. The verbally reported results that are presented in the five Summary of findings-tables are based on the application of the GRADE-system regarding confidence in the quantitative results about the effects of different labor market interventions. These short statements could potentially be useful for both decision-makers and practitioners.

Overall completeness and applicability of evidence are essential matters. The included studies analyze interventions from many parts of the western world. Although all are high- or middle-income countries, there are some differences regarding labor market policies and welfare subsidies, why the results may be interpreted with some caution. There is limited information about the quality of the work that the clients entered into after the intervention. An exception is the study by Dengler (2019), which, based on five dimensions of exposure, categorized the quality of work as low, medium, or high.

The generalizability of a result, expressed as indirectness in GRADE, is consistently considered in terms of context, population, and the number of studies, but not in terms of study design. Indirectness is also addressed when content is unclear or a different control condition is applied. This means that over time, support described as "the usual intervention" may have changed. Thereby the comparison can be different, particularly in older studies and this may affect the estimated effect. In these cases, the findings are downgraded due to indirectness. However, the body of evidence is quite strong with regard to effects on employment of workplace-linked training and internship, that is, not created jobs (modest certainty regarding effects).

It should be noted that none of the included quantitative studies examined effects on any health-related, self-reported outcome according to PICO. However, Mörk et al. (2021) studied register data on the prescription of psychiatric and pain relief drugs as well as care at hospitals. They concluded that the intervention, internship, was favorable, although the effects were not great.

There are some issues about the quality of this evidence that need to be raised. For a number of active labor market interventions, effects on entry or return to work could not be assessed. One main reason is that the programs included in these intervention categories differed from one another and their results cannot therefore be added together. Other reasons are the diverse methods applied for measurements of effect and unfortunately inadequately reported study data which cannot be used for statistical syntheses. When the data about effects of the interventions on employment are inadequate, it is not possible to assess the certainty of evidence. A very low certainty of evidence, however, does not necessarily mean that there is no effect. Instead, it highlights the need for more well-designed studies in this area. It may be noted that although the initial search identified over 700 full-text articles, only 42 quantitative studies were deemed to be relevant in all aspects, while 26 were assessed to be of adequate quality for inclusion in this review. In the light of previous knowledge, we consider that our findings are not surprising.

Potential biases in the review process are vital. The comprehensive literature search in six international databases also included citations and references for included studies and relevant reviews. In addition, other publication types

such as gray literature were included, but the use of organization websites was restricted to six countries which may be a potential limitation. We consider the risk of overlooking any significant studies at that time to be small. However, as the literature search from the year 2022 is not updated, new relevant and well-done studies might have been published. This fact is of course an important limitation.

The results are assumed to show causal relationships, even though the basis consists largely of register data. In observational studies there may be model errors, but in well-conducted observational studies, the errors can balance each other out. Quasi-experimental designs use either an external variation in treatment prevalence or recreate the randomized experiment via detailed data ex post (afterwards). The first group is often described as a natural experiment while the second can be referred to as a matching design.

Our results seem to be in agreement with finding in other systematic reviews. Smedslund et al. (2006) investigated the relative impact of two types of programs in their systematic review: those focused on skill building (LFA) and those focused on labor market affiliation (HCD). The results indicated that LFA programs increased the chances of getting a job more than HCD. This result is in accordance with the effects of educational interventions as shown in this report. The importance of long-term positive effects and the emphasis of human capital reported in the review by Card et al. (2018) are also in line with our findings. One exception is our finding that employment or education of internships can be nonexistent or negligible compared to no intervention (Cammeraat et al., 2021) for young people during recession.

The implications for practice and policy are central. This systematic review updates previous knowledge about the quantitative effects of education, internships and work practice as well as employer subsidies up to the year 2022. The following new knowledge has emerged: (a) the effects of case managers' working methods on long term social assistance recipients, (b) the finding that with respect to this client group, there are no studies at all on the effects of labor market initiatives such as validation and work-oriented rehabilitation. From studies based on qualitative data, there appears to be a discrepancy between official ambitions and descriptions of intervention designs and effects on the one hand, and participant experiences and skepticism on the other. The addition of (c) qualitative data on experiences as well as (d) economic and (e) ethical perspectives of labor market interventions also contribute to new knowledge. However, the absence of health economic evaluations of labor market interventions for recipients of long-term social assistance is an evidence gap.

The verbally reported results are based on the application of the GRADE-system regarding confidence in the quantitative results about the effects of different labor market interventions for clients. Hopefully, these statements may facilitate the understanding of the practical implication of the results, which could be useful for both decision-makers and practitioners.

When it comes to implications for research it would be valuable to achieve consensus as to what is most important to measure and how it may be measured in an agreed list of prioritized results, a Core Outcome Set (COS). According to the organization COMET (Core Outcome Measures in Effectiveness Trials), there is ongoing work to produce a COS for "work participation," but nothing has been published to date.

Preferably the interventions should be carried out as multisite studies. This would highlight the importance of the organization and implementation of equivalent interventions. The results of this systematic review emphasize the value of further studies which track longer follow up and combine statistical follow ups with qualitative evaluations of the clients' own perspectives.

Overall, there is a lack of gender perspective in the design of interventions and follow up. In addition, future research on labor market interventions needs to take into account not only possible differences between women and men, but also different age groups as well as risk factors such as ill health and low employability. This report may be used as a basis for forthcoming reviews.

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