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Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making Among Postgraduate Students

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Abstract

Job Search self-efficacy plays a crucial role in shaping the career decisions of postgraduate students. The main objective of the present study was to examine job search self-efficacy and its impact on career decision-making among postgraduate students. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from the respondents using an appropriate sampling method. The study analysed various factors influencing job search self-efficacy such as communication and networking confidence, goal setting, job interest with salary expectations, career clarity, and information-seeking behaviour. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents have a high level of job search self-efficacy, and about 65% of the respondents have a high level of confidence in searching for jobs and making career decisions, whereas about 49% of the respondents have demonstrated a high level of career decision-making ability. The findings also revealed that communication and networking confidence (42%), goal-setting ability (46%), and job interest with salary expectations (45%) are the factors that influence the job search behaviour of the students significantly. Career clarity and information-seeking behaviour are moderate among the respondents. Further, the findings revealed through statistical analysis that gender does not influence job search self-efficacy and career decision-making significantly among the respondents.

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Keywords: Job Search Self-Efficacy, Career Decision-Making, Postgraduate Students, Communication Skills, Career Guidance

1. Introduction

Career planning and job searching have become relevant concepts for postgraduate students who need a transition from academic life to professional life. Job Search Self-Efficacy refers to the level of an individual's confidence to execute various activities involved in job searching, including networking, creating resumes, attending job interviews, and searching for career opportunities. Postgraduate students who possess a high level of job search self-efficacy are more confident and motivated to enter the job market effectively. Making a career decision personal interests, analyzing career opportunities, and selecting appropriate job opportunities based on skills, values, and goals. Postgraduate students often experience various challenges while making career decisions due to competition in the job market, lack of work experience, and career uncertainty. In this context, job search self-efficacy influences the attitudes of the postgraduate students. Postgraduate students with high self-efficacy are more likely to explore different options and make informed decisions about their careers. Past studies have emphasized the role of other psychological factors like motivation, self-confidence, and ability to achieve success in one's career. It is very important to understand the relationship between job search self-efficacy and career decision-making to develop useful insights for

educators and career counselors to design training programs and workshops to enhance the employability skills of the students. Thus, it is very important to study the concept of job search self-efficacy to assist postgraduate students to make effective decisions about their careers and successfully enter the workforce.

Review of Literature

Several researchers have examined the various factors that affect career decision-making among postgraduate students with a particular emphasis on the role of job search self-efficacy. Bandura (1997)^[2] asserted that self-efficacy is a key determinant of an individual's ability to be confident about the tasks they undertake to achieve their goals. With respect to career development, job search self-efficacy refers to the belief that a postgraduate student holds about their ability to successfully undertake activities related to searching for a job.

Researchers have demonstrated that personal, social, and psychological factors significantly impact career decision-making. For example, Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000)^[10] asserted that self-efficacy significantly influences the ability of a postgraduate student to explore various career opportunities. Moreover, the researchers noted that self-efficacy influences the ability of a postgraduate student to make informed career decisions. Andrews and Kacmar (2001)^[11] demonstrated that the level of confidence a postgraduate student holds about their ability to successfully undertake activities related to searching for a job significantly predicts the strategies they employ to achieve their goals.

Research done by Saks & Ashforth (2000)^[14] showed that the perception of employability and previous experiences affect the job search behavior of students. The research concluded that students who have a high level of job search self-efficacy tend to be systematic in their perception of opportunities and make appropriate career decisions that align with their interests and capabilities. Furthermore, research done by Chen *et al.* (2015) showed that social support from students, mentors, and career counselors influences the job search self-efficacy of students. This affects the career decision-making process of students. In recent times, online platforms have emerged as a critical factor that influences the job search behavior of students. Research done by Li & Yu (2020) showed that online platforms improve the job search self-efficacy of students. This improves the decision-making process of students. Furthermore, research done by Patil (2021) showed that career guidance improves the self-efficacy of students. This improves the decision-making process of students.

Overall, the above literature suggests that job search self-efficacy is a significant predictor of career decision-making for postgraduate students. Personal confidence levels, social support, previous experiences, and access to technology all play a part in influencing students' attitudes towards the world of work. It is therefore vital for educators to understand the above relationships in order to promote students' employability.

Methodology

Aim

To study the job search self-efficacy and its impact of on career decision-making among postgraduate students.

Objectives

- To determine the level of Job search self-efficacy among postgraduate students.
- To analyze the relationship between gender of the students and their job search self-efficacy.
- To highlight the relationship between the academic discipline of students and their career decision-making.
- To determine the difference in career decision-making among students based on their prior work experience or internship exposure.

Hypotheses

- There is a significant difference among the groups with respect to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions influencing Career Decision-Making.
- There is no significant difference among the groups with respect to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions influencing Career Decision-Making.
- There is no significant relationship between the selected variable and Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions that influence Career Decision-Making.

Research Design

The descriptive research design has been used for conducting the study on the topic of job search self-efficacy and its impact on career decision-making among postgraduate students. Descriptive research design will help in collecting information on the attitudes and perceptions of the postgraduate students regarding their confidence level in the ability to search for jobs. It will also help in identifying the various factors that affect the career decision-making of the students while preparing to enter the job market.

Universe and Sampling

The universe of the study pertains to the postgraduate students of the students of Tirupattur District who are pursuing their higher education and seeking future career prospects. In order to conduct the study, the researcher adopted the simple random sampling method to select the sample for the study. The researcher has chosen a total of 50 respondents from a College at Tirupattur District as the sample for the study. The researcher has chosen the sample to understand their level of job search self-efficacy and its impact on their career decision-making process.

Tools for Data Collection

The primary data for the study was collected through the questionnaire method. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions that measured the various dimensions of job search self-efficacy and career decision-making among postgraduate students, such as:

- Job Search self-efficacy
- Communication & Networking Confidence
- Career planning and exploration
- Career Clarity
- Goal Setting
- Information Seeking & Commitment
- Job Interest & Salary Expectation

The responses were measured using a Likert scale to analysis the opinions and perceptions of the respondents.

Analysis and Interpretation

Various statistical analyses were computed using SPSS V.21 to understand the level of job search self-efficacy and its impact on career decision-making among postgraduate students. This includes Quartile Deviation, 't'-Test, One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Karl Pearson's

Correlation. These statistical tools were used to examine the relationship between demographic variables and the factors influencing job search self-efficacy and career decision-making among the respondents. The findings are presented below

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on their overall Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making

Dimensions	Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making					
	Low		Moderate		High	
	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)
Job Search Self-efficacy	12	24.0	16	32.0	22	44.0
Communication & Networking Confidence	13	26.0	12	24.0	25	50.0
Career Clarity	14	28.0	18	36.0	18	36.0
Goal Setting	15	30.0	11	22.0	24	48.0
Information Seeking & Commitment	13	26.0	22	44.0	15	30.0
Job Interest & Salary Expectation	13	26.0	13	26.0	24	48.0
Overall Job Search Self-Efficacy Impact on Career Decision-Making	12	24.0	14	28.0	24	48.0

From the above table, it is evident that a majority of the respondents demonstrated a high level of job search self-efficacy (44.0%) and overall job search self-efficacy (48.0%). Moreover, a majority of the respondents demonstrated high levels of communication and networking confidence (50.0%), goal setting (48.0%), and job interest

and salary expectation (48.0%). However, a majority of the respondents demonstrated moderate levels of career clarity (36.0%) and information seeking and commitment (44.0%). Generally, it can be concluded that the respondents demonstrated a good level of job search self-efficacy and confidence in their career decision-making process.

Table 2: 't' – Test based on the gender of the respondent and the various dimensions pertaining to Job Search Self-Efficacy

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Df	Statistical Inference
Job Search Self-efficacy					
Male (27)	19.63	4.001	.770	48	't'=0.135 P>0.05 Not Significant
Female (23)	21.17	3.010	.628	47.331	
Communication & Networking Confidence					
Male (27)	36.33	6.239	1.201	48	't'=0.501 P>0.05 Not Significant
Female (23)	37.52	6.104	1.273	47.050	
Career Clarity					
Male (27)	13.81	3.163	.609	48	't'=0.120 P>0.05 Not Significant
Female (23)	15.09	2.392	.499	47.386	
Goal Setting					
Male (27)	28.70	5.635	1.084	48	't'=0.553 P>0.05 Not Significant
Female (23)	27.83	4.579	.955	47.909	
Information Seeking & Commitment					
Male (27)	14.52	3.081	.593	48	't'=0.996 P>0.05 Not Significant
Female (23)	14.52	1.648	.344	40.941	
Job Interest & Salary Expectation					
Male (27)	48.56	6.762	1.301	48	't'=0.580 P>0.05 Not Significant
Female (23)	49.57	5.915	1.233	47.957	
Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making					
Male (27)	161.56	24.082	4.635	48	't'=0.496 P>0.05 Not Significant
Female (23)	165.70	17.332	3.614	46.788	

From the above table 2, it has been observed that the calculated 'p' value is greater than 0.05 for all the dimensions of Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Decision-Making. It clearly indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female postgraduate students. It has been observed that the mean values of male and female respondents are almost similar for all the dimensions, such as Job Search Self-Efficacy, Communication and Networking Confidence, Career Clarity, Goal Setting, Information Seeking and Commitment, and Job Interest and Salary Expectation. Therefore, gender does not have any significant impact on Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Decision-Making.

H0: There is no significant difference between male and

female postgraduate students with respect to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions influencing Career Decision-Making.

H1: There is a significant difference between male and female postgraduate students with respect to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions influencing Career Decision-Making.

Result: The p-value is higher than 0.05 for all variables, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between male and female postgraduate students with respect to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions influencing Career Decision-Making. The difference is only numerical.

Table 3: 'One-way Anova' based on the Preferred Job Location of the respondents Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making

Variable		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Statistical Inference
Job Search Self-efficacy	Between Groups	221.555	3	73.852	8.019	Sig. =0.000 P>0.05 Significant
	Within Groups	423.665	46	9.210		
Communication & Networking Confidence	Between Groups	343.408	3	114.469	3.497	Sig. =0.023 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1505.872	46	32.736		
Career Clarity	Between Groups	31.441	3	10.480	1.287	Sig. =0.290 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	374.559	46	8.143		
Goal Setting	Between Groups	88.798	3	29.599	1.127	Sig. =0.348 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1207.702	46	26.254		
Information Seeking & Commitment	Between Groups	25.515	3	8.505	1.392	Sig. =0.257 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	280.965	46	6.108		
Job Interest & Salary Expectation	Between Groups	107.849	3	35.950		Sig. =0.455 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	1863.131	46	40.503		
Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making	Between Groups	3187.731	3	1062.577	2.612	Sig. =0.063 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Within Groups	18712.689	46	406.798		

From the table above 3, it is evident that after conducting ANOVA for all the dimensions of Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Decision-Making, the majority of the variables have a p-value greater than 0.05. This implies that there is no significant difference between the various groups based on their perception of Communication and Networking Confidence, Career Clarity, Goal Setting, Information Seeking and Commitment, Job Interest and Salary Expectation, and the overall Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Decision-Making score. The differences between the various variables are only numerical. However, for the dimension of Job Search Self-Efficacy, the significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that there is a significant difference among the groups for this particular variable.

H0: There is no significant difference among the groups with respect to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions influencing Career Decision-Making.

H1: There is a significant difference among the groups with respect to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions influencing Career Decision-Making.

Result: Since the p-value is less than 0.05 for the variable of Job Search Self-Efficacy, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, indicating that there is a significant difference among the groups in terms of the variable of Job Search Self-Efficacy. However, for the other variables, where the p-value is higher than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, indicating that there is no significant difference among the groups with respect to the dimensions of Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Decision-Making for postgraduate students.

Table 4: Correlation between the age of the respondent and the various dimensions pertaining to Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making

Variable	Correlation Value	Statistical Inference
Job Search Self-efficacy	0.015	P>0.05 Not Significant
Communication & Networking Confidence	0.112	P>0.05 Not Significant
Career Clarity	0.077	P>0.05 Not Significant
Goal Setting	0.027	P<0.05 Not Significant
Information Seeking & Commitment	0.092	P>0.05 Not Significant
Job Interest & Salary Expectation	0.022	P>0.05 Not Significant
Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making	0.030	P>0.05 Not Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the above results of the correlation analysis, it is evident that the values of the correlations for all the dimensions as well as the overall Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Decision-Making are very low. In addition, the p-values for all the variables are higher than 0.05, implying that the correlations are not significant. This reveals that there is no significant relationship that can be established between the selected variable and the dimensions such as Job Search Self-Efficacy, Communication and Networking Confidence, Career Clarity, Goal Setting, Information Seeking and Commitment, Job Interest, and Salary Expectation. This reveals that the relationship that is established is merely numerical in nature

H0: There is no significant relationship between the selected variable and Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions that influence Career Decision-Making.

H1: There is a significant relationship between the selected variable and Job Search Self-Efficacy and its dimensions that influence Career Decision-Making.

Result: Since the p-values are higher than 0.05 for all the variables, the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is rejected. Hence, it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between the selected variable and Job Search Self-Efficacy and its impact on Career Decision-Making among postgraduate students.

Major Findings

The findings of the research on the topic "Job Search Self-Efficacy and its Impact on Career Decision-Making among Postgraduate Students" revealed that a considerable number of respondents showed a high level of job search self-efficacy (44.0%), indicating that a large number of postgraduate students feel confident about searching for jobs and recognizing job opportunities. Almost (48.0%) of the respondents showed a high level of job search self-efficacy for overall career decision-making, indicating that a large number of students feel confident about making decisions concerning their future career paths. The findings revealed that a high level of communication and networking confidence (50.0%) also contributes to the job search process, indicating that a large number of students feel confident about making effective interactions with employers. Additionally,

the findings revealed that a high level of goal setting (48.0%) and job interest/salary expectation (48.0%) also contribute to the job search self-efficacy of the respondents, indicating that a large number of students feel confident about making effective career goals and setting expectations about employment opportunities. In addition, career clarity (36.0%) was found to be moderate among many respondents, which indicates that some students still require guidance in identifying clear career paths. The level of information seeking and commitment (44.0%) was also moderate, suggesting that students moderately engage in searching for information related to career opportunities and job requirements.

The t-test analysis revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female respondents in terms of job search self-efficacy, communication and networking confidence, career clarity, goal setting, information seeking and commitment, job interest and salary expectation, and overall job search self-efficacy and career decision-making, since the p-value was greater than 0.05.

The ANOVA test revealed that job search self-efficacy showed a significant difference (Sig = 0.000) among the respondents. However, other factors such as communication and networking confidence (Sig = 0.023), career clarity (Sig = 0.290), goal setting (Sig = 0.348), information seeking and commitment (Sig = 0.257), job interest and salary expectation (Sig = 0.455), and overall job search self-efficacy and career decision-making (Sig = 0.063) did not reveal significant differences since their p-values were greater than 0.05. The correlation analysis, it was found that there was no significant relationship between these variables, including job search self-efficacy, communication and networking confidence, career clarity, goal setting, information seeking and commitment, job interest and salary expectation, and job search self-efficacy with career decision-making, as the p-value is more than 0.05.

Suggestions

From the results obtained in the study, the following suggestions can be made to improve the level of Job Search Self-Efficacy and Career Decision-Making among the students of postgraduate courses.

Since the students have shown a high level of job search self-efficacy, the educational institutions need to provide proper career guidance to the students. Colleges need to provide proper career counseling services to the students so that the students can understand the various career options available to them. From the study, it is found that communication and networking confidence play an important part in the job search process. So, the educational institutions need to provide proper training to the students to improve their communication skills. This will help the students to communicate well with the employers so that the students can get proper job opportunities.

It is found from the study that the level of career clarity among the students is moderate. So, the colleges need to arrange proper career awareness programs so that the students can gain better knowledge of the various career options available to them. Goal setting is the other factor that is important for the decision-making process. Educational institutions should encourage students to participate in career planning and skill development programs that would assist them in setting clear goals for their future careers and working towards the achievement of the same.

The study has also pointed out the fact that students should work towards enhancing their information-seeking behavior regarding the availability of jobs. Educational institutions should, therefore, strengthen the placement cells of the institution, which would provide students with information regarding the availability of jobs. Finally, students should be encouraged to participate in internship programs, job fairs, etc. Such programs would assist students in enhancing their confidence regarding the decision-making process for their future careers.

Conclusion

The present study focuses on the topic of "Job Search Self-Efficacy and Its Impact on Career Decision Making among Postgraduate Students." The results of the study revealed that the respondents exhibited a high level of job search self-efficacy, which indicates that postgraduate students are confident in searching for jobs. Moreover, the results revealed that the majority of the students exhibited a high level of job search self-efficacy, which indicates that the students are capable of making appropriate decisions regarding their future careers.

The results revealed that the students' confidence level in communication/networking, setting goals, and job interest with salary expectations is high, which indicates that these factors play an important role in influencing the students' behavior towards searching for jobs. However, the results revealed that the students' clarity level regarding careers and information-seeking behavior is moderate, which indicates that the students need more support regarding appropriate careers and information-seeking behavior. From the statistical analysis, it is revealed that gender does not have any impact on job search self-efficacy and career decision making, as there are no significant differences between male and female respondents. According to the ANOVA analysis, job search self-efficacy has a significant difference among the respondents, whereas other factors do not have any significant differences among the respondents. Similarly, the correlation analysis revealed that there are no significant relationships between the study variables and career decision making, as the p-value is higher than 0.05. Finally, the study revealed that job search confidence, communication skills,

having clear career goals, and having access to career information are the most important factors to help postgraduate students make effective career decisions. Therefore, it is recommended to enhance the effectiveness of career guidance programs and skill development programs to enhance the job search self-efficacy of the students.

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