

Job-search behaviour of Omani Graduates: Sohar University – a case study

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The objectives of the study were to critically analyse and explore the factors affecting job-search behaviour and to analyse the effect of such factors on job-search behaviour.

Design/Methodology: 145 samples were obtained using a well-structured questionnaire from the population of 677 graduated students from Sohar University, using convenience sampling technique and the data collected was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings: The results of the study revealed that most of the graduated students do not have a clear method to apply for a future job whereas they believe that the internet is the best way to find a job and the degree they possess will help them to find a job in the field of their expertise. It was also revealed that they were confident that they have gained sufficient knowledge and skills required from the university and they prefer to have a clear plan to find a job.

Research Implications: It was suggested that the Government should create jobs based on skills and open channels to recruit skilled graduates. It was also suggested that the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should try to alter the curriculum and introduce professional/technical courses eliminating the gap between the HEIs and the labour market.

Practical Implications: The study will help the colleges and the universities in conducting workshops and the related activities in engaging students towards increasing their skills.

Originality: No study was carried out before to study the job-search behaviour of Omani students and this is a study of its own kind.

Keywords: Job-search behaviour, Graduated Students, Students' Skills, Students' Knowledge, Self-Confidence.

Introduction

Seeking employment after completion of graduation or job loss, or seeking re-employment is a usual phenomenon and has become more of a strategic issue in career development. Therefore, job-search behaviour has gained a lot of momentum in recent times, as it is a major determinant in finding a job (Kanter *et al.*, 2001). Omani Government is very much involved in refining of employment policy both in the public and private sectors. With the decline in oil production and the fast economic changes the Government is trying to adjust the job imbalances between those sectors.

Taking into view the current employment scenario in Oman, the unemployment issue has become a grave concern for the Government and the graduates. Unemployment can be considered as the definition for an individual living without a job and is known as the availability of individuals who are ready to work but are still searching for vacancies because of a shortage of job opportunities.

The situation has become alarming, and it has become essential for the graduates to find a job for themselves. Thus, the understanding of a job-search behaviour is essential which can help the graduates to a great extent. Research suggests effective job-search behaviour translates the number of job offers, better job fit, and job satisfaction with offered opportunity (Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Stumpf, Austin, & Hartman, 1984; Steffy, Shaw, & Noe, 1989). Researchers have studied job-search behaviours from various perspectives. Some have studied it from the amount of time spent on job-search, and some have conducted studies to explore sources of information to find a job (Okudaira, 2017). Job seekers have to rank their priorities when searching jobs. Job seekers ought to organize their goals and professional method in searching a job. Self-efficacy and perceived control seems to affect job-search outcomes.

Every graduate is looking for a suitable job depending on the specialization of his/her study. A well-planned job-search behaviour leads to a good opportunity of getting a job and few known factors such as work interview, experience, and self-efficiency influence it. The job-search becomes difficult at the moment due to various circumstances, whether these circumstances are specific to the graduate or due to external factors

hindering the acquisition of a suitable job. Students must realize the importance of a broader range of skills required by them rather than the few generic skills they have acquired and develop more such skills for their future career growth. Understanding such behaviour will lead to adopting various search strategies by the graduates and will help in identifying an effective strategy in finding a new job - the right job, a job which is suitable for them. This identification will comprise of mapping generic skills onto graduate attributes gained from the existing curriculum. This will help the college and universities in conducting workshops and activities in engaging students towards increasing their skills to easily fall on the right track to search for jobs after graduation or during their internship/job training. This way the educational institutions and universities might also understand the good deliverables to be provided to their students in their curricula.

In 2018, Saudi Arabia reported an unemployment rate of about 5.5% whereas in Oman and Bahrain the unemployment rate was 19%. Nowadays, most graduates tend to use informal ways rather than formal way of job-search because the unemployment rate keep rising as they think it is the better way to get a job (Ashforth, 2000). Further, the emotional response leads to loss of employment opportunity as most of the job-seekers suffer from stress, and worry about their future. Thus the job seekers need to make a clear plan with a clear goal putting in full efficiency. In these lines, Omani girls come across more challenges as they ought to have some or the other jobs and for the sake of running the families they are ready to take up any jobs.

Though there have been studies on job-search behaviour, the paucity of research remains and was found in understanding job-search behaviour. This was the prime reason the study was taken up. This study aims to fill the gap by studying the job-search behaviour of students in a higher education institution viz. Sohar University. This study focuses on analysing the current job-search behaviour adopted by university graduates to find jobs, and understand the impact of this job-search behaviour on job outcomes. Further, through this study the job assistance, the graduates obtain from the university, can also be understood. Thus, the questions that came up during the above discussion were as follows:

Research Questions

1. What are the factors affecting job-search behaviour?
2. What is the effect of such factors on job-search behaviour?

Research Objectives

1. To critically analyse and explore the factors affecting job-search behaviour
2. To analyse the effect of such factors on job-search behaviour

Hypotheses

To fulfil the objective, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Students' skills, Students' knowledge, and self-confidence are the factors affecting job-search behaviour.
2. Job-search behaviour is influenced by students' skills, students' knowledge, and self-confidence of the graduated students.

Review of Literature

Job Search

Blömer (2015) confirmed that the youth searching for a new job is more motivated than older people. Youth use formal methods such as contacting employment agencies, job sites (LinkedIn) but the older use informal methods such as contacting friends, contacting people through a sports club, mouth-to-mouth, etc. Van Hoye and Saks (2008) claimed that job satisfaction is one of the objectives to search for a job which includes promotion and rewards. Hoofit (2004) claimed that job-search behaviour is a complex process and the factors involved are job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work valence, expectancy, and financial needs, and the attitudes, insights, willingness are stronger in the employed group than in the unemployed group. Bao and Luo (2015) mentioned that the proactive personality of individuals will ease the relationships between self-efficiency in job-search and the clarity of job-search and job-search activities. Hausdorf (2007) claimed that the universities and Governments should be aware of the effects of the increase in fees and subsequent economic hardships faced by graduates as these have implications for early professional decisions as well. Kanfer et al., (2001) found that the major factors that have a direct impact on search behavior were personality, expectancy, and self-evaluation, social, motive, and biographical antecedents.

Skills

Sarkar et al. (2016) confirmed the importance of skills and knowledge for employment and the skills and knowledge gained in the university/colleges and the skills required for the jobs do not match. Lowden et al.

(2011) found that there is a gap between what has been taught in university and what the labor market needs and there is a lack of communication between the universities and the business sector and hence urged for the need to eliminate those gaps to increase the employability of the graduates. [Liu et al.](#) (2014) confirmed that the easier the end-goal, the lesser is the effort of people to pursue their end-goal and hence the job seekers need to develop higher levels of internal attribution. [Bao and Luo](#) (2015) claimed that job-seekers need to develop a strong proactive personality so that the job-search activity will become easier.

Self-confidence

[Okudaira](#) (2017) found that students search for positions, sometimes completely in advance of the date. No positive effect has been spotted on students' human capital investment. Timing regulation primarily altered job-search behaviors. [Piróg](#) (2016) stated that there are different methods of searching for a job and the graduates prefer their methods. However, electronic methods were the most preferred one as it was faster and convenient. [Mowbray et al.](#) (2017) found that social networks have a crucial informational utility during the job-search process, whereby young jobseekers engage in networking behavior, both offline and online, remain largely unexplored. [Saks & Ashforth, 1999](#) (1999) noted that secondary education can forecast job opportunities and future wants. [Radwan](#) (2014) claimed that the Omani graduates' perspective toward the 'work readiness' competencies needed in the labor market. [Liu et al.](#) (2014) confirmed that job-search behavior was positively related to the number of job offers received by job seekers.

Knowledge

[Kanfer et al.](#) (2001) found that self-evaluative, social, and motive antecedents have a strong impact on search behavior. [Yizhong et al.](#) (2017) revealed that perceived employability has a significant positive impact on job-seeking efficiency, attitude, intention, and severity. [Manai and Holmlund](#) (2015) claimed that self-marketing is essential and developing such skills will help business students to secure good placements. [Saks & Ashforth, 1999](#) (1999) claimed that secondary education can forecast job opportunities and future wants. [Radwan](#) (2014) claimed that the Oman labor market has a shortage of job opportunities due to which the jobs provided by the Government and the private sector are not able to match the huge higher education output of graduates. [Liu et al.](#) (2014) confirmed that job-search behavior was positively related to the number of job offers received by job seekers.

From the above deep study of review of literature, the factors relate to job-search behavior were identified as Students' knowledge, Students' skills, and Self-confidence. i.e. the claim of hypothesis.1 is proved positively.

Research Methodology

Considering the variables – Knowledge, Skills, and Self-confidence as the independent variables and job-search behavior as the dependent variable the analysis was carried out. For the study purpose, 150 graduates were selected as the sample from the population of 677 graduate students, using convenience sampling technique that is a non-probability method as it was easy to reach the graduate group from Sohar University. Finally, 145 samples were obtained using a well-structured questionnaire, and the data collected was analyzed and the conclusions were made after due statistical analysis carried out using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings

Table.1 Demographic Details

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	108	74.5
	Male	37	25.5
Age	<20 years	7	4.8
	20-30 years	123	84.8
	31-40 years	15	10.3
Qualification	Bachelor	130	89.7
	Masters	5	3.4
	Ph.D	5	3.4
	Professional	5	3.4
Working	YES	40	27.6
	No	105	72.4

Source: Questionnaire

Reliability

Table.2 Reliability Analysis of the data

	N	%
Valid Cases	145	100.0
Excluded	0	0.0

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
.768	145 items

The test for data reliability and internal consistency confirms that the value lies between .70 & .93.

Table.3 Knowledge

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	K-S Value	χ^2 value	p-value
The degree will help you to find a good job	9 6.2%	9 6.2%	37 25.5%	61 42.1%	29 20.0%	.255	64.345	.000
Your bachelor's degree will support you to work in the same field you have	4 2.8%	21 14.5%	40 27.6%	53 36.6%	27 18.6%	.223		
You will not have any problem if you find a job in a different specialization	7 4.8%	22 15.2%	28 19.3%	47 32.4%	41 28.3%	.226		
You are confident that the university gave you all knowledge of your field of specialization	6 4.1%	20 13.8%	40 27.6%	66 45.5%	13 9.0%	.265		

Null hypothesis.2: There is no relationship between knowledge and the choice of the respondents.

From table.3, it can be seen that the p-value is less than .05. So, the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between Knowledge and the choice of the respondents. Now comparing the K-S values obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, 'You are confident that the university gave you all knowledge required in your field of specialization' (.265) ranks first, followed by 'The degree will help you to find a good job' (.255) and 'You will not have any problem if you find a job in a different specialization from your degree' (.226).

Table.4 Skills

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	K-S value	χ^2 value	p-value
The skills you have will define how much easy to find your future job	5 3.4%	17 11.7%	24 16.6%	61 42.1%	38 26.2%	.272	59.979	.000
As a graduate, you feel that you have enough skills to apply for a job	4 2.8%	18 12.4%	30 20.7%	66 45.5%	26 17.9%	.278		
Summer training is more enough to gain skills	10 6.9%	26 17.9%	30 20.7%	53 36.6%	26 17.9%	.238		
University provides series of workshops to gain skills for the graduates	6 4.1%	26 17.9	34 23.4%	51 35.2%	27 18.6%	.225		

Null hypothesis.3: There is no relationship between Skills and the choice of the respondents.

From table.4, it can be seen that the p-value is less than .05. So, the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between Skills and the choice of the respondents. Now comparing the K-S

values obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, ‘As a graduate, you feel that you have enough skills to apply for a job’ (.278) ranks first, followed by ‘the skills you have will define how much easy to find your future job’ (.272) and ‘summer training is more enough to gain skills’ (.238).

Table.5 Self-Confidence

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	K-S Value	χ^2 value	p-value
You have the plan to find your future job	2 1.4%	24 16.6%	38 26.2%	62 42.8%	19 13.1%	.258	80.483	.000
You have the desire to continue your study after finding a job	5 3.4%	14 9.7%	25 17.2%	52 35.9%	48 33.1%	.248		
You have personal confidence and you can do individual tasks	0 0%	4 2.8%	20 13.8%	64 44.1%	57 39.3%	.241		
You can manage and work with the team	1 0.7%	2 1.4%	9 6.2%	60 41.4%	73 50.3%	.301		

Null hypothesis.4: There is no relationship between Self-confidence and the choice of the respondents.

From table.5, it can be seen that the p-value is less than .05. So, the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between Self-confidence and the choice of the respondents. Now comparing the K-S values obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, ‘You can manage and work with the team’ (.301) ranks first, followed by ‘You have the plan to find your future job’ (.258) and ‘You have the desire to continue your study after finding a job’ (.248).

Table.6 Search Behaviour

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	χ^2 value	p-value
The internet is the best way to find a job	5 3.4%	9 6.2%	38 26.2%	62 42.8%	31 21.4%	74.138	.000
Students continue their post-graduation after graduation till they find a job	25 17.2%	26 17.9%	33 22.8%	29 20.0%	32 22.1%	1.724	.786
You have a clear method to apply for your future a job	1 70%	25 17.2%	45 31.0%	53 36.6%	21 14.5%	58.483	.000
The best method to find a job is to apply to the ministry of manpower and wait for their call	22 15.2%	41 28.3%	41 28.3%	32 22.1%	9 6.2%	25.724	.000

For the second factor, the p-value is more than .05. So eliminating factor No.2, we repeat the chi-square analysis and the result is in Table.6.

Table.7 Search Behaviour – revised

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	K-S value	χ^2 value	p-value
The internet is the best way to find a job	5 3.4%	9 6.2%	38 26.2%	62 42.8%	31 21.4%	.252	103.255	.000
You don't have a clear method to apply for your future a job	1 70%	25 17.2%	45 31.0%	53 36.6%	21 14.5%	.219		
The best method to find a job is to apply to the	22 15.2%	41 28.3%	41 28.3%	32 22.1%	9 6.2%	.181		

ministry of manpower and wait for their call								
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Null hypothesis.1: There is no relationship between Search Behaviour and the choice of the respondents.

From table.7, it can be seen that the p-value is less than .05. So, the null hypothesis gets rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between Search Behaviour and the choice of the respondents. Now comparing the K-S values obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, ‘The internet is the best way to find a job’ (.251) ranks first, followed by ‘You have a clear method to apply for your future job’ (.219) and ‘The best method to find a job is to apply to the ministry of manpower and wait for their call’ (.181).

Regression Analysis

Table.8 Test of Multi-collinearity in Regression using SPSS

Model	Tolerance	VIF
Constant		
Knowledge	.659	1.517
Self-confidence	.747	1.339
Skills	.673	1.486

From Table.8, it can be seen that the tolerance value of all independent variables has a value > .01 and a variance inflation factor (VIF) value < 10. So it is confirmed that there is no multicollinearity between independent variables in the regression model. Hence, the regression analysis was carried out and the results were as follows:

Table.9 (a), (b), (c) & (d) Regression Analysis

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Skills, Knowledge, Self-confidence		...

^a Dependent variable: Search behaviour

^b All requested variables entered

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.504 ^b	.254	.238	2.12518

^b Predictors: (constant), Skills, Knowledge, Self-confidence

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	216.501	3	72.167	15.979	.000 ^b
Residual	636.809	141	4.516		
Total	853.310	144			

^a Dependent variable: Search behaviour

^b Predictors: (constant), Skills, Knowledge, Self-confidence

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(constant)	5.304	1.262		4.202	.000
Knowledge	.317	.082	.347	3.876	.000
Self-confidence	.092	.082	.094	1.118	.266
Skills	.127	.072	.157	1.767	.079

^a Dependent Variable: Search behaviour

From the above table, it can be seen that the p-value for the independent variable self-confidence is more than 0.05. Therefore eliminating the variable self-confidence, the linear regression analysis is carried out again the results are as follows:

Table.10 (a), (b), (c) & (d) Revised Regression Analysis

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Skills, Knowledge		...

^a Dependent variable: Search behaviour

^b All requested variables entered

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.497 ^b	.247	.237	2.12704

^b Predictors: (constant), Skills, Knowledge, Self-Confidence

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	210.858	2	105.429	23.303	.000 ^b
Residual	642.452	142	4.524		
Total	853.310	144			

^a Dependent variable: Search behaviour

^b Predictors: (constant), Skills, Knowledge, Self-Confidence

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(constant)	6.107	1.038		5.881	.000
Knowledge	.343	.078	.376	4.383	.000
Skills	.147	.069	.182	2.118	.036

^a Dependent Variable: Job-search behaviour

From the above table, it can be seen that the p-value F (23.303) is .000 < .05, and the p-value for the independent variables – Knowledge and Skills is also less than 0.05. i.e. There exists a linear relationship between the dependent variable – job-search behaviour and the independent variables – knowledge, and skills. In other words, the Students’ Knowledge and Students’ skills impact the Job-search behaviour but there is no effect of self-confidence on job-search behaviour. In short, hypothesis.2 is partially proved. Therefore, the derived linear regression can be written as follows:

$$B = 6.107 + 0.343 K + 0.147 S$$

Where B - is Job-search behaviour

K – Knowledge, and

S – Skills

Discussion

Most of the respondents (54.5%) agreed that they were confident enough that the university provided them all knowledge required in their field of specialization and most of them (62.1%) believed that their degree

will help them to find a good job. Most of them (60.7%) also agreed that they would not mind if they find a job in different specialization other than their degree.

Most of the respondents (63.4 %) strongly believed that as graduates, they feel that have enough skills to apply for a job and most of them (68.3%) agreed that the job they secure will purely be based on the skills they obtained during their degrees. Most of the respondents (54.5%) agreed that summer training is sufficient enough to gain such skills.

Most of the respondents (91.4%) strongly believe that they can manage and work with teams. But most of them (55.9%) strongly agreed that they do not have any plans to find their future job. It was also confirmed by most of the respondents (69.0%) that they were willing to continue their studies even after finding a job. Most of the respondents (64.2%) agreed that the internet is the best means to find a job and most of the respondents (51.1%) claimed that they know the methods to apply for their future jobs and the rest believed that the best method to find a job is to apply to the ministry of manpower and wait for their call. It was also observed that students' job-search behaviour depends on both the variables Knowledge and Skills.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that most of the graduate students do not have a clear method to apply for a future job whereas they believe that the internet is the best way to find a job and the degree they possess will help them to find a job in the field of their expertise. On the other hand, they do not mind having a job in a different field. Although they were confident that they have gained sufficient knowledge and skills required from the university they prefer to have a clear plan to find a job and most of them were keen to continue their study even after finding a job as they are confident enough to work either individually or with a team.

Recommendations

From the above, it is recommended that

- The government should create jobs based on skills and open channels to recruit skilled graduates suitable for such jobs.
- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should try to alter the curriculum and introduce tailor-made professional/technical courses eliminating the gap between the HEIs and the labor market
- HEIs should provide sufficient skills and introduce knowledge-based training programs so that the graduating students become equipped and well-prepared to face the demand of the labor market
- The government can create recruitment agencies to channelize the recruitment process locally according to the local needs rather than centralizing through the Ministry of manpower or ministry of commerce and industry
- Students should be provided with adequate information and all needs with respect to job-search methods in relates to the aspiration of the graduates.

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