

# Understanding Job Search Intentions: A Study on Psychological Drivers among Malaysian Graduates

Choon Wei Low<sup>1\*</sup>, Mah Pei Yew<sup>2</sup>, Nur Fatihah Shaari<sup>3</sup>, Shukei Liew<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Economics, Faculty of Accountancy and Management, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Sungai Long Campus, Selangor, Malaysia*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Marketing, Faculty of Business and Finance, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR), Kampar Campus, Perak, Malaysia*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Economics, Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Johor Branch, Segamat Campus, Johor, Malaysia*

---

## ARTICLE INFO

### *Article history:*

Received 16 November 2024

Revised 14 April 2025

Accepted 23 May 2025

Online first 25 May 2025

Published 31 May 2025

---

### *Keywords:*

perceived behavioural control

social norm

attitude

job search self-efficacy

theory of planned behaviour

### *DOI:*

10.24191/smrj.v22i1.6744

---

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between job search self-efficacy, subjective norms, PBC, attitude, and job search intention among 139 Malaysian undergraduates in the Klang Valley using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) framework. In recent years, Malaysia has faced increasing challenges of graduate unemployment and skill-related underemployment, raising concerns about students' readiness to enter the workforce. Understanding the psychological and behavioural factors influencing job search intention is crucial to addressing these issues. The multiple linear regression analysis findings reveal that PBC and attitude significantly and positively influence job search intention. Students with a positive attitude towards job search activities exhibit a higher intention to search, and greater perceived control over the process further strengthens this intention. While subjective norms and job search self-efficacy are positively associated with job search intention, they are not statistically significant predictors. The results highlight the importance of intrinsic factors, such as personal attitudes and control, in shaping job search behaviour. This study recommends that higher education institutions offer targeted career guidance, focusing on resume writing, interview skills, and job market navigation to build students' confidence. Strengthening engagement in job search activities can improve graduates' employment prospects and contribute to Malaysia's broader economic development.

---

## INTRODUCTION

Job search intention refers to the motivation and plan of an individual to engage in activities aimed at securing employment. It includes the determination and readiness to take steps necessary to get a job, such as searching for job opportunities, preparing and submitting applications, and attending interviews. There are many jobs available in Malaysia. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a rapid development in job

---

<sup>1\*</sup> Corresponding author. E-mail address: [cwlow@utar.edu.my](mailto:cwlow@utar.edu.my)

opportunities as the number of jobs in the first quarter has increased by 1.5 percent to 8.94 million in 2024 (Bernama, 2024; The Star, 2024). However, the number of unemployed graduates remained high. Employed graduates were working in jobs that needed to match their qualifications. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2024), skill-related underemployment was 37.1 percent in the first quarter of 2024. Therefore, statistics from DOSM indicated that graduates face challenges in securing a job that matches their qualifications.

It is worth noting that underemployment and skills mismatch negatively impact the Malaysian economy, becoming more prominent during global economic crises. This structural issue occurs when the workforce possesses fewer or more skills than required for available jobs (OECD, 2019). While some mismatches are inevitable due to the rapidly changing labour market, persistent skills mismatches are costly for employers, workers, and society (McGuinness et al., 2017). The delay in securing significant investments in Malaysia is partly due to the mismatch between graduates' skills and future job opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2020). Consequently, matching skills and jobs has become a high-priority policy concern. The high cost of living often forces graduates to accept minimum-wage jobs (International Labour Organisation, 2021). This environment underscores the importance of enhancing job search intention among undergraduates, as effective job searching can help align their skills with suitable job opportunities, thereby mitigating the negative impacts of skills mismatch and underemployment. Therefore, improving job search intention through better career guidance and practical job search skills is crucial for addressing this economic challenge.

Despite the expanding body of literature in the field, three issues remain unresolved. The first issue is the persistent underemployment among graduates. Despite the growing job market, graduate unemployment remains a concern in Malaysia. There is a significant skills mismatch when graduates work in positions that do not fully utilize their degrees and skills. The first quarter of 2024 had 37.1% of skill-related underemployment, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) (2024). The high underemployment rate not only indicates a discrepancy between educational attainment and labour market demands but also increases the likelihood of job dissatisfaction and reduced economic productivity. A deeper understanding of the variables affecting graduates' employment intentions is essential, along with the formulation of effective strategies to bridge the skills gap.

Furthermore, a deficiency in job searches self-efficacy among graduates' results in diminished job search intention. The low job searches self-efficacy observed among Malaysian undergraduates requires further attention and resolution. The concept of 'job search self-efficacy' refers to an individual's belief in their ability to find and secure employment. Recent graduates often exhibit insufficient self-confidence and lack essential skills, which adversely impacts their strategies and behaviours in the job market. Enhancing job search self-efficacy via targeted career counselling and training programmes is crucial.

Additionally, further investigation is required to comprehend the impact of subjective norms on job-seeking intentions. Subjective norms refer to the perceived societal pressures to seek employment, which are influenced by close friends and family members. Although research indicates a positive correlation between subjective norms and job-seeking intentions, there is limited understanding of how varying social pressures affect different student populations. Cultural influences and familial expectations in Malaysia significantly impact individuals' job-seeking behaviours. Analysing these nuances can enhance the understanding of how social support networks influence job seekers' intentions.

The subsequent aspect is the perception of an individual's capability to effectively engage in job search activities. Numerous undergraduates encounter external obstacles, including restricted access to job search resources, insufficient networking opportunities, and economic limitations that influence their perceived agency in the job search process. These barriers can substantially reduce the intention to participate in job search activities. Identifying the external factors that hinder job search efforts and addressing them through institutional support and policy modifications is crucial for enhancing job search intentions and outcomes.

According to Zakariya (2017), graduates who have specific career goals are more likely to land positions that fit their interests and qualifications. This lessens the disparity between education and employment that many Malaysian graduates experience. Lastly, there are attitudes toward job searching. Although having a positive outlook on job seeking can significantly increase the intention to seek employment, many recent grads may hold unfavourable opinions about it because of past setbacks, a lack of prospects, or the intimidating aspect of the procedure. It is essential to pinpoint the root causes of unfavourable attitudes and create interventions that promote a more optimistic perspective on job searching. Unrealistic expectations will also contribute to unemployment. Many unemployed graduates aim for high salaries or prestigious positions without aligning these expectations with their actual skills or job market realities. Clear, realistic job search intentions could help address this mismatch (Jeffri & Rahim, 2023).

Based on the above issues, this study investigated the relationship between job search self-efficacy, subjective norm, PBC, attitude, and job search intention among undergraduates. It further examined the significant factors of job search intention. This study used multiple linear regression and discovered that all variables had a positive relationship with job search intention, while PBC and attitude significantly influenced undergraduate job search intention. According to Lai and Ishak (2014), nearly 20% of the Malaysian government's expenditures are allocated annually to education. The Malaysian government is committed to offering excellent educational opportunities and training to enhance the country's human capital quality. Consequently, human capital is anticipated to be a significant determinant of Malaysia's economic growth. Thus, it is crucial to understand the factors affecting undergraduate job search intentions.

The remainder of this paper will be arranged as follows: literature reviews on job searching, followed by research methodology, findings, and discussion before a conclusion is drawn.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is one pertinent theory Ajzen (1991) created in this field. According to TPB, intention is the main factor influencing behaviour, which perceived behaviour control (PBC), attitude, and subjective norms impact. According to Ajzen (1991), intention is the willingness to try a behaviour or the effort one plans to put into executing that behaviour. A person's attitude towards job searching might be either favourable or unfavourable. Concurrently, subjective norm refers to the urge to fit in and social pressure to act in a certain way. PBC is defined as how easy or hard behaviour is judged to be performed (Ajzen, 2002). According to Ajzen (1991), PBC aligns with the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), which is defined as judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations (Bandura, 1982).

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has been widely utilised in the context of job seeking, with various studies examining the connections among job search attitude, subjective norm, job search self-efficacy, intention to search for employment, and actual job search behaviours. Fundamental studies in this area include those by Caska (1998), Song et al. (2006), Van Hooft et al. (2004, 2005), Wanberg et al. (2005), and Zikic and Saks (2009). These studies consistently demonstrate a significant correlation between job search intention and job search behaviours. Specifically, the works of Caska (1998), Song et al. (2006), Wanberg et al. (2005), and Zikic and Saks (2009) confirm this relationship, indicating that individuals who intend to seek employment are more likely to engage in job search activities. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) model, attitude has a crucial impact on job searching and the outcomes it might bring. Subjective norm refers to social pressure from others, such as family and friends. PBC is the perception of an individual on their ability to successfully perform job search activities, which resources, skills, and environment can influence. Lastly, job search self-efficacy refers to one's belief in finding and securing a job successfully.

However, the pathways linking job search attitude, subjective norm, job search self-efficacy, and job search intention have yielded mixed results. While there is a consensus on the significant relationship between subjective norms and job search intention, findings regarding the impact of job search attitude need to be more consistent. Most studies, such as those by Song et al. (2006), Van Hooft et al. (2004, 2005), Van Hooft and De Jong (2009), and Zikic and Saks (2009), report a significant correlation between job search attitude and intention. In contrast, Wanberg et al. (2005) observed significant and non-significant correlations in a longitudinal study, indicating potential variability over time.

### **Relationship between Attitude and Job Search Intention**

Zikic and Saks (2009) found a significant but moderate link between attitude and intention, suggesting that while attitude plays a role, it may not be the sole driver of job search intention. These inconsistencies are mainly attributable to the varying measures of attitude used across studies. For instance, Song et al. (2006), Van Hooft et al. (2004, 2005), and Van Hooft and De Jong (2009) used adjective-based scales to assess participants' attitudes toward job seeking. In contrast, Wanberg et al. (2005) employed a more straightforward measure, asking participants directly if they had a positive or negative attitude towards job seeking, which may lack sensitivity and result in non-significant findings. Zikic and Saks (2009) used a different approach, focusing on the perceived benefits of finding a job, thus measuring outcome expectations rather than pure attitude, complicating direct comparisons with other studies. Regarding job search self-efficacy, the results consistently show moderate paths to job search intention. Studies by Caska (1998), Wanberg et al. (2005), and Zikic and Saks (2009) indicate significant correlations, suggesting that individuals' confidence in their ability to conduct a job search influences their intention to do so. However, some studies, such as Song et al. (2006) and Van Hooft et al. (2004), report non-significant paths, highlighting the need for further investigation into the nuances of how self-efficacy impacts job search intentions.

### **Relationship between Perceived Behavioural Control and Job Search Intention**

Based on research by Adams and De Kock (2015) perceived behavioural control was found to significantly influence graduates' intention to apply for jobs, surpassing the impact of their attitude toward applying. Their research indicated that individuals who perceived greater control over the job search process, such as confidence in utilising application tools and managing interviews, were more inclined to engage in proactive employment-seeking behaviours. Currently, the intention to search for employment remains a focal point for researchers. Lin (2010) observed that earlier research suggests subjective norms affect job search intentions, as individuals obtain information and support from external sources such as peers, family, and friends. Lin's research established a positive correlation between subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and attitudes with job search intentions, particularly in the context of utilising job search websites. Lin (2010) reported a positive relationship between perceived behavioural control (PBC) and job search behaviour, particularly in the context of utilising job search websites. Perceived behavioural control (PBC), indicative of the perceived ease or difficulty in executing a behaviour, is shaped by both external and internal factors, exerting both direct and indirect influences on behaviour (Carmack & Heiss, 2018). Lim et al. (2016) identified perceived control as a significant predictor of job search intention and behaviour among graduating students, underscoring the relevance of self-perceived ability in career management. However, Zainal et al. (2020) reported that PBC and job search intention among Malaysian graduates are negatively related, making other factor such as self-efficacy may have a significant relationship with job search intention.

### **Relationship between Subjective Norms and Job Search Intention**

Van Hooft et al. (2004) emphasised the role of subjective norms in measuring job search intention and behaviour in the labour market, using data collected from temporary employees in The Netherlands. Their findings showed that social pressure significantly influenced the job search intentions of minority groups

more than their attitudes did. Fort et al. (2015) identified subjective norms as a critical determinant of job search intention. Fort et al. (2015) found that subjective norm was strongly related to job search intention among 154 French job seekers. Van Hove et al. (2015) revealed that the variables of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, namely job search attitude, affective job search attitude, subjective norm, and job search self-efficacy, exhibited a positive correlation with job search intention, with job search self-efficacy demonstrating a particularly significant impact. A study in Malaysia by Yean, et al. (2015) found that the intention to work among insured employees is significantly influenced by subjective norms. However, this is not supported by the result found by Aun and Chee (2020), where the subjective norms were not significantly associated with job search intentions.

### Relationship between Job Search Self-Efficacy and Job Search Intention

Lim et al. (2016) examined the impact of self-efficacy on job search behaviours, concluding that higher self-efficacy leads to more robust job search intentions and more positive outcome expectations. They also found that social support did not moderate the relationship between intention and behaviour. Yizhong et al. (2017) explored the relationship between TPB variables and self-efficacy, highlighting a unique challenge: Within the Chinese context, self-efficacy did not significantly affect job search intention. Carmack and Heiss (2018) studied college students and found that PBC was an insignificant determinant of job search intention and behaviour when using LinkedIn. However, they concluded that the impact of PBC on intentions and behaviours is limited, but students still believe they can control their use of social networking sites.

Based on the literature discussed above, the current body of research on TPB related to job seeking reveals several critical gaps that warrant further investigation. Notably, the inconsistency in measuring job search attitudes across studies complicates understanding its impact on job search intentions, necessitating the development of standardised measurement tools. Addressing these gaps will enhance the theoretical framework and practical applications in supporting diverse job-seeking populations.

## METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was designed based on the guidance by the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Fig. 1 shows the research framework of this study. The dependent variable was job search intention (measured by 10 items). The independent variables are perceived behavioural Control (PBC) (measured by seven items), subject norms (measured by three items), attitude (measured by six items), and job search self-efficacy (measured by 20 items). All variables are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with (1) indicating strongly disagree and (5) indicating strongly agree. This quantitative research measures and discovers statistical results from the data collected from undergraduates. Data was collected through a questionnaire survey.

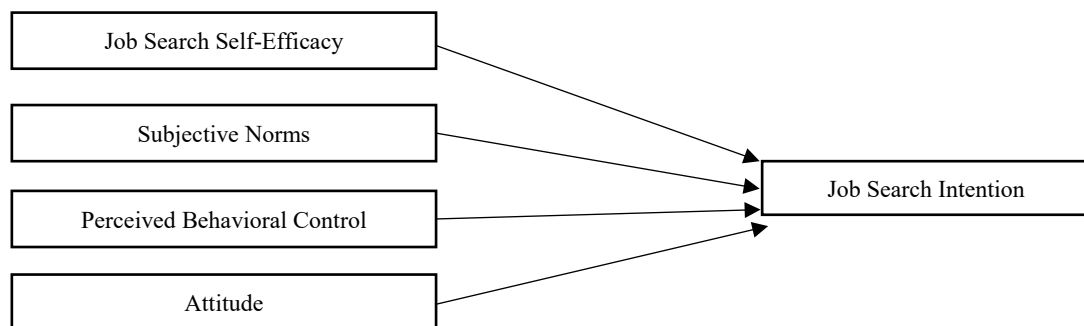


Fig 1. Research Framework

In the data collection, this study used a convenient sampling method, as it is an easiest way to reach and get in touch with the respondents, which is an undergraduate from business-related programme from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). In general, a total of 139 responses from undergraduates were collected for data analysis, and the data was collected using an online survey. Two tests were conducted before data analysis. Firstly, a reliability test was run in this research to ensure the reliable measurement of the different items in the instrument without bias. However, the questions asked in the questionnaire were adopted from previous studies. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) was used to measure how the items included in this research correlate. A result of a CA that is more than 0.6 is considered fair reliability, indicating that a higher level of CA value close to 1 is more reliable (Sweetman et al., 2010; Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Secondly, the normality test was conducted to confirm that the data was normally distributed. Skewness and kurtosis values were used to check the normality of the data. Skewness values between -2 and +2 are acceptable, with values between -1 and +1 indicating excellent symmetry. A skewness value 0 denotes perfect symmetry, while values outside of -2 and +2 indicate substantial nonnormality (Hair et al., 2022). The model specification for regression is as follows:

$$JSI_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 JSSE_i + \beta_3 SNI + \beta_4 PBC_i + \beta_5 ATT_i + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

In equation (1),  $\beta_x$  represents the coefficient values of each independent variable while  $\varepsilon$  representing the error term. To achieve the research objectives, data was regressed by using statistical software, IBM SPSS software. All determinants are expected to have a positive relationship with job search intention. A positive relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search intention implies that undergraduates who believe in their ability to secure a job have a higher job search intention (Lim et al., 2016; Yizhong et al., 2017). A positive relationship between subjective norms and job search intention means undergraduates with social pressure from family and friends have a higher job search intention (Fort et al., 2015; Van Hooft et al., 2004). Perceived behavioural control (Carmack & Heiss, 2018) and attitude (Song et al., 2006; Hooft et al., 2004, 2005; Van Hooft & De Jong, 2009; Zikic & Saks, 2009) are expected to have a positive relationship with job search intention as well.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Profile

A summary of respondents' profiles is presented in Table 1. Among 139 respondents, 101 of them are female, and the rest 38 of them are male. The female respondents are 72.7 percent, while the male respondents are 27.3 percent. There are more female respondents as compared to male because of the interest among respondents towards job search intentions, as male respondents are more interested in being self-employed or doing business. According to Aun and Chee (2020), female Malaysian Graduates tend to demonstrate stronger job search intentions compared to males, likely due to higher job readiness, career planning, and academic engagement. Next, respondents are undergraduate students from Business Stream, namely International Business, with 51 respondents (36.7 percent). The second highest number of respondents are studying Accounting, with 35 respondents (25.2 percent). The third and fourth highest respondents are Economics, with 27 respondents (18.7 percent), and Finance, with 25 respondents (18 percent), respectively. More than half of the respondents are in the first and second year of their studies, while about a quarter are in their undergraduate studies' third and fourth years.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Items	Frequency	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	101	72.7
Male	38	27.3
<b>Programme</b>		
Economics	27	19.4
Accounting	35	25.2
International Business	51	36.7
Finance	26	18.7
<b>Year of Study</b>		
Year 1 & 2	89	64.0
Year 3 & 4	50	36.0

### Regression Analysis for Job Search Intention

Table 2 shows the results of the regression analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test results indicated high reliability for the variables in the study, with coefficients for job search intention (JSI) at 0.940 and for independent variables, PBC, social norm (SN), attitude (ATT), and job search self-efficacy (JSSE) at 0.935, 0.73, 0.930, and 0.972 respectively. Conducted with 139 respondents, all variables have CA values above 0.7, demonstrating internal solid consistency. Hence, the reliability test results indicated that the responses collected were reliable. The skewness and kurtosis values showed that data of all variables was normally distributed.

The  $R^2$  value for this model is 0.497, indicating that 49.7% of the variance in the dependent variable JSI can be explained by the independent variables, PBC, SN, ATT and JSSE. The F-value determines if the overall regression model fits the data well. An F-value of 32.869 indicates that the model is statistically significant. The p-value for the F-test is less than 0.001, indicating that the overall model is highly significant. This means the likelihood of the observed relationship between the predictors and the outcome variable occurring by chance is very low. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for PBC, SN, ATT, and JSSE are 2.927, 1.603, 1.67, and 2.703, respectively. This indicates that multicollinearity issues among variables do not exist.

Table 2. Results of Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	VIF	CA	Skewness	Kurtosis
(Constant)	0.386				
PBC	0.511***	2.927	0.935	-0.738	0.669
SN	0.036	1.603	0.730	-0.657	0.480
ATT	0.177**	1.670	0.930	-0.656	0.684
JSSE	0.113	2.703	0.972	-0.683	0.543
$R^2$	0.497				
Adjusted $R^2$	0.482				
F-value	32.869				
F-significant	< 0.001				

Note: Job Search Intention (JSI) as dependent variable

: \*\*\* Significant at 1 %; \*\* Significant at 5%

### **Perceived Behavioural Control and Job Search Intention**

PBC is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. The coefficient value of 0.511 implies that holding other variables constant, a one-unit increase in PBC is associated with a 0.511 unit increase in JSI. The positive relationship between PBC and JSI among undergraduates can be contextualised within Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991). PBC reflects students' perceptions of their capability to control their academic and job-related tasks. This sense of control is crucial in educational settings where students juggle multiple responsibilities, including coursework, part-time jobs, and internships. The findings suggest that undergraduates who perceive higher control over their academic and work-related tasks tend to exhibit higher job satisfaction, which can be attributed to their confidence and autonomy in managing their responsibilities. The belief of graduates in their job search intention becomes the most important factors as a reliable and measurable predictor of their intention to find a job. This underscores the significance of job readiness programs in enhancing students' confidence and skill levels. Lim et al., (2016) indicate that PBC have a significant relationship with job search intention and behaviour among graduating students, underscoring the relevance of self-assessed capability in career management.

### **Attitude and Job Search Intention**

The statistical analysis indicates that ATT significantly predicts JSI at the 5% level. The coefficient of 0.177 suggests that, when other variables are held constant, a one-unit increase in ATT corresponds to a 0.177-unit increase in job search intention (JSI). The findings underscore the significant influence of attitude on job satisfaction among undergraduates. The correlation between ATT and JSI can be elucidated through Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (1991), which asserts that attitudes toward a behaviour substantially affect intentions and ensuing behaviours. A positive attitude among undergraduates towards academic and job-related tasks correlates with increased job satisfaction. Research demonstrates that a graduate's attitude towards job searching significantly affects their behaviour; those with a positive outlook are notably more likely to participate in employment-seeking activities. This supports prior studies indicating that individuals with positive attitudes tend to report higher job satisfaction, attributed to their optimistic perspective and proactive response to challenges.

### **Summary of the Result**

In summary, PBC positively correlates with JSI. The finding aligns with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour, suggesting that a sense of control is crucial for undergraduates managing multiple responsibilities. The relationship between attitude and job search intention is also positive, indicating that undergraduates with positive attitudes towards their tasks are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction due to their optimistic and proactive approach. These findings highlight the critical roles of perceived behavioural control and positive attitudes in job search intention among undergraduates.

Previous research has empirically supported the relationship between self-efficacy, behavioural control, and student outcomes. Zimmerman (2000) found that students exhibiting high self-efficacy tend to establish ambitious goals, employ effective learning strategies, and maintain persistence in the face of academic challenges. Undergraduates exhibiting elevated job search self-efficacy demonstrate increased capability, heightened motivation, and a reduced perception of barriers, resulting in enhanced job search intentions and more consistent engagement in job-seeking activities.

Attitudes toward job search activities also play a critical role in determining students' engagement and persistence in job-seeking. A positive attitude fosters enthusiasm and commitment, thereby enhancing job search intentions and improving the likelihood of employment outcomes. Wanberg et al. (2005) found that job seekers with a positive outlook demonstrated higher persistence in their search and were more likely to secure employment. This suggests that undergraduates who maintain a favourable attitude toward the job search process are more intrinsically motivated to engage in proactive job-seeking behaviours, which can ultimately improve their employment prospects.



Interestingly, SN and JSSE were not significant predictors of job search intention (JSI) in this study. This result is in line with a study by Aun and Chee (2020), and Chowdhury and Kang (2022), SN were not significantly associated with job search intention. It is suggested that personal factors—specifically perceived control and attitudes—play a more dominant role in shaping job search intentions among undergraduates than external social pressures or self-assessed job search capabilities. One possible explanation is the transitional nature of undergraduate life, where individual attitudes and perceptions influence behaviour more than external expectations or social norms.

## CONCLUSION

### Conclusion and Suggestion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between job search self-efficacy, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and attitude towards job search intention among undergraduates in public universities in Malaysia. In conclusion, attitude and perceived behavioural control are key predictors of job search engines. Attitude influences an individual's motivation to find a job, whereas perceived behavioural control affects their belief in their capability. It also serves as a significant predictor of job search intention among graduates. This result can be a helpful guideline for public and private universities in Malaysia to prepare their students to achieve graduate employability. Fostering students' perceived control over academic and job-related tasks is essential for their success and job satisfaction. Empowering students through targeted training and resources can equip them to manage responsibilities effectively. Educational institutions should offer workshops on time management, stress management, and job search strategies to develop essential skills, enabling students to balance their academic and career-related demands. Mentorship programs can enhance perceived control and self-efficacy by providing guidance, practical advice, and emotional support, helping students navigate educational and professional challenges more confidently.

Encouraging self-reflection promotes personal growth by helping students recognise their strengths, identify areas for improvement, and increase motivation. This process strengthens their sense of control, improving engagement in job search activities and leading to better outcomes. Cultivating positive attitudes toward job searching is equally crucial. Educational programs focused on positive psychology, resilience, and a growth mindset can foster optimistic perspectives, empowering students to approach job searches confidently. Career services play a vital role in supporting proactive behaviours by offering training in resume writing, interview preparation, and networking. Facilitating connections with alumni and potential employers expands students' professional networks and improves job prospects. Finally, positive reinforcement from educators and employers through constructive feedback and recognition fosters persistence and enthusiasm, further enhancing students' job search success.

Subjective norms and job search self-efficacy are not statistically significant with job search intentions among undergraduates. This could be due to a discrepancy between their actual behaviour, such as being unprepared or unready for a job, and the expectations of their surroundings. Besides, students may also feel overconfident and delay job applications. Thus, to overcome this situation, universities could hold more motivational programs and job carnivals to enable students to be more prepared after graduating.

### Limitation and Future Research

In this research, there were several limitations that the researcher faced that may be explored further by future researchers. The first limitation in this research was that the research was conducted among UTAR undergraduates' students, who performed business-related studies. As per the result, the SN and JSSE are not significantly significant with job search intentions; it could be because business undergraduates are more likely to further their study at the postgraduate level or get involved with self-employed jobs, such as

doing business. For future research, it is suggested to distribute the survey to selected public university undergraduates to make the result more significant.

Another limitation is the regression analysis of the study. The researcher can use an advanced statistical package software to get more reliable results in the future, for example, by using SmartPLS software.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) for providing facilities support for this research. The authors would also like to express their gratitude to participants who took part in this research. We acknowledge the use of Consensus to find relevant academic literature and ChatGPT to help revise the write up.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

All authors agree that this research was conducted without any self-benefits or commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funder.

## AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Choon Wei Low and Mah Pei Yew conceived the presented ideas. Choon Wei Low and Shukei Liew wrote the manuscript with support from Mah Pei Yew and Nur Fatimah Shaari. Mah Pei Yew and Shukei Liew performed the analysis. All authors discussed the results and commented on the manuscript. Nur Fatimah Shaari formatted the manuscript. Choon Wei Low completed the final revision of the manuscript.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, S., and De Kock, F. (2015). The role of salient beliefs in graduates' intention to apply. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 41(1), 1–11. <https://sajip.co.za/index.php/sajip/article/view/1223/1803>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioural control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behaviour. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32(4), 665–683. <https://people.umass.edu/ajzen/pubs/pbc.pdf>
- Aun, N. B., and Chee, F. A. (2020). Application of planned behaviour theory on post-study career intention: The influence of internship experience in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 9(2), 363–379. <http://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v9-i2/7392>
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2), 122–147. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy the exercise of control*. W H Freeman/Times Books/ Henry Holt & Co.
- Bernama. (2024). *Total jobs up 2.1pc to 8.94mil in Q4 last year*. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2024/02/1013734/total-jobs-21pc-894mil-q4-last-year>

- Carmack, H. J., and Heiss, S. N. (2018). Using the theory of planned behaviour to predict college students' intent to use LinkedIn for job searches and professional networking. *Communication Studies*, 69(2), 145–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2018.1424003>
- Caska, B. A. (1998). The search for employment: Motivation to engage in a coping behaviour 1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28(3), 206–224. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1998.tb01702.x>
- Chowdhury, M. S., and Kang, D. S. (2022). Person–organisation fit and occupation selection in Bangladesh: a study on Bangladesh Civil Service applicants. *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management*, 9(2), 225–249.
- Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024). *Labour market review: First quarter 2024*. <https://www.dosm.gov.my/portal-main/release-content/labour-market-review-lmr-q12024#:~:text=Overview,amid%20continued%20demand%20for%20labour.&text=Labour%20supply%20expanded%20further%2C%20with,per%20cent%20during%20Q1%202024>.
- Fort, I., Pacaud, C., and Gilles, P. Y. (2015). Job search intention, theory of planned behaviour, personality and job search experience. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 15(1), 57–74. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-014-9281-3>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M., and Sarstedt, M. (2022). *A primer on partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.)*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- International Labour Organization. 2021. World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2021. [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_795453.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40dgreports/%40dcomm/%40publ/documents/publication/wcms_795453.pdf)
- Jeffri, N. F. I., and Abdul Rahim, R. (2023). An empirical study of graduates' attributes, graduates' skills, job mismatch, and unrealistic salaries as unemployment factors among Malaysian graduates. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 10(6.2), 307–319. <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.106.2.14999>
- Lim, Y. J., Osman, A., Salahuddin, S. N., Romle, A. R. and Abdullah, S. (2016). Factors influencing online shopping behaviour: The mediating role of purchase intention. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 35, 401–410. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(16\)00050-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(16)00050-2)
- Lim, R. H., Lent, R. W., and Penn, L. T. (2016). Prediction of job search intentions and behaviours: Testing the social cognitive model of career self-management. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 63(5), 594–603. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000154>.
- Lin, H. F. (2010). Applicability of the extended theory of planned behaviour in predicting job seeker intentions to use job-search websites. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 18(1), 64–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00489.x>
- McGuinness, S., Pouliakas, K., and Redmond, P. (2017). How useful is the concept of skills mismatch? Discussion Papers Series No. 10786. Institute of Labour Economics. <https://docs.iza.org/dp10786.pdf>
- OECD. (2019). *Getting skills right: Creating responsive adult learning systems*. <https://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/adult-learning-systems-2019.pdf>
- Sekaran, U., and Bougie, R. (2010). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach (5th ed.)* John Wiley & Sons.
- Sieng, L. W., and Yussof, I. (2014). Human capital accumulation and economic growth in Malaysia: Investigating the long run nexus. *Jurnal Ekonomi Malaysia*, 48(1), 155–165. <http://doi.org/10.17576/JEM-2014-4801-13>

- Song, Z., Wanberg, C., Niu, X. and Xie, Y. (2006). Action–state orientation and the theory of planned behaviour: A study of job search in China. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 68(3), 490–503. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.11.001>
- Sweetman, D., Badiie, M. and Creswell, J. W. (2010). Use of the transformative framework in mixed methods studies. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(6), 441–454. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410364610>
- The Star. (2024). 8.94 million jobs recorded in first quarter of 2024, highest since 2018, says Stats Dept. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2024/05/15/894-million-jobs-recorded-in-first-quarter-of-2024-highest-since-2018-says-stats-dept#:~:text=Regarding%20the%20job%20situation%20by,8.75%20million%20in%20Q1%202024> \
- Van Hooft, E. A., and De Jong, M. (2009). Predicting job seeking for temporary employment using the theory of planned behaviour: The moderating role of individualism and collectivism. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 82(2), 295–316. <http://doi.org/10.1348/096317908X325322>
- Van Hooft, E. A., Born, M. P., Taris, T. W. and van der Flier, H. (2005). Predictors and outcomes of job search behaviour: The moderating effects of gender and family situation. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 67(2), 133–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2004.11.005>
- Van Hooft, E. A., Born, M. P., Taris, T. W., and van der Flier, H. (2004). Job search and the theory of planned behaviour: Minority–majority group differences in The Netherlands. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 65(3), 366–390. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.09.001>
- Van Hoyer, G., Saks, A. M., Lievens, F. and Weijters, B. (2015). Development and test of an integrative model of job search behaviour. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 24(4), 544–559. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2014.964214>
- Wanberg, C. R., Glomb, T. M., Song, Z. and Sorenson, S. (2005). Job-search persistence during unemployment: A 10-wave longitudinal study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(3), 411–430. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0021-9010.90.3.411>
- World Economic Forum. (2020). The Future of Jobs Report 2020. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Future\\_of\\_Jobs\\_2020.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_2020.pdf)
- Yean, T. F., Johari, J., and Sukery, A. F. M. (2015). The influence of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on intention to return to work: A case of Socso’s insured employees. *Kajian Malaysia: Journal of Malaysian Studies*, 33(Supp.1), 141–154.
- Yizhong, X., Lin, Z., Baranchenko, Y., Lau, C. K., Yukhanaev, A and Lu, H. (2017). Employability and job search behaviour: A six-wave longitudinal study of Chinese university graduates. *Employee Relations*, 39(2), 223–239. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-02-2016-0042>
- Zainal, N. Z., Hairuddin, H., and Kassim, E. S. (2020). Psychological determinants of job search intention among fresh graduates for the supply of labour force in the digital ERA. *Asia Proceedings of Social Sciences*, 6(3), 204–210. <https://doi.org/10.31580/apss.v6i3.1301>
- Zakariya, Z. (2017). Job mismatch and on-the-job search behaviour among university graduates in Malaysia. *Asian Economic Journal*, 31(4), 355–379. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asej.12135>
- Zikic, J. and Saks, A. M. (2009). Job search and social cognitive theory: The role of career-relevant activities. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 74(1), 117–127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2008.11.001>

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Self-efficacy: An essential motive to learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 82–91. <https://doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1999.1016>



© 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).