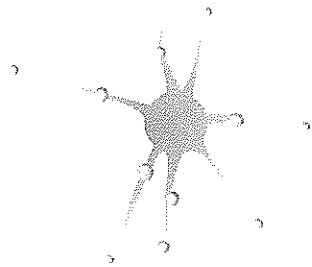


Kertas Penuh - Prosiding Seminar Psikologi Kebangsaan 2010



**SEMINAR
PSIKOLOGI
KEBANGSAAN
2010**

MODERATORS OF JOB-SEARCH INTENSITY, SELF-ESTEEM AND CAREER DECISION MAKING

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship and differences between job-search intensity, self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy among students. The moderators variables studied in this research were gender, academic performance and academic programs. Quantitative method used was correlation research. The data were collected from a self-reported questionnaire administered to 304 graduating students of a public university in Malaysia. Participants were recruited using cluster sampling procedure, also known as multistage sampling. The statistical tests used to analyze the data were Pearson Correlation (r) at 0.01 significant level, t-test and ANOVA at the 0.05 significant levels. The finding showed that there are a significant relationship between job search intensity, self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy. The results also show that gender had significant influenced for self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy. Academic performance (CGPA) influenced job search intensity and academic programs (faculty) also influenced job search intensity, self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy. The implications for students' developments and career development centre are discussed.

Keywords: Job Search Intensity, Self-esteem, Career decision making, Students

1.0 Introduction

Job search intensity may be viewed as an action to implement a preferred career path to pursue different occupational opportunities with different employers. Many job seekers are likely to ponder the preferred type of work and employer. They are likely to experience difficulties in securing preferred employment opportunities. (Werbel,2000). In this study job search intensity refers to the degree of job search effort by graduating students (future job seeker). It entails behaviours that are likely to lead to job interviews and job offers, such as applying for jobs through different recruiting sources and preparing for effective job interviews.

Kanfer et al. (2001) found that the intensity with which new entrants worked at finding jobs was more strongly related to personality than to situational factors, whereas job search intensity was more situational based than personality determined for those who were seeking new jobs as a result of layoffs and downsizing. Mau & Kopischke (2001) surveyed a nationally representative sample of college graduates regarding their job-seeking behaviours and outcomes. Aharon, et al. (2004) in their study examined the connection between personality traits and two strategies for job search, networking and general search. Brown, et al. (2006) tests a model of proactive personality and job search success with a sample of 180 graduating college students. Using structural equation modelling, the researchers tested a theoretical model that specified the relations among proactive personality, job search self-efficacy, job search behaviours, job search effort, and job search outcomes. Sacks (2006) examined the combined and differential effects of five job search behaviours on five criteria of job search success as well as the direct and moderating effects of job search self-efficacy.

A numbers of studies have found that self-esteem predicts job search behaviour and outcomes. For example, self-esteem has been found to relate negatively to the use of normal job sources and positively to job search intensity and assertive job-seeking behaviour (Sacks, 2005). In meta-analysis, Kanfer et al. (2001) found that self-esteem was positively related to job search intensity and job search effort; however, the relationship was stronger for intensity than effort and for job losers compared to new entrants.

Self-esteem is a set of attitudes beliefs that a person brings with him or herself when facing the world. Self-esteem is defined as a personal judgment of worthiness expressed in the attitudes a person holds toward the self. The individual with high self-esteem considers him self a person of worth, and this belief is associated with personal satisfaction and effective functioning. Low self- esteem implies self-rejection, self-dissatisfaction, or self-contempt. Self-esteem provides a mental set that prepares the person to respond according to expectations of success, acceptance, and personal strength. (Kanfer et al. 2001)

Studied done by McMullin and Cairney (2004) explore the relationships among self-esteem, age, class, and gender. They found that levels of self-esteem are lower in older age groups for both men and women. Furthermore, in all age groups, women have lower levels of self-esteem than do men. Aricak (2007) based on his

research investigated the vocational self-esteem of Turkish university students in different fields. There are statistically significant differences between departments. Female students obtained significantly higher vocational self-esteem scores in comparison to male students. Studied done by Karagozoglu, et al. (2008), to determine the correlation between self-esteem and assertiveness. When the students' self-esteem scores were compared with their gender, it was seen that the female students had a higher of level of self esteem than the male students. Sherina, et al. (2008), was conducted a study to determine the mean self-esteem score and to determine the association between self-esteem and age, sex, race, religion, number of siblings, ranking among siblings, family function, parental marital status and smoking among adolescents. Studied done by Duran and Tezer (2009) investigated the differences among first year university students regarding overall wellness and four of its dimensions in terms of self-esteem levels and gender.

Students are typically required to make decisions regarding education and training that will impact their occupational path. In making these decisions they are, by necessity, compelled to use whatever self-knowledge they have available, along with whatever occupational information they have been given or with which they are familiar. In order to be able in occupational decision-making, Savickas (1999) suggested that students leaving school need to have developed competence and skill in five domains: (a) self-knowledge, (b) occupational information, (c) decision making, (d) planning, and (e) problem solving.

Noh & Rafidah Aga (2007) in their writing regarding the preparation for students' psychological development for Vision 2020 mentioned that the third aspects of students' self-development that need to be considered are decision making, problem solving, and interpersonal skills. By having these skills the students will be trained as effective decision makers and problem solvers. Indirectly it will improve their interpersonal skills and help them become better human beings in their social circle. Those skills must be equipped in students' psychological development.

Research on career decision making is also extensive in the vocational psychology literature. Career decision making is the process by which individuals make career and educational decisions, it examines how people make career decisions (decision-making style); the precursors that may influence career choice (career indecision); and, more recently, individuals' beliefs that they can successfully accomplish behaviours that will lead to desired outcomes (decision-making self-efficacy beliefs) (Swanson & D'Achiardi, 2005)

Research conducted in Western contexts have investigated certain variables related with career decision making such as Ganske & Ashby (2007) investigate the relationship between perfectionism and career decision-making self-efficacy. Feinstein-Messinger (2007) in his study of career decision-making difficulties in sample of college students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Chui (2007) found that the career decision-making self-efficacy plays a significant role in career decision-making outcome expectations, career decision-making intentions, exploration behaviour, performance goals and vocational identity of secondary school students. Crespín (2006) focused on variables potentially related to college women's career decision-making self-efficacy. Ennis (2006) examined how demographic variables, related to career decision-making self-efficacy. Montgomery (2006)

examined the distinct relationship between Black and White racial identity and career decision-making self-efficacy. Rowland (2004) investigated factors that influence one's level of confidence in career decision-making of Bahamian adolescents in the high schools. Foster (2005) examined career decision-making self-efficacy among undergraduates following vocational, semi-vocational and non-vocational degrees and also to develop better understanding of factors used by undergraduate students that may influence career decision-making. Floyd (2003) examined the relationship between family dysfunction, parental attachment, and career decision-making self-efficacy among college students.

Jobs in the twenty-first century will require high academic and high-tech skills. With this in mind, students clearly need to pursue more rigorous courses of study that will provide them with opportunities in the world of work. Shahrul (2005) mentioned that local graduates were qualified in their area of study, but they lacked confidence and did not know how to go about looking for a job. Generally fresh graduates have good academic qualifications and can show some extra-curricular participation. Their main drawbacks are lack of self-confidence and positive attitude (Lazaroo, 2008).

Students may be entering into the job market with little regard to magnitude of career decision making. Career decision making among students could be related with others variables that influenced students decisions making. In relation to the above statements, this study examined whether there are relationship between job-search intensity, self-esteem, and career decision making among graduating students. Besides that, this study also focus on the moderatos variables such as gender, academic performance and academic programs.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

An Integrated Self-Regulatory Model of Job Search Predictors, Behaviours, and Outcomes (Sacks, 2005) was referred on this study. (Figure 1)

First – the model shows the main groups of predictors, including biographical variables, individual differences variables, and situational variables.

Second – The model includes both job search and employment goals.

Third – the model shows that the job search behaviours are directly related to job search and employment outcomes and indirectly related to employment quality. The model also shows the interrelationships among the outcome variables. The model includes two other predictors of job search and employment outcomes.

Finally, psychological well-being is shown in a box at the bottom of the figure to indicate that it is a pervasive outcome of job search that can occur at any time throughout the job search process. (Sacks, 2005).

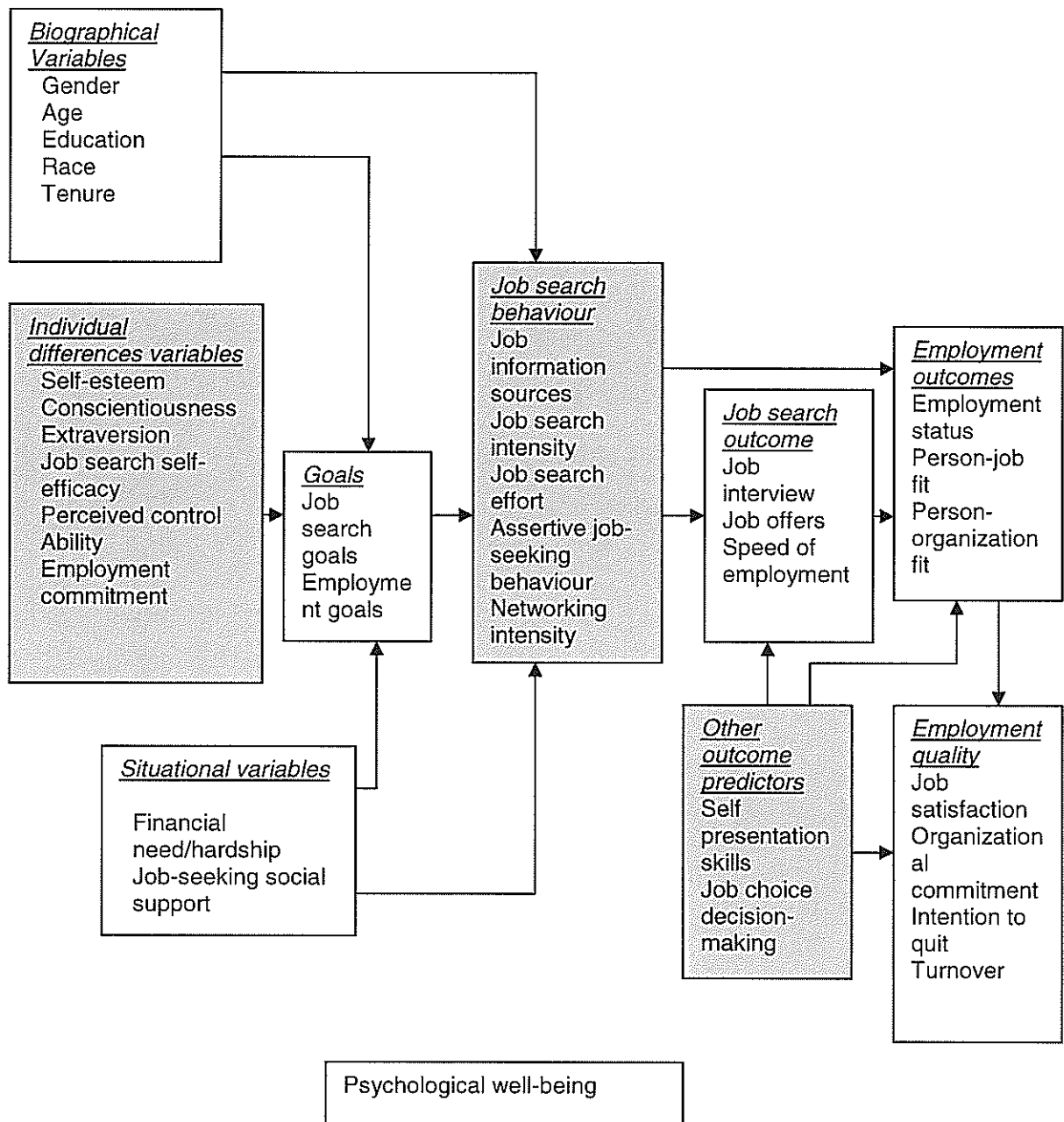


Figure 1: An Integrated Self-Regulatory Model of Job Search Predictors, Behaviours, and Outcomes (Sacks, 2005) pg. 170.

1.2 Problem statement, study aims and hypotheses

This study examined whether there are relationship between job-search intensity, self-esteem, and career decision making among graduating students. In addition, the study also examine whether the moderators variables such as gender, academic performance (CGPA), and academic programs (faculties) influence job-

search intensity, self-esteem, and career decision-making self-efficacy among students.

Specific hypotheses were:

- Ho1 There is no significant relationship between job-search intensity and career decision-making self-efficacy among graduating students.
- Ho2 There is no significant relationship between job-search intensity and self-esteem among graduating students.
- Ho3 There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and career decision-making self-efficacy among graduating students.
- Ho4 There is no significant difference in job search-intensity among students of different gender, CGPA and academic programmes.
- Ho5 There is no significant difference in self-esteem among students of different gender, CGPA and academic programmes.
- Ho6 There is no significant difference in career decision-making self-efficacy among students of different gender, CGPA and academic programmes.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants were 304 final year undergraduate students. The participants' were 181 males (59.54%) and 123 females (40.46%). The academic programmes (faculties) students involved were from Faculty of Electrical Engineering (FKE) -60 students (19.74%), Faculty of Manufacturing Engineering (FKP) - 61 students (20.07%), Faculty of Information Communication & Technology (FTMK) - 61 students (20.07%), Faculty of Electronic and Computer Engineering (FKEKK) - 61 students (20.07%), and Faculty of Mechanical Engineering (FKM) - 61 students (20.07%).

2.2 Materials

2.2.1 The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) were used to measure students' self-esteem. There are 10-item self-report scales assessing global self-esteem. Items are rated on a 4-point scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The Cronbach Alpha in the previous studies was 0.86 (Raes & Gucht 2009), 0.85 (Martin-Albo, et al. (2007), and 0.60 (Norida & Mohd.Tajuddin 2010). Cronbach's Alpha for the current sample was 0.64.

2.2.2 Job Search Intensity Scale

The job search intensity scale is a 7 item self-report scale assessing behaviours related to seeking employment including preparing a resume and responding to job ads. This scale asks how many times individuals have participated in several job seeking behaviours each week with options ranging from 1 (never or zero times) to 5 (very

often, at least ten times). Internal consistency reliability of this scale was .71 (Wanberg et al. 2000), .78 Graham (2007), and .89 (Norida & Mohd. Tajuddin, 2010). Cronbach's Alpha in the current sample was 0.86.

2.2.3 The Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy Scale-Short Form

The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale to assess career decision-making self-efficacy. The CDMSE-SF measures confidence in accomplishing career-related tasks and consists of 25 items rated on a 5-point scale. Cronbach's Alpha in the previous studies were .94 (Betz et al. 1996), .96 Flores et al., (2006), and .89 (Norida & Mohd. Tajuddin ,2010) . Cronbach's Alpha in the current sample was 0.92.

2.3 Procedure

The study was survey based and participants recruited using cluster sampling procedure. This procedure often involves selection of clusters within clusters (e.g. faculty, class, section) also known as multistage sampling. The researcher requested from the administration of the faculty to provide a list of graduating students' classes.

Once the classes were identified, the researcher contacted the class instructors to inform them about the study. An appointment with the instructors class been made to inform about the date of the distribution of questionnaires will be done. When the date was confirmed the researcher distributed the questionnaires in the class room to the participants. Administration of the questionnaires required about 30 minutes.

3. Results

Correlation analysis

Pearson product moment correlations was used to measure the strength of association between Job-Search Intensity and Self-esteem, between Job-Search Intensity and Career Decision Making-Self Efficacy, and between Self-Esteem and Career Decision Making-Self Efficacy.

Table 3: Correlations between Job-Search Intensity, Self-Esteem, and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy

	1	2	3
1. Job-Search Intensity	----	.177**	.280**
2. Self-Esteem	.177**	----	.443**
3. CDMSE	.280	.443**	

p < 0.01

Figure 3

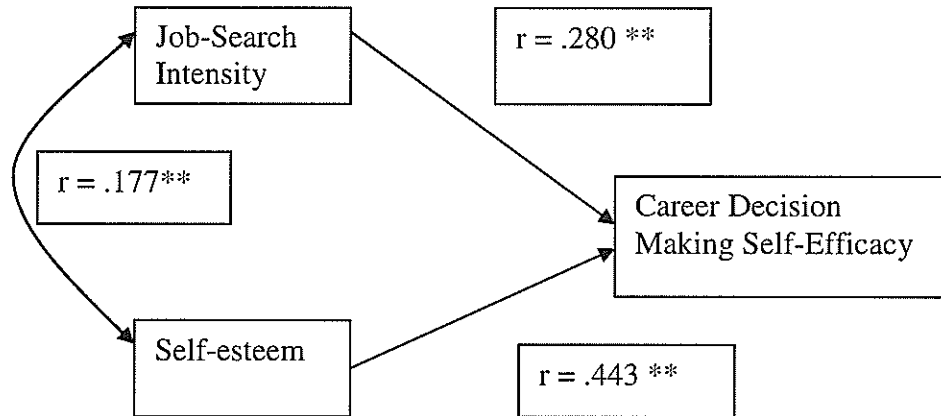


Table 3 and Figure 3 present the matrix of Pearson Correlations computed to examine relationships between Job-Search Intensity, Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy and Self-Esteem. There is a significant positive relationship between Job Search Intensity and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy ($r = .280, p < 0.01$), There is significant relationship between Self-Esteem and Job-Search Intensity ($r = .177, p < 0.01$), and there is a significant positive relationship between Self-Esteem and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy ($r = .443, p < 0.01$).

Table 4 presents the scores of t-tests for Job-Search Intensity, Self-Esteem and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy between male and female, and between students' academic performance (CGPA).

	<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Sig.(2tailed)</u>
JSI	Male	181	18.12	6.01	0.319	302	0.750
	Female	123	17.90	5.65			
<u>CGPA</u>							
	High	161	17.22	5.61	2.578	302	0.010**
	Low	143	18.94	6.01			
<hr/>							
	<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Sig.(2tailed)</u>
SELF ESTEEM	Male	181	19.13	3.30	2.936	302	0.004**
	Female	123	18.03	3.06			
<u>CGPA</u>							
	High	161	18.77	3.35	-0.506	302	0.613
	Low	143	18.58	3.12			

	<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Sig.(2tailed)</u>
CDMSE	Male	181	89.74	12.67	2.695	302	0.007**
	Female	123	85.72	12.91			
<u>CGPA</u>							
	High	161	88.01	12.99	0.152	302	0.869
	Low	143	88.23	12.84			

p<0.05

The mean job search intensity scores of male students (M = 18.12, SD = 6.01) is not significantly differ (t = 0.319, df = 302, p = 0.75) than female students (M = 17.90, SD = 5.65). There is no significant difference in job search intensity between male and female students, t(302) = 0.319, p>0.05.

The mean job search intensity scores of students with high academic performance (M = 17.22, SD = 5.61) is significantly differ (t = 2.578, df = 302, p = 0.01) than students with low academic performance (M = 18.94, SD = 6.01). There is significantly difference in job search intensity between students with high and low academic performance, t (302) = 0.10, p<0.05.

The mean self-esteem scores of male students (M = 19.13, SD = 3.30) is significantly differ (t = 2.936, df = 302, p = 0.004) than female students (M = 18.03, SD = 3.06). There is significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students, t (302) = 0.004, p<0.05.

The mean self-esteem of students with high academic performance (M = 18.77, SD = 3.35) is not significantly differ (t = -0.506, df = 302, p = 0.613) than students with low academic performance (M = 18.58, SD = 3.12) There is no significantly difference in self-esteem between students, with high and low academic performance t (302) = -0.506, p>0.05).

The mean career decision making self-efficacy scores of male students (M = 89.74, SD = 12.67) is significantly differ (t = 2.695, df = 302, p = 0.007) than female students (M = 85.72, SD = 12.91). There is significant difference in career decision making self-efficacy between male and female students, t (302) = 2.695, p<0.05.

The mean career decision making self-efficacy scores of students with high academic performance (M = 88.01, SD = 12.99) is not significantly differ (t =0.152, df = 302, p= 0.869) than students with low academic performance (M = 88.23, SD = 12.84). There is no significantly difference in career decision making self-efficacy between students with high and low academic performance, t(302) = 0.152, p>0.05.

Table 5 presents the scores of ANOVA for Job-Search Intensity, Self-Esteem and Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy among students' academic major

Table 5: ANOVA

	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.(2tailed)</u>
JSI	FKE	60	18.56	5.34	4, 299	5.35	0.000**
	FKP	61	16.45	5.39			
	FTMK	61	16.65	6.11			
	FKEKK	61	20.62	5.26			
	FKM	61	17.86	6.29			
	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.(2tailed)</u>
SELF ESTEEM	FKE	60	18.33	2.83	4, 299	3.98	0.004**
	FKP	61	18.62	3.57			
	FTMK	61	17.55	3.04			
	FKEKK	61	19.29	3.10			
	FKM	61	19.62	3.30			
	<u>Faculty</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.(2tailed)</u>
CDMSE	FKE	60	88.23	13.43	4, 299	3.80	0.05**
	FKP	61	89.14	11.30			
	FTMK	61	82.70	13.60			
	FKEKK	61	90.77	11.19			
	FKM	61	89.73	13.56			

P<0.05

Table 5 showed that there is statistically significant difference among five academic groups of students (FKE, FKP, FTMK, FKEKK, and FKM) for job search intensity, $F(4, 299) = 5.35$, $p < 0.05$, for self-esteem, $F(4, 299) = 3.98$, $p < 0.05$, and for career decision making self-efficacy with $F(4, 299) = 3.80$, $p < 0.05$.

4.0 Discussion

The results of this study showed that there are a significant relationship between job-search intensity and career decision-making self-efficacy, self-esteem and career decision-making self-efficacy, and between job-search intensity and self-esteem among students. This finding support An Integrated Self-Regulatory Model of Job Search Predictors, Behaviours, and Outcomes (Sacks, 2005).

Based on the model the job search behaviour (job-search intensity) has the relationship with the other outcome predictors (job choice decision making) and the relationship is significant. In other words, students who have high job-search intensity

more likely to have high confidence level or good career decision making. The individual differences variables (self-esteem) have the relationship with the other outcome predictors (job choice decision making) and the relationship is significant. Students who have high self-esteem more likely to have high confidence level or good career decision making. Sacks (2005) mentioned that job seekers who are more skilled at making job choice decisions are more likely to choose a job and organization that are good fits and more likely to obtain quality employment. Job search intensity also has a significant relationship with self-esteem. Students who have high self-esteem more likely to have good job-search intensity from others.

The finding of this study support the study done by Rogers, et.al (2008) found the relationship between self-efficacy, goals and choice actions. They suggesting that those who were confident of making career decisions were more likely to set career-related goals, and thus more likely to make career plans and engage in career exploration.

This study also showed the significant difference of job search intensity with high and low academic performance among students. Students with high academic performance difference job search intensity with students' low academic performance. Studied done by Van der Klaauw & van Vuuren (2009) showed that job search effort was not influence by academic achievements of students when entering the labour market. Another words; academic performance is one of the moderators' variables that influence job search intensity among students.

Male and female students were not significantly difference of job search intensity and this finding support the previous finding done by Norida & Mohd. Tajudin (2010). This result differed with finding of Mau and Kopischke (2001) who indicated that the significant gender difference in job search methods used. In other words, gender did not give any effect for job search intensity among students. In terms of students' academic major, there was a significant difference in job-search intensity among students' academic major.

Self-esteem between male and female students, showed that there is significant difference. Results of this study supported finding from Duran and Tezer (2009), Sherina, et.al. (2008), Karagozoglu, et.al. (2008), Aricak (2007), McMullin and Cairney (2004) and contrast with previous finding with Norida & Mohd. Tajuddin (2010). In terms of academic performance, this study showed that there is no significant difference between students with high and low academic performance in self-esteem. Based on students' academic majors, the result showed that there is a significant difference of self-esteem among students from various academic majors. Another words, gender and academic majors were the moderators' variables that influence self-esteem among students.

The results also showed that there is significant difference of career decision making self-efficacy between male and female students, this finding contrast with the study done by Foster (2005) and Norida & Mohd. Tajudin (2010) that found no significant difference of career decision-making self-efficacy between male and female. Based on students' academic majors, the result showed that there is significant difference of career decision making self-efficacy among students from

various academic majors. This finding shows that gender and academic majors influenced career decision-making self-efficacy among students.

Finding from this study have several implications. First, this results showed that academic majors influenced job search intensity, self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy. Gender moderator influenced self-esteem and career decision making self-efficacy, and academic performance only influenced job search intensity among students. Second, they support the relationships among individual differences variable (self-esteem), and job search behaviour (job search intensity) with outcome predictors (career decision making self-efficacy) as mentioned by Sacks (2005) in his An Integrative Self-Regulatory Model of Job Search Predictors, Behaviour, and Outcomes. Third, implications for the practitioners such as guidance counsellor are to guide students develop attitude beliefs and students' self development such as decision making, problem solving and interpersonal skills as mentioned in Vision 2020. Lastly, The limitations of the study are the number of sample size was smaller. For future studies should increase the number of the sample size and more diverse sample. Moreover the data were collected from one university and the results may not generalise other graduating students from other universities. Future studies needs to be conscious of others variable of linking the predictors' variables with the outcome variables.

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