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## The Impact of Employment Discrimination on Job Search Performance

(Full paper)

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### ABSTRACT

This study is to explore the impact of perceived employment discrimination on job search performance. Based on the trait activation theory, this article proposes that people's perceived employment discrimination when searching jobs online has a direct effect on job search performance, moderated by self-efficacy of job applicants. A total of 97 valid questionnaires were collected in this study. Through data analysis, we have concluded that the perceived impact of employment discrimination on job search performance is significantly negatively correlated, and job applicants' self-efficacy is not significant. Such results have implications for the human resource managers and job applicants to adopt positive attitudes to deal with the possible facing discrimination generated during searching a job in the internet era.

*Keywords:* Perceived employment discrimination, job search performance, self-efficacy

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### INTRODUCTION

In the current era of Internet job hunting, based on the convenience and development of the Internet, online job hunting has gradually accounted for an increasing proportion of fresh graduates. From the perspective of the relationship between total supply and total demand, the number of laborers usually exceeds the number of demands, which will inevitably intensify competition for employment pressure. There are currently more than 2,000 colleges and universities and the only a few are highly recognized by the society. This phenomenon will inevitably cause graduates of key colleges and non-key colleges to suffer in the talent market. To treat the problem differently, the perceived employment discrimination factor that people perceive may become one of the important factors affecting job search behavior and results (hereinafter will be more precisely expressed as "job search performance"). At present, domestic and foreign scholars have different degrees of research on people's perception of employment discrimination, job search performance and job self-efficacy. However, there are few studies conducted from the perspective of the impact of perceived employment discrimination on job search performance. Therefore, this study reveals how the self-efficacy factor of job applicants play a role in the chain of causality between perceived employment discrimination and job search performance. It can also theoretically occupy the dominant professional competition market in online job search, and provide guidance for job seekers, especially graduated college students.

### LITERATURE

#### Perceived Employment Discrimination

In the "Convention and Recommendation on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation" (Convention No. 111), the International Labor Organization has given a more standardized definition of "perceived discrimination in employment" (Reskin, 2000): Anything based on race, color, gender, religion, political views, ethnicity, ancestry, or social origin make distinctions, exclusions or preferences; the result is cancellation or damage to equal opportunities or equal treatment in employment or occupation, thus constituting people's perceived discrimination in employment. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (the US ESOC) puts forward another concept—employment discrimination (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Volpone & Avery, 2013), that is, individuals are affected by factors such as race, color, nationality, gender, age, etc. in the organization's recruitment, training, salary design and distribution, and promotion.

At present, scholars have some differences in their understanding of perceived employment discrimination. The first is reflected in the naming of the concept of perceived employment discrimination. Some scholars directly name it as employment discrimination, and some scholars name it as perceived employment discrimination. But there is no obvious difference between the two names. In order to better describe it below, we will uniformly use perceived employment discrimination as the name of this phenomenon. Hebl et al. (2002) divided discrimination in organizational contexts into explicit discrimination (Robinson & Wunnava, 1989; Doyle, 2007) and interpersonal discrimination; Hidden discrimination refers to the voluntary or involuntary negative behaviors of the members of the organization in the communication process, which are not inconsistent with the law and job responsibilities, and generally consist of verbal, nonverbal (such as body language) or language-like behavior. In organizational situations, it often manifests as a lack of smile and encouragement, and even hostility. Research shows that interpersonal discrimination is widespread in daily work and life, and interpersonal discrimination is often manifested through discrimination perception. Explicit discrimination usually occurs in links such as employment and career development. It is expressly prohibited by law and is generally correct for various social norms. The visibility and measurability of explicit discrimination is stronger than implicit discrimination. In addition, Dovidio and Gaertner proposed the concepts of blatant

discrimination and subtle discrimination. Yao He and others believe that there are two basic forms of employment discrimination that people perceive namely direct discrimination and indirect discrimination. These three categories actually have their inherent similarities.

To make discrimination tangible, the measurable medium of discrimination perception must be eliminated. Discrimination perception refers to the experience that an individual perceives in a certain group or environment that he is treated differently compared to other members. In recent years, the measure of discrimination has been gradually replaced by self-reporting by implicit measurement. For example, Ziegert and Hanges (2005) used the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Kim, 2003) to evaluate the implicit racial attitudes of the subjects by examining the two indicators of reaction time and error rate during the process of classifying words. Implicit measurement can more effectively avoid self-reporting bias and is therefore more suitable for evaluation bias.

### **Job Search -Performance**

Performance is the collective term for performance and efficiency, which includes both the efficiency in the process and the results of activities. The focus of this study is on the job search performance of individual graduates. The difference from previous studies is that it focuses more on individuals rather than groups. However, job search performance for individuals at home and abroad is much less than that for groups. Job search performance refers to the performance and efficiency of the job search process (Ellis & Taylor, 1983) and the performance and efficiency of the job search process. Previous job search performance studies mostly only considered the variable of employment as a measurement dimension. It is not scientific and reasonable to determine the job search performance by simply measuring whether an individual can be employed. Since the 1980s, scholars have expanded the depth and breadth of job search performance research to increase job satisfaction, and degree of influence. Job search performance has two dimensions: obtaining performance and continuous performance (Somers & Birnbaum, 2000). Obtaining performance refers to the smoothness of obtaining a job. Continuous performance refers to the length of time in the job after obtaining the job, which involves the degree of satisfaction with the job itself. The focus of this study is on the job search performance of individual graduates. With reference to the current research on factors affecting job search performance by domestic and foreign scholars (Sheehan, McDevitt & Ross, 1998; Jaramillo, Mulki & Solomon, 2006), the factors affecting job search performance mainly include the following aspects: The first thing are subjective attributes of individual characteristics. The second thing is the professional ability. Students with stronger professional ability are easier get a job position you like; intensity of job search; job search performance of graduates is positively correlated with personal effort. The third thing are environmental factors. Graduates from rural areas may be restricted by family conditions and other factors. They tend to have lower job search expectations than graduates from cities, so they are more likely to get a job; from this, it can also be found that the environment is affecting the individual's professional values, in turn, will affect subsequent job search behavior and job performance.

### **Self-efficacy**

The theory of self-efficacy was first proposed by Albert Bandura (1977). He believes that self-efficacy is a belief, which is an individual's ability to achieve a certain goal. The degree of confidence is also the gap between the individual's perception of the various aspects of the condition and the selected goal. Bandura divides self-efficacy into three dimensions: difficulty, intensity, and integrity. Difficulty refers to the individual's predictive value of the difficulty of a certain task to be completed, intensity refers to the degree to which the individual can persist in self-efficacy when facing difficulties, and integrity refers to the degree of transferability of the individual's self-efficacy. These three dimensions are a good measure of whether an individual can maintain confidence in himself in adversity. Bandura also believes that individuals tend to avoid activities beyond the scope of their ability, and are willing to do things within their ability. In addition, individuals will refuse activities that they can accomplish due to lack of confidence. Above, the individual's self-efficacy is related to its behavior, self-efficacy can guide individual actions. Hackett and Betz (1995) first introduced the concept of self-efficacy to the field of job hunting in 1981 (Renn & Fedor, 2001), trying to interpret the relationship between the proportion of women in high-income groups and self-efficacy. Since then, the research field has expanded to all aspects of career fields such as decision-making, career development, and job search behavior. In this research, what we call self-efficacy focuses on the individual's confidence in completing specific tasks or behaviors, and mainly controls the attitude of the subjects when facing difficulties, and the self-evaluation of their own abilities. This pre-evaluation will affect the subsequent behavior in many ways. It may influence people's choice of behavior, affect the persistence and effort in the face of difficulties or affect people's behavior and emotional state.

The existing measurement methods for self-efficacy can be divided into two categories: one is the measurement of general self-efficacy; the other is the measurement of self-efficacy in specific fields. Bandura believes that the measurement and analysis of individual self-efficacy should be analyzed in detail, and should be placed in the environment formed by specific work and corresponding behavior. When the work content or the surrounding environment changes, the individual's self-efficacy will also change. The measurement of self-efficacy in a specific field represented by Bandura is aimed at a specific field and needs to be implemented in combination with a specific situation and field. Regarding the measurement of job-seeking self-efficacy, it can be traced back to the job-seeking self-efficacy questionnaire in 1985. The content of the questionnaire mainly includes the self-efficacy of individuals looking for jobs and vacancies. These scales are divided into three categories: the first category is a one-dimensional job search self-efficacy questionnaire, which only explores a certain

aspect of self-efficacy, and only uses high or low self-efficacy as the standard. The second category is a two-dimensional job search self-efficacy questionnaire, and the third category is a multidimensional self-efficacy questionnaire.

### **Fairness heuristic theory**

The overall sense of fairness affects people's attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. Once treated fairly, people will lay down their burdens and work hard to maximize the benefits of the organization. If personal interests conflict with the interests of the organization, individuals will sacrifice their personal interests to protect the interests of the organization. The core content of fairness heuristic theory can be summarized as two stages and three effects.

#### (1) The formation stage of fair judgment.

Lind and van den Bos (20021) believe that fair judgments also have this tendency. People will use the fairness information they are exposed to heuristically help people make fair judgments, reduce cognitive complexity, and improve judgment efficiency. Especially when people are in a state of lack of information or ambiguity, people are more likely to use the fairness-related information which they have obtained from the situation to explain the overall fairness perception of the situation they are in.

#### (2) The use stage of fairness judgment.

When the overall sense of fairness is formed, people will use the overall sense of justice as a kind of enlightening information to guide and explain the related fairness information that they encounter later, that is, once the overall fairness judgment is made, this judgment itself will also produce other fairness judgments. influences. More importantly, this overall sense of fairness affects people's subsequent attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. Once treated fairly, people will work hard to maximize the benefits of the organization. If personal interests conflict with the interests of the organization, individuals will sacrifice their personal interests to protect the interests of the organization. In this way, the sense of fairness is used as an inspiration, and is connected with trust, cooperation, acceptance of authority and rules, self-esteem, pro-social behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior. On the contrary, if they think they have not been treated fairly, they will pay more attention to their personal interests, calculate carefully according to the return of personal short-term interests, and do things that are beneficial to the individual, and do not do things that are beneficial to the organization but not to the individual.

#### (3) Main cause effect.

The main cause effect is that a person is more receptive to early fair information and gives higher weight. The empirical research of van den Bos et al. (1998) support this view. Their research shows that: the information about procedural fairness and the information about distribution fairness, whichever gets the subjects first, has the greatest impact on fairness judgment, while the other has less influence.

#### (4) Substitution effect.

The fairness heuristic theory believes that when individuals collect fair information to form an overall fair judgment, the source of information may be result information, program information, and information about interaction with leaders, corresponding to result fairness, procedure fairness, and interaction fairness, respectively.

The research results of van den Bos et al. (1998) show that in the absence of judgments of fairness of results, judgments of procedural fairness will make up for this vacancy and form an alternative judgment of fairness of results. Of course, if there is information on the fairness of the results, the procedural fairness information will have less effect on the judgment of distribution fairness.

#### (5) Other effects.

Lind and van den Bos (20021) believes that the sense of fairness mainly affects the attitudes and behaviors related to the organization, while those that have little or nothing to do with the organization, it is not so easy to be affected by a sense of fairness.

## **MODEL**

Whether the situation affects the individual is mainly due to how the situation is perceived by the individual. Mischel, Coates, and Raskoff, (1968) and Tett and Burnett (2003) proposed that the different personality traits of the individual are activated in different organizational contexts, so that the advantages of the personality traits are reflected in the work performance. This theory provides a perspective to explain why individuals with certain characteristics can predict performance better than others, and why individuals with certain characteristics can predict performance positively in some jobs, but negatively predict performance in other jobs performance. Therefore, when people feel discrimination, they will be stimulated to have different feelings. This perception may have an impact on job search performance. In addition, people with different self-efficacy may have different effects. As shown in Figure 1, in the research on people's perception of employment discrimination, numbers reflect the degree of perception of employment discrimination that job applicants perceive in the process of job hunting, so as to better measure individual differences. For job-seekers' self-efficacy, a quantitative concept is also introduced, job-seeking self-efficacy, which presents the degree of job-seekers' self-efficacy perception.

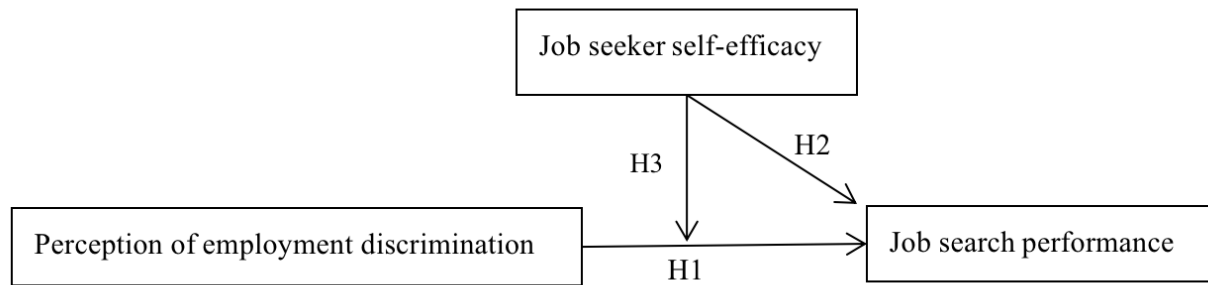


Figure 1: Research Framework

### HYPOTHESIS

#### H1: People's perception of employment discrimination is correlated with job search performance.

The individual's perception of the situation affects the individual's behavior (Mischel, Coates & Raskoff, 1968). The starting point of this hypothesis is that in the process of job hunting, the level of discrimination perception will directly affect job seekers' behavior. That is to say, the stronger the discrimination perception of job applicants, the more sensitive the mind of the job applicant, the more he will be more concerned, and the less self-confidence in themselves, which will increase the difficulty of job hunting by multiples, which will affect the performance of job seekers in the job search process, such as the mistakes caused by the lack of confidence in the interview, or the job seekers will magnify the difficulty of job hunting and evolve into passive avoidance, that is, avoid job hunting behaviors and fear that the job hunting will happen, which will affect the job seekers job search the number of attempts greatly reduces job search performance and directly lead to employment failure.

#### H2: There is a positive correlation between job applicants' self-efficacy and job performance.

The self-efficacy of job-seekers, that is, the degree of confidence or belief that job-seekers have in their job-hunting activities during the job-hunting process. This inner activity is manifested through external behaviors. The job-seeking behaviors of job seekers driven by feelings will be different, and the final result will be different. If you have a strong sense of self-efficacy, you will be more courageous and proactive in the job search process, and will not easily shrink back in the face of failure. If you have a weak sense of self-efficacy, the opposite is true.

#### H3: Job-seekers' self-efficacy has a moderating effect on people's perception of employment discrimination and job search performance.

People's perceived employment discrimination will affect job search performance, and job seekers' self-efficacy can also affect job search performance. Then when considering that people's perceived employment discrimination will affect job search performance, the self-efficacy of job seekers may play a certain role between the two, that is, this hypothesis is considered to play a moderating role. When job seekers have a strong sense of discrimination in employment, a series of problems such as the lack of confidence and withdrawal may appear. Job seekers with a strong sense of job-seeking self-efficacy can overcome such problems as the lack of confidence and withdrawal. Then when job seekers feel discrimination in employment, because job search self-efficacy is high or low, it is possible to reduce or increase the effect of job search performance. In summary, a strong sense of self-efficacy of job seekers will reduce the impact of employment discrimination on job search performance, and vice versa, it will reduce the impact.

### DATA

This questionnaire survey was conducted online and a total of 106 questionnaires were collected, including 97 valid questionnaires. This questionnaire is mainly distributed to senior seniors who have obtained at least one offer. Among them, in terms of gender, women account for 55% and men account for 45%. In terms of schools, 211/985 key college graduates accounted for 35%, and ordinary college graduates accounted for 65%. From the perspective of household registration sources, about 40% are from rural areas, 50% are from small towns, and about 10% are from big cities. In terms of age, the samples in this survey are all between 20 and 25 years old. People's perception of employment discrimination has a total of 20 questions, the sample size is 97, and the final reliability coefficient is 0.722. This coefficient indicates that the reliability of the questionnaire is within an acceptable range. There are 10 questions in the job-seeking self-efficacy questionnaire, and the final reliability coefficient is 0.841, which is higher than 0.8, indicating that the questionnaire has good reliability. Finally, the reliability coefficient of the job search performance questionnaire is 0.761, which is between 0.7-0.8 The reliability is within the acceptable range and can be used for research and measurement.

## MEASUREMENTS

This study will use three sets of scales to synthesize a set of questionnaires. The three sets of scales are: Employment Discrimination Perception Measurement Scale, Job Seeker Self-Efficacy Measurement Scale, work performance measurement Scale. The Employment Discrimination Perception Scale involves seven aspects to measure the perception of employment discrimination: school, gender, appearance, major, household registration, experience, and height. Set up questions for different aspects of employment discrimination, and use the five-point weighting method to measure the perception of employment discrimination. The Self-Efficacy Scale for Job Seekers is adapted from the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), which has good aggregation and resolution. This questionnaire design is based on the general self-efficacy scale, fully considers the relevant context of the job search process, and adds relevant contextual assumptions to quantify the self-efficacy of job applicants. The work performance measurement scale refers to the four-item job-seeking self-efficacy questionnaire compiled by Kenfer in 1985 (Strauser & Berven, 2006). The content of the questionnaire mainly includes what kind of job an individual is looking for, finding vacant positions, etc. Sense of efficacy. The measurement of discrimination has been gradually replaced by implicit measurement by self-report. For example, Ziegert and Hanges used the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Kim, 2003) to categorize words by examining the two indicators of reaction time and error rate to evaluate. The questionnaire will simply set up 6 questions. The six questions belong to two levels. The first level is to explore process performance, mainly involving the first two issues, and the second level is to explore result performance, including the last four issues. According to two dimensions, the answer to each question also has five levels ranging from "completely inconsistent" to "completely conforming", "completely conforming" is recorded as 5 points, each level is decremented by 1 point, "completely not conforming" "Is counted as 1 point, and finally a questionnaire is made.

## RESULTS

### (1) People's perception of employment discrimination will directly affect job search performance.

Based on the previous theoretical assumptions, we believe that the strength of people's perception of employment discrimination will drive job-seekers to react differently, which in turn will affect the final job-hunting results. The reliability column can reflect that the final reliability coefficient of the Employment Discrimination Perception Questionnaire is 0.722, and the final reliability coefficient of the job seeker self-efficacy questionnaire is 0.841, which is higher than 0.8, indicating that the questionnaire has good reliability; The reliability coefficient is 0.761, between 0.7-0.8. The reliability is within the acceptable range and can be used for research and measurement. In summary, the final reliability of the three major questionnaires is higher than 0.7, which is within an acceptable range. Among them, the final reliability of the job-seekers' self-efficacy questionnaire is higher than 0.8, which has excellent reliability.

### (2) The self-efficacy of job seekers will also directly affect job search performance.

Table1 Descriptive statistics and reliability test of the questionnaire results.

	Statistic s	Mean	Minimum Value	Maximum Value	Standard Deviation	Cronbach $\alpha$
People's perception of employment discrimination	97	3.2036	2.35	4.20	0.3876	0.722
Job applicant self-efficacy	97	3.6062	2.50	5.00	0.5458	0.841
Job search performance	97	3.1529	1.00	5.00	0.7132	0.761

The scores of job search performance and job self-efficacy are all over 3 points. Preliminary judgment is that the subjects generally feel discriminated against in employment, but most of the subjects have strong confidence in their job search activities, and it also reflects that the subjects are satisfied with the job search results as a whole. In terms of standard deviation, the standard deviation of people's perception of employment discrimination is small, indicating that the difference in their sense of discrimination is not too large; the standard deviation of self-efficacy is moderate, which also varies from person to person. The standard deviation appears to be too large, indicating that some people are extremely satisfied with the job search results, and some are extremely dissatisfied, and there is a big difference.

**(3) The self-efficacy of job seekers is not significant in the moderating effect of the perceived employment discrimination on job search performance.**

Table 2 Regression analysis table with job search performance as the dependent variable.

Predictor variable	Standardization coefficient	P value
People's perception of employment discrimination	-0.521***	0.000*
Job search self-efficacy	0.228**	0.008
People's perception of employment discrimination * Self-efficacy in job hunting	-0.042	0.612

From the above figure, the regression coefficient between people's perceived employment discrimination and job search performance is -0.521 ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that the impact of people's perceived employment discrimination on job search performance is significant and negatively correlated, Hypothesis 1 is verified. The regression coefficient between job search self-efficacy and job search performance is 0.228 ( $P < 0.01$ ), indicating that there is a significant positive correlation between job search self-efficacy and job search performance. Hypothesis 2 is also true. The above figure shows that under the adjustment of job search self-efficacy, the regression coefficient between people's perceived employment discrimination and job search performance is -0.042 ( $P > 0.05$ ), indicating that people's perceived employment discrimination affects job search performance in the process, the regulatory role played is not obvious. Hypothesis 3 has been verified by data and cannot be supported.

### DISCUSSION

According to previous theoretical assumptions, people's perception of employment discrimination will drive job applicants to make different behaviors, which will affect the final job search results. At the same time, in the research of this article, job-seekers' self-efficacy is defined as the job-seekers' belief or confidence in their job-hunting activities. Through empirical research, it can be found that job-seekers' self-efficacy is related to the impact of perceived employment discrimination on job search performance. It plays a negative role, but it is of little significance. This may be due to the fact that in the process of employment discrimination affecting job search performance, the difference in performance between job seekers with high job-seeking self-efficacy and job seekers with low job-seeking self-efficacy is small or because the sample size of the questionnaire is limited. In the future, we hope to expand the sample size and accurate detailed information of the questionnaire, refine the questionnaire scoring method, and enhance the degree of data discrimination to obtain this accurate correlation. At the same time, I hope that scholars in follow-up studies will give more consideration to the combination of employment discrimination, job search performance and job self-efficacy.

### CONCLUSION

According to the relevant research theories of scholars in recent years, this article discusses the impact of perceived employment discrimination on job search performance by issuing questionnaires and empirically. Through data analysis and analysis, we conclude that the impact of perceived employment discrimination on job search performance is significantly negatively correlated, the strength of the perception of employment discrimination will drive job-seekers to make different behaviors, which in turn will affect the final job-hunting results. The impact of perception of employment discrimination on job search performance is negatively correlated, that is, the stronger the perception of discrimination, the worse the job search performance. Conversely, the weaker the discrimination perception, the better the job search performance. And the self-efficacy of job applicants is not significant in moderating the impact of perceived employment discrimination on job search performance. It may be because of the influence of employment discrimination on job search performance, the difference in performance between job seekers with high job-seeking self-efficacy and job seekers with low job-seeking self-efficacy is smaller. This article suggests that job-seekers should be trained to modify their perception about the discrimination during the job hunting process, in order to exert their subjective initiative in the job search process and enhance their self-efficacy, which can lead to a better job search performance.

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## APPENDIX A : Measurements

Self-efficacy Questionnaire for Job Search	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If I try my best, I can always solve the problem.</li> <li>2. Even if others oppose me, I can still get what I want.</li> <li>3. For me, it is easy to stick to my ideals and achieve my goals.</li> <li>4. I am confident that I can effectively deal with any unexpected events.</li> <li>5. With my talents, I can deal with unexpected situations.</li> <li>6. If I put in the necessary efforts, I will be able to solve most of the problems.</li> <li>7. I can face difficulties calmly because I can rely on my ability to deal with problems.</li> <li>8. When facing a difficult problem, I can usually find several solutions. 9. When I have trouble, I can usually think of some ways to deal with it.</li> <li>10. No matter what happens to me, I can handle it with ease.</li> </ol>
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<p>Employment Discrimination Perception</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Companies tend to recruit graduates from key universities.</li> <li>2. I think graduates from key universities are more capable than those from ordinary universities.</li> <li>3. I am very worried that the employer will decide whether to hire me based on the quality of the graduate school.</li> <li>4. I cannot accept the gender restriction clause in the recruitment process.</li> <li>5. I will affect my ability when applying for a job because of the company's gender restrictions.</li> <li>6. The employment opportunities of girls are worse than that of boys.</li> <li>7. I think people with good looks have an advantage in the job search process.</li> <li>8. During the interview, I felt that my appearance had a degrading effect.</li> <li>9. If your major is unpopular, it will be more difficult to find a job.</li> <li>10. I regret choosing my current major, because I don't follow the employment situation.</li> <li>11. If the position does not restrict my major, I will have more opportunities with my own ability.</li> <li>12. I think students with local registered permanent residence will be more popular when companies are recruiting.</li> <li>13. I will be rejected because the place of household registration is not in the same city as the applicant company.</li> <li>14. If there is no household registration preference or discrimination, I would prefer to work in a city other than my hometown.</li> <li>15. Companies always prefer graduates with relevant experience.</li> <li>16. During the interview, I always feel that my experience is not as good as others.</li> <li>17. Having relevant work or internship experience is directly related to the success rate of job hunting.</li> <li>18. I think the disadvantage of my height is that I cannot make up for it in other ways.</li> <li>19. I will try to make myself appear taller in the job search process.</li> <li>20. I always feel that someone will discriminate against me because of my height.</li> </ol>
<p>Job Search Performance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I am very active when looking for a job.</li> <li>2. My job search is very smooth.</li> <li>3. I quickly determined my work unit.</li> <li>4. I have found the ideal job now.</li> <li>5. I will stay in my current workplace as long as possible.</li> <li>6. I think the job I am looking for is not much different from my expectations.</li> </ol>