

# A longitudinal Study of the Relationship among Job Search Self-Efficacy and Job Search Duration, Perceived PO Fit: The Mediation Effect of Focus Information Search Method

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In this study, we aimed to investigate the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search duration, perceived person-organization fit. In addition, we also investigated the mediating effect of focus information search methods on the relationship between job search self-efficacy and perceived person-organization fit. For this reason, we focused on fresh graduates from a two-stage data collection procedure. This study found that high job search self-efficacy was associated with short job search duration and high perceived person-organization fit. In addition, the focus information search method had a partial mediating effect on the relationship between job search self-efficacy and perceived person-organization fit. Lastly, the main research findings and limitations are discussed, and suggestions are presented regarding the direction of future studies and the empirical implications of the results.

**Keywords:** *Job search self-efficacy, person-organization fit, focus information search method, job search duration, fresh graduates*

## Extend Abstract

Career development consists of a series of adaptation and transformation processes. These processes are especially important in the career development of people who have just graduated from school and are entering the workplace for the first time. In particular, how well job searchers fit an organization has a significant impact on their career development and psychological satisfaction. This study attempted to integrate and extend research in the fields of job searches and person-environment fit. Using the self-efficacy theory and job search model, this study investigated the relationship between job search self-efficacy, job search duration, and perceived person-organization fit in a sample of new graduates. It also investigated the mediating effect of the focus information search method on the relationship between job search self-efficacy and perceived person-organization fit.

## Design/Methodology/Approach

We collected a sample of new graduates using a two-stage data collection procedure. The first stage collected data on the research participants' job search self-efficacy, focus information search method, financial needs, and demographic background. In the second stage, data on the research participants' job search duration, person-organization fit, and work-related background were collected. The second stage of data collection was conducted after the research participants had found a job and had worked for an organization for approximately three to four months. The final sample consisted of 331 new graduates.

Job search self-efficacy was measured with six items derived from Van Ryn and Vinokur (1992). The scale coefficient  $\alpha$  was .85. The focus information search method was measured with six items derived from Crossley and Highhouse (2005). The scale coefficient  $\alpha$

was .76. The research participants were asked to indicate the number of months they had been unemployed before finding their current job. They were also asked to rate their fit with their organization according to three items derived from Cable and DeRue (2002). The scale coefficient  $\alpha$  was .93. We controlled for demographic variables (gender, age, and education) and the participants' financial needs.

### Findings

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables. Figure 1 presents the results of the structural equation modeling. The overall model had a good model fit ( $\chi^2 = 319.53$ ,  $df = 126$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ,  $CFI = .93$ ,  $GFI = .90$ ,  $IFI = .93$ ). The first hypothesis focused on the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search duration. We found

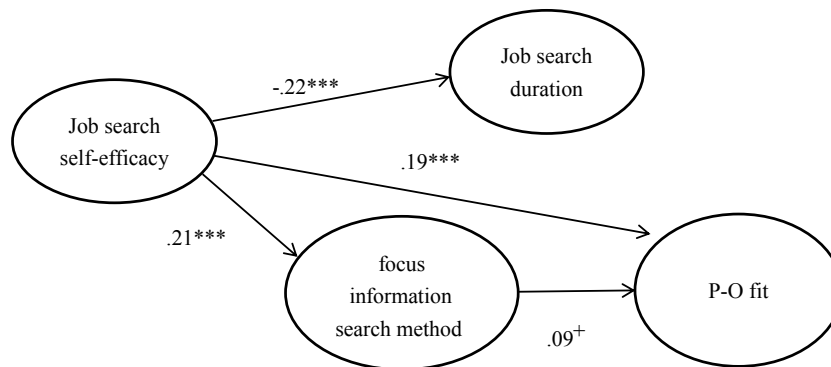
that high job search self-efficacy was associated with a short job search duration ( $\beta = -.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), confirming Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 2 focused on the relationship between job search self-efficacy and person-organization fit. We found that high job search self-efficacy was associated with a high perceived person-organization fit, supporting Hypothesis 2. Finally, Hypothesis 3 proposed that the relationship between job search self-efficacy and person-organization fit would be mediated by the focus information search method. To test this hypothesis, we examined the mediating effect using the bootstrap method. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 2. The 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect did not include 0 (.0002~.0984), indicating that the focus information search method mediated the relationship between job search self-efficacy and perceived person-organization fit, confirming Hypothesis 3.

**Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Study Variables (N = 331)**

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	0.67	.47								
2. Age	2.31	.54	-.40**							
3. Education	4.06	.42	-.16**	.28**						
4. Financial needs	3.23	.73	-.03	-.05	-.13*	(.76)				
5. Job search self-efficacy	3.43	.57	-.08	.07	.10	-.08	(.85)			
6. Focus information search method	3.36	.55	-.01	.04	.06	-.11	.17**	(.76)		
7. Job search duration	4.32	4.65	.02	.15**	-.08	.05	-.20**	-.04		
8. P-O fit	4.10	1.02	-.13*	.10	-.03	-.07	.19**	.15**	-.01	(.93)

Notes. Male = 0, female = 1; job search duration is in months.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



Fit index ( $\chi^2 = 319.53$ ,  $df = 126$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ,  $CFI = .93$ ,  $IFI = .93$ ,  $NNFI = .92$ )

**Figure 1. Results of the Structure Equation Modeling**

**Table 2. Mediating Effect of the Focus Information Search Method**

X (job search self-efficacy)		M (focus information search method)		Y (person-organization fit)	
		<i>Coeff</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
X → M (a paths)		.1597	.0536	2.9774	.0031
M → Y (b paths)		.2169	.1002	2.1641	.0312
X → Y (c paths)		.3220	.0973	3.3102	.0010
X → Y (c' paths)		.2874	.0981	2.9312	.0036
Indirect effects of bootstrapping					
	Data	Boot	Bias	SE	95% CI
M	.0346	.0338	-.0008	.0243	.0002~.0984

*Note.* Resampled 2000 times. Control variables: gender, age, education, and financial needs.

## Research Implications

This study makes three important contributions. First, the results support and extend the job search model. Most of the indicators used to study job search processes in previous studies measured the intensity and effort of the search, whereas this study also considers the focus information search method. Furthermore, this study not only considers the outcomes of job searches, but also examines the person-organization fit of new graduates. The results of this study expand the job search model of Kanfer et al. (2010). Second, many studies have pointed out that there are significant differences between the job searches of new graduates and those seeking reemployment. Therefore, it is not suitable to use research on reemployment to explain the job search processes of new graduates. Our focus on new graduates provides valuable new insights for job search researchers. Finally, our finding that high job search self-efficacy is associated with a high perceived person-organization fit demonstrates that for new graduates, job search self-efficacy is another important antecedent determinant of whether individuals are likely to have a higher perceived person-organization fit after entering an organization. Thus, this study also contributes to the field of person-organization fit.

## Research Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be recognized. First, although our study design is cross-

sectional, the results are vulnerable to common method variance. We address this issue carefully in our study design, and test the relationships among the variables for the influence of a common method factor. Therefore, we conclude that common method variance is not a substantial concern in our study. Second, the measurement of job search methods is based on the focus information search method scale established by Crossley and Highhouse (2005). The average number produced by this scale represents a fixed result, not a dynamic process. Finally, due to the difficulty of recruiting suitable research subjects, we asked the internet job bank to invite suitable participants to answer the online questionnaire. This method clearly creates a sample selection bias.

## Future Research

In terms of antecedents, the characteristics of new graduates (e.g., traits, family factors, and growth background) require further exploration. Second, a job search is a dynamic process. Over time, job searchers may change their search methods and search sources. Conceptualizing job searches as a dynamic process would help us to understand the job searchers' psychological, attitudinal, and behavioral changes. Finally, job searchers vary in their job search experience, time pressure, source of information, and openness to acceptable work. Comparing different types of job searchers would help us to understand the job search methods and processes of different job searchers.