

Impact of Socio-Demographic Characteristics on the Choice of Job Search Channels Among Unemployed Job Seekers in Gampaha District

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to investigate the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the choices of job search channels used by unemployed persons when seeking jobs in the Gampaha District. A structured questionnaire was administered on a face-to-face basis to collect data from a sample of 200 unemployed job seekers who live in the Attanagalla divisional secretariat division, Gampaha in 2023. The study used a systematic sampling procedure, and four types of job search channels, such as newspaper advertisements, the Internet and social media, direct contacts with an employer, and informal networks were taken as dependent variables, while socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were considered as independent variables in the study. Frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, and chi-square tests were used to explore the basic features of the young job seekers in the study. Results of frequency analysis indicated that 22% of the unemployed used newspaper advertisements, 10.5% of them used direct contacts with the employer, 18% of them used informal networks, and 49.5% of them used the Internet and social media as their job search channels. A multinomial probit regression model was used to investigate how socio-demographic characteristics impact the choice of job search channels used by unemployed youth. The findings of the model revealed that except for household size, all socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, civil status, level of education, knowledge in information technology, duration of job search, and whether the person previously worked or not, have a significant influence on the young job seekers' job search channels.

KEYWORDS: Job search channels, job seekers, multinomial probit regression model, socio-demographic characteristics.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The unemployment rate is the most widely recognized and closely monitored as one of the key indicators to measure the performance of the labor market in a country (Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report – 2022, Department of Census and Statistics). The number of unemployed persons was estimated as 399,332 during the year 2022. Out of this, 51.8 percent were males and 48.2 percent were females. (Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report – 2022, Department of Census and Statistics). In 2022, Sri Lanka recorded an annual unemployment rate of 4.7%, which is a drop from the 5.5% recorded for 2021 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022). When considering the district-level distribution in 2022, the highest unemployment rate was recorded from the Hambantota district (6.9%), followed by the Kandy district (6.7%), and among these districts, the Gampaha district recorded 4.5% in 2022. (Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey Annual Report – 2022, Department of Census and Statistics). Sri Lanka's high unemployment rate has been attributed to a mismatch of skills, to queuing for public sector jobs, and to stringent job security regulations, but also possibly to mismatches between job search channels that are decided to be used by unemployed persons and firms' decisions regarding which channels to open for job vacancies. Because different search methods offer various pools of employment opportunities and varied wage offer distributions to the unemployed, the choice of job search channels has an impact on the search results. (Rama, 2016).

The efficiency of job searching merges those who are unemployed and places with job vacancies; thus, it could reduce the long-term unemployment rate. Understanding the job search channels that are commonly chosen by unemployed job seekers is important for helping employers to announce the vacancies through the appropriate channels and for helping policymakers see the disturbances in job search processes. The choice of job search channels is partially a function of the personal characteristics of the unemployed job seekers and socio-economic characteristics, and knowing these determinants enables employers to find the ideal candidates in the labor market.

Thus, searching for a job is an important activity in the labor market and is typically carried out by both the employed and the unemployed. While the former represents those who look for jobs while employed, commonly referred to as on-the-job search, the latter mainly deals with the search activity of the unemployed, known as off-the-job search. Interestingly, this can also be defined from a different viewpoint. While an on-the-job search is an outcome derived from a combination of search and work, an off-the-job search, seemingly characterized by a full-time job search, is the principal

constituent of unemployment. Empirically, a plethora of studies— for example, Tobin (1972), Burdett (1978), Holzer (1988), and Blau and Robins (1990)— attempted to examine the effectiveness of both employed and unemployed job searchers.

It is important to understand which factors determine the choice of job search methods, and by investigating the determinants, the study sought to provide insights to job portal providers on how to improve their services and cater to the needs of the users. From this point of view, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- Which method of job searching is mostly adopted by the unemployed respondents in Gampaha District?
- Are there any significant associations between socio-demographic characteristics and the choices of job search channels by the unemployed job seekers in the study?
- How do socio-demographic characteristics influence the choices of job search channels in the study?

Against this backdrop, this study attempts to analyze the search behavior of the unemployed job seekers, focusing on the following objectives:

- To find out the method of job searching that is mostly adopted by the unemployed respondents in Gampaha District.
- To assess the association between socio-demographic characteristics and the choices of job search channels by the unemployed job seekers in Gampaha District.
- To examine the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the choices of job search channels in the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section describes the theoretical background and the major concepts related to job search theory.

Theoretical Review

Theory of Job Search

Job search theory attempts to describe the problems faced by unemployed individuals and to propose methods for making optimal job search choices. Job searching is the process of looking for a job due to unemployment or dissatisfaction with a current position. The primary objective of job searching is usually to get a job interview with an employer, which could lead to a job offer. Typically, a job seeker or hunter looks for job vacancies or employment opportunities first (Goal, 2009).

Roshchin and Markova (2004) point out that the job search problem is a consequence of information imperfection and uncertainty that exists in the labor market. Searching for a job is one of the most important processes in the labor market, and the requirements of job seekers must coincide with the characteristics of the real workplaces offered by employers within this process. During the search, the worker collects information on the distribution of job offers and on the most successful job search strategies to adopt. Job searches with the help of relatives and friends, contacting employers, and using educational organizations are the most effective job search strategies. The most common methods are a hybrid model that provides formal and informal methods and also "pure" informal strategies such as contacting relatives and friends or contacting potential employers (Varshavskaya & Podverbnykh, 2021). Even if individuals are literate, a mismatch between unemployed people's decisions about which job search channels to use and employers' decisions about which job search channels to use to find qualified workers can make unemployment rates remain static. Thus, this type of study may help the organizations or firms to choose the best search channels that attract quality employees to sustain in the competitive world. Generally, there are two distinct channels in job search methods, namely, formal and informal methods. The formal methods specifically emphasize the impersonal intermediaries between searchers and firms, while the informal methods are more personal in nature, such as contacting relatives and friends or contacting potential employers (Varshavskaya & Podverbnykh, 2021).

Formal search methods include advertisements in a newspaper, employment exchanges, and private agencies. By comparison, frequently used informal search methods include referrals from an employee or employer, personal contacts, and family members. Formal channels are realized with the help of formal intermediaries, such as public employment services and private recruitment agencies that deal with employment mediation. Search channels, such as "friends and relatives' help" and "direct contacts with employers," are informal (Roshchin and Markova, 2004; Boutte, 2006). In the 1970s, job search theory gained popularity as an alternative to the "standard" neoclassical labor supply theory. The neoclassical framework, which assumed perfect information, did not allow for unemployment where individuals actively sought work but were unable to find it. One of the fundamental assumptions of job search theory is that off-the-job search is more effective than on-the-job search. Holzer (1988) shows that unemployed search is not only extensive—use of more job search methods—but also intensive—longer hours of search. As a result of extensive and intensive search methods, unemployed job searchers are likely to receive more job offers. However, a few scholars are of the view that search activity of the employed seems to be more effective than the unemployed job search, suggesting that search costs, which may be direct or indirect, can be minimized. The main

premise of job search models is that looking for a job is a dynamic sequential process and that, under conditions of uncertainty and imperfect information, individuals must decide when to stop this process. Frictional unemployment is a natural outcome of this process (Faggian, 2014).

According to Ndagijimana et al. (2018), one of the most important processes in the labor market is job searching. Within this process, job seekers' requirements must match the characteristics of actual workplaces offered by employers. During the search, the worker gathers data on the distribution of job offers and the most effective job search strategies to use, and the worker can influence the search outcome by putting forth effort in the job search and selecting from a variety of search methods.

Mussida & Zanin (2020) mentioned that, according to job search theory, unemployed individuals should select their search methods by evaluating the expected returns or benefits and costs associated with the possible options. Benefits are primarily in the form of job offers, which can vary in their typology, quantity, and quality, affecting the likelihood of employment and income earned in the following period. Costs can be monetary or in terms of time and effort.

Choi et al. (2020) examined the importance of financial information during the job search process. This study used geographic, cross-sectional, and time-series variation, and the findings indicated that earnings announcements help spark the interest of job seekers, and both job postings and interviews increase financial information acquisition. Job search intensity and posted wages are linked to a company's financial performance. When the job market is competitive, job seekers search for financial information more intensely. Overall, these findings indicate that job seekers use financial information in their job searches and make decisions based on financial information.

Empirical Studies

According to the above strand of job search theory, one of the earlier studies of the determinants of the choice of job search methods and their effectiveness is Holzer (1988). He analyzed a sample of unemployed youths and found that the main determinants of the choice of search channel are the relative costs in terms of time spent on a particular channel for generating job offers and their acceptance. Sackey and Osei (2006) investigated the extent to which schooling, age, and gender influenced the choices made by unemployed youth when looking for employment. They found that unemployed youth who have completed higher levels of schooling are more likely than those who have less than a basic level of education to opt for job search methods involving the submission of job applications to potential employers.

Garcia & Nicodemo (2013) also found that jobs obtained through formal channels have a higher percentage of individuals with tertiary education (52%), while jobs

found through informal channels have a much higher percentage of individuals with primary and secondary school education (71%). This shows that education, particularly higher levels of education, has a positive relationship with the use of formal networks to find a job.

Perera (2020) investigated the ineffectiveness of social contacts and alternate job search methods for unemployed youth in Sri Lanka, and he suggested that social contacts and internet job searches prove to be more efficient search methods, reducing unemployment duration by 21.6% with a wage premium of 14.3% in the study.

Mussida & Zanin (2020) used a multivariate probit model and cross-sectional microdata to investigate the factors influencing the job search channels of unemployed individuals in Italy from 2014 to 2018. Findings of their study revealed that there are no significant changes across unemployed people with and without previous work experience, such as age, education, and citizenship, and for unemployed individuals with previous job experience, the characteristics of their last job play a crucial role in influencing the choice of search channels. Dagume (2021) did a study to investigate the socio-demographic factors that influence the job search methods used by unemployed youth when seeking jobs in South Africa. They employed a multinomial logistic regression model to analyze the data, and its results showed that only education has a bearing on the employment search method adopted by the youth.

Joseph & Adeyemi (2023) examined the job search among transition-age youth in Ekiti State, Nigeria. They found that the methods of job search mostly adopted by Nigerian unemployed youth are directly through the employer and the internet. The commonest methods used by employed graduates in getting jobs are through a friend, relative, and directly through an employer. Further, it was found that the most effective and reliable methods used by them are directly through a friend, relative, employer.

Another study was done by Ferdinand, Casim, & Boris (2023) to identify the main channels of job search in the Beninese labor market in the case of unemployed youth. They found that work experience, mother's employment status, education level of the unemployed and the head of household, age, and length of time spent unemployed significantly influence the choice of the main job search technique in Benin.

This study is especially important in the Sri Lankan context because there are very few studies on the job search behavior of unemployed individuals in the developing countries, especially in Sri Lanka. But there are not any studies available in Gampaha district in this context. Thus, based on the above findings, the current study focused on socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, civil status, level of

education, knowledge in information technology, size of households, duration of job search, and the previous job and its impact on choices of job search channels in Sri Lanka. By considering the above factors, the current study tries to fill the above research gaps, which were not taken in the previous empirical studies and literature.

METHODOLOGY

Methods of Data Collection

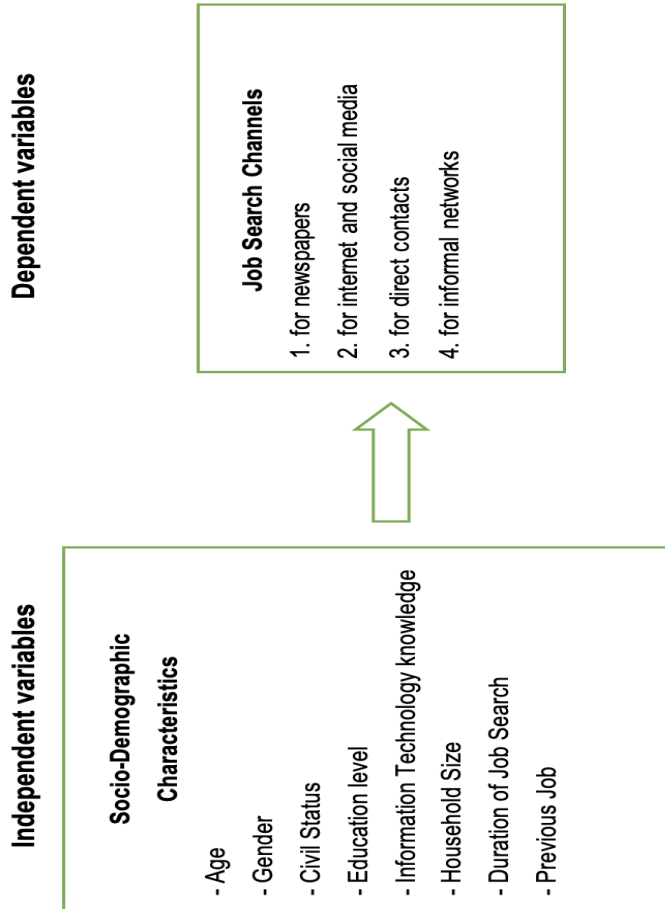
To investigate the choices of job search channels and to examine the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the choices of job search channels among unemployed job seekers in the Gampaha district, this study used cross-sectional data gathered from a representative sample of 200 respondents aged between 20 and 49 in 2023. According to the State Ministry of Home Affairs, there are 151 Grama Niladari divisions in the Attanagalla DS division in Gampaha district. From this division, 10 Grama Niladari divisions, namely Koskadawala, Kiththammahara, Halgampitiya, Pththalagedara East, Wataddara South, Nittambuwa South, Ranpokunagama Zone D, Diyakade, Karasnagala, and Kahatowita West, were selected using the systematic sampling method.

Finally, from the above each division, 20 unemployed persons were collected, with a total of 200 unemployed job seekers in the study. The data were collected using a structured questionnaire to gather detailed data on the respondents' socio-demographic profiles, as well as information on their choices of job search channels.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework consists of the dependent and independent variables used in the study, which are the factors influencing choices of job search channels. The independent variable focuses on socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, civil status, education level, knowledge of information technology, household size, duration of job search, and previous job searches. Job search channels are taken as dependent variables. The conceptual framework was used to generate the data, and the collected data were analyzed using different analytical tools in the study.

Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the factors influencing choices of job search channels



Source: Developed by the Author

Table 1 illustrates the description and measurement of the dependent and independent variables used in the study.

Table 1: Description of the variables used in the study

Variables	Description of the variables	Type of measurement
Dependent variable	Choices of job search channels are coded as 1 for newspapers, 2 for internet and social media, 3 for direct contacts, and 4 for informal networks.	Categorical dummy.
Independent variables		
Age	Age of the respondent measured in years.	Continuous.
Gender	The gender of the respondent is coded as 1 for male and 0 for female.	Binary variable.
Civil status	The civil status of the respondent is coded as 1 for married and 0 for single.	Categorical dummy.
Levels of education	Education levels are coded as 1 for higher education, 0 otherwise.	Ordinal data
Knowledge in Information Technology	Knowledge in Information Technology of the respondent coded as 1 for yes and 0 for no.	Binary variable.
Household size	Number of households in the family.	Continuous.
Duration of job search	Duration of job search of the job seeker in months.	Continuous.
Previous Job	Previous Job coded as 1 for yes, 0 for no.	Binary variable.

Source: Developed by Author

Methods of Data Analysis

To achieve the research objectives, the researcher used different methods of statistical analysis, such as frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, the chi-square test, the multinomial probit model, and the marginal effects. Frequency analysis is used to describe the basic features of the data used in the study related to gender, civil status, ethnicity, education level, information technology knowledge of the

unemployed persons, monthly family income, previous job, and sector of previous employment.

Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features and provide a simple summary about the age, household size, job search duration, and years of previous job experience of the respondents. The chi-square test is used to measure the association between socio-demographic characteristics of the unemployed job seekers and job search channels.

Multinomial Probit Regression Model

The multinomial probit model is a statistical model used to predict the outcome of a multi-way trial where the outcome is a categorical, unordered variable based on associated explanatory variables. It's often employed when analyzing discrete choices made by individuals, such as job choices or any decisions on the choices. The model assumes that each alternative has an associated utility, and the alternative with the highest utility is chosen. The key difference from the multinomial logit model is that it does not assume independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA), making it potentially more robust in certain situations. The model incorporates unobserved factors, or error terms, that influence individual choices, and these error terms are assumed to follow a multivariate normal distribution. Unlike the multinomial logit model, the multinomial probit model does not assume that the relative probabilities of choosing between two alternatives are unaffected by the presence or absence of other alternatives. Thus, the lack of the IIA assumption makes it more suitable and flexible than the multinomial logit model when the IIA assumption is likely violated. This study tries to identify the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on job search channels among the unemployed job seekers. The usage of the multinomial probit regression model is more applicable than other regression models because the dependent variable is the job search channels, which has four categories. Further, it is assumed that in a given period of time, rational unemployed job seekers choose mutually exclusive job search channels that offer the maximum utility. Following Dagume (2021), suppose the i th respondent chooses the job search channel j ; assume the utility choice j as:

$$U_{ij} = V_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where,

U_{ij} = The utility of the alternative j for the decision maker or an individual i

V_{ij} = Function of observed or deterministic component explained by observable factors

ε_{ij} = Function of unobserved or random error term

Taking into consideration the axioms of choice, the individual i is assumed to be rational and makes a choice among the alternatives (that is, job search options) that maximize utility. That is, the individual i will choose alternative j if:

$$Prob (U_{ij} > U_{ik}) \text{ for all other } k \neq j \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

In this study, job search channels are the dependent variables ($Y = j, j = 1,2,3,4$) that are defined as 1 for newspaper advertisements, 2 for internet and social media, 3 for contact with the employer directly, and 4 for informal networks, respectively. Based on the above job search choices, the model of this study is summarized as follows:

$$P_{nj} = \frac{\exp(x_n^1 \beta_j)}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^5 \exp(x_n^1 \beta_j)}, \text{ for } j = 1,2,3,4 \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

Where,

P_{nj} = Probability of being in each of the groups 1, 2, 3 and 4

β_j = is the vector of estimated coefficients for the j th category and x_n^1 is the i^{th} case (row) of the data matrix.

i = Indexes of the individuals

j = Four nominal unordered job search channels

The study estimates the probability of use for each job search channel by considering the socio-demographic characteristics of the job seekers as explanatory variables. The study estimates the multinomial probit regression model for each job search channel, with the dependent variables taking a value from 1 to 4 as given below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots(4)$$

Where,

Y = Job search channels, which is categorized as,

1 for 1 newspaper advertisements

2 for internet and social media

3 for contact with the employer directly

4 for informal networks

β_0 = Constant and $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6, \beta_7$, and β_8 are the coefficients of each independent variable respectively. They were as below:

X_1 = Age in years

X_2 = Gender coded as 1 for male, 0 for female.

X_3 = Civil status coded as 1 for married, 0 for single

X_4 = Education levels coded as 1 for higher education, otherwise 0

X_5 = Knowledge in Information Technology (IT) coded as 1 for yes, 0 for no

X_6 = Household size in numbers

X_7 = Duration of job search in months

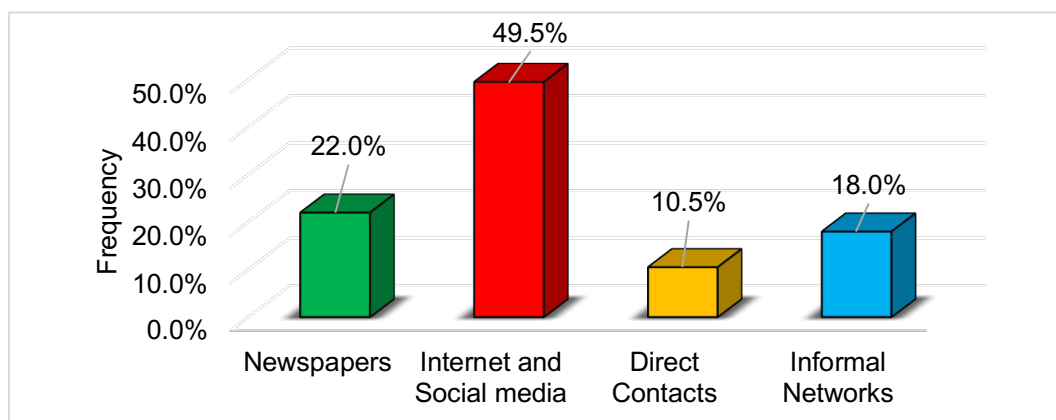
X_8 = Previous Job coded as 1 for yes, 0 for no

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Frequency Analysis

Figure 1 shows the frequency of choices towards four different job search channels among the unemployed youth job seekers in the study. According to that, the majority (49.5%) of the unemployed used the internet and social media, and a very small percentage (10.5%) of them have contacted the employed directly as their choice of job search channels. The rest of the 22% and 18% of them choose newspaper advertisements and informal networks as their major job search channels, respectively. This implies that the most common methods of job search adopted by the unemployed youth are through the internet and social media, followed by newspaper advertisements, as they are mostly picked in the study.

Figure 2: Frequency of job search channel



Source: Survey data, 2023

Table 2 shows the frequency of the respondents in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, and according to gender, 62.5% are females, and 37.5% of them are males. In case of characteristics, the majority (69.5%) of them are single, and 30.5% are married, and among the ethnicity, 91% of the job seekers are Sinhalese, 6.5% of them are Tamils, 2% of them are Muslims, and only 0.5% of them belong to other

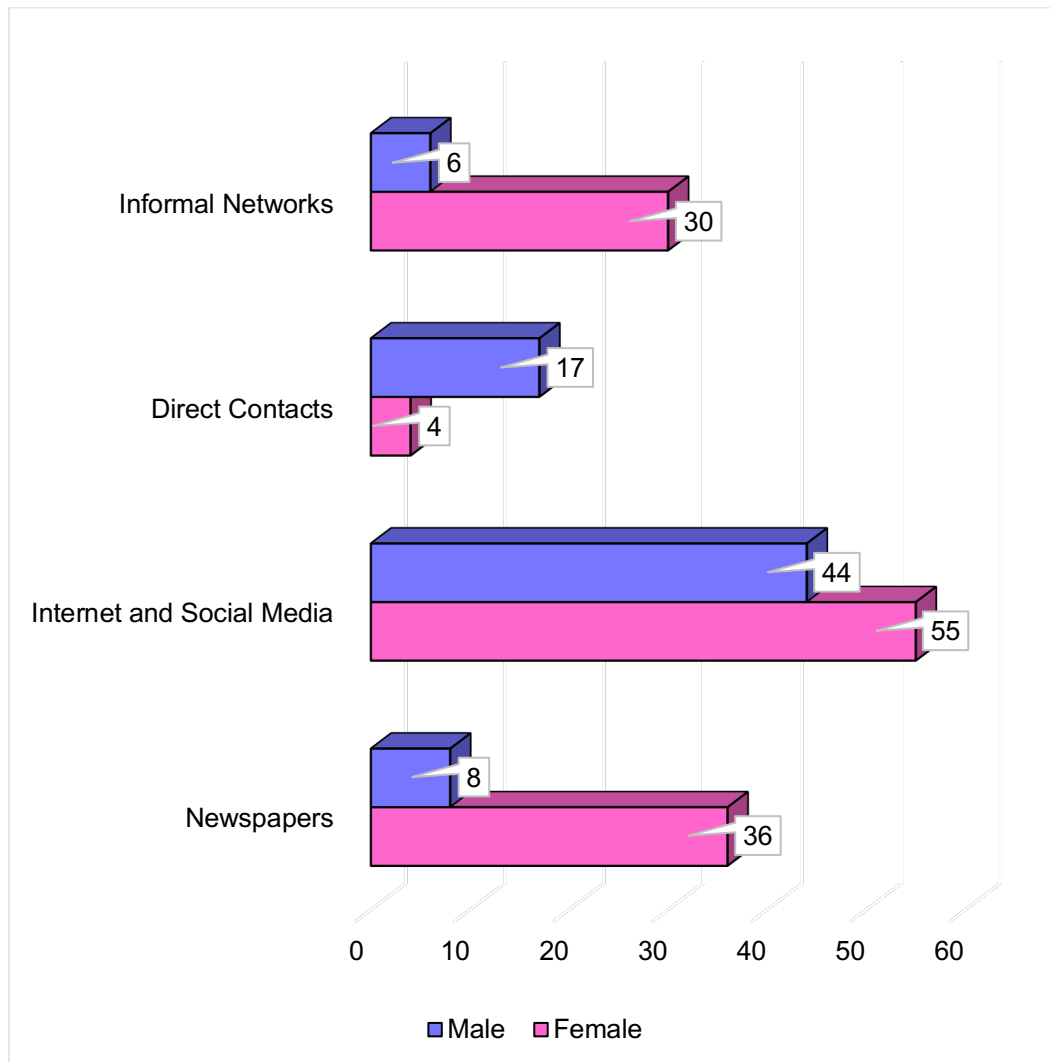
ethnic groups. According to the education levels, 49.50% of the job seekers have a secondary education level or below, whereas 50.5% of them have higher educational qualifications. In terms of monthly income, the majority of the income of the youth in their family is less than Rs.50,000, while only 5.5% of their family income is more than Rs.100,000 per month. Among the unemployed job seekers, the majority of them have IT knowledge, and only 26.5% of them do not have IT knowledge in the samples. Further, at present, unemployed job seekers, 50.5% of them, were previously employed, and the rest, 49.5%, were not employed previously.

Table 2: Profile of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	125	62.5
Male	75	37.5
Civil Status		
Single	139	69.5
Married	61	30.5
Ethnicity		
Sinhala	182	91.0
Tamil	13	6.5
Muslim	4	2.0
Other	1	0.5
Education Levels		
Secondary and below	99	49.50
Higher education	101	50.50
Family Income per month		
Less than Rs.50,000	107	53.5
Between Rs.50,001 - Rs.100,000	82	41.0
More than Rs.100,000	11	5.5
IT Knowledge		
Yes	147	73.5
No	53	26.5
Previously employed		
Yes	101	50.5
No	99	49.5

Source: Survey data, 2023

The following graph shows the gender distribution in the choices of job search channels, and according to that, the internet and social media were selected as the major ones by both males and females. Even though, compared to males, a higher number of females chose the internet and social media as their job choice, and in the case of direct contact with the employer, it was selected by 17 males and 4 females.

Figure 2: Gender distribution in the choices of job search channels

Source: Survey data, 2023

Results of descriptive statistics

Table 3 describes the descriptive statistics of the selected variables used in the study, and according to that, the average age of the unemployed job seekers is nearly 28 years old, with a minimum of 20 years and a maximum of 49. Average household size is nearly 4, with the range between 2 and 8 members in the family.

Table 3: Results of descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Age	27.73	7.27	20	49
Household size	4.22	1.10	2	8
Duration of job search in months	5.27	3.35	1	24
Previous job experience in years	3.55	3.49	1	17

Source: Survey data, 2023

Also, on average, they spent nearly 5 months finding a job, and among the present unemployed job seekers, some of them had worked previously for nearly 4 years.

Results of the chi-square test

In this study, a chi-square test was conducted to find out the association between demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, education level, IT knowledge, monthly family income, previous job, sector of previous employment, and choices of job search channels.

Results of Table 4 revealed that all socio-demographic characteristics were statistically significantly associated with choice of job search channels except ethnicity and family income. 83% of the female unemployed job seekers choose informal networks, 81.80% of them choose newspaper advertisements as their job search channels, and 81% of the males choose direct contact with the employer. All four types of job search channels are mostly chosen by Sinhala unemployed job seekers, and other ethnic groups choose a smaller percentage of those job search channels in the samples. The respondents who have more IT knowledge prefer to choose the internet and social media, and those who don't have much knowledge in IT choose newspaper advertisements and informal networks as their choices of job search channels in the study.

Table 4: Results of chi-square test

Variables	Choice of job search channel				χ²
	Newspapers	Internet and social media	Direct contacts	Informal networks	
Gender					32.62***
Female	81.80%	55.60%	19.00%	83.30%	
Male	18.20%	44.40%	81.00%	16.70%	
Civil Status					43.43***
Single	43.20%	90.90%	52.40%	52.80%	
Married	56.80%	9.10%	47.60%	47.20%	
Ethnicity					4.34
Sinhala	88.60%	90.90%	85.70%	97.20%	
Tamil	9.10%	6.10%	9.50%	2.80%	
Muslim	2.30%	2.00%	4.80%	0.00%	
Other	0.00%	1.00%	0.00%	0.00%	
Education level					72.90***
Secondary and below	90.90%	25.30%	23.80%	0.00%	
Higher	9.10%	74.70%	76.20%	80.60%	
IT Knowledge					69.89***
Yes	43.20%	99.00%	66.70%	44.40%	
No	56.80%	1.00%	33.30%	55.60%	
Family income					7.06
Less than Rs.50,000	63.60%	46.50%	52.40%	61.10%	
Between Rs.50,001 – Rs.100,000	31.80%	47.50%	47.60%	30.60%	
More than Rs.100,000	4.50%	6.10%	0.00%	8.30%	
Previous Job					25.26***
Yes	47.70%	36.40%	85.70%	72.20%	
No	52.30%	63.60%	14.30%	27.80%	

Source: Estimated by author using SPSS, 2023

Note: *** indicates the 1% level of significance.

Results of the multinomial probit regression model

Table 5 presents the results of the estimated multinomial probit model on the extent to which socio-demographic characteristics influence the choices made by the unemployed youth job seekers in Gampaha District when searching for jobs.

Table 5: Results of the multinomial probit regression model

Variables	Choices of job search channels					
	Newspapers		Direct contacts		Informal networks	
	Coefficient	Std. Err	Coefficient	Std. Err	Coefficient	Std. Err
Age	0.085*	0.049	-0.068	0.066	0.030	0.052
Gender	-1.004	0.669	2.087**	0.841	-1.401**	0.691
Civil status	1.644**	0.770	2.396**	0.990	1.105	0.765
Education level	-3.322***	0.710	-0.011	0.830	-2.394***	0.627
IT Knowledge	-4.513***	1.288	-4.921***	1.361	-4.948***	1.284
Household size	0.100	0.236	-0.270	0.349	0.052	0.241
Duration of job search	-1.174*	0.092	-0.380***	0.147	-0.179**	0.090
Previous job	0.089	0.611	2.304***	0.837	1.484**	0.609
Constant	2.258	2.115	3.868	2.507	3.592	2.148
Number of Observations	= 200					
LR chi ² (24)	= 213.81					
Probability > chi ²	= 0.000					
Pseudo R ²	= 0.436					

Source: Survey data, 2023

Note: Internet and social media served as a base group.

***, **and * indicated 1%, 5%, and 10% levels of significance, respectively.

The likelihood ratio test was, consequently, performed to test the overall significance of all the coefficients in the model. In this analysis, the distribution reveals that the probability of the model chi-square (213.81) was 0.000, less than the level of significance of 0.05 (i.e., $P < 0.05$). The null hypothesis that there was no difference between the model without independent variables and the model with independent variables was rejected. Thus, the multinomial probit model as a whole better fits the model to examine the impact of socio-demographic characteristics of the unemployed youth job seekers on their choice of job search channels in the study. Among the above eight explanatory variables, IT knowledge and duration of job search in months are statistically significant at all three levels in determining the choices of all other job search channeling compared to the base group of internet and social media.

The age of the unemployed job seeker is significant at the 10% level only in determining the choice of newspaper advertisements compared to internet and social

media, and it is insignificant in the choices of other job search channels. The coefficient of age in newspapers has a positive sign, which represents that the respondents whose age increases from 20 to 49 are more likely to search for a job through newspaper advertisements and less likely to use the base group of internet and social media. But this finding is inconsistent with the finding of Dagume (2021), who mentioned that age has no impact on the choices of job search channels.

Gender is a statistically significant factor in the choices of job search channels only for the direct contacts with the employer and informal networks at a 5% level, but it is not an influencing factor in the choices of other channels. By considering the internet and social media as a base group, the coefficient of gender has a positive sign in direct contacts and a negative sign in informal networks, indicating that compared to females, male respondents have a higher probability of choosing direct contacts with an employer and a lower probability of choosing informal networks while they are searching for a job. But, this finding is inconsistent with the finding of Dagume (2021), who mentioned that gender has no impact on the choices of job search channels and according to Fakhfakh et al., (2016), he found that women are more likely than men to find work through direct application, but the results of this study revealed that females are less likely to select direct contacts to find job opportunities.

Civil status is a statistically significant factor in the choices of newspaper advertisements and direct contact, and it is insignificant in other choices. This represents that married unemployed people are more likely to search for job opportunities through newspaper advertisements and direct contact than single respondents. Also, single unemployed people are more interested in searching their job possibilities through the internet and social media in the study.

The coefficient of education has a sign in all three job search channels except the base category of internet and social media, which represents that, in comparison to their counterparts with secondary school education and below, youth with higher school education in the Gampaha District are more likely to check their employment opportunities through internet and social media than to apply using the other three job search channels. In other words, unemployed youth job seekers who have higher educational qualifications are more likely to choose the internet and social media and less likely to choose newspaper advertisements or direct contact with employers compared to their counterparts. Dagume (2021) found that secondary- or below-educated people are more likely to use informal networks to find jobs and less likely to use media advertisements than tertiary-educated people. But these results of the study reveal that secondary and below-educated people are more likely to select newspapers and informal networks than higher-educated unemployed people compared with the internet and social media. Studies by Gustavo and Cristobal (2004), Heath (1999), and Labini (2005), in Venezuela, Australia, and Italy,

respectively, oppositely found that unemployed individuals with more highly skilled or better educated parents are more likely to use direct application methods as their main job search activity. The implication is that individuals with a higher education are more likely prefer formal search methods than informal methods. Knowledge of Information Technology (IT) has a negative sign and is highly significant in all three job search channels, and it has a positive sign in the reference category of internet and social media. This finding revealed that the unemployed youth seekers who have more knowledge in information technology are more likely to find their job opportunity through the internet and social media and less likely to adopt the other three choices when they seek a job. Because better knowledge in information technology makes it easier for them to apply for more job vacancies through the internet and social media than the unemployed youth who have limited or no knowledge in information technology. The duration of the job search has a negative sign in all three job search channels, indicating that the unemployed youth who spend more months searching for a job are less likely to select newspaper advertisements, direct contact with an employer, and informal networks, and they are more likely to find their job through the internet and social media. The present unemployed youth who have previously worked is not significantly influencing the job search channels towards direct contacts with an employer and informal networks at 1% and 5% levels, respectively. The persons who have worked before are more likely to search for their present job by contacting the employer directly and through informal networks than by searching for the job through the internet and social media. It refers to the fact that if a person has already done a job, it makes it easier for them to contact directly with the employer and the ways they were familiar with to find a job at now.

Results of marginal effects

Table 6: Results of marginal effects

Variables	Choices of job search channels			
	Newspapers	Internet and social media	Direct contacts	Informal networks
Age	0.014 (0.007)	-0.011 (0.011)	-0.005 (0.004)	0.002 (0.008)
Gender	-0.130 (0.081)	0.144 (0.132)	0.212 (0.090)	-0.227 (0.008)
Civil status	0.181 (0.117)	-0.343 (0.132)	0.115 (0.093)	0.047 (0.111)
Education	-0.400 (0.079)	0.543 (0.093)	0.066 (0.045)	-0.209 (0.082)
IT knowledge	-0.226 (0.108)	0.727 (0.063)	-0.089 (0.068)	-0.412 (0.118)
Household size	0.018 (0.035)	-0.010 (0.050)	-0.017 (0.019)	0.008 (0.039)
Duration of job search	-0.015 (0.013)	0.049 (0.020)	-0.016 (0.009)	-0.018 (0.014)
Previous job	-0.097 (0.089)	-0.238 (0.120)	0.104 (0.057)	0.230 (0.091)

Source: Survey data, 2023. Note: Standard errors are in the parentheses

The estimated results of the marginal effects for explanatory variables used in the multinomial probit model are illustrated in Table 6. The marginal effects of age have positive signs in newspaper advertisements and informal networks, while they have negative signs in the other two choices. It was revealed that as age increases from 20 to 49, the probability of selecting newspaper advertisements and informal networks increases by 1.4% and 0.02%, respectively, while the probability of selecting internet and social media and direct contact with an employer decrease by 1.1% and 0.05%, respectively. In the case of gender, compared to female youth unemployed job seekers, males are 13% and 22.7% less likely to choose newspaper advertisements and informal networks, whereas they have 14.4% and 21.2% more probability of choosing the internet and social media and direct contacts in searching for a job. The married unemployed job seekers are 18.1% more likely to choose newspaper advertisements, 11.5% more likely to choose direct contacts, and only 4.7% more likely to choose informal networks. However, they have 34.3% less probability of choosing the internet and social media for searching for their job. The respondents who have higher educational qualifications and more IT knowledge are 54.3% and 72.7% more likely to select the internet and social media as their main job search channels in the study. The unemployed person who has spent more months searching for a job will have a 4.9% higher likelihood of selecting the internet and social media, and the persons who had a job previously prefer, with 23% and 10.4% more probability, to use informal networks and direct contact with the employer while they are searching for their current job.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Data were collected across four 10 Grama Niladari divisions, and from each of them 20 unemployed persons were collected, with a total of 200. Thus, this study is limited to one administrative division within Gampaha and may not generalize to the broader Sri Lankan context. Therefore, future research should broaden the sample to include a more diverse range of young unemployed respondents across other districts in Sri Lanka. This study considered only four channels in the job search, and nowadays, there are many digital techniques available in the job market. It is better to consider the latest digital job search channels rather than physical ones, such as agencies, which are frequently used by the respondents when they seek a job in Sri Lanka. Another limitation of the study is the application of the multinomial probit model, which considers out of four choices, only the most preferred one-job channel can be chosen by the respondents. But the application of the multivariate probit model allows more than one option to be chosen simultaneously, which is more possible in real life. Therefore, future research might address the assessment of changes in the multi-channel job-searching behavior of the unemployed in the study. In addition, it might be interesting to expand the analysis to compare and to highlight the possible

differences in behavior of job searching for new employees and the employees who had a job previously with and without previous job experience.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the study was to investigate the effect of socio-demographic characteristics on the choices of job search channels among the unemployed in Gampaha District when they are seeking employment by employing the multinomial logistic regression model. In the beginning, to find out which method of job searching is mostly adopted by the unemployed respondents in Gampaha District, frequency analysis for job search channels was done, and its results revealed that the most effective and reliable methods (49.5%) unemployed respondents used the internet and social media, and a very small percentage (10.5%) of them have contacted the employer directly as their choice of job search channels. The estimated results of the multinomial probit model showed that compared to young people, older unemployed respondents were more likely to use newspaper advertisements to find a job. When the males are searching for a job, they are more likely to choose direct contact with an employer and less likely to choose informal networks than females.

Further, married unemployed respondents are more likely to search for job opportunities through newspaper advertisements and direct contact, and single unemployed respondents are more interested in searching for their job possibilities through the internet and social media in the study. The respondents who have higher education and more knowledge in IT were more likely to search for employment through the internet and social media and less likely to choose the other three job search channels during their job searching time compared to their counterparts. As the duration of the job search increases, they are more likely to choose the internet and social media as their job search channels. The persons who have worked before are more likely to search for their present job by contacting the employer directly and through informal networks than by searching for the job through the internet and social media.

Based on these findings from the multinomial probit regression, the researcher recommends that human resource experts and managers of the firms should build their recruitment and selection strategies by paying more attention to the internet and social media to advertise their job opportunities. The results and suggestions from this study can be used by government agencies and policymakers to design effective recruitment and selection strategies for job search guidance as well as to attract the best talent workers into the labor market. This study will serve as a source of reference for other researchers who want to investigate the phenomenon further.

Evidence emerging from this analysis may help to improve knowledge of the multichannel job-searching behavior of unemployed people for both employers and

firms who aim to hire employees and for policymakers aiming to design effective support services for job-search guidance.

From the employer and demand side, the above analysis sheds light on the types of channels to activate or invest in to attract specific kinds of candidates. Also, the results of this study offer a new direction in understanding the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on the choice of job search channels among the unemployed job seekers in Sri Lanka.

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