

**Generation Y: How their job values influence their job search and job search objectives as new entrants in the workforce**

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Abstract

*Purpose*

This study was conducted to determine if there was a relationship between an individual's work values and their job search objectives when they enter the workforce.

*Methodology*

Data was collected from 84 generation Y participants using an online survey. The primary recruitment strategy for data collection was the social media website Facebook.

*Results*

The results showed there were weak but significant relationships between several of the work values and job search constructs. Notably, there was a correlation between instrumental work values and fast employment goals as well as prestigious work values and job search clarity.

*Conclusion*

The findings reported in this paper add to the existing job search and job search objective literature by accounting for new variables that can affect one's job search.

## Introduction

Generation Y is the up and coming age group to seek for employment. Generation Y is also known as the millennials and can be characterized by the children of baby boomers. Likewise, David Foot first used the term "Baby Boom Echo" to describe the generation born between 1980 and 1995 (Ng et al, 2010). Generation Y is a significant age group to examine because they are the newest entries joining the workforce.

Job search has become an integral and fundamental aspect of work life today (Côté et al, 2006). Job search is a crucial course of action for Generation Y to follow through with because it aids entries in understanding their needs and wants when seeking for a job. Workers will increasingly find themselves changing jobs, employers, and careers because of shifts in the economy, changes in the nature of work, organizational restructuring and downsizing, and labour shortages (Côté et al, 2006). Furthermore, Generation Y entries may inquire for a new job search for the following reasons; university students searching for employment following graduation, dissatisfied employees searching for new employment opportunities to improve their quality of work-life and organizations downsizing.

Several major career development theorists have recognized that values play an important role in career counseling and in the career decision-making process (Duffy et al, 2007). Seeing that the Baby Boomer Generation is retiring at an increasing rate, the

may result in a confusion of what work values are most important to them. Work values refer to what a person wants out of work in general and also which components of a job are important to their work satisfaction (Duffy et al, 2007). Generation Y's work values affect their decision making process concerning job search, which generates a thought-provoking subject to examine.

This study will be focusing on Generation Y individuals regarding the understanding of how job seekers behave during their job search and what job values influence their search. As employers strive to attract and hire high-value young employees, it is more important than ever for employers to understand the expectation that young people bring to the labour market (Ng et al, 2010). Recognizing the influence of Generation Y's job values with regard to job search, will help employers and managers to grasp an understanding of how to improve the marketing of jobs and to increase job search support for Generation Y entries. This study will build upon past research such that the mechanisms underlying job seekers behaviors and subsequent outcomes will be understood; the past research was done by Stéphane Côté, Alan M. Saks and Jelena Zikic in 2006.

## Literature Review

University students today face different challenges than those from previous generations. Graduating university and college students also have different goals and attitudes towards obtaining a job after graduation. University students searching for employment following graduation; dissatisfied employees searching for new employment opportunities to improve their quality of work-life; and organizations downsizing, leaving

reason to job search. Among the reasons to find a job are different objectives to use when searching for a job. These job search objectives include fast employment, job search clarity, job search intensity, job search strategies including an exploratory job search process, haphazard job search strategy, and a focused job search strategy.

When searching for a job some aspects of the job search can predict results. Positive affectivity predicted job search clarity over and above conscientiousness and job search self-efficacy. Job search clarity mediated relationships between positive affectivity and job search intensity and between job search self-efficacy and job search intensity. Negative affectivity, however, did not predict job search clarity. Job search clarity predicted job search intensity, which led to interviews, offers, and employment. affectivity find a job because they achieve job search clarity and, in turn, look for a job intensely. The results suggest that job seekers high in positive affectivity find a job because they achieve job search clarity and, in turn, look for a job intensely (Côté et al, 2006).

Furthermore research suggests that people who engaged in a careful and deliberate search and choice process when looking for jobs were more satisfied than people who used a more haphazard or intuitive approach. In addition, people who were higher in the tendency to consider future outcomes were more likely to use a careful and deliberate approach to finding a job (Crossley, 2005). Three different strategies among people can be found when examining people searching for jobs. A focused search strategy involves concentrating search efforts on a small number of carefully screened potential employers. People using this approach often identify top choices early in their search

search strategy involves examining several potential employment options and actively gathering job-related information from various sources (e.g., friends, employment centers, etc.). Job seekers using this approach are likely to undertake their job search with an idea of what they want while remaining open to opportunities that may present themselves. A haphazard job search strategy involves passively gathering information both inside and outside of one's area of academic study or previous work experience. Job seekers using this strategy are likely to use a trial and error approach, often switching tactics without rationale (Crossley, 2005).

Another construct that may effect the job search is one's financial need after graduation. Financial need and task-specific self-esteem affected both job search behaviors, and that task-specific self-esteem moderated the relationship between job search behaviors (Blau, 1994). Sources predict that one's success in producing job alternatives is a function of two variables sources used to obtain information and the intensity of following up on this information. The sources used include informal approaches including friends, acquaintances and past employers and informal approaches such as advertisements and employment services. Job search intensity measures the effort which the individual makes during their search. This effort can be seen in two distinctive ways preparatory and active behaviours (Blau, 1994).

During the preparatory phase individuals will allocate resources (time, effort, and money) and identify various search generators to help produce initial job alternatives to consider. This phase allows individuals to gather potential leads through various

and acting on leads from prospective employers. The active phase measures the individuals commitment to job search (Blau, 1994).

Work values have been viewed as critical to the career counseling process with college students (Duffy et al, 2007). Moreover, it has been shown that individuals make job choices consistent with their work goals (Judge et al, 1992). Recent factor analytic studies have supported a stratified approach to measuring work values whereby values have been organized within four basic dimensions: intrinsic, extrinsic, social and prestige. Intrinsic values refer to an importance placed on autonomy and interest; social values refer to an importance placed on working with people and making contributions to society; extrinsic values refer to an importance placed on making money and having job security; and finally, prestige values refer to an importance placed on having a prestigious and respected occupation. In general, work values have been shown to significantly predict career choice, and the congruence of work values with work environment has been shown to significantly predict job satisfaction and job performance (Duffy et al, 2007). Work values are a subset of social values that suggest general patterns of behavior that individuals ought to exhibit. Therefore, most members of society interpret social values as positive and endorse behaving in accordance with them (Judge et al, 1992). This leads to our hypotheses:

**H1:** Individuals with instrumental work values will want to find a job immediately.

**H2:** Individuals with high level of social values will use their personal networks to find a job.

clarity.

**H4:** Individuals who value cognitive work values will have a very focused job search strategy in order to find a intrinsically fulfilling job.

Individuals searching for a job have a number of choices to make concerning the search process. These choices include which methods of search to use, how much effort to devote to each method of search, which firms to contact first, how many offers to collect before making an acceptance decisions, and criterion for deciding what constitutes an acceptable offer (Blau, 1990).

During job search, individuals generally undertake a variety of activities and use a variety of personal resources (e.g., time, effort, social resources) for the purpose of obtaining employment. Similar to other self-regulated behaviors, such as requisite behavior in a highly autonomous job, individual differences in job search are largely self-organized and self-managed. Over time, job search behavior may change in direction or intensity as self-reactions or feedback from the environment influence self-regulatory components, such as employment goals and search strategies (Kanfer et al, 2001).

As the latest generation to enter the workforce, Generation Y is the most technically literate, educated and ethnically diverse generation in history and at the graduate level there have been considerable interest+not only in attracting, and retaining this talent but in developing it as well (Shaw, 2008). Job search is particularly important among this sample of job-seekers because one's first job following postsecondary education is a critical factor in determining future career status and earnings (Saks, 1999). In terms of job search, perceived control is likely to be important in today's competitive and

ployment is beyond their control (Saks, 1999).

## Methodology

### *Sample:*

The targeted sample for this study consisted of Ontario residents who are recent graduates and entering the workforce. Our control variable was measured with males and females from Generation Y as our population, ranging in age from 18-30 years old. We were targeting those out of high school, university and college. Our dependent variable was job search objectives, such as fast employment goals, job search clarity, job search intensity and job search strategy. The independent variables which we measured were intrinsic values, extrinsic values, social-altruistic values, and status/prestige.

It is hard to identify exactly how many people had access to the survey; however we estimate the final number was 350. The total number of respondents for this study was 84, giving us a response rate of 24%. There were 32 people who had started the survey but left it incomplete, and therefore their data was unusable.

### *Survey:*

Our survey was a self-report questionnaire. We distributed it through social networking sites, allowing the respondents to access the survey online at their convenience. We used convenience sampling because of our time limitation. We used two different scales to measure our respondents; nominal and likert. A nominal scale was used to collect our demographic data. It was important to ensure we were exhaustive in the demographics in order to obtain accurate results. We asked respondents to provide their age, gender, marital status, student status, employment status, debt, highest level



test our independent variables such as intrinsic values, extrinsic values, social-altruistic values, and status/prestige. Professor Sean Lyons aided in the analysis of our data, so we could study the correlations between variables.

### Results/Findings

In this survey we sought out to measure job search objectives, using four independent variables to help explain and specify our results which included intrinsic values, extrinsic values, social-altruistic values, and status/prestige. Each respondent was put into one of these four independent variable categories upon completion. Their categorization depended on how they answered the required questions within the survey. Job search objectives was separated into three categories: fast employment, job search clarity, and job search strategy, which also had three sub categories within it: exploratory, half hazard, and focused. Within this results section, the four earlier hypothesis will be revisited and either proven or disproven through our results from the survey and their level of significance.

H1 stated that individuals with instrumental work values will want to find a job immediately. This hypothesis was proven true from our results. My biggest concern is finding a job as soon as possible after graduation showed only a significant correlation for instrumental type of respondents with a correlation of  $r=0.240$ . None of the 3 other job search objectives had any significant correlation.

	Instrumental	Social	Prestige	Cognitive
My biggest concern is finding a job as soon as possible after graduation	r=0.240 p<0.05			

H2 stated individuals with high level of social values will use their personal networks to find a job. Within the results, there were no significant correlations with social values and networking other than the intention of following up on all leads, even long shots. This showed a correlation of  $r=0.273$ . Social actually had the least significant correlations in regards to job search strategy: exploratory. Instrumental has showed the highest strongest and most correlations in regards to leads, networking, and job searching. Prestige and cognitive had equal correlations. Each job search value had a significant correlation in regards to following up on most leads, even long shots.

	Instrumental	Social	Prestige	Cognitive
I intend to follow up on every lead to make sure I didn't miss any golden opportunities	r=0.285 p<0.01		r=0.265 p<0.05	r=0.354 p<0.01
I intend to follow up on most leads, even long shots	r=0.376 p<0.01	r=0.273 p<0.05	r=0.309 p<0.01	r=0.344 p<0.01
I intend to gather as much information about all the companies that I could	r=0.377 p<0.01		r=0.280 p<0.05	r=0.378 p<0.01

available sources of job information (e.g. employment centres, friends, internet sites, etc.)	p<0.01			
I intend to gather information about all possible job opportunities, rather than setting out for something specific	r=0.272 p<0.05		r=0.234 p<0.05	r=0.326 p<0.01

H3 stated individuals who display high levels of prestige will have high levels of job search clarity. Prestige individuals did have the most correlation within the job search clarity section. There was a significant correlation in regards to having a set goal for the type of job I want to have, with a correlation of  $r=0.272$ , and another significant correlation in regards to having a clear idea of where I want to work with a correlation of  $r=0.272$ .

	Instrumental	Social	Prestige	Cognitive
I have set a goal for the type of job I want to have			r=0.272 p<0.05	
I have a clear idea of where I want to work		r=0.275 p<0.05	r=0.272 p<0.05	

H4 stated individuals who value cognitive work values will have a very focused job search strategy in order to find an intrinsically fulfilling job. No significant relationship was found for these 2 variables.

eration Y impact job search and job search objectives as new entries into the workplace. Through our findings in the research we found some correlations between an individual's job values and their job search objectives. Below are the four main hypotheses of our study.

**Hypothesis 1-** Individuals with instrumental work values will want to find a job immediately.+

The hypothesis suggests that an individual who demonstrates instrumental work values will want to achieve fast employment in their job search. The results confirm our hypothesis with a correlation between instrumental work values and fast employment. This implies that individuals who are focused on making money after graduation and obtaining job security are likely to have a goal of fast employment. There were no other known correlations between the other work values and fast employment.

**Hypothesis 2-** Individuals with high level of social values will use their personal networks to find a job.+

The hypothesis states that an individual who deems social values important will use personal networks as a job search strategy. Through our research there were no significant findings to support this hypothesis. In fact, social values had the least significant correlations with job search strategy. We did however find correlations between instrumental work values and job search strategies. The research shows that individuals who demonstrate instrumental work values has correlations with all of the job search

as much research on companies as possible. This correlation could be explained with an implication that graduates whose goal of earning money and job security right after graduation will be determined to gain any employment and utilize all job search strategies. We also found that those who have prestige and cognitive values had correlations with regards to leads and gathering as much information about companies and jobs.

**Hypothesis 3-** Individuals who display high levels of prestige will have high levels of job search clarity.+

The hypothesis was supported in our research. Our findings suggest that those who portray prestige and status are correlated with having job search clarity. This means that those who display high levels of prestige have a solid idea of where they want to work and the type of job they want to have. One implication of this finding is that those who are focused on their status may have an ideal job and environment that they must work in to fulfill their status in society. Therefore those individuals already have a clear idea of their job search. There was also a correlation between social values and having a clear idea of where they want to work. This could be in part due to people with social values want to work somewhere they can interact with others and share ideas, therefore already having an idea of the type of company they would like to work in to fulfill these goals.

**Hypothesis 4-** Individuals who value cognitive work values will have a very focused job search strategy in order to find an intrinsically fulfilling job.+

no known correlations between cognitive work values and a focused job search strategy. One reason why cognitive work values may not have been correlated with a job search strategy of finding an intrinsically fulfilling job is because perhaps cognitive work values could imply an individual aiming to gain employment in a challenging job, regardless of interest and autonomy.

Overall, the findings from our research suggest that work values can influence an individual's job search and job search objectives as new entries into the workplace. These findings coincide with the previous studies conducted on job search in that work values were shown to significantly predict career choice (Duffy et al, 2007). These findings provide some further insight into specific work values that influence particular aspects of the job search. This research also suggests some implications for future graduates in that the values one has regarding future work can have an influence their job search. This finding supports previous research where it has been shown that individuals make job choices consistent with their work goals (Judge et al, 1992). In conclusion, work values of individuals can have an influencing factor on future job searches.

#### Limitations and Directions for Future research

After conducting our study it is apparent that there were several limitations and therefore areas that could be improved in future research. The first major limitation was time. More time would have allowed us to recruit a greater abundance and variety of

methods of surveying.

The second limitation we experienced was the size of our sample. As one of the last groups to have our survey available to the public, we inevitably lost the initial willing participants. We were aiming to reach a sample of one hundred, but fell short at eighty four participants. As well, thirty two people had started the survey which would have helped us reach our goal, yet they did not complete it and therefore their data was unusable. Research focused on why some participants did not complete the survey would be beneficial to its usage in future research. As mentioned previously, time also played a large factor in determining our sample size.

The third limitation was that we had a convenience sample. Our subjects were chosen because of their convenient accessibility to the researchers and are therefore not an accurate representation of the population. With more time and as a result with a larger sample, we would have the opportunity to not only obtain a sample from southern Ontario, but other provinces and possibly other countries.

The final limitation is the integrity of the participants. The integrity of participants will unfortunately never be a controllable factor in this type of study. To lessen the effects of integrity limitations it is advised to make the survey available at strategized locations. For example, you may not want to hand out surveys for this subject on a Friday night at a movie theatre, but instead in a controlled setting such as a lecture hall or an area of professional business.

In the future we propose a larger time frame to create and administer the survey. This will allow the researchers to implement other methods and reach a more diverse

dinal survey would be more representative of the population and would therefore ensure our results were accurate.



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