

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ANXIETY ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' JOB SEEKING BEHAVIOUR DURING THE PANDEMIC: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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Abstract COVID-19 anxiety is influencing the world's health and economy. Employees and companies alike are concerned with how to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic which has resulted in a higher rate of unemployment and loss of many jobs. However, the job behaviour appears to be a hard issue for graduate Omani students. Job searchers confront additional challenges, disappointments, and rejection, which can diminish their drive, especially in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the impact of COVID-19 anxiety on job search behaviour among new graduate students is an imperative topic. This research is designed in terms of setting up descriptive analysis, as it examines the impact of COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour among new graduates of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, and suggests some recommendations on the basis of the outcome of the survey. Moreover, from the study we found that many of the job seekers' job search behaviour has had a strong impact due to COVID-19. Finally, our findings contribute to the expanding body of literature supporting the role of personal resources in encouraging job search tenacity.

Keywords: Anxiety, Job Search Behaviour, Pandemic

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020a) declared COVID-19 a pandemic – a public health emergency – on April 2022, as there have been 510,887,255 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6,249,104 deaths reported (WHO, 2022). On April 26, 2022, Oman's Ministry of Health reported 389,099 confirmed cases and 4,258 deaths (Worldometers, 2022). To stem the spread of the disease, China and several other countries enacted nationwide or regional lockdowns. Educational institutions, banking institutions, commercial activity centres, and amusement facilities have all been forced to close indefinitely (Stansfield et al., 2020 and Hollingsworth et al., 2020). COVID-19 pandemic sparked one of the worst economic downturns in modern history in almost every country; lockdowns and government restrictions severely reduced economic activity, and customers were held back by fear of infection (Goolsbee & Syverson, 2021). Many university students, particularly those who have no prior experience with online education and its essential amenities, are compelled to stay at home and complete their studies entirely online. Online education has taken a huge toll on the mental and physical health of students.

In the past, this group has been found to be psychologically incapable of managing their psychological and academic needs (Hamaideh & Hamdan, 2014). They reported high levels of academic stress and efficacy and were vulnerable to psychosocial disturbances (Hamaideh & Hamdan, 2014; Shehadeh et al., 2020). There are many indicators of mental health in the general population, and particularly among university students (Tee et al., 2021). As previously stated, university students are frequently subjected to physical, psychological, social, and intellectual demands, all of which increase their risk and vulnerability to psychological discomfort, such as depression, anxiety, and stress. Despite the prevalence of psychological issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, few studies have examined melancholy, anxiety, and stress among college students (Zheng, 2020). Furthermore, anxiety among college students has previously been identified as a public health issue. Several past studies have examined students' anxiety, despair, and stress, and have discussed factors that may influence their mental health (Rehman & Fattah, 2007).

The worldwide coronavirus pandemic disrupted college students' normal job-hunting practices. College students are more susceptible to changes in the labour market. The Great Recession doubled the unemployment rate for graduates

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from 3.5% to 7.0% in 2011. Graduates, on the other hand, fared better than their non-college counterparts (Abel & Deitz, 2017). College graduates lost more jobs than non-degree holders during the crisis; however, job gains for college grads outpaced gains for non-degree holders during the recovery period, they agreed. There are parallels between COVID-19's effects and the Great Recession, both of which had a major impact on employment. Research on this topic is diverse, but two main themes emerged: under-employment and labour market factors (e.g., job search). Therefore, with COVID-19 recession and the unprecedented nature of the situation, many may conclude that job searching is pointless. In addition, the pandemic altered the economy's structure, which resulted in significant job losses. The pandemic drastically altered the labour market's layout, as well as job seekers' behaviour (McFarland et al., 2020). However, the job search activity moved towards virtual jobs that required less face-to-face contact, which persisted in the weeks following the pandemic's commencement (Hite & McDonald, 2020).

The unusually low search efforts by the unemployed during the COVID-19 recession runs the risk of exacerbating their alienation from the labour market during the pandemic. With the health crisis likely to continue well into 2021 such temporary detachments could lead to long-run scars for the affected workers and dampen the speed of recovery of the labour market. COVID-19 had an impact on students' job-search experiences and the role that psychographic attributes such as emotional intelligence and pandemic anxiety levels played in their job search success. Results showed support for networking, pandemic anxiety, and social support as influential factors in a student's job search outcome (Blyth, 2021).

The COVID-19 anxiety is influencing the world's health and economy. Employees and companies are concerned with how to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic (Alte & Villa, 2020), which has resulted in high unemployment and the loss of many jobs. In addition, the effect of the pandemic's emergence was experienced more keenly by new graduates, who experienced a reduction in their chances of finding jobs. It created a big challenge in their job-search behaviour, leaving them very concerned about their future and forcing them to emerge at a critical time. However, the impact of COVID-19 anxiety on job search behaviour among new graduate students is an imperative topic. The main purpose of this study is to assess the anxiety level of the new graduate students while searching for jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND OF THEORIES WITH LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 Anxiety

Theory of trait anxiety (Gray's, 1982) and theory of neuroticism were interested in two major hypotheses (Eysenck's, 1967). The first assumption is that in the personality dimension of trait anxiety or neuroticism, individual differences depend largely on genetic factors. In line with Gray (1982), Personality characteristics studies neuroticism and extraversion. Estimate the contribution of heredity to these circumstances at around 50% of the variance. The second major assumption is that inheritance affects the degree of trait anxiety or neuroticism through the physiological system. According to Eysenck (1967), individual variations in neuroticism depend on the functioning of the so-called "visceral brain". Further, Sigmund Freud's and Melanie Klein's theories on anxiety concentrate on the roots, definitions, and roles of anxiety. The aim of this comparative study is to provide an instrument that can be used to help frame theoretical discussions in psychoanalysis, within an epistemological framework. According to the writer, anxiety is only one of the many manifestations of mental existence that Freud's general theories attempt to describe, whereas anxiety and its consequences are fundamental to Melanie Klein's ideas on mental functioning.

Many theories related to feeling had to accommodate cognition in some way, including theories of basic feelings, such as anxiety. Eysenck said that there are two types of people who are low in trait anxiety and high in trait anxiety in the information which they saved in their memory for a long time. People who are low in trait anxiety and high in trait anxiety also differ in their mood. The memory approach is used to deal with the state of anxiety that develops over time, as well as the fact that certain people are nervous in some stressful circumstances, but others are not. Eysenck said that those who experience high and low trait anxiety may differ in the practical aspect as well as in the structure of their cognitive systems. Getting fear through looking responses of other people can be effective way to learn the fear and ignore potential threats. Learning observational fear also known as common reason that led to increase in the anxiety disorders (Ida & Andreas, 2019). We can learn by looking at the direct responses of someone to an aversive stimulus, such as being bitten by a dog. Learning from other people's responses might be a common thing in the society. Anticipatory responses are not exactly reliable if it

is a true threat. For example, we may think that people who have high trait anxiety react with fear and behave anxiously with safe and unsafe stimuli, which is not true, because individuals are different in differentiating between safe and unsafe cases. Furthermore, people who are suffering from general anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder have less ability to differentiate between safe cues and threatening experiences, and are usually directed by a rising fear reaction to safe stimuli. Moreover, learning of fear can be different functions of external factors such as fear and strength. In addition, there is evidence of bigger scope of learning negative stimuli compared to the positive that is believed to be reflected in the 'better safe than sorry' principle. In other words, responses of fear are different, and usually we can know anxious behaviour, which is defined as a collective response of fear for both threatening and safe cues from different individuals who suffer from different kinds of anxiety.

Anxiety refers to many psychological and physiological phenomenon, including the individual's conscious state of a future unwanted event or fear of the real situation. Anxiety and fear are closely related. Another frequent difference between fear and anxiety is that fear is an adaptive response to a real threat, while anxiety is a diffuse emotion, sometimes an unreasonable or excessive response to a current or future perceived threat (Klein & Pine, 2001).

Job Search Behaviour

Bateman and Crant speculated that the "proactive personality" characteristic affects job-seeking conduct. Anticipated value theory links an individual's motivation (and subsequent behaviour) to their expectations. Job-search behaviour is motivated by the anticipation of having a job and the importance of jobs in life, according to this theory. Research allows for the testing of both theories' generalisation to a population that has not yet been studied. The proactive personality theory and the expected value theory appear to be useful theoretical frameworks for studying job search behaviour, the researchers say. The research shows that both theoretical constructs are extremely useful in predicting job search behaviour (Bateman & Crant, 1999). One of the most important determinants of production is the state of the labour market. The nature of the business and the applicability of the policy have changed because of the introduction of the household registration system. There is a decrease in the number of skilled workers because of the market reflecting recent college graduates. College graduates will have an easier time finding jobs that pay at least the federal minimum wage if they use job search. Despite these limitations, it is difficult to enter the market because the expected benefit is in direct opposition to the cost of job searching. As a result,

graduates will be less likely to enter the workforce if search costs go up, as this will reduce the demand for workers. We must first change the dual labour market, and then we must rethink how students search for jobs and how colleges and universities educate their students. Looking for work after graduation, job loss, or career opportunities have become so widespread and frequent that it is now considered an integral part of working life as a whole. Job hunting has become widespread and frequent. There has also been a significant increase in the amount of research done on job search and unemployment, including a meta-analysis that identified job search behaviour as the primary determinant of job search. Since most studies have only looked at one or a few aspects of job search behaviour, it is difficult to combine previous findings, thus lacking a clear understanding of the various dimensions of job search behaviour. However, COVID-19 influenced job searching in general; compared to pre-employment levels, COVID-19 changed job search behaviour and resulted in a rise in job applications for jobs from home. We also consider that strong macro-economic events lead to instability and a lack of control, which makes the epidemiological event more likely to make face-to-face work unsafe. Face-to-face positions are more likely to be speculated during a pandemic due to company closures from both a financial and a health standpoint.

Relationship between COVID-19 Anxiety and Job Search Behaviour

Research on context (macro-economic factors) is needed to gain deeper and richer insights into the determinants and moderators of job search success, according to Wanberg, Ali and Csillag (2020). Economic shock from the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant and direct impact on human capital in the traditional workplace (Autin et al., 2020; Campello, 2020). Large-scale research by Aucejo et al. found that college students were disproportionately affected by the pandemic (2020). In the spring and summer of 2020, when the pandemic breaks out, students should expect a 35% drop in their chances of finding a job, according to their findings. It is not uncommon for young adults to estimate that the pandemic will have a significant impact on their future earning potential, with a 20 per cent drop in their chances of finding work before graduation and an impact on their future income. Since graduates mostly run from the bad impact of recessions, the health and length of the graduate's labour market is linked to the wider economy. The size of the current issue means it will affect workers from different skills level and lead to difficulty for those entering the labour market for the first time. The recruitment of new graduates decreased everywhere. In 2020, a lot of employers decided to take the step to delay or reduce the numbers of

graduates recruited. Moreover, this led to a reduction in the overall number of jobs in the formal graduate labour market in all countries that participated in the study. The new graduate market will not recover immediately. Looking at the predictions of the next year, the expectation of 15 countries is that the volume of graduates recruited will be continuously on the decline. There are only three countries whose expectation is stability of the market – Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa; and only three other countries that expect growth – the UAE, Poland, and Belgium. People believe in uncertainty; the respondents say that their loss of certainty in how the transition of graduates will work makes planning difficult, including finding various ideas and solutions regarding this issue. In addition to job prospects, the pandemic has had an effect on people's social, educational, and financial circumstances. Using the job search theory and research (Bianchi, 2020; Wan-berg, Ali et al., 2020), and informed by the event system theory, we first examine the extent to which recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic has changed job search behaviour during the transition period immediately following the event (Morgeson et al., 2015). It is therefore possible to conclude that applications will rise in uncertain and stressful situations, because job search provides an alternative way to cope, particularly in the short term (Trope & Liberman, 2010; Wanberg & Rotundo, 1999). Job search behaviour (i.e., job applications) may have changed over time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to determine if the pandemic's onset affected job search events and transitions.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study, which have been formulated after a thorough literature survey:

Q1. What is the present level of COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour among the newly graduated students?

Q2. Does the level of COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour stand equal across the demographic variables?

Q3. Does COVID-19 anxiety impact job search behaviour among the newly graduated students?

Objectives

- To assess the level of COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour among the newly graduated students.
- To analyse the interaction of various demographic characteristics on COVID-19 anxiety and job search

behaviour among the newly graduated students.

- To assess the mutual relationship between COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour among the newly graduated students.
- To provide useful suggestions based on the results obtained.

Type of Research

The type of research used in the study is quantitative containing close-ended questions (A. Megeirhi et al., 2018). All the responses have been recorded on a five-point Likert scale. The sampling method used in the study was convenience sampling, because it was easy for the researcher to reach the sample size participation to gather the data and the information.

Research Design

This study is mainly based on descriptive analysis, as it examines the impact of COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour among new graduate students in the University of Technology and Applied Science, Muscat (Oman). Therefore, the population of the study considered was the new graduate students from the University of Technology and Applied Science from 2020 – the respondents comprised both male and female students from the Business Department.

Sample Size

The sample size, which is a group of subjects selected from the general population, is considered a representative sample.

$$n = N * X / (X + N - 1)$$

where,

$$X = Z_{\alpha/2}^2 * p * (1-p) / MOE^2$$

$Z_{\alpha/2}$ is the critical value of the normal distribution at $\alpha/2$ (e.g. for a confidence level of 95%, α is 0.05 and the critical value is 1.96); MOE is the margin of error; p is the sample population; and N is the population size. By applying the formula, the sample size to collect data is 150; this is enough to represent the population. However, the number of the respondents we collected information from is 162 students (mixed gender) from the University of Technology and Applied Science. We created a Google Form online for the questionnaire. In addition, the sampling technique method that was used in the research is non-probability sampling, which is useful for the analysis, because it makes inferences about the population easy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Respondents

Convenience sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which people are non-randomly selected so they are 'convenient' sources of data for researchers. We decided to distribute the questionnaire to students who have graduated from the University of Technology and Applied Science, and it was sent to both males and females to see how COVID-19 anxiety affects job search behaviour. We divided the questions into two parts: eight questions about COVID-19 anxiety and five questions about job search behaviour. All responses are recorded using a five-point scale from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'.

Research Instrument

The research used both primary and secondary data tools. In primary data, we used a questionnaire, which is a set of several questions through which we tried to collect some basic information or data from the respondents. Our instrument two variables, which consisted of COVID-19 and job search behaviour. The COVID-19 anxiety scale was adopted from Sherman (2020). For job search behaviour, the scale of Megeirhi et al. (2020) was adopted.

The secondary data tool was used to collect information from past studies and experiences. In addition, we gathered some information or questions from previous articles and explained to the respondents that they can express their opinion on the impact of (COVID-19) anxiety on job search behaviour among new graduate students.

Primary Data

The researchers of this study gathered significant data which is useful to the objectives of the study. Moreover, the instrument used in this study to collect the information was a questionnaire; therefore, it was easy for the researcher to know, figure, and measure various opinions of the sample size which was taken from the general population of the study. The questionnaire was distributed to the sample, which was newly graduated students from the University of Technology and Applied Science.

Treatment of Data

After the distribution of the questionnaire to the respondents, we started analysing the data that was collected by using appropriate software such as MS Excel and SPSS. MS Excel and SPSS are more suitable and useful for the researcher to show the results in the form of tables, graphs, means, standard deviation, and correlation, and to clarify additional

facts and findings.

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation

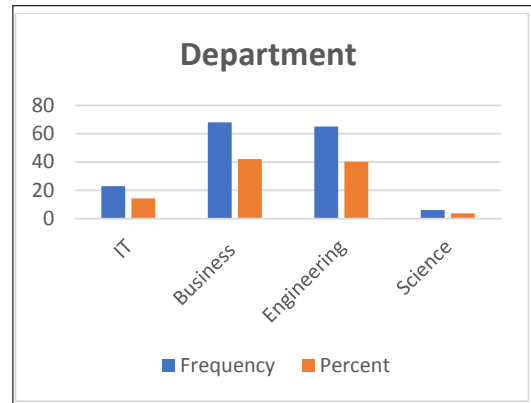


Fig. 1

Table 1: Department

Specialisation	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
IT	23	14.2	14.2	14.2
Business	68	42.0	42.0	56.2
Engineering	65	40.1	40.1	96.3
Science	6	3.7	3.7	100.0
Total	162	100.0	100.0	

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour

Interpretation

The bar chart in Fig. 1 shows the data of the respondents who answered the questionnaire from different departments. It is clear that the business and engineering departments have the highest number of participants, at 42% and 40.1%, respectively. On the other hand, there were only 23 participants (14.2%) from the IT department, while the science department had the lowest percentage of participants at 6%.

Table 2: Age

Age	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
20-22	44	27.2	27.2	27.2
23-25	89	54.9	54.9	82.1
26-28	16	9.9	9.9	92.0
Above 28	13	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	162	100.0	100.0	

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

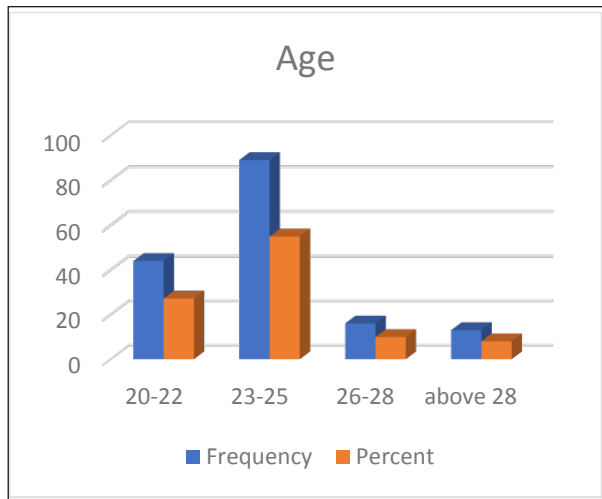


Fig. 2

Interpretation

The bar chart in Fig. 2 shows the various age limits of graduate students. A majority of graduates (55%) are in the age group 23-25. The second-highest number of respondents (27%) are in the age group 20-22. On the other hand, 10% of the respondents' age is in the range 26-28. However, the lowest number of students (8%) are above 28.

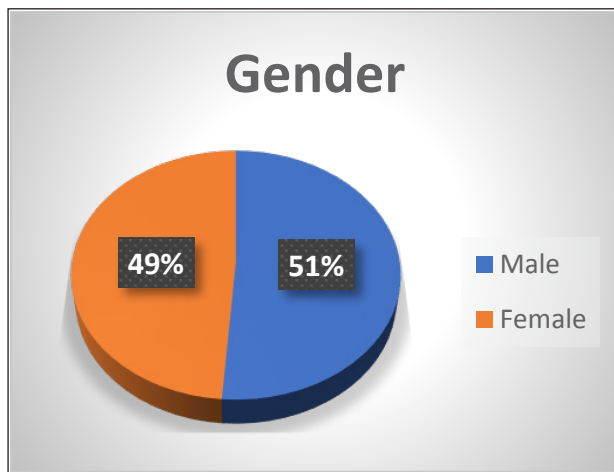


Fig. 3

Table 3: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Male	83	51.2	51.2	51.2
Female	79	48.8	48.8	100.0
Total	162	100.0	100.0	

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Interpretation

The pie chart in Fig. 3 illustrates that the number of males (51%) is slightly higher than the number of females (49%).

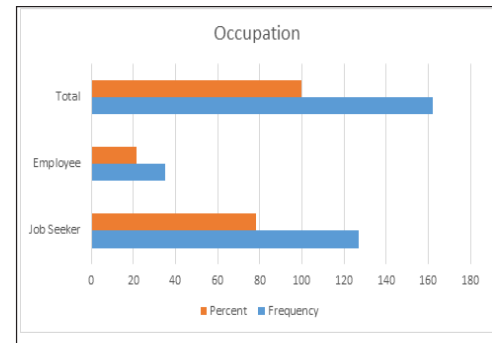


Fig. 4

Table 4: Occupation

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Job Seeker	127	78.4	78.4	78.4
Employee	35	21.6	21.6	100.0
Total	162	100.0	100.0	

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Interpretation

Table 4 indicates the occupation data of the sample size who answered the questionnaire. It can be clearly seen that 162 participants answered the questionnaire. The job seekers take the lead over the employees by 92 participants, at 78.4%. On the other hand, the employees made up only 35 participants, at 21.6%.

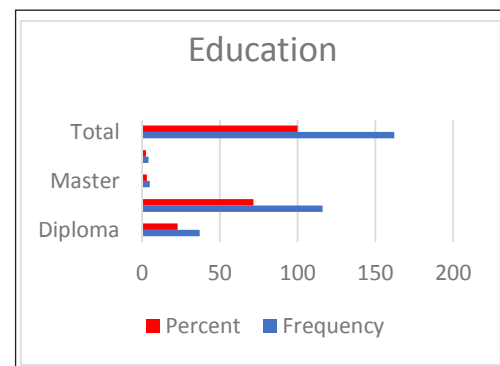


Fig. 5

Table 5: Education

Qualifications	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent	Cumulative Per cent
Diploma	37	22.8	22.8	22.8
Bachelor's	116	71.6	71.6	94.4
Master's	5	3.1	3.1	97.5
Other	4	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	162	100.0	100.0	

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Interpretation

In terms of qualification, the bar chart in Fig. 5 shows that the highest number of respondents (72%) have a bachelor's degree, while a fewer number of participants hold a diploma (22.8%). However, a small number of respondents have a master's degree (3.1%), with the lowest number of respondents (2.5%) having different levels of education.

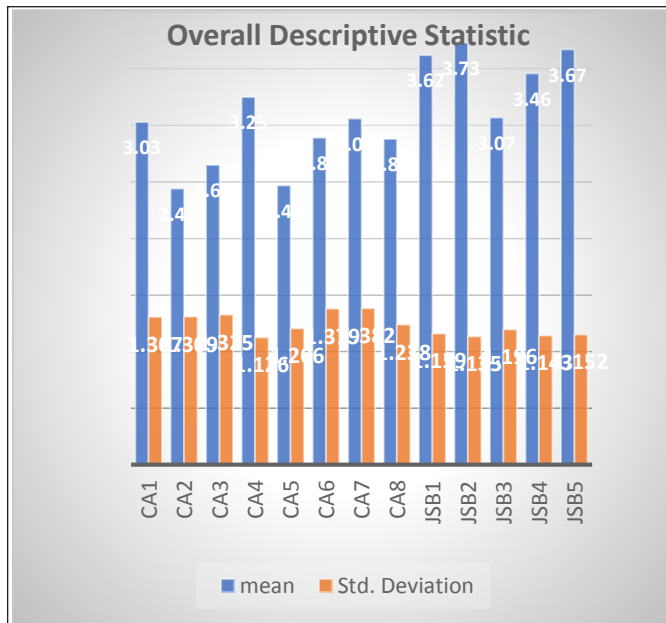


Fig. 6

Table 6: Overall Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CA1	162	3.03	1.307	.103
CA2	162	2.44	1.309	.103
CA3	162	2.65	1.325	.104
CA4	162	3.25	1.126	.088
CA5	162	2.47	1.206	.095
CA6	162	2.89	1.379	.108
CA7	162	3.06	1.382	.109
CA8	162	2.88	1.238	.097
JSB1	162	3.62	1.159	.091
JSB2	162	3.73	1.135	.089
JSB3	162	3.07	1.196	.094
JSB4	162	3.46	1.143	.090
JSB5	162	3.67	1.152	.091

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Interpretation

Fig. 6 shows that there are a high number of respondents who have become worried and restless when exposed to even normal health issues (3.25%). Most of the graduate students

ignore discussions about COVID-19, as it makes them feel worried and depressed (3.06%). However, the lowest number of respondents agree that they feel dizzy when listening to news regarding COVID-19 (3.03%). Moreover, there is a similarity in responses, where most students are afraid of death due to COVID-19 (2.89%). There is a slight difference between students who lose interest in food after knowing about COVID-19 (2.65%) and those who become worried and restless when exposed to even normal health issues.

As for the JSB statements, the highest percentage of respondents (3.73%) were searching for jobs through the Internet because of the pandemic situation, while 3.62% of the respondents had spent much of the time seeking job opportunities and putting a lot of effort into searching for a job. Conversely, only 3.07% of the respondents are reading various job advertisements in magazines and newspaper publications.

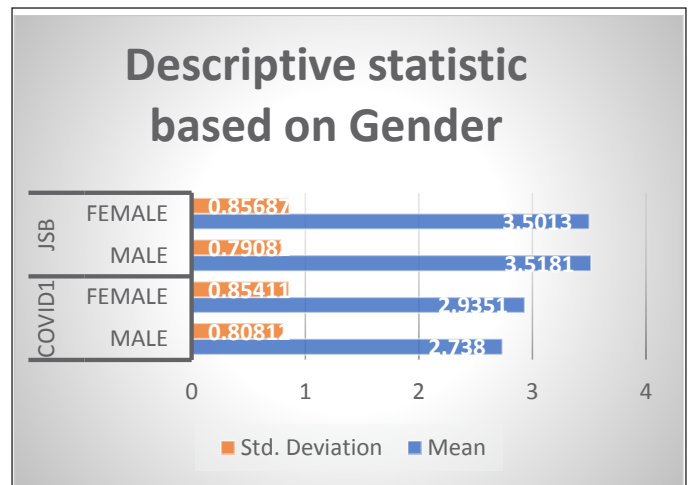


Fig. 7

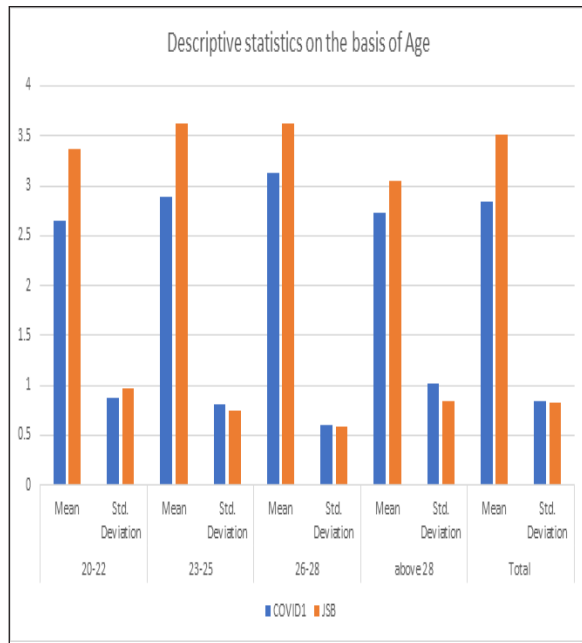
Table 7: Descriptive Statistics based on Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
COVID-19	Male	83	2.7380	.80812	.08870
	Female	79	2.9351	.85411	.09610
JSB	Male	83	3.5181	.79082	.08680
	Female	79	3.5013	.85687	.09641

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Interpretation

In terms of descriptive statistics based on gender, it can be seen from Fig. 7 that the level of varies slightly between the perception of males and females in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on them, while there is no difference between them due to COVID-19, as they are both facing problems while searching for jobs.

**Fig. 8****Table 8: Descriptive Statistics based on Age**

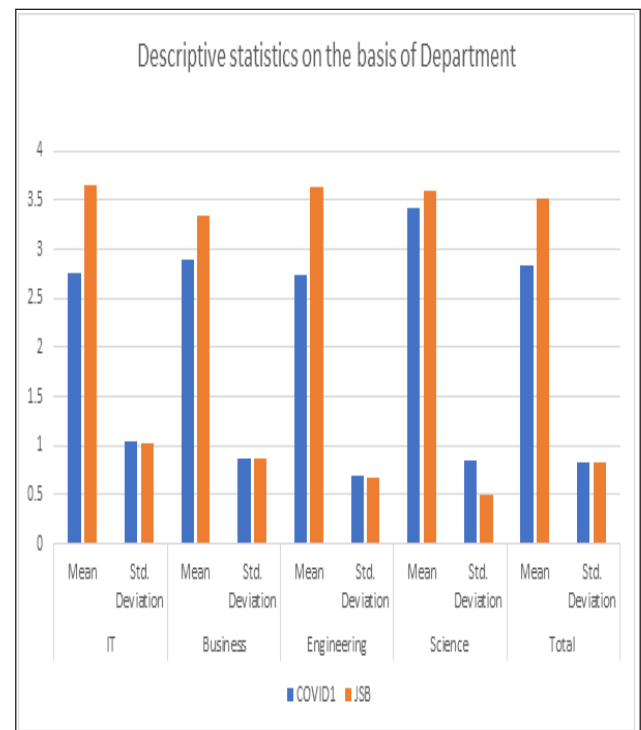
Age		COVID-19	JSB
20-22	Mean	2.6477	3.3636
	N	44	44
	Std. Deviation	.88111	.97052
23-25	Mean	2.8890	3.6292
	N	89	89
	Std. Deviation	.80865	.74806
26-28	Mean	3.1250	3.6250
	N	16	16
	Std. Deviation	.60381	.57908
Above 28	Mean	2.7308	3.0462
	N	13	13
	Std. Deviation	1.01402	.84520
Total	Mean	2.8341	3.5099
	N	162	162
	Std. Deviation	.83415	.82116

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Interpretation

The bar graph in Fig. 8 shows the descriptive statistics on the basis of age. There are several differences in the values between the two variables – COVID-19 and JSB. Students aged 26-28 have slightly higher mean values in both the variables, COVID-19 and JSB (3.12 and 3.62, respectively), which means students feel sensitive regarding the pandemic environment, as well as the job search behaviours. Regarding COVID-19 anxiety, the lowest mean is in the age group 20-22 and the lowest standard deviation is in the age group 26-28.

Furthermore, in terms of job search, the lowest mean and standard deviation are among the age groups above 28 and 20-22, respectively.

**Fig. 9****Table 9: Descriptive Statistics based on Department**

Department		COVID-19	JSB
IT	Mean	2.7554	3.6522
	N	23	23
	Std. Deviation	1.03660	1.03259
Business	Mean	2.9044	3.3412
	N	68	68
	Std. Deviation	.86579	.87079
Engineering	Mean	2.7346	3.6277
	N	65	65
	Std. Deviation	.70104	.68180
Science	Mean	3.4167	3.6000
	N	6	6
	Std. Deviation	.84286	.48990
Total	Mean	2.8341	3.5099
	N	162	162
	Std. Deviation	.83415	.82116

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Interpretation

The bar graph in Fig. 9 shows the descriptive statistics based on different departments. It is clear from the graph that all the departments are equal in mean on JSB, which is around

3.5. In contrast, the mean differs for the COVID-19 variable. In addition, the values of standard deviation are significantly low in all fields (COVID-19 and JSB).

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics based on Occupation

Occupation		COVID-19	JSB
Job Seeker	Mean	2.7913	3.5921
	N	127	127
	Std. Deviation	.80272	.82439
Employee	Mean	2.9893	3.2114
	N	35	35
	Std. Deviation	.93560	.74667
Total	Mean	2.8341	3.5099
	N	162	162
	Std. Deviation	.83415	.82116

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

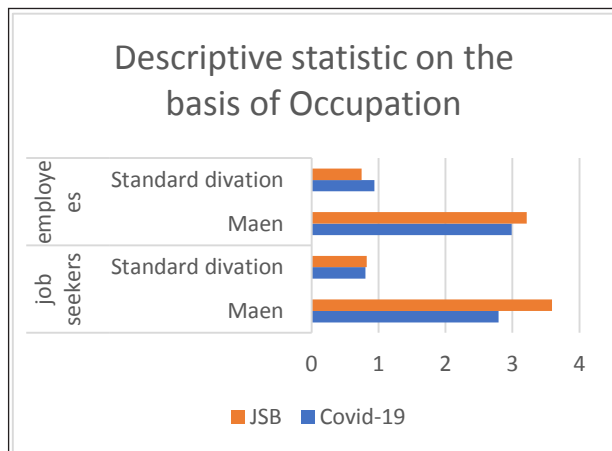


Fig. 10

Interpretation

The bar graph in Fig. 10 shows the descriptive statistics based on occupation. According to the chart, there are differences in values between JSB and COVID-19. It is seen that job seeker's behaviour's mean value is higher than that of the employed.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics based on Education

Education		COVID-19	JSB
Diploma	Mean	2.8480	3.4541
	N	37	37
	Std. Deviation	.49576	.65769
Bachelor's	Mean	2.7877	3.5293
	N	116	116
	Std. Deviation	.87387	.88160

Education		COVID-19	JSB
Master's	Mean	4.4000	3.8000
	N	5	5
	Std. Deviation	.39922	.56569
Other	Mean	2.0938	3.1000
	N	4	4
	Std. Deviation	.06250	.60000
Total	Mean	2.8341	3.5099
	N	162	162
	Std. Deviation	.83415	.82116

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

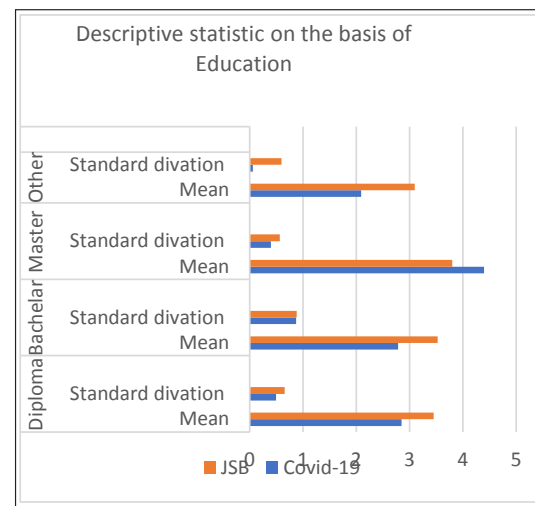


Fig. 11

Interpretation

The bar graph in Fig. 11 shows the descriptive statistics on the basis of education. According to the chart, there are differences in values between JSB and COVID-19. It is seen from the figure that the master's degree variable has a higher mean value on COVID-19 compared to other qualification holders. Furthermore, it is found that master's degree holders are facing tremendous problems in finding new jobs during the pandemic.

Table 12: Correlation

		COVID-19	JSB
COVID-19	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	162	
JSB	Pearson Correlation	.641	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	162	162

Note: COVID-19: COVID-19 Anxiety, JSB: Job Search Behaviour.

Note: Significance level at 95%.

Correlation Analysis

The analysis followed a conceptual framework and assumptions, which improved the study. In addition, it finds the relationship between the two factors – COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour ($r = .641$ sig. = .000). However, the p -value of significance is lower than the acceptable range of 0.05 ($p = .95$), which proposes that COVID-19 anxiety is a significant predictor of job search behaviour, thus accepting H1 of this research.

DISCUSSION

This study examines how COVID-19 impacts the job search behaviour among Omani students at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of group statistics, both male and female respondents participated in answering the questions. The researcher found that the relationship between both factors of the study, that is, COVID-19 anxiety and job search behaviour, have shown their effects on both genders, male and female, and not only on one. Moreover, regarding the data collected after distributing the questionnaire for participation, the result shows that there are slight differences in the numbers between male and female respondents who are affected because of COVID-19 anxiety in searching for a job. Overall, it is apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic has had its effects and caused problems in a majority of individuals, classified as job seekers, in the community.

Regarding the departments, there are four different departments, and we have distributed the questionnaire to all the departments, as well as to male and female respondents, and we obtained similar results among businesspeople and engineers; however, the business department has the highest number of participants at 42% and 40.1%, respectively. There are different age groups for job seekers as well as for graduates. We distributed the questionnaire to different age groups, and we received the highest result in the group 23-25, which is the youngest. In addition, there are different groups based on degrees – graduates in diploma, bachelor's, and other. After calculating the number of graduates in each degree, we got the highest percentage of graduates with a bachelor's degree, which is 116.

People have entered a psychological state in their lives because of the pandemic, and there are those who are looking for a job where they can work online and be away from people for self-preservation. The difference in perception between the male and female respondents in terms of the effect of COVID-19 on them is very less; and there is no difference between them regarding JSB. Students between the ages of 26 and 28 had a mean slightly higher, between 3.12 and 3.62, in each of the COVID-19 and JSB variables. Further, there was a slight difference between the age groups 23-25 and 26-28 in COVID-19 and JSB, as these are the younger age

groups. There are many departments covering the graduate students, and we obtained similar numbers between them in the two variables. The largest number of people who fear COVID-19 are employees; unlike job seekers, their number is less than employees, and vice-versa, at JSB. People having a master's degree face a big problem in finding a new job during this pandemic and their numbers are large on JSB and COVID-19 variables, unlike holders of a diploma. On comparing the numbers between JSB and COVID-19, there is a relationship between the values; p of significance is less than the acceptable range 0.05 ($p = .95$), which suggests that COVID-19 anxiety is an important indicator of job search behaviour.

CONCLUSION

Job behaviour appears to be a hard issue for Omani graduate students. Job searchers confront additional challenges, disappointments, and rejection, which can diminish their drive, especially during COVID-19 and in the present economic environment. Furthermore, today's graduate students are looking for work not only during a difficult economic period, but also during a major life transition in which they must adjust to a new way of life and financial situation, while also managing changing personal relationships.

The largest number of people who fear COVID-19 are employees; unlike job seekers their number is less than employees, and vice-versa, at JSB. Those having a master's degree face a big problem finding a new job during this pandemic, and their numbers are large on JSB and COVID-19, unlike holders of a diploma. On comparing the numbers between JSB and COVID-19, there is a relationship between the values; p of significance is less than the acceptable range 0.05 ($p = .95$), which suggests that COVID-19 anxiety is an important indicator of job search behaviour.

However, anxiety has a significant impact on job search behaviour, and this chapter will show some of the impacts of (COVID-19) anxiety on job search behaviour among fresh graduates, since COVID-19 has become one of the popular topics nowadays in the field of human resources and people who have recently graduated and are looking for a job. Due to this situation fresh graduate students cannot find a job. So, we analysed this in the previous chapter through the answers of the respondents and this was our first objective. It became clear to us that anxiety causes a big problem for new graduates, and they do not even like to talk about this matter because it has become a source of concern for all job seekers and the ethics of looking for work. We also analysed that the percentage of males was higher than the percentage of females in terms of searching for work, and we are here talking about recent graduates, and this was one of our

objectives as well. Moreover, from the results we found that there are slight differences in the numbers between male and female respondents who are affected by COVID-19 anxiety while searching for a job. Overall, we found that the relationship between anxiety and job search behaviour was positive, and we can say that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased its impact and caused issues for most individuals, classified as job seekers, in the community. Finally, our findings contribute to the expanding body of literature supporting the role of personal resources in encouraging job search tenacity.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATION OF STUDY

We started with self-ratings. Despite its widespread usage in job search research, this approach may cause common method variance, resulting in overstated associations. Furthermore, even though job search behaviour is regarded as one of the components of various employability techniques, we have not theorised any link between perceived employability and subjective norms. In terms of speed and worldwide effect, the COVID-19 pandemic is unparalleled. We wanted to enhance practice in ways that would assist organisations comprehend the COVID-19 problem, while also improving job search theory in ways that would be applicable outside of the crisis. Given that the context has not played a key role in the job search literature, this finding has substantial implications for job search theory and for guiding future research (Boswell et al., 2012). Many traumatic occurrences happen throughout the job hunt, such as college graduation, job acceptance, and job loss. A fledgling field of study is beginning to understand that macro events may also impact job search, such as how job searching during times of hardship and uncertainty adds to a loss of control or greater thankfulness (Bianchi, 2020).

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