



# USE OF INTERNET IN THE JOB SEARCH PROCESS: GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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## Abstract:

Bearing in mind the slowdown of the global economy and modest potential for job creation, job seekers are in a vulnerable position. This particularly applies to the young people who are looking for the first employment. That has led to a growing interest in analyzing the ways in which candidates look for a job, and effectiveness of certain tools. In the last fifteen years, the Internet has been widely accepted as a job search tool. Therefore, the authors have placed special emphasis on the Internet job search activities of young people in Serbia and possible gender based differences. The results have shown that there are no gender-based differences in behaviour of young job seekers. In addition, it can be concluded that the Internet job search activities are very intensive and recognized as one of the main job search tools, with the international trends in behaviour of job seekers.

## Key words:

job search activities, the Internet, young job seekers, job search intensity, gender-based differences in behaviour of job seekers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Young people are faced with difficulties at labor market. That particularly refers to the job search period, possibilities of finding stable employment, unemployment and poverty risks *etc.* (Arandarenko, 2011; Krstić *et al.*, 2010; Jovičić & Lazarević, 2014; European Commission, 2012). As a consequence of labor market flexibilization and latest international economic crisis, young people face the possibility of finding non-standard employment, long-term job search and labor market exclusion (European Commission, 2012; O'Reilly *et al.*, 2015). These are some of the reasons for the growing scientific and research interest in job search activities, its intensity and effectiveness.

On the other hand, the Internet has become a very important channel for job search activities (Kuhn & Skuterud, 2002; Van Roy, 2003; Kudlyak & Romero, 2013). Due to its rapid expansion, the intensity of Internet job activities among job seekers tripled in the period from 1998 to 2009 (Kuhn & Mansour, 2011). On the other hand, Internet job matching platforms have emerged over the past fifteen years, and have become an important element of modern labour markets (Levin, 2011). The Internet has led to reallocation of effort among various job search activities (Stevenson,

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2008), so the Internet resource has become the main source of information used by job seekers during the job search process (Van Roy, 2003; Stevenson, 2008; Beard, 2010; Kudlyak & Romero, 2013).

Internet use in job search process and its effect on employment outcomes have also changed over time. Although job search was first considered ineffective, recent findings suggest that it has become an effective tool for finding a job, so it reduces individual workers' unemployment duration (Kuhn & Mansour, 2011; Suvankulov & Chi Keung Lau, 2012). Also, job seekers who use Internet for search activities had positive employment or reemployment outcomes, compared to general job seekers population (Suvankulov & Chi Keung Lau, 2012). The Internet also has positive effects on general labour market activity. Some analyses have shown that the Internet use keeps job seekers active and reduces the possibility of job search discouragement by over 50 percent (Beard *et al.*, 2010).

## 2. INTERNET USE IN GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Bearing in mind gender based differences in labor market outcomes (Arandarenko, 2011; European Commission, 2012), gender perspective of Internet use in this case is important. Gender gap in the Internet use was evident in 1990s, but it decreased and almost disappeared in 2000s (Ono & Zavodny, 2002).

The main research question of this paper is: „Is there any gender-based gap in the Internet job search activities among the young job seekers in Serbia?“ It was mainly related to Internet job search intensity and use of different Internet contents in job search process (online job boards, employers' websites visits, professional and other social networks, job search clubs, online job advertisements *etc.*). We were also interested in the devices job seekers use for Internet job search. Our hypothesis is defined in the following way: There are no statistically significant gender-based differences in Internet job search activities.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Research method used in this case was the online survey. Respondents were participants of a career fair held at Singidunum University on March 4th, 2016. They were predominately graduates who uploaded their CV in the career fair database. They were asked to give answers to different questions related to several aspects of the job search process. Out of 173 respondents, 121 were women and 52 man, which approximately represents gender struc-

ture of visitors attending this career fair. Also, over 98% of respondents were younger than 35.62. Furthermore, 8% of them were aged between 15-24, years old, since 35.7% were in the age group of 24-35.

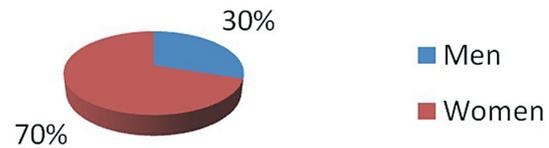


Figure 1. Sample structure

Job search activities could be generally analyzed through job search effort and intensity, job search strategies, preparatory and active job search behavior, formal and informal job sources, specific job search behavior job search quality, job search dynamics, and job search persistence *etc.* (Van Hoyer, 2014, p. 2). We were predominantly interested in the intensity of job search activities. The areas of job search covered are:

- ♦ Internet job search activities,
- ♦ Devices used for Internet job search.

We used ANOVA to compare potential gender-based differences within the sample, related to job search activities. Independent variable was gender, since dependent variables were: "I use social networks (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook *etc.*) in the job search process", "I use online job boards", "I visit employers websites", "I network with other job seekers using specialized websites". The respondents were asked to grade their specific Internet activity on 1-5 scale (where „1“ stands for „never“ and 5 stands for „very often“).

We also wanted to find out something about the intensity and possible gender-based differences of devices used for Internet job search. ANOVA was also used in this case, where independent variable was gender, while dependent variables were: "I use laptop when search for job related information", "I use desktop computer when search for job related information", "I use mobile phone when search for job related information", "I use tablet computer when search for job related information" and "I use other devices when search for job related information". The questionnaire included other questions related to non-Internet job search activities (Use of HR agencies services, Career fairs visits, use of university career center services, use of National Employment Office services *etc.*), job search strategy, salary and other relevant labor market preferences, but it will not be analyzed in detail, bearing in mind the specific research topic.



### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results in Table 1, there are no differences in general Internet use for job search activities. More than 95% of respondents actively use Internet in job search process, which is in accordance with the international trends of job seekers behaviour.

Gender of respondents	Answers			
	Yes	%	No	%
Man	50	96.15	2	3.85
Women	115	95.04	6	4.96

Table 1. Question: Do you use Internet services in the job search process?

The results show that there is no statistically significant gender-based difference in intensity of the Internet job search activities in any of the cases (Table 2). The use of online job boards (4.16) and employers websites visits (3.86) were the most intensive Internet job search activities for all the respondents. Networking with other job seekers was not recognized as an interesting job search activity by any group (2.29 in average).

Questions	Gender	Mean	SD	N
I use social networks (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook etc.) in the job search process	Male	3.02	1.435	51
	Female	3.36	1.448	120
	Total	3.26	1.448	171
I use online job boards	Male	4.25	1.214	51
	Female	4.12	1.204	120
	Total	<b>4.16</b>	1.205	171
I visit employers websites	Male	3.67	1.052	51
	Female	3.94	1.19	120
	Total	<b>3.86</b>	1.155	171
I network with other job seekers using specialized websites	Male	2.25	1.278	51
	Female	2.3	1.274	120
	Total	<b>2.29</b>	1.272	171

SD – standard deviation; N – Number of respondents

Table 2. Question: Intensity of different ways of Internet job search

It is interesting that online social networks are not used at all among 28.2% of the respondents. LinkedIn was recognized as the best social network for job search activities (55.8%), Facebook was favored by 13,6% of the respondents, while Twitter was not recognized at all in this sense (no respondent recognized it as the best social network for job search).

Since we also surveyed intensity of non-internet job search activities, we can mention that the differences were recognized only for three job search activities: 1. Use of HR agencies services ( $F(1,170) = 3,944, p = 0.05$ ), 2. Career fairs visits ( $F(1,170) = 9,497, p < 0.05$ ), and 3. Use of university career center services ( $F(1,170) = 5,092, p < 0.05$ ). Women are more engaged in all of the mentioned activities, which is consistent with the sample structure and gender structure of career fair visitors.

Questions	Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
I use laptop when search for job related information	Male	3.55	1.646	49
	Female	4.17	1.354	118
	Total	<b>3.99</b>	1.468	167
I use desktop computer when search for job related information	Male	3.33	1.688	49
	Female	2.75	1.659	118
	Total	2.92	1.683	167
I use mobile phone when search for job related information	Male	3.18	1.523	49
	Female	3.43	1.38	118
	Total	<b>3.36</b>	1.424	167
I use tablet computer when search for job related information	Male	1.53	1.082	49
	Female	1.74	1.317	118
	Total	<b>1.68</b>	1.253	167
I use other devices when search for job related information	Male	1.51	0.845	49
	Female	1.89	1.407	118
	Total	1.78	1.277	167

SD – standard deviation; N – Number of respondents

Table 3. Devices used for Internet job search



Devices used for Internet job search activities were also an area of our research interest. Differences were found only in the cases of laptop ( $F(1,170) = 8,825$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and desktop computer use ( $F(1,170) = 6,007$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Female respondents use laptop more often than male respondents. On the other side, male respondents use desktop computers more intensively than female when looking for job related information. The most interesting devices for job search are laptops (3.99) and mobile phones (3.36). In most of the cases, the tablet computer was not recognized as an Internet job search device (1.68).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Our research results show that the Internet as a job search tool is used almost by all young job seekers in Serbia. They actively use different Internet platforms and contents in the job search process more often than non-Internet job search activities, which is similar to previous scientific findings in this field. We could observe significant differences in intensity of different Internet job search activities. Online job boards were most attractive to the respondents, while networking with other job seekers was not recognized as a regular job search activity. Internet use has become broadly accepted both among men and women, which is also relevant for job seekers behavior literature.

We could not find statistically significant difference in Internet use in the job search process among male and female respondents. Also, intensity of Internet job search activities is very similar. Some differences were recognized when we analyzed devices used for job search activities and non-Internet job search activities. Bearing in mind all of the mentioned, we can say that our research hypothesis is confirmed.

Some future analyses could be focused on gender based differences of older groups of job seekers. Also, job search strategies, general job search intensity could be correlated with Internet job search activities and possible gender based differences. Finally, effectiveness of every Internet job search activity should be evaluated in the perspective of employment outcomes, since some of the activities were widely accepted (Use of online job boards) and some were not recognized at all (Networking with other job seekers).

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