CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the results and discusses the implications of results for both academicians and practitioners. The chapter concludes with the discussion of limitations in this study and potential directions for future research.

8.1 Summary of Results

The hypotheses of this study were tested using SEM as presented in the previous chapter. Out of thirty hypotheses, twenty hypotheses (H1A, H1C, H2A, H2B, H2C, H3B, H3C, H4A, H4C, H5A, H5B, H5C, H6B, H7B, H7C, H7D, H8A, H8B, H9C, H9D) were supported and nine hypotheses (H1B, H3A, H6A, H6C, H7A, H8C, H8D, H9A, H9B) were not supported. One hypothesis (H4B) was open-ended and was subject to exploration due to contrasting theories on the direction of expected relationship.

Hypothesis 1A tested the impact of career adaptability on focused search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of career adaptability on focused search strategy which is consistent with the extant literature (Gunkel et al., 2005; Koen et al., 2010; Chatterjee, 2014). As career adaptability fosters career decisiveness, it induces the job seekers to search and apply for specific jobs that are aligned with their knowledge, experiences, and interests.

Hypothesis 1B tested the impact of career optimism on focused search strategy. The results showed that there is no significant relationship between career optimism and focused search strategy. This finding although not congruent with the past studies conducted in the western context and developed economies, is consistent with finding by Chatterjee (2014) in the Indian context among the sample of management students. The reason can be attributed to the
competitive job market conditions in India with limited opportunities for the new entrants (Kuriakose & Joseph, 2016).

Hypothesis 1C tested the impact of perceived knowledge of job market on focused search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of perceived knowledge of job market on focused search strategy which is consistent with the extant career literature (Gunkel et al., 2005, Chatterjee, 2014).

Hypothesis 2A tested the impact of career adaptability on exploratory search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of career adaptability on exploratory search strategy which is in congruence with the past studies on job search behavior (Koen et al., 2010, Zikic & Klehe, 2006). The individuals who are adaptable tend to adjust quickly with any change in the career plan and work roles. Therefore, career adaptability fosters the use of exploratory strategy during job search.

Hypothesis 2B tested the impact of career optimism on exploratory search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of career optimism on exploratory search strategy which is in congruence with the extant career literature (Chatterjee et al., 2014). It shows that the individuals with positive outlook towards career indulge in more career exploration activities and do not confine their job search efforts to specific type of jobs or organizations.

Hypothesis 2C tested the impact of perceived knowledge of job market on exploratory search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of perceived knowledge of job market on exploratory search strategy which is in congruence with the extant literature which suggest that perceived knowledge of job market involves proactively collecting information about different jobs, occupations, and employment trends and patterns (Rottinghaus et al., 2012).
Hypothesis 3A tested the impact of career adaptability on haphazard search strategy. The results showed that there is no significant linkage between career adaptability and haphazard search strategy. Career adaptability as a component of career planning attitudes induces clarity of employment related goals and ambitions (Savikas, 2005) thus reducing the use of haphazard search strategy, but the same could not be concluded in the present study due to insignificant statistical estimates.

Hypothesis 3B tested the impact of career optimism on haphazard search strategy. The results showed that there is negative impact of career optimism on haphazard search strategy. This finding is congruent with the past studies (Gunkel et al., 2010; Stoeber et al., 2016) which suggest that career optimism enables the job seekers to perform the job search activities comfortably and be decisive about their career choice (Rottinghaus et al., 2005), thus reducing the use of haphazard search strategy.

Hypothesis 3C tested the impact of perceived knowledge of job market on haphazard search strategy. The results showed that there is negative impact of perceived knowledge of job market on haphazard search strategy. This finding is consistent with the past studies (Gunkel et al., 2010; Nota et al., 2014) which suggest that perceived knowledge of job market enables the job seekers to be decisive about their career choice (Rottinghaus et al., 2005) and not follow a random approach in their job search; reducing the use of haphazard search strategy.

Hypothesis 4A tested the impact of emotional support on focused search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of emotional support on focused search strategy which is consistent with the extant literature (Zikic & Klehe, 2006; Bonaccio et al., 2014). Encouragement to pursue the desired career and overcome the distress related to failure and
uncertainty in the job search process fosters determination to search for the most suitable and fitting jobs.

Hypothesis 4B tested the impact of emotional support on exploratory search strategy. The results showed that there is a negative impact of emotional support on exploratory search strategy which is consistent with the extant model of vocational exploration and commitment by Blustein et al. (1989). The results indicated that emotional support leads to perceived pressure and social anxiety during job search to accomplish the goals outlined by oneself or prescribed by the society at large, abstaining the job seekers from exploring their alternatives.

Hypothesis 4C tested the impact of emotional support on haphazard search strategy. The results showed that there is a negative impact of emotional support on haphazard search strategy which is in congruence with the extant literature on emotional support and job search (Zikic & Klehe, 2006; Blustein et al., 1989, Bonaccio et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 5A tested the impact of financial support on focused search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of financial support on focused search strategy which is consistent with the extant literature (Koen, 2007). In contrast with financial hardship that induces the use of haphazard search strategy; financial support fosters the use of focused search strategy.

Hypothesis 5B tested the impact of financial support on exploratory search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of financial support on exploratory search strategy which is consistent with the extant literature (Zikic & Klehe, 2006). Financial support allows the job seekers to comfortably explore their alternatives before making a final choice as they are not subject to the financial hardship that induces job seekers to randomly take up any job for livelihood. Since most of the respondents in this study were fresher’s i.e. without any prior work-
experience, most of them are likely to be the recipient of financial support from their parents and family members as per the general norm in Indian society.

Hypothesis 5C tested the impact of financial support on haphazard search strategy. The results showed that there is a negative impact of financial support on haphazard search strategy which is in congruence with the extant literature (Koen, 2007). In absence of financial support, one tends to apply randomly for jobs so as to end the state of financial concern at the earliest, such as repayment of education loans taken for pursuing higher education.

Hypothesis 6A tested the impact of informational support on focused search strategy. The results showed that there is no significant linkage between informational support and focused search strategy. This finding can be attributed to the information-seeking behavior of job seekers which largely influence the receipt of informational support. Since, measurement of information-seeking behavior was beyond the purview of this study, future studies can be conducted to examine the impact of information-seeking on informational support and further on the use of job search strategies.

Hypothesis 6B tested the impact of informational support on exploratory search strategy. The results showed that there is a positive impact of informational support on exploratory search strategy. This finding indicates that since job seekers with exploratory search strategy are open to the opportunities and alternatives available to them, they are motivated to pursue all the job related information and job leads available to them through their social network. This finding is congruent with the extant literature on social ties and job search behavior (Barbuescu, 2015; Hatala & Yamkovenko, 2016).
Hypothesis 6C tested the impact of informational support on haphazard search strategy. The results showed that there is no significant linkage between informational support and haphazard search strategy. This finding indicates that since a job seeker with haphazard strategy are characterized with the lack of motivation and dedication to pursue the job related information and unclear employment goals, availability of informational support failed to signify any impact on the use of haphazard search strategy.

Hypothesis 7A tested the impact of focused search strategy on number of job offers. The results showed that there is no significant impact of focused search strategy on number of job offers received by the job applicants. Although this finding is consistent with the results reported by Crossley and Highhouse (2005), a larger time gap between phase 1 and phase 2 in this study would have yielded more conclusive results.

Hypothesis 7B tested the impact of focused search strategy on percentage of job search success. The results showed that there is a positive impact of focused search strategy on percentage of job search success. This finding is in congruence with the conceptualization of focused search strategy which reduces the chance of mismatch between the applicants’ skills and requirements of the job (Stevens & Turban, 2001); leading to most of job applications being converted into job offers.

Hypothesis 7C tested the impact of focused search strategy on pre-entry person-job fit perception. The results showed that there is a positive impact of focused search strategy on pre-entry person-job fit perception which is in congruence with the past studies on job search strategies (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010, Taggar & Kuron, 2016).
Hypothesis 7D tested the impact of focused search strategy on pre-entry person-organization fit perception. The results showed that there is a positive impact of focused search strategy on pre-entry person-organization fit perception which is in congruence with the conceptualization of a focused search strategy which induces the job seekers to screen the potential employers (Stevens & Beach, 1996; Stevens & Turban, 2001).

Hypothesis 8A tested the impact of exploratory search strategy on number of job offers. The results showed that there is positive impact of exploratory search strategy on number of job offers received by the job applicants. This finding is consistent with the past studies which suggest that exploratory job seekers submit large number of job applications resulting in many job offers (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010).

Hypothesis 8B tested the impact of exploratory search strategy on percentage of job search success. The results showed that there is negative impact of exploratory search strategy on percentage of job search success. This finding is consistent with the conceptualization of exploratory search strategy (Stevens & Turban, 2001) and the findings reported by Taggar and Kuron (2016) with respect to the large number of over-qualified job applications being submitted by the exploratory job seekers.

Hypothesis 8C tested the impact of exploratory search strategy on pre-entry person-job fit perception. The results showed that there is no significant impact of exploratory search strategy on pre-entry person-job fit perception as suggested in the job search literature (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010, Taggar & Kuron, 2016). A larger time gap between phase 1 and phase 2 in this study would have yielded more conclusive results.
Hypothesis 8D tested the impact of exploratory search strategy on pre-entry person-organization fit perception. The results showed that there is no significant impact of exploratory search strategy on pre-entry person-organization fit perception as suggested in the literature (Stevens & Beach 1996, Stevens & Turban, 2001). A larger time gap between phase 1 and phase 2 in this study would have yielded more conclusive results.

Hypothesis 9A tested the impact of haphazard search strategy on number of job offers. The results showed that there is no significant linkage between haphazard search strategy and number of job offers received by the job applicants. Although this finding is consistent with the result reported by Koen et al. (2010), a larger time gap between phase 1 and phase 2 in this study would have yielded more conclusive results.

Hypothesis 9B tested the impact of haphazard search strategy on percentage of job search success. The results showed that there is no significant linkage between haphazard search strategy and percentage of job search success. It is likely that a time gap of 3 months was insufficient to yield the predicted negative linkage between the use of haphazard search strategy and percentage of job search success.

Hypothesis 9C tested the impact of haphazard search strategy on pre-entry person-job fit perception. The results showed that there is a negative impact of haphazard search strategy on pre-entry person-job fit perception which is congruent with the conceptualization of haphazard search strategy and the extant literature on job search (Steven & Turban, 2001; Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010, Taggar & Kuron, 2016).

Hypothesis 9D tested the impact of haphazard search strategy on pre-entry person-organization fit perception. The results showed that there is a negative impact of haphazard search strategy on pre-entry person-organization fit perception which is congruent with the
conceptualization of haphazard search strategy and the extant studies on job search (Steven & Turban, 2001; Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010, Taggar & Kuron, 2016).

8.2 Implications for Academicians

The present study identified the individual level and contextual factors that influence the use of job search strategies which in turn impact the job search outcomes. Past studies on job search strategies have mainly focused on the individual level factors that impact the use of one strategy over other. Since job search strategies are equally influenced by the contextual factors, this study contributes to the extant literature by investigating the impact of social support types on the use of job search strategies.

Further, the present study used Theory of Reasoned Action to explain the impact of individual attitudes and situational factors on job search strategies, thereby, validating the theory in the present context. Very few studies in the past have used TRA as a theoretical base to measure the predictors and outcomes of job search behavior. Using TRA as a theoretical framework is important due to its applicability in predicting human behaviors including the job search behavior.

This study used a longitudinal research design where both process and outcomes of job search were incorporated in the study as recommended by several vocational theorists and job search researchers (Hall, 2002; Super, 1957; Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Rogers & Creed, 2011). This study confirms the relevance of using a longitudinal research design when one is trying to examine the impact of a behavior on the future outcomes, in the Indian context.

The study for the first time also tested for the possible interaction effect between focused and exploratory search strategies as recommended by Koen et al. (2016). As suggested by
Crossley and Highhouse (2005), job seekers are likely to switch from one job search strategy to the other over a period of time, depending on the outcomes obtained or change in the factors that influence the strategies. Thus, it is likely that few job seekers could be at a transition stage from one strategy to the other while responding to the measures of job search strategies; suggesting interaction between them. However, the findings of this study revealed no interaction effect between focused and exploratory search strategies and confirmed the independence and uniqueness of each strategy amongst entry-level job seekers in the Indian context.

The present study adds value over existing body of literature on job search strategy as for the first time the impact of different job search strategies on the job search outcomes have been empirically tested amongst the sample of entry-level job seekers. Further, by including both individual level and contextual factors in one research model, this study provides a more comprehensive, detailed and integrated understanding of the individual level and situational factors that aid the use of focused, exploratory, and haphazard search strategies by the job seekers; especially the new entrants to the job market. This study is first of its kind to measure the components of career planning attitudes and different types of social support as predictors of job search strategies with an exclusive scale constructed to measure the three social support dimensions suggested by House (1981) in the job search context.

Further, this study contributes to the extant literature by measuring the percentage of job search success as one of the quantitative job search outcomes. Past studies on job search behavior have only measured the number of applications submitted (Taggar & Kuron, 2016) and the number of job offers received (Crossley & Highhouse, 2005; Koen et al., 2010), without considering the ratio of number of job offers received to number of applications submitted. Measuring the impact of job search strategies on percentage of job search success depicts the job
search success more objectively and also helps in ascertaining the effectiveness of one job search strategy over other.

Job search behavior has hardly been studied in the emerging economies and in the Indian context. India, due to its demographic dividend or young population base, has the opportunity to supply required workforce in the global job market. Thus, examining the job search behavior of Indian youth can be considered as a timely and notable investigation. This study, for the first time, examined the relevance and applicability of job search strategies and its impact on job search outcomes in the Indian context. The findings of this study has the potential to provide valuable insights to the higher education institutes and career counselors with regard to the appropriate initiatives that can be taken to foster the use of a suitable job search strategy which could enable the graduating students to reach the fulfilling employment outcomes.

8.3 Implications for Practitioners

The findings of the study revealed that components of career planning attitudes and different types of social support did not hold the same impact on the three job search strategies. It can be inferred from the results that career adaptability and perceived knowledge of job market as individual factors and emotional support and financial support as the contextual factors positively impacts the use of focused search strategy. Similarly, all the three career planning attitudes and financial and informational support positively impacts exploratory search strategy. Thus, by looking at the job market conditions, which may vary from one economy to the other, practitioners can identify the strategies followed by job seekers based on their career planning attitudes and receipt of social support. Based on the findings of this study, career counselors, employment agencies, and higher education institutes can also promote the development of
career planning attitudes amongst the young individuals to foster the use of a suitable job search strategy, given the job market conditions.

With regard to the impact of job search strategies, not all of them have identical impact on the job search outcomes. Focused search strategy plays a critical role in determining the person-job fit and person-organization fit; hence ensuring a better employment quality and higher rate of job search success. Exploratory search strategy have been found to be strongly and significantly related to the number of job offers received, thus, appearing as the most suitable strategy when the job market conditions and the country’s economy is not very promising. It can be also inferred from the results that an individual with lack of emotional and financial support can be directed to adopt a more exploratory than a haphazard approach to ensure the employment success in terms of number of job offers received. The study findings can be used by the career counselors, employment agencies, and placement officers of the higher education institutions to facilitate the development of career planning attitudes amongst the students and design career planning programs. Based on the results of this study, different courses and action plans can be developed by the higher education institutes, career counselors and employment agencies in catering to the diverse needs of the entry-level job seekers. Suitable programs can be designed for the students to guide them and reinforce their knowledge about the job market, adaptability, and optimism, which would result in the use of a suitable job search strategy and abstain the use of haphazard search strategy. Similarly, programs can be designed and imparted for the parents and close family members of the job seeking students, so as to converse and highlight the critical role of social support types in determining job search success via use of a suitable job search strategy. Based on the career planning attitudes and the types of social support available to the
graduating students, career counselors and management institutes can help the job seeking students in building employability so as to ensure a successful job search process.

The results of this study can also benefit the human resource managers of the organizations competing for the desired pool of talent. With the growing ambiguity and complexity of human resource planning with respect to the supply of workforce for various areas and types of job positions, employers have recognized the importance of succession planning for all the key positions at various levels in the organizations. To ensure this, the firms have also started allocating time, budget, and resources for career planning and management for all its employees, especially the new recruits who have begun their careers within the organization. Thus, the findings of this study can provide the employers with the roadmap to design their career planning programs to foster the development of career planning attitudes amongst its newly hired employees.

8.4 Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

The present study is an attempt to explore the antecedents and consequences of job search strategies amongst the entry-level job seekers in the Indian context using TRA as a framework. As this study is apparently first of its kind in India to examine the impact of job search strategies on both quantity and quality of job search outcomes using a longitudinal research design, it has several limitations.

The present study took a gap of only three months between the two measurement points i.e. T1 and T2 and a longer gap would have yielded better results. Due to the constraints on time and cost involved in the data collection process, a larger time gap could not be maintained between the two phases. Although, studies in the past have been conducted with a similar time
gap (Zikic & Saks, 2009; Van Hoye et al., 2015), only proximal outcomes of job search strategies could be measured in this study. Thus, future studies can include a number of other job search outcomes such as the employment quality indicators (i.e. employee commitment, job satisfaction, organizational identification, turnover intention etc.) by maintaining a wider gap between the measurement points in the longitudinal study. Further, the present study included only the post graduate level management students due to the time and budgetary constraints imposed on the data collection process. Students enrolled in other higher education programmes such as undergraduate level and engineering courses were not considered in this study. Similarly, the final sample size confined to 504 only, and a larger sample size could not be obtained. Nevertheless, the present sample size was adequate for running the statistical analysis. Hence, future studies can collect data from a larger sample size and include students from other academic streams and backgrounds. Similarly, future studies can also extend this research model by collecting data from the unemployed and employed job seekers so as to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of job search strategies on the outcomes across different categories of job seekers in the Indian context. Comparison among samples of job seekers’ categories and different academic streams would provide an in-depth and enriching understanding of the role of career planning attitudes and relevance of job search strategies in ensuring job search success.

The present study included career planning attitudes as the individual level predictors of job search strategies. However, other individual level factors such as self-efficacy, goal decidedness, job search clarity, core-self-evaluation, psychological capital and big five personality traits could be included as predictor variables of job search strategies. These factors have been frequently cited in the vocation psychology literature as predictors of job search behavior. Thus, future studies can consider these constructs as individual level predictors of job search strategies.
search strategies. Similarly, only social support was included as the contextual factor influencing the job search strategies. Future studies can be conducted by including the labor market demand and financial hardship as the other situational factors affecting job search behavior (Kanfer et al., 2001; Koen et al., 2010; Manroop & Richardson, 2015). Future studies can also examine the relationship between labor market conditions and career optimism so as to gain deeper insights into the role of job market conditions in shaping career optimism of entry-level job seekers.

This study examined the impact of informational support on job search strategies without considering the information-seeking behavior of the job applicants. As receipt of informational support largely depends on the information-seeking behavior itself, measurement of the same is likely to yield enriching results. Thus, future studies can examine the impact of information-seeking behavior on informational support and use of job search strategies.

The present study measures the impact of career planning attitudes and social support on job search strategies and in turn their impact on job search outcomes from a purely vocational psychology perspective. The study did not integrate the labor economic factors such as skill training, employment trends and patterns, demand and supply of workforce, wage and compensation etc., which may equally impact the job search strategies as well as the outcomes. An integration of constructs from both vocational psychology and labor economics literature would provide more enriching and integrated understanding of the job search process (Kanfer et al., 2001; Manroop & Richardson, 2015); hence future studies can test these factors.

8.5 Conclusions

The present study is an attempt to empirically examine the antecedents and consequences of job search strategies in emerging economies such as India. Based on an extensive literature
survey of studies in vocation behavior domain, a conceptual research model was developed and thirty hypotheses were postulated. Data was collected using both offline and online survey through questionnaire consisting of 49 and 8 items anchored on a five point Likert’s scale at T1 and T2 respectively. The respondents of this study were the final year job seeking students enrolled in the full-time MBA/PGDM programmes across 25 AICTE approved management colleges in Hyderabad. Exploratory factor analysis followed by SEM for the test of measurement and structural models was conducted using the advanced statistical tool packages. The results of the statistical analysis revealed that career planning attitudes and social support types had differential impact on the three job search strategies examined in this study. These job search strategies in turn impact the job search outcomes differently. The results also indicated that career optimism as a component of career planning attitudes and informational support as one of the social support types did not show any significant relationship with focused job search strategy. Similarly, focused search strategy did not show any significant relationship with the number of job offers. Exploratory search strategy was predicted by all the career planning attitudes and social support types which in turn was positively related to number of job offers. Haphazard search strategy was found to be the most undesired strategy in any given job market conditions, which showed no linkage with the number of job offers and percentage of success and was found to be negatively related to person-job fit and person-organization fit perceptions. The demographic characteristics such as age, gender, academic background and work experience did not impact either job search strategies or pre-entry fit perceptions. Based on the findings, implications were drawn for academicians and practitioners. Finally, limitations of this study were discussed and several directions for future research were suggested.