

The Effect of Employability on Generation Z Job Search Intention through Self-Efficacy with Self-Consciousness as Moderating Variable

*Job Search Intention
through Employability
and Self-Efficacy*

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ABSTRACT

Amid increasing labor market competition and rapid technological change, understanding the psychological factors influencing young job seekers has become increasingly important. The study addresses inconsistencies in prior findings on employability and self-efficacy, as well as limited evidence on the moderating mechanism of self-consciousness in the Indonesian context. This study examines the influence of self-perceived employability on job search intention among Generation Z in Jakarta, considering the mediating role of job search self-efficacy and the moderating role of self-consciousness. A quantitative approach was employed using purposive sampling, involving 197 Generation Z respondents across six municipalities in Jakarta. Data were collected through an online questionnaire and analyzed using structural equation modeling to test direct and mediating relationships, and regression analysis to examine moderation effects. The results indicate that self-perceived employability positively influences job search self-efficacy and job search intention, while job search self-efficacy significantly predicts job search intention. Further analysis confirms that job search self-efficacy partially mediates the employability-intention relationship, and self-consciousness strengthens the effect of self-efficacy on job search intention. These findings highlight the importance of psychological resources in shaping job search behavior among Generation Z and provide empirical insights for career development and recruitment strategies.

Keywords: Job Search Intention, Job Search Self-Efficacy, Self-Consciousness, Self-Perceived Employability.

INTRODUCTION

Rapid globalization, digitalization, and intensifying competition have transformed the labor market, demanding higher individual competitiveness. The pandemic further reshaped business models, operational processes, and required competencies, prompting the need for learning strategies aligned with evolving market demands, as skills, education, and experience remain key indicators of competitiveness (Jangjarat & Jewjinda, 2023). Globalization has also expanded access to international talent, intensifying both local and global competition, thereby requiring Human Resource Development (HRD) strategies to emphasize future-oriented competency readiness amid rapid technological change (Karwehl & Kauffeld, 2021). In this context, Generation Z, comprising nearly 28% of Indonesia's population and born between 1995 and 2009, represents the largest cohort entering the workforce. Shaped by early technological exposure influencing their values and career aspirations, Gen Z requires purpose-driven roles, flexibility, and continuous development opportunities, especially as labor market

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instability demands rapid adaptation to evolving skill requirements (Anggara et al., 2024; Hovořáková & Pauknerová, 2024).

Job search intention represents an important early stage of career development, reflecting individuals' psychological readiness and confidence in their competencies to enter the labor market (Lian et al., 2021). Greater psychological readiness strengthens perceived employability and motivates individuals to actively pursue career opportunities (Fernández-Valera et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2023). In this context, self-perceived employability plays a key role, as individuals who believe they possess valuable and marketable skills tend to show stronger job search intention and persistence in competitive labor markets (Coetzee, 2023).

Confidence in obtaining suitable employment reflects work readiness, as perceived employability represents individuals' beliefs about their ability to secure and maintain employment and predicts young people's entry into the labor market (Low et al., 2020; Sánchez-Queija et al., 2023; Yepes, 2024). This perception can be strengthened through behavioral strategies that enhance work resources and practical knowledge (Sartori et al., 2023). In addition, job search self-efficacy and self-consciousness act as important psychological resources: job search self-efficacy reflects confidence in performing job search activities and encourages persistence, while self-consciousness increases awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses (Leenders et al., 2019; Carden et al., 2022; De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2024). Together, these factors strengthen psychological readiness and shape job search intention (Voirol et al., 2021).

Prior research on the relationship between Self-Perceived Employability (SPE) and job search intention shows inconsistent findings, ranging from significant positive effects to weak or insignificant relationships (De Battisti et al., 2016; Fort et al., 2023; Gerçek, 2024). These inconsistencies may result from differences in research design, measurement indicators, and sample characteristics, which mostly involve adult job seekers or university students rather than Generation Z. Consequently, empirical evidence on the SPE–job search intention relationship among Generation Z remains limited, even though their distinct career orientation and technological background may produce different patterns.

Although job search self-efficacy influences job search behavior, its mediating role between employability and job search intention remains underexplored. Yizhong et al. (2017) found that perceived employability positively affects self-efficacy and job search outcomes, while Leenders et al. (2019) and Lian et al. (2021) confirmed self-efficacy's mediating role in attachment and mentoring contexts. Similarly, Miao et al. (2020) and Chowdhury et al. (2021) highlighted self-confidence effects on work intention. However, none of the studies integrated employability into a comprehensive model or explicitly tested this mediation among Generation Z during the education-to-work transition, revealing a clear research gap.

Empirical research on self-consciousness as a moderator in the relationship between self-efficacy and job search intention remains limited, particularly in Indonesia. This gap is compounded by conceptual ambiguities, as self-consciousness often overlaps with self-awareness and lacks clear theoretical boundaries, alongside ongoing debates regarding its development through social interaction and work experiences (Neschen, 2023). These limitations underscore the need to examine whether self-consciousness strengthens or weakens the effect of self-efficacy on job search intention, especially among Generation Z, whose identity formation and career readiness are shaped by social and workplace dynamics.

Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between self-perceived employability, job search self-efficacy, and job search intention by incorporating self-consciousness as a moderating variable in Generation Z. Addressing these gaps not only enriches understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying Gen Z's career readiness but also provides practical insights for organizations and educational institutions to design targeted career development, employer branding, and recruitment strategies aligned with this generation's characteristics.

LITERATURE REVIEW & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The Effect of Self-Perceived Employability on Job Search Self-Efficacy

Planned Behavior Theory, proposed by Ajzen (1991), explains that behavior is driven by intention, which is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Fernández-Valera et al. (2020) further emphasize that intention reflects the degree of effort individuals are willing to exert to perform a behavior. When attitudes and subjective norms are positive and perceived control is high, behavioral intention and effort increase accordingly. In the context of job search, Vamvaka et al. (2020) argue that behavioral interventions help individuals set career goals and enhance employment outcomes. Chukwuedo and Ohanu (2024) highlight that job search intention is a central component of this theory. Tolentino et al. (2019) conceptualize job search self-efficacy as a general competence reflecting individuals' perceived ability to secure employment, which fosters persistence and greater effort in career decision-making. Empirical evidence by Tien (2019) in Taiwan supports this view, demonstrating that job search self-efficacy significantly influences job-related outcomes.

Self-perceived employability is conceptually related to self-efficacy but remains a distinct construct, as it reflects individuals' overall perception of their labor market prospects rather than confidence in specific tasks (Berntson et al., 2008; Richardt et al., 2024; Dwyer et al., 2025). Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, self-perceived employability can strengthen attitudes toward job search and perceived behavioral control, since individuals who believe they possess relevant skills and qualifications tend to feel more capable of overcoming job search barriers. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between self-perceived employability and job search self-efficacy across contexts, including China by Yizhong et al. (2017), Greece by Dimopolulos (2020), and Turkey by Gerçek (2023). Higher self-perceived employability fosters confidence, which enhances self-efficacy and motivates more proactive job-seeking behavior.

H1: Self-perceived employability has a positive effect on job search self-efficacy.

The Effect on Job Search Intention

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), self-efficacy is a key determinant of behavioral intention, as individuals who believe in their capabilities are more likely to engage in goal-directed actions (Kraft et al., 2005). In the job search context, higher self-efficacy fosters positive attitudes toward employment seeking and strengthens perceived behavioral control, thereby increasing sustained job search efforts. Empirical studies consistently confirm that job search self-efficacy positively predicts job search intention. Kim et al. (2019) and Saul and Dywili (2021) provide robust empirical support showing that individuals with stronger confidence in their ability to perform job search tasks such as preparing applications, attending interviews, and networking tend to exhibit higher job search intention. Their findings indicate that belief in one's job search competence not only enhances motivation but also strengthens commitment and persistence in pursuing employment opportunities.

Similarly, drawing on TPB, Self-Perceived Employability (SPE) enhances attitudes and perceived behavioral control, which in turn strengthens job search intention. Individuals with high SPE are more proactive in exploring labor market opportunities and overcoming job search barriers (Onyishi et al., 2015; De Battisti et al., 2016). Empirical evidence further supports that self-perceived employability positively influences job search intention. Yizhong et al. (2017) demonstrate that individuals who perceive themselves as more employable tend to exhibit stronger intentions to engage in job search activities, as confidence in their labor market value enhances their motivation and proactive career behavior.

H2: Job search self-efficacy has a positive effect on job search intention.

H3: Self-perceived employability has a positive effect on job search intention.

The Effect of Job Search Self-Efficacy as a Mediator

Self-Perceived Employability (SPE) reflects individuals' overall perceptions of their ability to obtain and maintain employment, whereas job search self-efficacy refers to their confidence in effectively performing job search activities. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), confidence in one's capabilities can function as a mediating mechanism that links perceived competencies to behavioral intention. In this context, individuals who perceive themselves as employable are more likely to develop stronger intentions to seek employment. Empirical findings by Yizhong et al. (2017) and Lianto et al. (2025) consistently show that SPE is positively associated with job search intention, indicating that favorable self-evaluations of employability encourage proactive career planning.

Furthermore, job search self-efficacy has been identified as a significant predictor of job search intention. Fort et al. (2023) demonstrate that individuals with higher confidence in their job search abilities tend to exhibit stronger intentions to pursue employment opportunities. Integrating these findings suggests that job search self-efficacy may act as an underlying psychological mechanism through which SPE translates into job search intention. Thus, individuals who perceive themselves as employable may strengthen their confidence in conducting job search tasks, which in turn enhances their intention to actively seek employment.

H4: Job search self-efficacy mediates the effect of self-perceived employability on job search intention.

The Effect of Self-Consciousness as a Moderator

Self-consciousness refers to individuals' awareness of their internal states, thoughts, and emotions, as well as their sensitivity to how they are perceived by others. Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior, such self-awareness can influence behavioral intention by shaping how individuals evaluate their capabilities and anticipated outcomes. The self-consciousness framework further suggests that higher levels of awareness improve the accuracy of self-assessment and reinforce goal-directed behavior, as individuals become more reflective and deliberate in aligning their actions with personal standards and career goals (Pignault et al., 2023).

Empirical evidence supports the moderating role of self-consciousness in the job search context. Fort et al. (2023) found that private self-consciousness strengthens the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search intention. This finding suggests that individuals with higher levels of self-awareness are better able to translate their confidence in performing job search activities into stronger intentions to seek employment. In this sense, self-consciousness functions as an amplifying mechanism that enhances the effectiveness of self-efficacy. It enables individuals to direct their confidence into more focused, persistent, and goal-oriented job search behaviors, ultimately reinforcing their intention to actively pursue employment opportunities.

H5: Self-consciousness moderates the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search intention.

Figure 1 shows a conceptual framework depicting the relationships between variables in the study. Self-perceived employability directly influences job search self-efficacy (H1) and job search intention (H3). Furthermore, job search self-efficacy has a direct influence on job search intention (H2). Furthermore, self-consciousness acts as a moderating variable, strengthening the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search intention (H5). H4 also exhibits a mediating effect. This model emphasizes the important roles of self-efficacy and self-awareness in driving job search intentions.

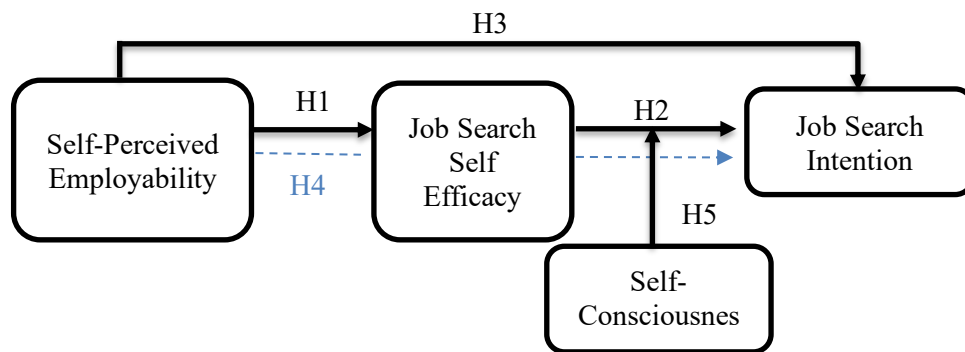


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationships among self-perceived employability, job search self-efficacy, self-consciousness, and job search intention among Generation Z in Jakarta. The population comprised Generation Z individuals residing in Jakarta. Based on BPS census data, the total Generation Z population in Jakarta is 2,678,252 (BPS, 2020). A total of 197 respondents were collected and proportionally distributed across municipalities: Thousand Islands (30), South Jakarta (35), East Jakarta (30), Central Jakarta (32), West Jakarta (40), and North Jakarta (30). The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with criteria including individuals classified as Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012). The sample size exceeded the minimum requirement and ensured representation across all municipalities in Jakarta (Hair et al., 2019).

A systematic questionnaire with closed-ended questions scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to gather the data. The instrument measured four variables. Self-perceived employability was assessed using six items adapted from Chen and Lim (2012), including perceiving strong demand in the job market, noticing many job openings in the desired field, easily finding opportunities in fields of interest, possessing the required skills and abilities, demonstrating confidence in interview performance, and being able to obtain jobs when skills are relevant. Job search self-efficacy was measured using ten items developed by Petruzziello et al. (2021), such as utilizing personal networks and the internet, identifying employer-required skills, writing a good resume, tailoring a resume to specific jobs, composing a cover letter, researching companies before interviews, performing well in self-presentation during interviews, writing thank-you letters after interviews, and negotiating salary or working conditions.

Self-consciousness was measured using nine items adapted from Fort et al. (2023), including efforts to understand oneself, experiencing a lack of self-awareness, frequently reflecting on the self, becoming the subject of fantasies, not conducting introspection, attending to personal feelings, examining reasons behind actions, monitoring mood changes, and demonstrating awareness of thinking processes. Job search intention was measured using twelve items developed by Blau (1994), such as reading classified advertisements, registering as a job applicant, preparing or revising a resume, sending a resume to employers, completing job application forms, reading job-related books or articles, attending interviews, discussing job prospects with others, contacting recruitment services, consulting employers or colleagues, contacting potential employers by phone, and using internal resources for job leads. The survey was shared on social media sites, including LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter, and delivered online using Google Forms.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS 24 and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data and investigate direct and mediator effects. The measurement model was evaluated through validity and reliability tests to ensure that all indicators accurately measured their respective constructs and demonstrated consistent responses.

The moderating influence of self-consciousness was further investigated using multiple linear regression analysis with SPSS 25. Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the significance of the proposed relationships, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to assess the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables.

RESULTS

The findings of the data analysis done to look at the connections between the variables in the study model are shown in this part. To test the suggested hypotheses and assess the measurement and structural models, the analysis was carried out using the proper statistical procedures. The results offer factual proof of the connections between the research variables. The ensuing subsections contain the analysis’s comprehensive findings.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	47	23.9 %
	Female	150	76.1 %
Education	High School	69	35 %
	Diploma	25	12.7 %
	Bachelor Degree	100	50.8 %
	Bachelor	3	1.5 %
Age	15-17 years	2	1 %
	17-20 years	19	9.6 %
	20-24 years	160	81.2%
	24-27 years	16	8.1%
Total Respondent		197	100 %

The total number of respondents described in Table 1 consists of 197 people, all of whom were Generation Z in the DKI Jakarta area. Based on gender, the majority of respondents were female (76.1%), while males comprised 23.9%. In terms of education, the majority of respondents had a bachelor’s degree (50.8%), followed by high school graduates (35%) and diploma holders (12.7%). The respondents’ age group was dominated by the 20–24 age group (81.2%), reflecting an active transition from education to the workforce. This demographic composition indicates that the study sample is relevant to representing the characteristics of Generation Z job seekers in Jakarta.

Table 2. Validity & Reliability Test

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach’s Alpha
Self-Perceived Employability (SPE)	SPE1	0.817	0.870
	SPE2	0.716	
	SPE3	0.762	
	SPE4	0.806	
	SPE5	0.743	
	SPE6	0.832	
Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE)	JSSE1	0.492	0.911
	JSSE2	0.776	
	JSSE3	0.808	
	JSSE4	0.821	
	JSSE5	0.839	
	JSSE6	0.825	
	JSSE7	0.807	
	JSSE8	0.800	
	JSSE9	0.692	
	JSSE10	0.715	
Self-Consciousness (SC)	SC1	0.541	0.794
	SC2	0.606	
	SC3	0.672	
	SC4	0.654	
	SC5	0.486	

Variable	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Search Intention (JSI)	SC6	0.673	0.896
	SC7	0.695	
	SC8	0.622	
	SC9	0.606	
	JSI1	0.611	
	JSI2	0.625	
	JSI3	0.818	
	JSI4	0.759	
	JSI5	0.767	
	JSI6	0.670	
	JSI7	0.744	
	JSI8	0.752	
JSI9	0.601		
JSI10	0.782		
JSI11	0.477		
JSI12	0.713		

Table 2 indicates that the convergent validity criteria have been satisfied, as all indicators demonstrate factor loadings above 0.45, confirming their validity. This suggests that each item is adequately correlated with its respective construct and is appropriate for measuring the intended variable. In addition, the variables self-perceived employability, job search self-efficacy, self-consciousness, and job search intention meet the composite reliability threshold, with values exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.60. Therefore, all constructs can be considered reliable and consistent in measuring their respective concepts.

Table 3. Analysis Results of Direct and Indirect Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Estimation (β)	p-value	Decision
Self-Perceived Employability \rightarrow Job Search Self-Efficacy	0.699	0.000	H1 Supported
Job Search Self-Efficacy \rightarrow Job Search Intention	0.665	0.000	H2 Supported
Self-Perceived Employability \rightarrow Job Search Intention	0.096	0.044	H3 Supported
Self-Perceived Employability \rightarrow Job Search Self-Efficacy \rightarrow Job Search Intention	0.465	0.000	H4 Supported
Job Search Self-Efficacy*Self-Consciousness \rightarrow Job Search Intention	0.005	0.048	H5 Supported

Table 3 presents the hypothesis testing results. The findings indicate that self-perceived employability has a positive and significant effect on job search self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.699$; $p = 0.000$), suggesting that higher perceptions of employability are associated with greater confidence in conducting job search activities. Job search self-efficacy also shows a significant positive effect on job search intention ($\beta = 0.665$; $p = 0.000$), meaning that stronger confidence in job search abilities leads to stronger intentions to seek employment. In addition, self-perceived employability directly influences job search intention ($\beta = 0.096$; $p = 0.044$), although the effect size is relatively small. These results imply that Generation Z individuals who perceive themselves as skilled and employable tend to feel more confident and demonstrate stronger intentions to engage in job search behaviors.

Furthermore, job search self-efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between self-perceived employability and job search intention ($\beta = 0.465$; $p = 0.000$). Because the indirect effect is substantially larger than the direct effect, the mediation can be considered a full mediation, indicating that the influence of self-perceived employability on job search intention primarily operates through job search self-efficacy. Self-consciousness significantly moderates the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search intention ($\beta = 0.005$; $p = 0.048$), strengthening the positive effect of self-efficacy on intention. This suggests that higher self-awareness enhances the extent to which

confidence in job search abilities translates into stronger job search intentions among Generation Z.

Table 4. R-Square Value

Variable	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Job Search Self-efficacy	0.695	0.693
Job Search Self-Efficacy*Self-Consciousness	0.749	0.745

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Table 4 shows that the first regression equation's R^2 value is 0.695, meaning that the independent variables in the model account for 69.5% of the variance in the dependent variable. The R^2 value rises to 0.745, or 74.5%, after adding the second regression equation, indicating an improvement in the explanatory power of the model. This rise implies that the association between the variables has more explanatory power when self-consciousness is included. Thus, it can be said that the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search intention is strengthened by self-consciousness.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that self-perceived employability positively influences job search self-efficacy. Individuals who perceive themselves as possessing relevant skills and strong labor market prospects tend to exhibit greater confidence in conducting job search activities. This result is consistent with prior studies that identified a positive association between self-perceived employability and job search self-efficacy, as reported by Yizhong et al. (2017), Dimopolulos (2020), Joglekar and Tan (2022), and Gerçek (2024). The findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991), suggesting that perceived behavioral control shapes intention. In this study, self-perceived employability strengthens confidence in managing job search tasks and readiness to seek employment, particularly among Generation Z respondents with undergraduate education.

Job search self-efficacy was also found to positively influence job search intention. Individuals who feel capable of preparing resumes, attending interviews, and utilizing digital platforms demonstrate stronger intentions to seek employment. This finding supports earlier research highlighting the critical role of self-efficacy in shaping job search intention, as reported by Saks et al. (2015), Tien (2019), Saul and Dywili (2021), and Gerçek (2024). In line with the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991), job search self-efficacy reflects perceived behavioral control, which enhances the likelihood that intention will be formed and translated into action. The results further resonate with the characteristics of Generation Z, who are technologically literate and actively utilize digital resources in the job search process. Confidence in navigating online platforms appears to strengthen their motivation and persistence in seeking employment opportunities.

In addition, self-perceived employability was shown to positively influence job search intention. This finding confirms previous research demonstrating that individuals who believe in their employability are more inclined to engage in active job search behavior, as shown by Yizhong et al. (2017), Gomes et al. (2019), and Fudali-Czyż et al. (2022). Within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991), self-perceived employability contributes to favorable attitudes and stronger perceived control, which ultimately enhance intention. Among Generation Z respondents, predominantly female and holding undergraduate degrees, higher educational attainment appears to strengthen perceptions of competence, thereby increasing motivation to pursue employment opportunities.

The mediating role of job search self-efficacy further clarifies this relationship. Self-perceived employability influences job search intention both directly and indirectly through job search self-efficacy, indicating a partial mediation mechanism. This expands earlier studies emphasizing the importance of examining job search self-efficacy as a mediating pathway, as highlighted by Yizhong et al. (2017), Zakkariya et al. (2021), and Yaqin and Indradewa (2025). The findings remain consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991), as individuals who perceive themselves as employable develop

stronger confidence in executing job search behaviors, which in turn enhances their intention to seek employment. For Generation Z, particularly those with higher education, academic preparation appears to reinforce both employability perceptions and confidence, strengthening overall job search intention.

Self-consciousness was found to moderate the relationship between job search self-efficacy and job search intention. This supports prior research suggesting that self-consciousness strengthens the link between confidence and behavioral intention (Fort et al., 2023). Individuals with higher levels of self-awareness are better able to evaluate their strengths, regulate emotions, and align their job search strategies with personal goals. In the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991), self-consciousness enhances reflective judgment and perceived control, thereby amplifying the impact of job search self-efficacy on intention. Among Generation Z respondents, many of whom are women in early adulthood, heightened self-awareness appears to reinforce motivation and clarity of career direction, ultimately strengthening job search intention.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors that shape job search intention in Generation Z. The results show that the lowest average values appear on aspects related to networking ability in self-perceived employability, resilience to rejection in job search self-efficacy, persistence in continuing applications despite failure in job search intention, and self-evaluation of weaknesses in self-consciousness. These findings indicate that organizations and educational institutions must not only focus on strengthening technical skills but also on developing networking opportunities, resilience training, and reflective practices that help Generation Z build confidence and persistence in the job search process.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study reinforces the Theory of Planned Behavior by confirming that attitudes through self-perceived employability and perceived behavioral control through job search self-efficacy are critical in shaping intention. The integration of self-consciousness as a moderating factor expands the theory by highlighting the role of self-awareness in amplifying the impact of self-efficacy on intention, especially in the Indonesian context, where empirical evidence is still limited.

However, this study is limited by its cross-sectional design and sample characteristics, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings across different populations or labor market contexts. Looking forward, future research can enrich this model by incorporating variables such as career adaptability, social support, digital job search behavior, and work values fit, which would provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamics underlying job search intention. For practice, these insights enable organizations to design career development interventions, employer branding programs, and recruitment methods that resonate with the values, motivations, and social interaction patterns of Generation Z, ultimately improving the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies for young talent.

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