



A Study on the Perceptions of College Students towards Campus Placements versus Off-Campus Job Searches

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ABSTRACT:

Choosing between a campus placement and an independent off-campus job search is one of the first major career decisions a college student makes. This study examines the perceptions of college students towards campus placements versus off-campus job searches, with particular attention to four factors: perceived job security, salary expectation, career autonomy and social influence (family and peers). A descriptive research design was adopted. Primary data were collected from 66 college students (UG and PG, Arts & Science and Engineering) through a structured Google Forms questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, and respondents were selected through convenience sampling. The data were analysed using percentage analysis, correlation analysis, weighted average analysis and multiple regression analysis. All five constructs recorded favourable weighted averages (3.51 to 3.71 out of 5), with Salary Expectation (3.71) and Job Security (3.64) ranking highest. Salary Expectation ($r = 0.683$) and Job Security ($r = 0.673$) showed strong, significant positive correlations with perceptions for campus placement ($p < 0.001$). The four-factor regression model was significant ($R^2 = 0.55$, $F = 18.96$, $p < 0.001$), and Salary Expectation was the only significant individual predictor ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.022$). The study concludes that pay and perceived security, rather than family or peer pressure, are the strongest drivers of students' perceptions for campus placement, and it offers suggestions for students, placement cells and employers.

Keywords: Campus placement, Off-campus job search, Placement perceptions, Job security, Salary expectation, Career autonomy, Social influence

Introduction:

The Transition from College to Work

The transition from college to the world of work is one of the most important stages in a young person's life. For most students, the final years of a degree programme are shaped by a single question: how will I secure my first job? The answer largely decides the early direction of a student's career, income and long-term professional identity. Campus placement is the process through which companies visit educational institutions to recruit graduating students and offer jobs to the most deserving candidates before the completion of their degree programme (Dhingra and Kundu, 2020). Students, recruiting companies and the institution are its three major stakeholders. For students, campus placement relieves the burden of searching for a job and offers a firm prospect of employment on completion of the final semester.

Off-campus job search, in contrast, is a self-directed route. The student looks for employment independently through online job portals, professional networking sites, company career pages, employee referrals, walk-in drives and competitive examinations. This route demands more effort, time and initiative, and its outcome is less certain. At the same time, it gives the student a wider range of employers, greater control over the choice of company and role, and in some cases a higher salary than campus recruiters offer.

The Graduate Recruitment Landscape

India has one of the largest higher education systems in the world. According to the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22, total enrolment rose from 4.14 crore in 2020-21 to 4.33 crore in 2021-22, so every year a large cohort of graduates enters the labour market and competition for good jobs is intense. Employability is also a concern: the India Skills Report 2026 reported India's overall employability at 56.35 per cent, up from 54.81 per cent in the previous year, which means nearly half of the test takers were still not considered job-ready. This explains why students value the structured training, screening and employer access that campus placement cells provide, and why many also prepare independently for off-campus opportunities. Digital tools have further blurred the line between the two routes: Shenoy and Aithal (2016) describe an online campus placement model in which registration, screening and interviews are handled electronically, while job portals and professional networks have made off-campus search easier.

Understanding Student Perceptions

A student's choice between the two routes is rarely accidental. Perceived job security makes campus employers attractive because an offer in hand before graduation reduces uncertainty. Salary expectations influence whether a student settles for the packages offered on campus or aims for better pay elsewhere. The need for career autonomy, that is, the wish to choose one's own employer, role and city, pulls students towards the open market. Finally, the expectations of parents and the behaviour of classmates often push students towards the visible and socially approved path of campus placement. These factors are consistent with the motivation-hygiene theory of Herzberg et al. (1959), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Relevance and Significance of the Study

Previous research has examined students' perceptions of the factors that decide selection in campus hiring (Dhingra and Kundu, 2020), the effectiveness of campus recruitment practices in Tamil Nadu (Pradeepa and Julie, 2026), the advantages and constraints of the online campus placement model (Shenoy and Aithal, 2016) and the experiences of students working on-campus and off-campus (Dakas, 2011). However, none of these studies directly examines why students prefer campus placement over an independent off-campus job search, or how job security, salary expectation, career autonomy and social influence together shape that perception. The present study addresses this gap, and its findings are expected to help students make informed choices and to help placement cells and employers design better recruitment and career-support practices.

Methodology:

This study combines both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through a structured Google Forms questionnaire, employing a convenience sampling method to select 66 college students (undergraduate and postgraduate, from Arts and Science and Engineering streams); all 66 responses were valid. The questionnaire has two parts: demographic and background details, and 15 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) grouped under five constructs: Job Security (5 statements), Salary Expectation (3), Autonomy (3), Social Influence (2) and Perceptions (2). Secondary data were gathered from books, journals, research articles, reports and websites. The research is classified under a descriptive research design, which focuses on describing the characteristics and perceptions of the respondents. The data were analysed using percentage analysis, Pearson's correlation, weighted average analysis and multiple regression.

Objective:

1. To study the perceptions of college students regarding campus placements and off-campus job searches.
2. To assess the influence of perceived job security and salary/compensation expectations on students' placement perceptions.
3. To study the impact of career autonomy and of peer, family and institutional influence on students' placement-channel perceptions.
4. To develop a predictive understanding of which factors most strongly determine students' overall perceptions for campus placement versus off-campus job search.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

1. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR AGE

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20 Years	14	21.2
20 to 21 Years	18	27.3
22 to 23 Years	25	37.9
24 Years and above	9	13.6
Total	66	100.0

Inference: The data shows that the largest group of respondents (37.9%) is aged 22 to 23 years, followed by 20 to 21 years (27.3%), below 20 years (21.2%) and 24 years and above (13.6%). Thus, 86.4% of the respondents are below 24 years of age, the band typical of undergraduate and postgraduate students who are close to the job market.

2. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR GENDER

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Male	31	47.0
Female	35	53.0
Total	66	100.0

Inference: The data shows that 53.0% of the respondents are female and 47.0% are male. This indicates a fairly balanced gender distribution, with a marginally higher share of female respondents.

3. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR COURSE / BRANCH

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
UG Arts and Science	13	19.7
PG Arts and Science	28	42.4
UG Engineering	9	13.6
PG Engineering	7	10.6
Others	9	13.6
Total	66	100.0

Inference: The data shows that postgraduate Arts and Science students form the largest group (42.4%), followed by UG Arts and Science (19.7%). Engineering students together form about a quarter of the respondents (24.2%).

4. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE AND JOB OFFER STATUS

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Completed an internship – Yes	49	74.2
Completed an internship – No	17	25.8
Received a job offer – Yes	28	42.4
Received a job offer – No	38	57.6
Total	66	100.0

Inference: The data shows that nearly three-fourths of the respondents (74.2%) already have exposure to the working environment through internships, yet only 42.4% have received a job offer through campus or off-campus routes, which indicates that placement concern remains high in the sample.

5. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR "CAMPUS PLACEMENTS OFFER GREATER JOB SECURITY THAN OFF-CAMPUS JOB SEARCHES"

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	4	6.1
Disagree	4	6.1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	15	22.7
Agree	18	27.3
Strongly Agree	25	37.9
Total	66	100.0

Inference: The data shows that 65.2% of the respondents agreed (27.3%) or strongly agreed (37.9%) with the statement, 22.7% were neutral, and only 12.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Thus, students clearly perceive campus placements as offering greater job security.

6. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR "I WOULD CONSIDER AN OFF-CAMPUS SEARCH IF IT OFFERED A HIGHER SALARY"

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	3	4.5
Disagree	4	6.1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	18	27.3
Agree	22	33.3
Strongly Agree	19	28.8

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Total	66	100.0

Inference: The data shows that 62.1% of the respondents agreed (33.3%) or strongly agreed (28.8%) that they would move to an off-campus search for a higher salary, while 27.3% were neutral and 10.6% disagreed. Salary is therefore a factor that can pull students in either direction.

7. PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS FOR "OVERALL, I WOULD PREFER CAMPUS PLACEMENT OVER AN OFF-CAMPUS JOB SEARCH"

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	3	4.5
Disagree	8	12.1
Neither Agree nor Disagree	18	27.3
Agree	19	28.8
Strongly Agree	18	27.3
Total	66	100.0

Inference: The data shows that 56.1% of the respondents agreed (28.8%) or strongly agreed (27.3%) with the statement, 27.3% were neutral and 16.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The majority of respondents lean towards campus placement, although a sizeable group remains undecided.

8. CORRELATION ANALYSIS

H0: There is no significant relationship between (a) perceived job security, (b) salary expectation and students' perceptions for campus placement.

H1: There is a significant relationship between (a) perceived job security, (b) salary expectation and students' perceptions for campus placement.

TEST STATISTICS

Variables	Pearson r with Perceptions	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Job Security	.673	.000	66
Salary Expectation	.683	.000	66

Inference: ($0.000 < 0.05$) Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the common significance level of 0.05, there is a strong, significant positive relationship between both job security ($r = 0.673$) and salary expectation ($r = 0.683$) and students' perceptions for campus placement. Thus, the null hypotheses are rejected and the alternative hypotheses are accepted. Correlation shows association, not cause and effect.

9. WEIGHTED AVERAGE ANALYSIS

WEIGHTED AVERAGE OF THE PERCEPTION FACTORS (Weights: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Factor	Total Responses	Weighted Average
Salary Expectation	198	3.71
Job Security	330	3.64
Autonomy	198	3.60
Perceptions	132	3.58
Social Influence	132	3.51

Inference: Salary Expectation records the highest weighted average (3.71), followed by Job Security (3.64), Autonomy (3.60), Perceptions (3.58) and Social Influence (3.51). All five constructs lie above the neutral value of 3, indicating a generally favourable attitude. The weighted average of Autonomy (3.60) is slightly higher than that of Social Influence (3.51), which suggests that students give marginally more weight to the freedom to choose their own employer and role than to the expectations of family and peers.

10. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS

H0: Job security, salary expectation, autonomy and social influence have no significant effect on students' perceptions for campus placement.

H1: Job security, salary expectation, autonomy and social influence have a significant effect on students' perceptions for campus placement.

TEST STATISTICS – MODEL SUMMARY AND ANOVA

R	R Square	Adj. R Square	F	Sig.
.74	.55	.52	18.96	.000

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS (Dependent variable: Perceptions)

Predictor	B	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.13		.45	.653
Job Security	.32	.25	1.72	.091
Salary Expectation	.35	.32	2.36	.022
Autonomy	.13	.11	.75	.458
Social Influence	.17	.16	1.19	.240

Inference: ($0.000 < 0.05$) Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the common significance level of 0.05, the four independent variables together have a significant effect on students' perceptions for campus placement and explain 55% of the variation ($R^2 = 0.55$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. Among the individual predictors, only Salary Expectation ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.022$) is significant at the 5% level.

Results

The study examined students' perceptions of campus placements versus off-campus job searches, analysing the influence of job security and salary expectation, the role of autonomy and social influence, and the combined predictive power of the four factors. The majority of respondents (56.1%) prefer campus placement, and all five constructs recorded weighted averages above the neutral value (3.51 to 3.71).

The correlation analysis showed that salary expectation ($r = 0.683$, $p < 0.001$) and job security ($r = 0.673$, $p < 0.001$) are strongly and significantly related to the perception for campus placement. The multiple regression model was significant ($F = 18.96$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 55% of the variation in perceptions, with Salary Expectation ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.022$) as the only individually significant predictor; Job Security ($p = 0.091$), Social Influence ($p = 0.240$) and Autonomy ($p = 0.458$) were not significant once all factors were considered together, which suggests that job security shares much of its explanatory power with salary expectation. These findings suggest that while social influence and autonomy play a role, pay and perceived security are the critical drivers of students' perceptions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of college students towards campus placements versus off-campus job searches. Based on the responses of 66 students, students hold a generally favourable view of campus placement, with 56.1% preferring it over an off-campus search. Salary expectation and job security are the most important factors: they rank highest in the weighted average analysis, correlate strongly with perceptions, and together with autonomy and social influence explain 55% of the variation in perceptions. Students' beliefs about better pay and greater security through campus recruitment therefore matter more than family or peer pressure.

At the same time, campus placement is not an unconditional choice: 62.1% of the respondents would move to an off-campus search for a higher salary and 60.6% feel it offers more freedom to choose the company and role. These insights suggest that placement cells and employers should make compensation transparent, broaden the choice of recruiters and roles, extend career support to students who search off-campus, and begin career guidance early. As the sample is small and based on convenience sampling, the results should be read as indicative, and future studies with larger samples and additional factors such as company brand, location and work-life balance can build on these findings.

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