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Determinants of job waiting period for economics graduates: An integration of human resource management and the Islamic perspective of *silaturahmi* (networking)

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the determinants of job waiting periods among bachelor graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Bengkulu, integrating human resource management and the Islamic concept of *silaturahmi* (networking). Primary data were collected from 40 respondents through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A descriptive analysis using cross-tabulation and Likert scale measurements was applied to examine the influence of wages, age, and networking on graduates' job search duration. The results indicate that networking, representing *silaturahmi*, is the most influential factor in shortening the waiting period, with 17.5% of graduates having six to eight professional contacts. Wage expectations also affect the duration, as some graduates prefer to wait for higher compensation (15% received IDR 1,000,000–1,490,000), while age has a comparatively smaller impact, with most graduates securing employment at 22 years old (25%). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening social ties and professional networks to enhance graduate employability and facilitate smoother transitions into the labor market. This study uniquely integrates human resource management principles with the Islamic concept of *silaturahmi*, offering new insights into strategies for enhancing graduate employability.

Keywords: job waiting period; wages; age; networking; *silaturahmi*; graduate employability

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

Economic development is an essential process for improving the quality of life and overall welfare of a nation. It involves various productive activities across economic sectors and aims to create sustainable improvements in public welfare. The quality of human resources is crucial in this process. A well-educated and skilled population can significantly contribute to economic growth, whereas a low-quality workforce may hinder development and become an economic burden. According to [Sukirno \(2010\)](#), economic development is a long-term process that results in an increase in per capita income, accompanied by structural changes in the economy.

From an Islamic perspective, economic development is not limited to material progress; it also includes moral and spiritual dimensions. The ultimate objective of Islamic economics is *Falah*, which refers to prosperity in both worldly life and the hereafter. Work is regarded as a form of worship (*Ibadah*) and a manifestation of human responsibility as a *Khalifah* (steward) on earth. Therefore, human resources should be managed productively so that individuals can contribute to society's welfare.

Unemployment is one of the major challenges to economic development. In principle, unemployment refers to individuals of productive age who are willing and able to work but cannot obtain employment due to various reasons. This issue becomes more complex when it involves educated individuals who remain unemployed despite their academic qualifications. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as educated unemployment, which occurs when the supply of highly educated labor exceeds the available employment opportunities. The issue of graduate employability has become a major concern for higher education institutions, as universities are increasingly expected to equip students with the competencies required by the labor market ([Harvey, 2001](#)). Factors such as economic crises, structural imbalances in the labor market, and mismatches between graduate competencies and job market needs contribute significantly to this problem.

The issue of unemployment is also evident in Bengkulu. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics or *Badan Pusat Statistik* (BPS) (2014) indicate that unemployment in Bengkulu City fluctuated significantly from 2011 to 2015.

Table 1. Unemployment in Bengkulu City (2011–2015)

Year	Number of Unemployed in Bengkulu City	Change (%)
2011	4.596	-
2012	12.394	169,6%
2013	10.968	-11,5%
2014	8.609	-21,5%
2015	13.312	54,6%

Source: [Central Bureau of Statistics \(BPS\) Bengkulu Province \(2014\)](#)

Table 1 shows that unemployment in Bengkulu City fluctuated considerably during the observed period. The sharp increase in unemployment in 2012 indicates that the growth of the labor force was not fully matched by the availability of job opportunities. Such conditions reflect an imbalance between the labor supply and demand in the regional labor market.

This problem becomes more pronounced when examining unemployment by education level. Data from the Bengkulu Manpower and Transmigration Office show that unemployment among individuals with higher education qualifications has increased significantly over time.

Table 2. Open Unemployment by Education Level in Bengkulu City (2011–2014)

Year	SMA	Change (%)	Diploma/S1	Change (%)
2011	1.621	-	1.614	-
2012	7.017	332,8%	1.852	14,7%
2013	5.089	-27,4%	2.570	38,7%
2014	6.728	32,2%	4.259	65,7%

Source: Bengkulu Manpower and Transmigration Office (2014)

Table 2 indicates that unemployment among individuals with diplomas and bachelor’s degrees increased substantially, particularly in 2014, and decreased thereafter. This highlights the growing problem of educated unemployment, where university graduates experience difficulties entering the labor market despite their higher educational attainment. Further evidence can be observed in the number of registered job seekers in Bengkulu.

Table 3. Registered Job Seekers by Education Level and Gender In Bengkulu City (2011–2015)

Year	SMA		Total	Diploma/S1		Total
	Male	Female		Male	Female	
2011	278	87	365	123	235	358
2012	524	251	775	337	534	871
2013	790	579	1.369	1.734	2.725	4.459
2014	297	160	457	310	553	863
2015	135	75	210	251	319	570

Table 3 shows that a significant proportion of job seekers in Bengkulu City are individuals with diplomas and bachelor’s degrees. This indicates that higher education does not automatically guarantee immediate employment, and many graduates must wait before obtaining their first job.

In labor economics, this period is often referred to as **the waiting time to obtain employment**, which reflects the transition process from education to the labor market. The length of this waiting period can be influenced by several factors, including wage expectations, demographic characteristics, and access to employment information.

From the perspective of Islamic management, professional networking (*silaturahmi*) plays an important role in facilitating access to job opportunities. Maintaining strong social relationships can help individuals obtain job information, recommendations, and employment opportunities more rapidly.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature by integrating labor economics with the Islamic concept of *silaturahmi* to explain the determinants of job waiting periods among university graduate. This study fills this gap by empirically examining how networking, interpreted through the Islamic concept of *silaturahmi*, influences the job-waiting period of university graduates. In many labor market studies, networking is often discussed in general terms without linking it to the ethical and social principles emphasized in Islamic teachings. Therefore, there is still a gap in the literature regarding how the concept of *silaturahmi* can be understood as a form of social capital that influences the waiting period for graduates to find employment.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the determinants of the waiting period for obtaining employment among graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Bengkulu, Indonesia. Specifically, this study examines the influence of wage expectations, age, and networking on the duration of job search. By integrating human resource management perspectives with the Islamic concept of *silaturahmi*, this study aims to provide a broader understanding of the role of social relationships in improving graduate employability and facilitating the transition from higher education to the labor market.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The labor market is a place where the supply and demand for labor interact with each other. According to [Handoyo and Sjafi'i \(2006\)](#), the labor force consists of individuals who are either employed or actively seeking employment. In Sharia Economics, the labor market is not only a place for economic transactions but also a field for fulfilling *Muamalah* (social relations) based on justice and mutual benefit. The non-labor force includes people who are still in school or managing households, often referred to as the "potential labor force." The structure and efficiency of the labor market play pivotal roles in shaping a country's economic development.

A mismatch between labor supply and demand can result in unemployment, particularly among recent graduates, who face increasing competition and limited job opportunities. Economic development must be accompanied by institutional and structural transformations, including effective labor absorption mechanisms. Failure to align labor market demand with educational outputs may lead to an oversupply of highly educated and unemployed individuals. This phenomenon, commonly known as "educated unemployment," reflects a structural problem in the labor market, especially in developing countries such as Indonesia. From an Islamic management perspective, this condition also indicates the importance of maintaining *Tawazun* (balance) between the competencies produced by educational institutions and the actual needs of the Ummah (the community).

Labor supply theory explains the relationship between wage levels and the quantity of labor offered by workers. [Simanjuntak \(2001\)](#) states that labor supply depends on population size, labor force participation, and working hours, all of which are influenced by the prevailing wage level. In Sharia Business Management, the concept of wages is closely related to *Ujrah*. Unlike the conventional view that focuses solely on market equilibrium, *Ujrah* emphasizes *Adl* (justice) and *Kifayah* (sufficiency), ensuring that the compensation reflects both the worker's effort and their basic needs to maintain a dignified life.

The waiting time to get a job, also known as job search duration, refers to the period between graduation and obtaining the first job. This period varies based on an individual's characteristics and economic conditions. In the context of Islamic ethics, this waiting period is a phase of *ikhtiar* (proactive effort) and *sabr* (patience). Graduates are encouraged to remain productive and continuously improve their skills while waiting for the right opportunity, as seeking a halal livelihood is considered a form of *Jihad* in the economic sphere.

Several fundamental factors significantly influence university graduates' job search duration, creating a complex interaction between personal quality and market opportunity. First, educational background and its direct relevance to labor market needs serve as primary determinants of graduate employability. Furthermore, age remains a critical demographic characteristic that influences recruitment processes owing to specific institutional requirements. Beyond these technical aspects, perception and motivation to seek employment play vital roles. This argument is supported by [Granovetter \(1973\)](#), who explains through the "strength of weak ties" theory that broader social connections often provide access to new job information and employment opportunities that are not available within close personal networks. Particularly when driven by the intention (*Niyah*) to achieve self-sufficiency and contribute to the welfare of the family and society as a form of devotion. Finally, networking or social capital emerged as a key variable. Social capital theory suggests that relationships and trust within social networks can facilitate access to valuable information and opportunities, including employment ([Coleman, 1988](#)). In an Islamic management framework, networking is viewed as the practical implementation of *silaturahmi*. It is not merely a strategic tool for personal gain but a profound way to strengthen social bonds that, as promised in Islamic teachings, can expand one's *Rizq* (provision) and facilitate life's affairs, including the path to obtaining suitable employment (see [Figure 1](#)).

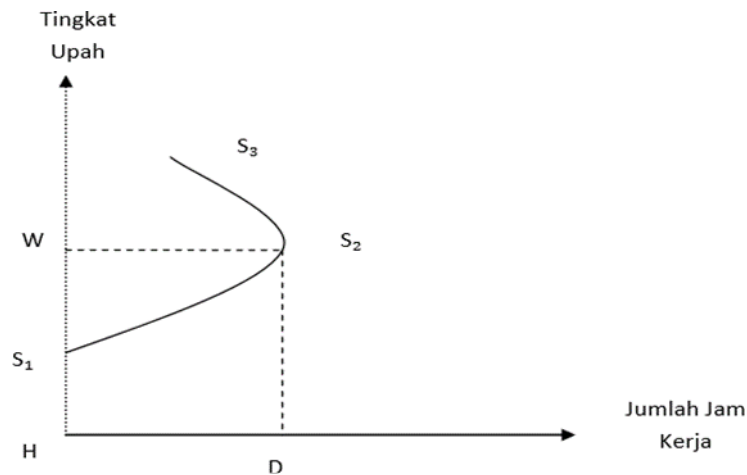


Figure 1. Labor Supply Curve

Source: [Simanjuntak \(2001\)](#)

The labor supply curve shows the relationship between wage levels and the number of hours that a person is willing to work. At lower wage levels, an increase in wages leads to an increase in the supply of labor. As wages rise from point S1 to S2, individuals tend to allocate more time to work. However, after reaching a certain wage level (point W), further wage increases may result in a decline in working hours (point X). This condition is known as the backward-bending labor supply curve, in which the income effect dominates the substitution effect. With a higher income, individuals may prefer more leisure time, even though it results in lost income. This behavior becomes apparent between the S2 and S3 points ([Simanjuntak, 2001](#)). In a broader sense, this also reflects the principle of balance (*tawazun*) in a worker's life, where spiritual and social needs eventually balance out material pursuits.

The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) refers to the proportion of the labor force to the total working-age population. According to [Simanjuntak \(2001\)](#), the LFPR measures the extent of active involvement in the labor market. Among university graduates, the LFPR may reflect their level of preparedness and motivation to enter the job market shortly after graduation. This motivation is often tied to the concept of wages (*Ujrah*), which [Sumarsono \(2003\)](#) defines as compensation for services provided. Wages include benefits paid to workers and are a major factor influencing the decision to enter the labor market. Wage expectations play a critical role in determining job acceptance among recent graduates. Many choose to delay employment if the offered salary does not meet their personal expectations, contributing to a longer job-waiting period. In Sharia management, while seeking a fair wage is justified, it must be balanced with the intention (*Niyah*) to provide for the family through halal means.

The length of unemployment or job waiting period is shaped by both economic and non-economic factors. This phenomenon is further explained by Search Theory ([Kaufman & Hotchkiss, 1999](#)), which addresses the uncertainty caused by imperfect information in the labor market. Job seekers often lack complete knowledge of vacancies or wage levels, making them rely heavily on informal sources of information. Networking plays a pivotal role in this regard. Networking is a behavior aimed at building relationships to obtain employment in the field. In the Islamic framework, this is the practical application of *silaturahmi*, which is believed to strengthen social bonds and facilitate the path to *Rizq* (provision).

Education is an investment that enhances productivity. However, when a mismatch occurs between educational output and market demand, graduates experience extended search periods for employment. Educational attainment and professional networks serve as signals to employers regarding a job seeker's potential. Therefore, for graduates, combining academic competence with strong ethical networking is essential to navigate the competitive labor market and reduce the waiting period.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design that aimed to systematically describe observed phenomena, whether natural or man-made. According to Sukmadinata (2006), descriptive research seeks to interpret and explain existing conditions, relationships, opinions, processes, effects, or trends. This type of research is appropriate for gaining an in-depth understanding of job waiting periods among graduates, allowing for the exploration of patterns and influencing factors such as demographic characteristics, wage expectations, and job-seeking behavior.

The data used in this study are primary data collected directly from 40 graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Bengkulu who were employed between 2013 and 2015 (Biro PKK UNIB, 2015). Data were obtained through structured questionnaires and interviews with the participants. The sampling technique used was snowball sampling to reach graduates who were already in the workforce. The information gathered included desired wage levels, age, and professional networking.

Operationally, the variables are defined as follows: (1) job waiting period refers to the time (in months) required by graduates to obtain their first job after graduation; (2) wage level is the amount of monthly income received by graduates at the time they secured their first job, measured in Indonesian Rupiah. In this study, the wage level is also analyzed as a reflection of *Ujrah* (compensation) expectations; (3) age refers to the respondent's age (in years) when they first obtained employment; (4) networking is defined as the number of personal or professional contacts within a company or institution who could provide information or recommendations. From a Shariah management perspective, this variable represents the practical application of *silaturahmi* (social ties) in career development. This variable was measured using a scale: 0–2 (very few), 3–5 (few), 6–8 (many), and > 8 (very many). (5) Perception reflects respondents' subjective assessment of their job search experience. All variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale to measure the degree of importance or influence of each factor.

3.1. Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using two primary techniques: structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews with the participants. The questionnaire was designed to obtain quantitative data directly from respondents regarding their employment history and their perceptions. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed and adjusted based on relevant theoretical frameworks and prior studies. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire items were reviewed and adjusted based on relevant theoretical frameworks and prior studies. The questions were structured to capture respondents' experiences regarding wage expectations, age at first employment, and the role of networking in obtaining job opportunities in the public sector. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was reviewed to ensure the clarity and relevance of each item to the study objectives.

The questionnaire was distributed through a dual-channel approach: (1) direct distribution to respondents residing in Bengkulu and (2) digital distribution via various communication platforms, including email, social media, and instant messaging services, to reach graduates located outside the region. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via telephone to gain qualitative insights, and all responses were recorded and summarized for further analysis.

3.2. Sampling Method

The population of this study consisted of bachelor's degree graduates from the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Bengkulu, who graduated between 2013 and 2015 and obtained employment (Biro PKK UNIB, 2015). Because the exact number of employed graduates was not formally documented at the time of the study, snowball sampling was employed to identify and reach the target respondents. The final sample consisted of 40 respondents, exceeding the minimum recommended sample size of 30 for descriptive research.

3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including cross-tabulation and Likert-scale interpretation. This approach allowed the study to identify patterns in graduates' job search experiences and evaluate the relative importance of each variable influencing the waiting period for employment. The results are presented in tables and graphs to illustrate the relationships between the job waiting period and key variables such as wage levels, age, and networking. To interpret the mean values from the Likert-scale responses, interval classifications were established using the following formula:

$$\text{Interval} = \frac{\text{Maximum Score} - \text{Minimum Score}}{\text{Number Of Categories}}$$

The mean values obtained from the respondents' Likert-scale responses were interpreted using interval classifications. Based on a 5-point scale (1–5), the resulting intervals were defined as follows: (1) 4.24–5.00 = very important; (2) 3.43–4.23 = important; (3) 2.62–3.42 = fairly important; (4) 1.81–2.61 = less important; and (5) 1.00–1.80 = not important.

Data tabulation and analysis were systematically conducted to ensure accuracy. Microsoft Excel was used to calculate frequencies and means, as well as to generate visual outputs such as tables and charts. These descriptive outputs serve as the basis for interpreting graduates' behavior in the labor market and evaluating the influence of networking, wages, and age from both management and Sharia perspectives.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This behavior aligns with labor market search theory, which suggests that employment is influenced not only by formal education but also by informal factors such as the presence of social capital. Graduates with broader access to job information and stronger social networks tend to experience shorter job-waiting periods. This also supports the Signaling Theory, which states that professional networks act as effective indicators of employability beyond academic credentials.

In the context of Sharia management, this underscores the importance of *Tawazun* (balance) between intellectual competence and social character. A graduate's ability to maintain good relationships and exercise *ikhtiar* (proactive effort) significantly impacts their career path, reflecting the Islamic principle of balancing spiritual submission with worldly effort (Hafidhuddin & Beik, 2010).

In terms of wage levels, 15% of respondents who waited 4–6 months accepted a salary in the range of IDR 1,000,000–1,490,000. Qualitative data from interviews revealed that many graduates were willing to remain unemployed for longer periods in hopes of securing a job with a higher wage. This behavior reflects the Islamic concept of *ujrah* (compensation), where graduates evaluate the fairness and adequacy of pay to ensure it meets the standard of justice and welfare for the worker (Antonio, 2001). However, the willingness to accept lower initial wages for the sake of experience demonstrates the value of *Sabr* (patience) and the long-term vision of building professional "*Barakah*" through early career development.

Regarding age, the majority of graduates who secured employment within 4–6 months were 22 years old (25%). From a management perspective, this emphasizes the "golden age" of productivity that must be managed effectively to prevent human-capital waste. As emphasized in Sharia economic principles, human resources must be optimized during their peak years to benefit the *Ummah* (Hafidhuddin & Beik, 2010).

The most significant finding of this study is the impact of networking. Approximately 17.5% of respondents who found employment within 4–6 months had 6–8 connections, categorized as having "many" professional contacts. Through professional contacts, graduates are more likely to obtain information about job vacancies and receive recommendations that can accelerate recruitment. This data provide empirical evidence for the importance of *silaturahmi* in the professional world. In Shariah

Business Management, networking is not merely a transactional tool but a spiritual and social obligation that opens the doors of *Rizq* (provision) as a manifestation of the divine promise to those who maintain good relations with others (Antonio, 2001).

Overall, networking and wage expectations were the most influential factors, whereas age had a relatively lower impact. Interestingly, female graduates experienced a shorter average job-waiting period than males. This disparity may be attributed to social expectations or employer preferences in specific sectors such as the military. Moreover, male respondents tended to be more selective, holding out for higher salaries, which consequently extended their waiting durations. The full distribution of respondents based on these variables is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Mean Scores of Wage Level, Age and Networking Variables Based on Likert Scale

No.	Variable	Mean Score
1.	Wage/Income	4.26
2.	Age	3.47
3.	Networking (Job Contacts)	4.46

Source: Primary Data Processed

Among the three variables examined, networking had the highest average score (4.46). This indicates that social networks function as an important channel for accessing job market information, placing them in the "Very Important" category. This indicates that graduates strongly believe that professional and personal connections are the most crucial factors in reducing the job waiting period. With a broader network, graduates can access information about job openings and receive recommendations more effectively. This finding aligns with Lin's (2001) theory of social capital and, in a Shariah management context, serves as empirical evidence of the importance of *silaturahmi*. Islam teaches that maintaining social ties is not only a moral obligation but also a spiritual key to expanding one's *Rizq* (provisions). Therefore, it is essential for universities to strengthen alumni networks and career services to facilitate a smoother transition into the workforce.

The wage/income variable received the second highest average score of 4.26. Most respondents viewed wage expectations as a significant consideration, reflecting their desire to secure a salary that meets their rising living expenses. Many graduates are willing to prolong their unemployment periods to secure positions with higher salaries. This behavior is consistent with labor market search theory (Kaufman & Hotchkiss, 1999), which explains that job seekers often evaluate the trade-off between accepting current job offers and waiting for potentially better employment opportunities to arise. From a Sharia perspective, this selective behavior can also be related to the concept of *ujrah* (fair compensation), where graduates seek a wage that provides *kefayah* (sufficiency) and reflects the value of their education.

In contrast, the age variable had the lowest average score (3.47). The results show that most respondents secured their first job between the ages of 21 and 24. Within this narrow range, employers tend to prioritize academic qualifications, soft skills, and perceived work readiness over minor age differences. This suggests that in a competitive labor market, professional "fit" and competence are valued more than chronological age.

One limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size and the use of a non-random sampling method (snowball sampling), which may limit the generalizability of the findings across regions or academic disciplines. Future research with a larger and more diverse sample could provide broader insights into job waiting periods across various faculties. Nonetheless, these findings offer vital evidence for educational institutions to improve graduate employability, particularly by integrating the values of professional networking and realistic career planning into their curricula. Future research could expand the sample across multiple universities and faculties to enhance generalizability and validate the findings in different cultural and labor market contexts.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and analysis of this study, it can be concluded that the average job waiting period for the bachelor's graduates of the Faculty of Economics and Business at the University of Bengkulu is approximately 4.8 months. The results indicate that female graduates tend to experience a slightly shorter waiting period than male graduates, which may reflect differences in job-search strategies and employment selectivity. Among the variables examined, networking emerged as the most influential factor affecting the waiting period, with a mean score of 4.46. Graduates who possessed a greater number of professional contacts tended to obtain employment more quickly, indicating the important role of social networks in facilitating access to job opportunities. In the context of Sharia management, this finding reflects the importance of *silaturahmi* in building productive professional relationships.

In addition, wage expectations were identified as an important consideration for graduates when choosing employment opportunities, as many respondents preferred to wait longer to obtain more appropriate compensation. Meanwhile, the influence of age was relatively smaller than that of other variables, as most respondents secured employment within a similar age range after graduation.

These findings have important implications for universities and career development centers to better prepare students for the labor market. Strengthening alumni networks, providing career guidance programs, and facilitating internship opportunities may help reduce graduates' job waiting periods. However, this study is limited by its relatively small sample size and the use of a non-probability sampling method. Therefore, future research with a larger and more diverse sample is recommended to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing graduates' transition into the labor market.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Authors' Contributions

SH conceptualized the study, developed the analytical framework, conducted the literature review, and prepared the original draft of the manuscript. A contributed to refining the research design and reviewed and edited the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the overall analysis, discussed the findings, and approved the final manuscript.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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Notes on Contributors

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