

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE JOB PREFERENCE OF FINAL-YEAR UNDERGRADUATES AT SRI LANKA'S STATE UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Purpose: Structural unemployment among educated youth, has become the most serious problem in Sri Lanka's economy since graduates take longer to enter the workforce. The aim was to explore the role of job preference index in predicting the employability. Findings were revealed that graduate employment has favorably associated with "skill-based factors, as well as stability and independence".

Methodology: Factor analysis and binary logistic regression were data analysis tools, and a mixed research approach was referred while applying the deductive approach. Analysis is heavily depending on primary data collected through a self-administrated online questionnaire from final year undergraduates of Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. Sampling technique was the stratified sampling technique. For the case study, online interview method has been used since the covid pandemic crisis. The study was designed as a postpositivist study, selecting job preference as dependent variable and factors to job preference (Stability and expertise-1, Managerial career-2, Personality temperament-3, Autonomy and independence-4), as independent variables.

Findings: According to factor analysis, personality temperament and managerial careers can be allocated in to a one factor and other variables such as autonomy, independence, stability and expertise are allocated into another factor. Therefore, the Job preference index of final year undergraduates in state universities in Sri Lanka has been built based on the skill-based factors and stability and independence. The odds of selecting a job in private sector by a final year undergraduate who expect stability of their carrier and like to improve expertise skills ,2.6818 times greater than selecting a job in government sector.

Research Limitations: The sample size was just 21.37% of total final year undergraduates from Sabaragamuwa University which is a very low representation of total population. The analysis is heavily depending on primary data collection and a case study and there was no secondary data collection. The time line for this study is somewhat short and limited. The results of study could not be confidently used to explain situations concerning all universities in Sri Lanka and other countries. Private universities are not covered through this study.

Implications: This research provides evidence for policymakers to take the steps to enhance knowledge and soft skills within university before starting their career life.

Likewise, make a noncredit course on entrepreneurship compulsory for all undergraduates as a key measure/s to promote entrepreneurial ambitions among graduates. That may be used as a means of instilling an innovative culture in our graduates and eventually employing them to help the country's industrial sector flourish. Given the relevance of entrepreneurial education as demonstrated by this study, it is critical to take the necessary steps to improve entrepreneurial education in the country. Because youths are the county's future potential entrepreneurs, it is critical to teach them how to use their creativity, trust their ideas, and have the confidence to explore new ways to challenges. As a result, researchers feel that this grooming should begin in university.

Keywords: Autonomy and independence, job preference, managerial careers, personality temperament, stability and expertise