



## UNDEREMPLOYMENT AMONG GRADUATES AND THEIR COPING STRATEGIES IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

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### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to understand the graduate underemployment problem in the western province of Sri Lanka. Underemployment has been identified as an emerging issue in the world as well as in Sri Lanka as it reveals a significant mismatch between supply and demand in the labour market. In literature, unemployment has gained significant attention of policy makers, but underemployment has remained a largely unexplored phenomenon. Therefore, it is essential to do more research about underemployment to fill this gap in literature. This article is aimed at assessing the variables of graduate underemployment and identifying coping strategies of underemployed graduates. For the purpose of this study, perceived underemployment was used as a measure of underemployment. The dimensions used by Feldman (1994) to measure graduate underemployment are applied in this study. The data was collected through a questionnaire from a sample of 100 graduates as a pilot study. The study assessed the impacts of a range of variables such as gender, age, education level on graduate underemployment. Statistical tools were used to study the significance of the relationships between these variables and perceived underemployment of graduates. Results revealed diverse impacts of variables such as gender differences, employment sector and the status of the degree on the underemployment of graduates. Strategies such as self-initiated job hunting, studying further and rethink about career goals were identified as the coping strategies which are consistent with previous literature. Finally the recommendations for underemployment and implications were discussed by providing directions for future researchers.

**Keywords :** Underemployment, Graduate Employment, Perceived under Employment, Coping Strategies