

## Factors Influencing on Career Choice of Management and Commerce Undergraduates in National Universities in Sri Lanka

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**Abstract:** Selecting one's career wisely and rightly is a core factor for performance, individual satisfaction and societal wellbeing. Identifying what determines career choice among undergraduates can have many a benefit. This study, therefore, aims at exploring the influence of various factors on career choice decision among management and commerce undergraduates in national universities in Sri Lanka. The existing literature in this regard, within the study context, is skeletal, and that this study, having explained about the socio-demographical composition of management and commerce undergraduates, achieved three research objectives; to assess the level of career choice among Sri Lankan national university management and commerce undergraduates; to identify the priorities of factors affecting career choices; and thirdly, to assess the influence of such career choice factors on level of career choices among Management and Commerce undergraduates in the national universities in Sri Lanka. This study designed as a postpositivist study, taking all national universities that have commerce and management streams as the population while using systematic random sampling. Data were collected using self reported questionnaire from 371 final year management and commerce, undergraduates in six Sri Lankan national universities. Correlation and regression analysis were used in analyzing data. Survey results revealed that personal factors and Job-related factors are the most influential factors on determining graduates' career choice.

Researchers concluded that, personal factors highly influence on career choices that implicate graduates be choosier in deciding their careers rather accepting available and demanded careers in the country. Further, it was concluded that majority of the graduates, concerned have moderately level career awareness. That implicates that graduates may not find their rightly matching career at their earliest, instead, they may realize it, after starting work. The identified implications guided the authors to recommend strong career development activities by the universities through their curricula and out of curricula activities to create career awareness of the most demanding and prioritized careers while motivating the graduates to accept such available careers.

**Keywords:** *Careers, Career choice, Career choice factors, Management and commerce undergraduates, National universities, Sri Lanka*



## Introduction

Career is a sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with the series of job and work related activities over a person's life time. career choice plays an important role for a person's individual development, organizational development and economical development of a country. Jarvis (2011) recommends the correct career choice, is a reason for individual development and Parson (1909), believed the correct career choice is a reason for employee's efficiency and reducing employer's cost. Ajufo (2013) also explained the career choice helps to reduce youth unemployment and it helps to develop the social and economical situation of a country.

## Graduate Employment Situation in Sri Lanka

'Employment' is a key yardstick to measure the economic health of a country. According to 'Department of Census and Statistics' (First quarter, 2020), national unemployment rate of Sri Lanka is 5.7% with a total unemployment among GCE (A/L) and above GCE level educated population of 10.1 %. Among the youth (age 15-24 years), the unemployment rate is 23.3%, according to the Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey (Alwis, January, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. Further, average overall unemployment ratio of universities is 54% (Singam, 2017). This graduate unemployment problem leads many economic and social issues. A study done by Ratnayake, Jayamanne, Perera and Ramyadevapriya (2011) showed that 416 out of 2,112 graduates had long term job search for more than one year. The employment status by discipline is given in table one below.

**Table 01: Graduate's Employment Situation in Sri Lanka**

Discipline	Employed	Under Employed	Not employed
Engineering	94.7%	2.3%	3.0%
IT	92.5%	1.9%	4.5%
Medicine	91.4%	2.4%	4.8%
Science	71%	6.4%	22.6%
Agriculture	69.7%	6.7%	23.6%
Management	66.4%	14.4%	18.2%
Arts	32.1%	20.1%	46.2%

*Source: Graduate Employment Census, 2012*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.universityworldnews.com>

## **Management and Commerce Graduates' Unemployment Situation in Sri Lanka**

There are fifteen state universities, established in Sri Lanka, and only thirteen universities, including Open University of Sri Lanka, currently offer around seventy-two bachelor's degrees of management and commerce related subjects where the management and commerce undergraduates become the second highest number of undergraduates' population in Sri Lankan national universities. (University Grant Commission – Sri Lanka, 2015). Management and commerce graduates show significant high level of unemployment. Singam (2017) highlighted that the Faculties of Arts and Management, having a higher rate of graduates' unemployment as 76% and 36% respectively, whereas Medicine and Engineering accounted only for 10% and 7% in 2012. Singam (2017) further claimed that Sri Lankan universities, are far behind, compared with developed and even in some developing countries.

### **Statement of Problem**

It was shown that the unemployment among graduates in Sri Lanka and management and commerce undergraduates in Sri Lanka is considerably high. Alwis (January, 2020); Singam (2017); Ratnayake, et. al. (2011) have studied about unemployment pattern among graduates in Sri Lanka. Factors affecting such unemployment in the globe and in Sri Lanka have been studied by many authors. Such factors have been explained under career theories as well. Trial Factor Theory (Betz, Fitzgerald and Hill, 1898);

Social-Cognitive Career Theory of Bandura (1977); Theory of Circumscription and Compromise of Gottfredson (1996); Self Concept Theory of Super and Savickas (1990); and Theory of Vocational Personalities of Holland (1997) can be stated as such theories. Patton and McMahon (2014) categorized 'Career Theories' under five categories: Theories of Content; Theories of Process; Theories of Content and Process; Constructivist / Social Constructionist Approach to career theories; and Theories related to minority groups. Within the study context of Sri Lanka many researchers have highlighted factors, affecting career choice among graduates (Keerthisinghe and Wijethunga, 2019; Galhena and Rathnayake, 2011; Vikneshwaran and Balasundaram, 2013; Tennakoon, Vidanapathirana and Sutharan, 2005). However, such studies have not covered a larger sample, extended to cover management and commerce undergraduates of all national universities in Sri Lanka. Additionally, the factor-list, selected to explain career choice is not exhausted enough. Based on such limitations, the research gap of this study was identified as the lack of studies in assessing enough factors that explain career choices among management and commerce graduates of national universities in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the research problem of this study was: what are the factors, influencing on career choices of management and commerce undergraduates in the Sri Lankan National Universities?

### **Research objectives**

In order to answer the said research problem three major research objectives have been set; (1) to assess

the level of career choice of the management and commerce undergraduates in Sri Lanka's national universities, (2) to identify the career choice factors affecting the management and commerce undergraduates in Sri Lanka's national universities, and (3) to determine the impact of career choice factors to the level of career choice of the management and commerce undergraduates in Sri Lanka's national universities.

### Literature Review

A 'Career' is an individual's journey through learning, work, and other aspects of life. There are number of ways to define a career and the term is used in a variety of manner. According to Supper (1999), career is a combination and sequence of roles played by a person during the course of a life time. Further, he defined this role including those as child, student, citizen, worker, homemaker, spouse, parent, pensioner, etc. 'Choice' is an act of choosing between two or more possibilities (Oxford Dictionary Definition). Therefore, career choice can be stated as selecting a type of occupation or profession. Hiebert (1998) stated that choosing a career is perhaps second only to choose of mate in terms of the pervasiveness of the impact on one's life. Guay, Senecal, Gauthier and Fernet (2009) highlighted that too often, career choice and planning has been ineffectual because it was based upon an effort to match intellectual ability and interest with an occupation without considering other important variables. 'Career choice guidance and counseling' began in the western world more than 100 years ago. The theories evolved in the area of

career choice have been practicing in the USA and internationally. It began in the years of Parson (1908) as a 'Trait and factor approach' in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it slowly began to become a rather mature discipline today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a strong theoretical and empirical base.

There is sufficient amount of studies, done, on the factors to career choice and career choice. Such work is cited in the proceeding sections.

### Demographic Factors to Career Choice

Many researchers identified some demographical factors, influencing on students' career choices. Sierles et. al. (2003) conducted a study and identified two main reasons influencing on student career choices; (a) intrinsic factors and (b) cultural factors and nationality trends. Foley, Guarneri and Kelly (2008) identified that racial and ethnic difference play a significant role in influencing on student career choices. Kiobassa et. al. (2011) identified female workers chose to spend more time with their children and spouse. According to Ibrahim et. al. (2014), male students are more concerned with career prestige than females. But Miller (2012) argued that gender difference is not showing a direct impact on students' career choices. Mishkina, Wangrowiczb, Dorib, and Dori (2016) suggested women are significantly more influenced than men by others. According to Ko, Lp and Applegate (2010), employment status also significantly influences on career choices. Isso (2008) and Baller et. al. (2013) identified previous working

experiences also significantly influence on undergraduates' career choices.

### ***Personal Career Choice Factors***

There are critical personal factors, influencing career choice such as aptitude, skills, personality, the level of responsibility that suits him/her interests and needs (Francis, 2011). Agarwala (2008), Eddy et. al. (2008), and Galhena (2011) found that skills and competencies and educational background play a critical role in influencing on selection of students' career. Robertsom, Smeets, Benhow, and Lubinski (2010); Tyagiet et. al. (2012); and Lubinski et al. (2006) suggested that lifestyle, family habits, and leisure time influence on career choices. Within the study context, no study has done on how lifestyle can influence for management and commerce undergraduate's career choice. However, Keerthisinghe and Wijethunga (2019) identified that vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, emotional arose, performance accomplishment has significant positive influence on undergraduates' career exploration. Midrange, Suthar, and Wachissaraakey, (2019) have identified lack of experience, heavy competition, political changes and lack of financial facilities as factors to decide undergraduates' career aspirations.

### ***Social and Technological Factors to Career Choice***

Agarwala (2008), and Galhena (2011) suggested family and peer groups influence on undergraduates' career choices though, Ogowewo (2010) has suggested that no significant influence

of family factors on students' career choice. According to Ibrahim et. al. (2014) there is no influence from peer groups on students' career choices. Gibbon, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, and Davis, (2006); and Patten and McMahon (2014) found internet and media significantly influence on students' career choice decision. However, no studies can be found that media and internet impact on undergraduates' career choices within the study context.

### ***Job Related Factors***

Money, in terms of salary at work has been identified as the most important factor on African-Americans' career choices, while enjoyable nature of career becomes another important aspect, according to Gibson, Boeders, Wiles, Stephan, and Davis (2006). Galhena and Ratnayaka (2011) found that financial and non-financial factors influence on students' career choices. Opportunity of overseas placement has also been valued as another significant reason for career choice (Tyagi et. al., 2012). Sheikh et. al. (2012) also mentioned that overseas migration opportunity is one of the significant determinations of Pakistani medical undergraduates' career choices. No empirical study has been conducted in Sri Lanka to assess how migration opportunities influence as a job-related factor on management and commerce undergraduates' career choices. Thampoe (2016) suggested that salary, interesting job, job security, and educational opportunities are major critical influencers on career decisions of management students of northeastern university in Sri Lanka.

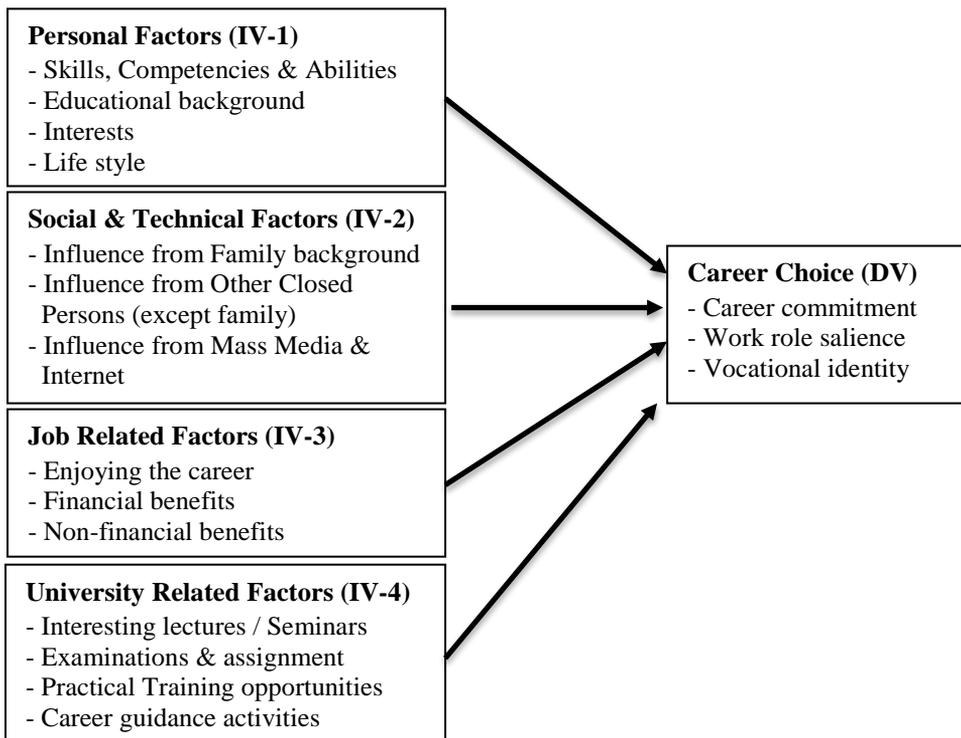
### **University Related Factors**

Alexitch and Page (1997) found that less than one-third of students reported having received information related to career preparation and opportunities from their high school guidance counselors influenced their career choices. Tennakoon, Vidanapathirana and Sutharan (2005) identified interesting lectures and seminars, successful examinations, practical and laboratory-based trainings, problem-based learning sessions and assignments, and students’ seminars as influencing on medical undergraduates’ career choices. Within the study context concerned, no such study could be found as evidence for

studies on how university related factors influence management and commerce undergraduates’ career choices. Within, the study context, such studies have not been carried out.

### **Methodology**

The study was designed as a postpositivist study, selecting career choice as dependent variable and factors to career choice (personal factors-IV-1, social and technological factors -IV-2, Job related factors- IV-3, university related factors-IV-4) as independent variable. Based on the literature review, researchers derived the following mentioned conceptual framework for the current study.



**Figure 01: Conceptual Framework** [Source: Authors, 2020]

This study was done testing the null hypothesis, related to objective three.

**H1 (0):** There is no influence of personal factors and career choices of management and commerce undergraduates in national universities in Sri Lanka.

**H2 (0):** There is no influence of social and technical factors and career choices of management and commerce undergraduates in national universities in Sri Lanka.

**H3 (0):** There is no influence of job related factors and career choices of management and commerce undergraduates in national universities in Sri Lanka.

**H4 (0):** There is no influence of university related factors and career choices of management and commerce undergraduates in national universities in Sri Lanka

Researchers selected the final year management and commerce

undergraduates as the population, assuming that students have identified and selected their future career paths. According to UGC (2015) reports, final year management and commerce student enrollment is 4,486 in 13 state universities in Sri Lanka. The researchers used the formula provided by Yamane (1967), to calculate the sample size. According to this formula the required number of respondents is 367. Researchers provided 380 questions among the selected sample by using multistage random sampling method. This sampling method specially recommended for a larger sample which is scattered over large geographical area. In the first stage, the researchers selected six national universities randomly and in second stage randomly selected 380 final year commerce and management undergraduates. Out of 380 questionnaires nine questionnaires had not properly filled, therefore researcher selected 371 questionnaires in the continuation of the study. The selected sample has been given in Table -02.

**Table 02: Study Sample**

Name of the University	Number of Respondents and Respondent Rates			
	Respondents	(%)	Male	(Male Respondents as %)
University of Sri J’Pura	160	43.6%	64	40%
University of Colombo	48	12.8%	18	37%
University of Peradeniya	20	5.0%	08	40%
University of Kelaniya	65	17.3%	30	45%
University of Jaffna	42	11.4%	20	47%
South Eastern University	36	9.7%	17	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>42%</b>

Source: Authors, 2020

Data were collected using structured questionnaire to assess the IV and DV except for data on demographical factors such as nationality, gender, marital status, and employment status and career field. To measure factors to career choice, few questioners were used. To measure personal factors, questionnaire, developed by Agrawal (2008), and Dimer and Blustein (2007) was used. The questionnaire, developed by Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, and Davis (2006) was used to measure social and technical factors. The questionnaires of Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, and Davis (2006) and Agrawal (2008) was used for measuring Job related factors. University related factors were measured through the questionnaires, developed by Tennakoon, Vidhanapathirana, and Sutharan (2005). First part of the questionnaire consisted with five questions to collect

the data related to demographical factors of respondents and the second part consisted with 33 questions to collect the data related to career choice factors. For the pilot study, the questionnaire was distributed among 23 management and commerce final year undergraduates in the University of Colombo Sri Lanka for the validity and reliability measurements. The internal consistency reliability on the 'Cronbach's alpha coefficient is calculated as measure of reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha for DV is 0.892, for IV-2 is 0.850, for IV-3 is 0.852 and for IV-4 is 0.838. All these values are greater than 0.7 and Cronbach's alpha value for IV-1 is 0.687 which is closer to 0.7 range. Therefore, researcher decided to continue the research with this questionnaire without any amendments.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis plan is given in table 03.

**Table 03: Data Analyzing Tools**

Research Objective	Statistical Tool/s Used
Objective 1	Descriptive Statistics, Independent Sample t test, Onaway ANOVA, Multiple Comparisons
Objective 2	Descriptive Statistics
Objective 3	P value, Pearson Correlation, F value, P value, Mean plots, Regression

*Source: Authors, 2020*

Researcher used 'SPSS 22.0' to analyze data. In this survey, 371 management and commerce final year undergraduates were surveyed from the

population of 4486. In analyzing the background information, it was noted that the majority of undergraduates were Sinhalese 270 (75.8%), 65 were

Tamil (18.2%), 19% of undergraduates were Moors (5.3%), and 02 were in 'other' category (0.6). There were 147 male undergraduates (41.2%) and 208 female undergraduates (58.6%). Majority, of 346 undergraduates (97.1%) were unmarried and 10 (2.9%) were married. In this survey, 4 respondents were employers (1,1%), 31 were full time employees (8.7%), 29 were part time employees (8,1%), and 08 undergraduates were self-employed (2.2%). The response for question of 'describe career field' reported; 214 undergraduates (60.1%) as 'accounts related'; 15 (4.2%) as 'marketing related'; 40 (11.2%) as related to 'HRM or administration'; two respondents (0.6%) as 'plantation management related'; 14 (3.9%) as 'tourism management related'; thirteen respondents (3.7%) as 'teaching/lecturing related'; four (1.1%) as 'research related career field'; and another 51 (14, 3%) as 'other' category while three respondents (0, 8%) did not answer this question.

After removing the outliers, the mean values of DV was 3.77 and there was a 5% trimmed mean value of 3.81. The researcher used the descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages to measure the respondent's level of career choices. 152 respondents were having a higher level of career choice, 187, the majority of respondents were having a moderate level of career choice and only 18 were having a low level of career choice. It means 42.6% of respondents of Sri Lankan national university management and commerce undergraduates were having a strong idea about their career choices, 52.5%,

the majority were having a moderate idea about their career choices and only 4.9% undergraduates having low idea about their future career choices. After removing the extreme outliers, the mean value of IV-1 was 3.60 and 5% trimmed mean value was 3.62. Mean value of IV-2 was 3.60 and 5% trimmed mean value was 3.62. After removing the outliers, mean value of 'IV-3' was 3.88 and 5% trimmed mean value was 3.93. Mean value of 'IV-4' was 3.81 and 5% trimmed mean value is 3.85. According to the output generated by SPSS 22.0 the residuals were homoscedastic and no heteroscedasticity problem. VIF was greater than 10, hence no Multicollinearity was reported. Durbin Watson value' was 2.114, it means residuals are independent and no autocorrelation problem in the residuals.

Researcher used 'correlation' to identify the relationship between DV and IV's. The highest relationship shows between 'career choice' and 'personal factors', reporting a correlation value of  $r = 0.468$ . The secondly highest relationship was shown between career choices and 'Job related factors', having a correlation value of  $r = 0.454$ . The relationship between career choices and 'university related factors' also showed a positive correlation of  $r = 0.323$ . The relationship between career choices and 'social and technical factors' shows the lowest correlation value which is  $r = 0.192$ . This means that 'personal factors', explaining 46.8% of the variation, 'job related factors' explaining 45.4% of the variation, 'university related factors' explaining 32.3% of the variation, and 'social and

technical factors' explaining 19.2% of the variation in career choice of commerce and management undergraduates in Sri Lanka's national

universities. All IV's had been positively correlated with DV (Table-04).

**Table 04: Correlation Coefficients**

	C_CH1	P_F1	S_F1	J_R_F1	U_R_F1
C_CH1 Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.468** .000	.192** .000	.454** .000	.323** .000
P_F1 Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.468** .	1	.277** .000	.433** .000	.432** .000
S_F1 Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.192** .000	-.277** .000	1	.272** .000	.357** .000
J_R_F1 Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.454** .000	.455** .000	.272** .000	1	.579** .000
U_R_F1 Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.323** .000	.432** .000	.357** .000	.579** .000	1

Source: Analysis Results, 2020

Researchers identified four sub factors under 'IV-1', three sub factors under 'IV-2', three sub factors under 'IV-3', and four sub factors under 'IV-4' (see Table -05). The 'model Summary' table, provides  $R^2 = 0.297$  and adjusted  $R^2 = 0.267$  values. R squared value is 0.297 and adjusted R squared value is 0.287. It indicates that exogenous

variables in the initial model were able to explain 28.7% of the variance exogenous variables in the model. Further, according to the 'model summary table 'Durbin Watson value' is 2.114, this is between '1.5 and 2.5' and close to '2', it means residuals are independent and no autocorrelation problem in the residuals.

**Table 05: Regression Analysis (Model Summary)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.545 <sup>a</sup>	.297	.289	.51291	.297	37.148	4	351	.000	2.114

Predictors: (Constant), U\_R\_F1, S\_F1, P\_F1, J\_R\_F1 [Source: Analysis Results]

According to Table, 05 the R squared value is 0.297 and adjusted R squared value is 0.287. It indicates that exogenous variables in the initial model were able to explain 28.7% of the variance. Further, according to the

‘model summary table ‘Durbin Watson value’ is 2.114, this is between 1.5 and 2.5 and close to ‘2’, it means residuals are independent and no Autocorrelation problem in the residuals.

**Table 06: ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	39.091	4	9.773	37.148	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	92.341	351	.263		
	Total	131.432	355			

a. Dependent Variable: C\_CH1

a. Predictors: (Constant), U\_R\_F1, S\_F1, P\_F1, J\_R\_F1

Source: Results of the Analysis, 2020

ANOVA table above (Table 06) reports how well the regression equation fits the data (predicts the dependent variable). According to the ‘ANOVA table’ Probability of ‘F testing statistic’ is 0.000 and in regression model F=37.148. As this result is highly significant and the linear model is highly valid, the independent variables jointly influence on dependent variable. According to the coefficient table

‘Personal factors’ ( $\beta=.325$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and ‘Job related factors’ ( $\beta=.329$ ,  $p=.000$ ) significantly influence on Sri Lankan management and commerce national university undergraduates’ career choices at 95% significant level. Yet, ‘social and technical factors’ and ‘university related factors’ do not significantly influence on Sri Lankan undergraduate’s career choices at 95% significant level.

**Table 07: Coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.325	.215		6.171	.000		
	P_F1	.325	.051	.332	6.433	.000	.751	1.332
	S_F1	.015	.040	.018	.362	.718	.852	1.174
	J_R_F1	.329	.060	.309	5.446	.000	.622	1.607
	U_R_F1	-.005	.049	-.006	-.098	.922	.595	1.681

Source: Results of Analysis

According to the Coefficient table above, (Table 07), 'Personal factors' ( $\beta=.325$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and 'Job related factors' ( $\beta=.329$ ,  $p=.000$ ) are significantly influence on Sri Lankan management and commerce national university undergraduate's career choices at 95% significant level. Social and technical factors' and 'university related factors' are not significantly influencing on Sri Lankan national university management and commerce undergraduates' career choices at 95% significant level. Further, the researcher identified unstandardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) of 'Job related factors as 0.329. It means if every unit increase of 'personal factors, (IV-1) the career choice of Sri Lanka national university management and commerce undergraduate (DV) increases by 0.329 units. Unstandardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) of 'personal factors' is 0.325, and indicating that if every unit increase of 'Job related factors, (IV-2) the career choice of Sri Lanka national university management and commerce undergraduates (DV) increases by 0.325 units. Unstandardized regression

coefficients ( $\beta$ ) of 'social and technical factors (IV-2)' is 0,015 and unstandardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) of 'university related factors' (IV-4) is 0.005, but 'IV-2' and 'IV-4' are not significantly influencing on 'DV'. It's also identified standardized beta of 'personal factors' ( $\beta=.332$ ,  $p=.000$ ) has a higher influence on management and commerce undergraduates' career choices among selected four factors.

As given in table 08, factors such as 'skills, competencies and abilities, educational background, interests and life style' influenced on Sri Lankan national university management and commerce undergraduates' career choices. 'Family background and peer groups' were not significantly influencing on career choices, but 'internet and mass media; significantly influencing on career choices. 'Career enjoying' and 'non-financial benefits' were also significantly influencing, but according to this study, 'financial benefits' not showing a significant influence on career choices. 'Lectures and seminars' and 'practical training opportunities' were significantly

influencing on career choices. However, practical examination and

assignments and 'career guidance activities' were not influencing.

**Table 08: Coefficient Summary Table**

Personal factors (IV-1)	-Skills, competencies and abilities (p<0.05, B= 0.199) -Educational background (p<0.05, B= 0.100) -Interests (p<0.05, B= 0.159) -Life style (p<0.05, B= 0.024)
Social & Technological factors (IV-2)	-Family background (p>0.05, B= 0.006) -Influence from peer groups (p>0.05, B= 0.009) - Internet and mass media (p<0.05, B= 0.062)
Job related factors (IV-3)	-Career enjoying (p<0.05, B= 0.068) -Non-financial benefits (p<0.05, B= 0.064) -Financial benefits' (p>0.05, B= 0.024)
University related factors (IV-4)	-Lectures and seminars (p<0.05, B= 0.122) -Practical training opportunities (p<0.05, B= 0.149) -Examination and assignments (p>0.05, B= 0.053) -Career guidance activities (p>0.05, B= 0.048)

*Source: Results of Analysis*

## Discussion

This study aims at finding the factors influencing on career choices of management and commerce undergraduates' in national universities in Sri Lanka. Researcher identified majority of respondents were Sinhalese, unmarried, age between 24-26 unemployed and most of them wish to select a career related to 'accounts/financial management related field. Most of them were females and it's similar to the gender distribution of study sample. Researchers identified that the highest number of management and commerce undergraduates show moderate level idea about their future career choices while considerable number of students were having high level of understanding about their future career fields. Lesser number of undergraduates had low level of understanding about their future career

decisions. Previous researchers had found 'instinct/personal factors' had been the most influencing factor of management and commerce undergraduates' career choices. According to this study, researchers found the same. Agarwala (2008), Eddy et. al. (2008) and Galhena (2011) found that skills and competencies, and educational backgrounds had been the key factors that influence on selecting students' career choices. Researchers also found the same in this study. Additionally, researchers identified 'life style' and 'interests' are influencing on management and commerce undergraduates' career choices, confirming this same finding, made by the studies done by Robertsom, Smeets, Benhow and Lubinski (2010) and Ogowewo (2010). Researchers also identified 'personal factors' as the most influencing factor on this undergraduates' career choices. Agarwala (2008) and Galhena (2011)

identified 'family background' and 'peer groups' significantly influence on undergraduates' career choices, however, Baller et. al. (2013) showed that social factors such as family and peer groups did not influence on students' career choices. By this study also, researchers confirmed that 'family background' and 'peer groups' did not influence on Sri Lankan management and commerce undergraduates' career choices. Additionally, researchers found 'media, social media and websites' significantly influenced on management and commerce undergraduates' career choices showing the similar results to the work of Gibbon, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, and Davis, (2006) and Patten and McMahon (2014). Gibbon, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, and Davis (2006) and Galhena and Ratnayaka (2011) respectively found that enjoying career' and 'financial and non-financial factors' influence significantly on student's career choices. Researchers also identified that 'enjoying career' and 'non-financial benefits' such as 'job prestige, career availability, promotional and educational opportunities, and migration opportunities' significantly influence on management and commerce undergraduates' career choices. However, it was found by the researchers that financial benefits' do not significantly influence on career choices. According to this study 'job related factors' were the second highest influencing factor on career choices. Tennakoon, Vidanapathirana and Sutharan (2005) identified 'university related factors' such as 'lectures and seminars, practical training opportunities, examination and

assignments, and career guidance activities significantly influence on medical undergraduates' career choices. In this study however, 'practical training opportunities and lectures and seminars' were found to influence on management and commerce undergraduates' career choices. In overall, 'university related factors' seemed not to significantly influencing on their career choices.

### **Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations**

The correct career choice positively influences on personal development of employee, development of the workplace and on economic development of a country. Management and commerce undergraduates are the second highest undergraduate population in Sri Lanka. In that context, this study concluded that; majority of respondents have a moderate understanding about career choice; significant number of students have a higher-level career choice; personal factors and job-related factors highly positively influence in students' career while undergraduates' employment status also significantly influences on career choices. There is a significant positive relationship between career choice of management and commerce national university undergraduates' and factors such as personal factors, social and technological factors, job related factors and university related factors. Personal factors become the most influencing factor while social and technological factors and university related factors' do not influence on management and commerce national

university undergraduates' career choices.

This study contributed to fill an identified research gap, by understanding the factors affecting the career choice decision of the selected target population. Further based on the conclusions, the researchers highlighted implications that majority of students with moderate level of their career understating, find it difficult to establish soon after their graduation in a rightly matching career. Therefore, it is recommended to launch career awareness programs by the universities as a part of their curriculum or and as external activities, outside to the curriculum to enhance high level of career awareness by the students. Even this career guidance activities can be promoted at school level. Mostly influential career factors to career choice decision are personal factors and that, students will select their personally valuing careers irrespective of the selection of careers that have high demand in the labour market or prioritized under the economic progressing agenda. This may lead to a mismatch between career opportunities, available and graduates'

career preferences, resulting plausible further, high unemployment ratio. Therefore, it is recommended to create right career awareness through universities as part of the curriculum or external activities to outside curriculum about most exiting career opportunities, available by impacting on the power of graduates' personal factors in selecting a career. So that, students can be motivated to opt to a career that is available and prorated in the career rather always waiting for their preferred career. overall, this study identifies a high level of implications in university curricular on students' career development activities and that, it is recommended, in overall, to strengthen and give priority over students' career planning and career management activities within curricular and empower the career guidance unit to play a critical role to capitalize on students' competency development missions, launched by the universities to align students' personal career choices with country's demanded careers by eliminating possible mismatches and ultimately the reducing the high rate of unemployment among graduates now Sri Lanka Experiences.

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## Appendix

### Gender and Career Choices

		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower
C_F	Equal variances assumed		.331	-.139	369	.890	-.05887	.42349	-.89163	.77388
	Equal Variances not assumed			-.138	328.585	.890	-.05887	.42608	-.89706	.77931

**Marital Status and Career Choices  
Independent Samples Test**

		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	
CF	Equal variances assumed	.180	.672	-.940	369	.348	-1.21274	1.29044	-	3.75028	1.32480
	Equal variances not assumed			-.911	9.472	.385	-1.21274	1.33180	-	4.20274	1.77726

**Nationality and Career Choices  
ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.322	3	.774	2.110	.099
Within Groups	129.110	352	.367		
Total	131.432	355			

**Employment Status and Career Choices**

**ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	194.992	4	48.748	3.077	.016
Within Groups	5798.420	366	15.843		
Total	5993.412	370			

**Described Career Field and Career Choices**

**ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	76.483	7	10.926	.671	.697
Within Groups	5861.515	360	16.282		
Total	5937.997	367			