

**FACTORS AFFECTING CAREER PREFERENCES OF MANAGEMENT
UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITIES IN THE WESTERN PROVINCE OF SRI
LANKA**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the factors influencing career preferences among management undergraduates at universities in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. A decline in career preferences among these students could have significant societal implications, impacting both the national economy and socioeconomic well-being of the country. A quantitative research approach was used, with data gathered through structured questionnaires distributed to 377 undergraduates. The sample size was determined using the Morgan table, referencing University Grants Commission data, which estimates that around 20,000 undergraduates are enrolled in universities within Western Province. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were used to analyze the collected data. The results revealed significant relationships between the independent variables and career preferences. Societal and technological factors (STF) were found to strongly influence career choices, highlighting the role of societal trends and technological developments. Personal factors (PF), such as individual interests and skills, were also significant. Job-related factors (JRF), including salary expectations, job security, and career growth opportunities, impact career preferences, while individual factors (IF), such as career ambitions and long-term goals, further shape career decisions. However, university-related factors (URF) had an insignificant effect on students' career preferences. These findings offer critical insights for educators, policymakers, and employers, emphasizing the diverse influences that shape students' career decisions. By addressing these factors, universities can enhance their career guidance programs to align better with students' needs and aspirations. This study provides practical recommendations for improving career development initiatives in Sri Lankan higher education, aiming to support more informed career decision-making among management undergraduates.

Keywords: Intentional factors, job-related factors, personal factors, social & technological factors, university related factors