

A Study on Career Aspirations of Undergraduates in Sri Lanka

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Studying career aspiration among undergraduates has become an important topic since undergraduates face numerous challenges after completing their university degree especially when seeking for suitable employment opportunities. Therefore, this study mainly investigates the "career aspiration" in the context of current Sri Lankan Undergraduates, identify the factors that affect different career aspirations of undergraduates and the key issues faced by undergraduates with regard to their career aspirations by applying the theory of planned behaviour. In order to achieve the research objectives, the study was devised using descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected from 20 undergraduates in 04 solitary universities as per the sample and from 03 graduates to conduct case studies based on their successful stories for validation purpose through semi structured interviews. The analysis is done by thematic analysis method by using NVivo 8 qualitative analysis software. Based on the findings of the study the concept career aspiration defined as "identification of an appropriate professional path during the period of undergraduate with realistic vision by considering future career targets, goals and objectives through which the final satisfaction could be achieved", and indicated that the subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and attitude are the factors which affect different career aspirations of the undergraduates in Sri Lanka. Finally, key issues were identified as lack of experiences, competition, political changes and lack of monetary facilities and all the respondents agree with the statement that the identified issues become great influence to career aspiration. This research is a significant source for the policy makers and decision makers in manipulating the university education system of the island and the universities can meaningfully contribute towards career development of undergraduates.

Keywords: Theory of planned behaviour, Attitudes, Social norms, Perceived behavioural control