

# The Impact of Gender and Location on Career Indecision: Special Reference to Sri Lankan State Universities

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**Abstract—** Making a career decision is one of the most important problems that adolescents face during their transition from university to work environment. In making a decision on career advancement pertaining to a preferred career, young adults and adolescents face high levels of anxiety. The inability to choose a career is referred to as career indecision among university undergraduates. Career indecision is linked to concerns such as career development and difficulties in making career-related decisions, as well as self-efficacy, career counselling opportunities, and family support, many of which can affect a student's capacity to make career decisions. The purpose of the study is to identify whether there is a significant impact of the target population's segregation based on gender and university location on career decision-making among Sri Lankan state university management undergraduates. The sample included 345 final-year management undergraduates from metropolitan and rural state universities. Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire and the hypothesis was tested using an independent sample t-test. According to the study's primary findings, career indecisiveness is higher among males, while the geographical location of state universities is shown to be insignificant in terms of being career indecisive. When it comes to designing human resource development programs and policies, the research findings are useful to policymakers, government institutions, and the public at large.

**Keywords—** *career indecision, gender, location, management undergraduates, state universities*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Career Indecision has been seen as one of the essential and focal areas of career psychology, which has caught the consideration of numerous

scientists because of its money-related and mental costs (Osipow, 2009). Therefore, most researchers revealed career decision-making related problems are leading to arise career indecision (Lock, 2009). Career indecision is a negative status that refers to an inability to select a career goal or having selected a career goal, to experience significant feelings of uncertainty about the goal (Callanan and Greenhaus, 2010). According to the Sri Lanka scenario, Management undergraduates record a significant percentage (around 20%) from total Sri Lankan undergraduates and it has gradually risen. (University admission handbook, 2019-2020). As a creating nation like Sri Lanka, there is a tremendous interest in managerial experts to offer help for financial development and adding to the achievement of unstable business conditions (Liyanage, 2013). Graduates passing out from state universities could be considered as an important asset concerning uplifting the country's economy (Ukil, 2016). Graduates' contribution to the enhancement of the knowledge workforce is massive. Their calibre at the strategic business level is a major determinant in the growth of the state as well as private institutions. However, the issue at hand is, the current economic situation of the country has not expanded in order to create value-added employment opportunities for graduates. Therefore, graduates do not motivate to take correct decisions regarding their career prospects. Since no previous scholarly work has dealt with the phenomena of career indecision concerning gender and university location, the study was conducted in the context of Sri Lankan state universities. The territory education sector was chosen because it was thought to have the most likely group of society who were indecisive about their careers. Thus, the research question of this study is to identify whether there is any

significant impact on career indecision based on gender and geographical location.

In order to find out the answer to the research question, the general objective is to identify the impact on career indecision based on gender and geographical location.

*A. Research Problem*

Graduates who passed out from universities are considered a significant resource for the economy in the long run (Brown et al., 2013). When considering the unemployment statistics in Sri Lanka, it is 4.8% (Department of Census and Statistics, 2019). When considering the graduate unemployment rate in Sri Lanka, 54.8% of Art degrees and 45.2% of other degrees were recorded (LFS,2019). Figure 1 shows the average unemployment figures for the last few years. When looking at these numbers, it's clear that unemployment rates have either continued to rise or have increased.

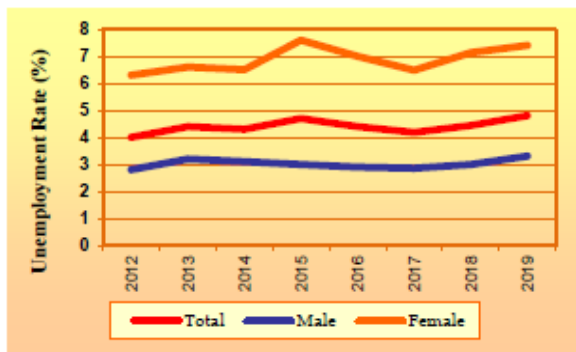


Figure 01. Unemployment Rate by Gender

Source: LFS 2019

Table 01. Unemployment Data on G.C.E A/L, & Above Persons

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	38.7	39.8	41.9	45.8	41.9
Male	23.4	26.4	30.5	28.9	28
Female	49.4	49.6	50.7	59.2	53.3

Source: LFS 2019

Results of Table 01 could be viewed as the source of a looming problem of G.C.E A/L & above Person's career indecision, which in turn affects a country's economic development.

Since career indecision is a complex issue that experiences a high level of uncertainty regarding one's career choices and impacts on the overall

growth of the economy (Lopez and Ann-Yi, 2006). According to Herr, Cramer and Niles (2004), 50% of university students experience career-related problems, some of which are associated with students being undecided about various career options, causing anxiety in university students (Gati et al., 2000). The severity leads to lifelong consequences for the individual's vocational future, psychological and physical well-being, social acceptance, ultimately overall quality of life (Mann, Harmoni and Power, 1989). When considering gender, many differences can be identified among males and females especially in cognitive abilities. The poor female labor force participation and high female unemployment rates (Department of Census and Statistics, 2018) may necessarily mean the indecisive nature of making career decisions. It could be other pressures from culture and society. Concerning the geographical location of the universities, most people have a perception that facilities and the quality of the graduates may higher be based on proximity to the capital city of the country. When analyzing the university rankings, it is apparent that metropolitan universities are higher in the rankings. Thus, based on the facts given above, the problem statement of the study is to identify whether there is any significant impact on career indecision based on gender-wise segregation as well as the physical location of the universities, among management undergraduates in Sri Lanka.

*B. Career Indecision*

Career indecision is a negative status that refers to an inability to select a career goal or having selected a career goal, to experience significant feelings of uncertainty about the goal (Callanan and Greenhaus, 1992). Zimmerman and Kontosh (2007), found that many career development studies have described career indecision as an inability to make career-related decisions and linked it to the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes of an individual. In addition to that, career indecision concerning problems relating to career development, specifically problems relating to career decision-making (Fouad, 1994). Esters (2007) describes career indecision as problems individuals may encounter as they make a career decision, as well as an antecedent that may influence career choices. In the context of career indecision among university students, career indecision is considered to be an inability to choose

a university major subject or career (Herr et al. 2004).

## II. METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the research objective, a descriptive research design based on the quantitative approach was used. This research is a cross-sectional and approach that was deductive as testing an existing theory to confirm if the theory was applicable in the research context through data collection, analysis, and interpretation of results. The target population of this study included all the Management undergraduates in Sri Lankan state universities. The exact sample of 345 respondents was from the four state universities such as the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Colombo, University of Ruhuna and University of Sabaragamuwa based on convenient sampling. In this study, the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and the University of Colombo were categorized under the metropolitan universities and the University of Ruhuna and the University of Sabaragamuwa were categorized as the rural universities. Thereby the respondents of the survey research are university undergraduates in their final year. Thus, the unit of analysis for the present study is “individual”. The self-administered questionnaire has been used as a primary data collection tool for this study.

Based on the previous research studies it has been revealed that there are significant differences among males and females when it comes to focusing on various aspects related to decision making (Francic et al.,2015) (Koch et al., 2015). Therefore, the literature mentioned that there is a significant difference among various traits of decision making between males and females. Accordingly, the researcher has built up the hypothesis below;

Hypothesis 1– The student being a male or a female has a significant impact on being career indecisive.

University systems can be categorized based on many factors such as staff size, the degrees offered, faculties etc (Dill & Soo, 2005). One such factor is the location of the university, which can be further categorized as metropolitan and rural. The differences in the exposure of opportunities arise due to various factors such as the availability of resources that differ between rural and urban state universities, the access to information is somewhat

questionable when it comes to rural universities when comparing to metropolitan universities (Johnston & Hugginss,2016). Thus, the following hypothesis has developed.

Hypothesis 2 – The geographical location of the university has a significant impact on career indecision.

## III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### A. Results

Demographic analysis was done while considering the frequencies of demographic variables. A dataset consisted of 345 valid responses was used to carry out the analysis part. Out of 345 responses, 62% and 38% represented female and male respondents respectively. Most of the respondents were from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, which was 32% of the total responses.

Hypothesis 1– The student being a male or a female has a significant impact on being career indecisive

Table 02. Independent Sample Test (Gender)

Career Indecision	Levene's Test for Equal Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
	F	Sig.	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	7.48	0.007	2.474	0.014
Equal variances not assumed			2.408	0.017

Source: Survey Data 2020

According to the Table 2, T-test has been used to test the predetermined hypotheses. When observing the group statistics, there was a difference between males and females with regard to career indecision. Thus, a high mean value (Males 2.9816) represents high career indecision. The low mean value represents (Female 2.6874) low career indecision. When reviewing the significance values of the independent sample t-test, the significance of t value in equal variance not assumed was 2.408 and significance is 0.017. It indicated as less than 0.05. It ensures a statistically significant difference in career indecision between male and female undergraduates. Therefore, career indecisiveness among the male undergraduates was higher. Hypothesis 1 is supported according to

the analysis and this fact was beyond the findings of previous studies.

Hypothesis 2 – The geographical location of the university has a significant impact on career indecision.

Table 03. Independent Sample Test (Location)

Career Indecision	Levene's Test for Equal Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
	F	Sig.	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	7.48	0.007	2.723	0.064
Equal variances not assumed			2.224	0.077

Source: Survey Data 2020

When considering the Table 03 results of the geographical location, a T-test was carried out. Observing the group statistics, the mean values of rural universities (2.723) were high when comparing to metropolitan universities (2.224). When reviewing the significance values both rural and state universities are exceeding 0.05. Therefore, the researcher identified the geographical location of the university has an insignificant impact on career indecision. Hypothesis 2 was not supported according to the findings and ensures the proximity to the capital city or level of resources and facilities in the university do not account for students to be indecisive when taking their career-related decisions.

#### B. Discussion

The t-test results backed with Hypothesis 1, indicating that males had a more indecisive career nature. It was established and confirmed in previous studies (Francic et al.,2015) that certain cognitive and behavioral characteristics such as impatience, aggressiveness, restlessness, and impatience were seen among males. Females seem to be more concentrated and determined when engaging in decision making. This finding applied not only to pick a career path but also to workplace decision-making. When compared to the current study findings, a previous study finding (Koch et al., 2015) that cited gender as an immaterial factor in

career indecision does not correspond with the current study findings.

Based on the statistical conclusions on geographical location, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Despite the fact the physical location of each university might differ from each other, undergraduates in a given university are comprised from all over the world. Furthermore, the number of resources and facilities available inside a certain university had no impact on whether or not an undergraduate was more or less career indecisive.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study is to identify whether there is any significant impact on career indecision in light of state university management undergraduates in Sri Lanka when it comes to the segregation of the target population based on gender as well as the geographical location of the state universities. Based on the findings, gender has a significant impact, while geographical location does not significantly impact on career indecision. Further, study results revealed that males are more indecisive and geographical factors do not define the indecisiveness of the undergraduates. From a theoretical perspective, this study revealed that the gender of an undergraduate as a significant factor when explaining the career indecision and location of the university could not be considered as a barrier to being career decisive. These research findings could be beneficial to design the career counseling programs in the Universities, Higher Educational Institutes, and Schools of the country. Further, employers and the management of the organizations could be benefitted to understand the indecisive nature between two genders. The government and related policy-making institutions also would be in a position to identify the gaps, requirements and drawbacks when formulating the relevant policies. The major limitation of this research is a classification of the universities as metropolitan and rural was done on an arbitrary basis, purely based on the proximity to the city centre. As future research, implications and directions could opt for private universities in Sri Lanka as a comparison study.

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