# Determinants of Career Indecision: With Special Reference to Management Undergraduates in Sri Lankan State Universities

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## Abstract

One of the foremost decisions that adolescents are confronted within the transitioning period from university to job environment is making a career decision. Young adults and adolescents could experience high levels of stress after they are expected to make their career decision referring to a desired career. The stressful period may be too overwhelming for them. As a result, it may have adverse implications on the quality of their career choice. The applicability of career indecision amongst university students is considered an inability to choose an occupation. Career indecision is linked to issues related to career development and problems in making career related decisions, self-efficacy , career counseling opportunities, family support which may have an impact on the student's ability to make career choices. The current study aimed to examine the determinants of career indecision experienced by final year Management undergraduates in the Sri Lankan state universities. The study examined the differences in career indecision based on gender and, it examined the impact of self-efficacy, career-counseling opportunities, and family support on career indecision. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to undergraduates. The sample (n = 215) consisted of final year male and female Management undergraduates. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between career indecision and gender. In addition, the results revealed that there was a negative impact of self-efficacy and career counseling opportunities on career indecision. Further, the findings revealed that there was a significant positive impact of family support on career indecision.

***Keywords****: Career Indecision, Self Efficacy, Career Counseling Opportunities, Family Support, Management undergraduates*

# 1. Introduction

The advancement of technology, industrialisation and greater diversity on labor market make career decision making a more troublesome and comprehensive process (Stărică, 2012). Career decision making is one of the most critical and inevitable turning points in everyone's life (Büyükgöze Kavas, 2011) and it is a complex process (Germeijs and De Boeck, 2003). Developmental career theories have revealed that, the career decision-making process starts at elementary school level, where the students create their interests and recognise how their capacities identify with this present reality and this process proceeds all through a person's life span (Creed et al., 2006). Over the years there have been a multitude of publications and studies conducted regarding career decision making (Wanberg and Muchinsky, 1992). Since career decision-making is a complex process, career counselors are confronted with a variety of difficulties that individuals encounter when making career decisions(Germeijs & De Boeck, 2003). Therefore, many researchers have revealed that career decision-making related problems are leading to the rise of career indecision (Lock, 2009). Career Indecision has been viewed as one of the essential and focal subjects of Career Psychology, which has caught the consideration of numerous scientists because of its money related and mental costs (Osipow, 1999). The term career indecision has been broadly utilised with reference to issues related to career development; particularly, problems in making career-related decisions.

Further, when considering the knowledge gap, the researcher found an inconsistency in findings. According to time, culture and context, determinants and findings are inconsistent (Osipow, 1999; Jordaan et al., 2009; Nota et al., 2007; Creed et al., 2006;Jackson and Wilton, 2017; Abrams et al., 2015)When look back at previous studies, the majority has been conducted in developed countries; yet there seemed a lack of studies conducted in developing contexts. Therefore, the generalisation ability of the developed context research findings', is very less in comparison to developing context's, due to changes in technology, culture, work patterns, economy etc. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the determinants of career indecision among final year Management undergraduates in Sri Lankan Context. In addition, there are two types of questions in this study. They are, general questions and specific questions. The general question is to identify, *what are the determinants of career indecision?* And the specific questions are, *What is the impact of self-efficacy on career indecision?, What is the impact of family support on career indecision?, What is the impact of career counseling opportunities on career indecision?* and *What is the difference between males& females when being career indecisive?*. In order to find out answers for the research questions there are two types of research objectives such as, the general objective and the specific objectives. The general objective is *to identify the determinants of career indecision* and the specific objectives are, *To examine the impact of self-efficacy on career indecision, To examine the impact of family support on career indecision, To examine the impact of*

*career counseling opportunities on career indecision* and *To study the difference between males& females when being career indecisive.*

# 2. Research Problem

In the phenomena of career decision making, most people experience career indecision and it is a real problem that people confront in their lifespan (Lock, 2009). Career indecision is a negative status that refers to the inability to select a career goal or having selected a career goal, and to experience significant feelings of uncertainty about the goal (Callanan and Greenhaus, 1992). Consequently, career indecision is viewed as a severe problem characterised by the experience of high level of uncertainty regarding one's career choices (Lopez and Ann-Yi, 2006). According to Herr, Cramer and Niles (2004), 50% of the university students experience career related problems, some of which are associated with students being undecided about various career options, causing anxiety in university students. However, for many young people, making a career decision can be a difficult and confusing task (Gati et al., 2000) and that has lifelong consequences for the individual's vocational future, psychological and physical well-being, social acceptance, ultimately the overall quality of life (Mann, Harmoni and Power, 1989). Gordan, L. and Meyer (2002), specified that it is common for people to encounter a specific level of developmental career uncertainty. This might expect to not have a satisfactory experience; more adequate information relating to the world of work. Developmental career indecision among understudies is viewed as a wholesome state, which may ultimately prompt the student to explore careers and set goals (Feldt, 2010). Further, Brown, D. & Brooks, L (1996), viewed career indecision as a demonstration, that reduces a person's inspiration. Therefore, this activity constrains people to move in the direction of their objectives and to accomplish them. Accordingly, career indecision is one of the most commonly present problems in students seeking counseling, at most of the university counseling centers (Kelly, K.R., and Lee, 2005). As a result, the researcher identified career indecision among undergraduates as the phenomena of study. Thus, this study is focuses to identify the factors influencing on career indecision with special reference to final year Management undergraduates in Sri Lankan state universities.

# 3. Review of the Relevant Literature

## 3.1. Career Indecision

Career indecision is a negative status that refers to the inability to select a career goal or having selected a career goal, and 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 was identified with reference to the problems relating to career development; specifically the problems relating to career decision making (Fouad, 1994). Esters (2007) describes career indecision as the problems that 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 the inability to choose the major subject in university or a career (Herr et al. 2004) .

## 3.2. Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is beliefs that determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy assesses a broad and stable sense of personal competence to  deal effectively with a variety of stressful situations (Schwarzer and Wiedemann, 1997).Further, self-efficacy is an individual's belief that he or she can successfully complete the tasks which are necessary to make career decisions (Taylor and Betz, 1983). In addition, it refers to the belief in competencies, with respect to the behaviours that are necessary in particular career-relevant domains (Betz and Klein-Voyten, 1997).

## 3.3. Career Counseling Opportunities

Career counseling helps the counselee to make decisions that he or she needs to make, and gives knowledge and skills that the counselee needs to make future career and life decisions (Savickas, 1993).Career counseling opportunity is counseling or mentoring/coaching on issues related to an individual's career (Susan C.Whisto, 2003).

## 3.4. Family Support

Family Support is defined as an integrated network of  community based  resources and services that strengthen parenting  practices and the development of children (Family Support, n.d.).Parents enlist family support: a constellation of formal and informal services and tangible goods that are defined and determined by families. It is "whatever it takes" for a family to care for and live with a child or adolescent who has an emotional, behavioral, or mental disorder. (Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, 2015, p. 1)Family support is conceptualised as three different patterns; they are acceptance/involvement, strictness/supervision, and psychological autonomy. Acceptance/ involvement refers to the degree to which the individuals perceive their parents as loving, responsive, and involved;

strictness/ supervision reflects ultimate parental monitoring and supervision of the children; and psychological autonomy refers to non-coercive and democratic discipline of parents (Lamborn,1991)

## 3.5. Prior research studies on study variables

When considering existing literature, the researcher was able to find out many studies regarding career indecision among undergraduates in various contexts. According to the research conducted by Nota et al., (2007), self-efficacy and family support were used as determinants of career indecision. Family support has been found to influence both career self-efficacy beliefs and career decision making. The purpose of that study was to verify whether career search self-efficacy could mediate the relationship between family support and career indecision. Using a sample of 253 Italian youth, the study found that, for male adolescents attending a university-preparation high school, career search self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between family support and career indecision. On the contrary to expectations, there was no direct relationship between family support and career indecisionfor female adolescents; however, family support was directly associated with career search self-efficacy, and career search self-efficacy was associated with career indecision.

According to the study conducted by Germeijs and De Boeck (2003), three elements of career indecision were derived from decision theory: being insufficiently educated about the alternatives, valuation issues, and vulnerability about the results. The three components were examined in high school students' career decision-making procedure. Using factor analysis, the researcher found empirical evidence of a difference between the three theoretical sources of career indecision: an information factor, a valuation factor, and an outcomes factor, but only the valuation factor and the outcomes factor seemed to associate empirically with career indecision. The importance of both factors for career indecision was further supported by their intermediate role between general indecisiveness and career indecision.

# 4. Methods

## 4.1. Research method

In order to examine the determinants of career indecision among undergraduates, a descriptive research design based on the quantitative approach was used. This research is a cross-sectional quantitative study, investigating whether the factors including self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities and family support, are related to career indecision. The research approach was deductive or quantitative as it tested an existing theory to confirm if the theory was applicable in research context through data collection, analysis, and

interpretation of results. To do this, the information was gathered from the final year undergraduates who are following the Management degree in Sri Lankan state universities. Data was collected from four state universities such as University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Colombo, University of Ruhuna and University of Sabaragamuwa. The quantitative survey method was chosen since it allows the collection of a large amount of data from a large population in a cost-effective manner (Rizkallah et al., 2015). In order to do that, a questionnaire was used with a proper scale and scope. Then the responses were statistically analysed using SPSS version 20.
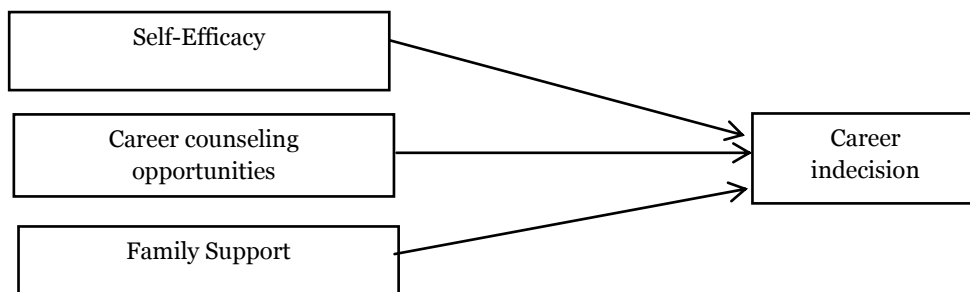


Figure 01: Conceptual Framework

After conducting an extensive literature review, four hypotheses have been formulated to cover the scope of the study. They were formulated by considering previously done research. Most of the researchers revealed that self-efficacy, negatively impact on career indecision,(Harriott et al., 1996; Taylor and Bet, 1983; Nota et al., 2007*;* Greenhaus et al., 1995). Based on existing literature, a hypothesis was developedas:*H1:There is a significant negative impact of self-efficacy on career indecision.* Existing literature findings revealed that there is a negative impact of career counseling opportunities on career indecision (Savickas, 1993;Herr et al., 2004). Based on that, a hypothesis was built up as*H2: There is a significant negative impact of career counseling opportunities on career indecision.* Family support negatively impacts on career indecision (Parsons, 1909; C. T. Lee, Beckert and Goodrich, 2010;Nota et al., 2007). Based on that, a hypothesis was developed as *H3: There is a significant negative impact of family support on career indecision.*Existing literature provided evidence that, there is a difference between males and females when being career indecisive. Based on that, a hypothesis was developed.(Nota et al., 2007).*H4: There is a significant difference between males& females when being career indecisive.*

## 4.2. Questionnaire design

A questionnaire was designed consisting five sections based on the hypothesis. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework developed in order to a get clear idea about the relationship between those factors (Dorner, 2012; Chatchawan et al., 2017; Monteiro et al., 2016). Here career indecision (CI) acts, as the dependent variable and all the others are independent variables. In the questionnaire, the respondents have to fill their gender, university, specialisation area, and the source of monitory income. Then the rest of the questions were provided with several options. Five-point Likert-scale was used to capture responses from the undergraduates, which allowed them to make their level of agreement as, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. After the confirmation of the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted by giving the questionnaire to 20 undergraduates. They were invited to complete the survey, to comment on whether the questionnaire is legible, understandable and to give any other comments to improve the design and content of the questionnaire. After that, some modifications were done according to the comments.

# 5. Data analysis

## 5.1. Demographic analysis

A demographic analysis was done while considering the frequencies of demographic variables. A data set consisting of 215 valid responses was used to carry out the analysis part. Out of 215 responses, 62% and 38% represented female and male respondents respectively. Most of the respondents were from University of Sri Jayewardenepura, which was 32% of the total responses. When considering the specialisation area of undergraduates, a majority specialised in Accountancy which was 31.2 % of the total responses, 10.7% specialised in Finance, 20.5% specialised in Marketing, 24.7% specialised in Human Resource Management, and 13.5 % specialised in Entrepreneurship. When considering the monitory source of income, almost 33.5% of the respondents have Mahapola; and the least number of undergraduates recorded other monitory sources.

## 5.2 Measurement model assessment

Before doing descriptive, correlation and regression analysis, it is important to assess the measurement model. For that, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked. Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) coefficient and Bartlett's test of sphericity (BTS) were used to assess the measurement model.Sampling adequacy was measured by using KMO value. BTS is a statistical test used to test overall significance of correlation. Criteria: 0.90s-marvellous, 0.80s-meritorious, 0.70s-middling, 0.60-medicore, 0.5s-miserable and below 0.5 is

unacceptable(Kaiser H, 1974). Table 1 depicts that KMO value is 0.62, which is medicore value, and BTS is also a strong value.

Table 01:KMO and Bartlett's Test

| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .620 |
|---|---|---|
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 408.204 |
| | Df | 6 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

Source: Survey data (2018)

Reliability was checked using Cronbach's alpha technique (Shahzad et al., 2007; Vasanthapriyan et al., 2017; Hamdy, 2015). The test will be significant when the alpha value result is more than 0.7. George and Mallery,(2003) provide the following rules for alpha values: (Alpha value > 0.9 – Excellent, Alpha value > 0.8 – Good, Alpha value > 0.7 – Acceptable, Alpha value > 0.6 – Questionable, Alpha value > 0.5 – Poor, Alpha value < 0.5 – Unacceptable). The values of Cronbach's alpha are depicted in Table 2. As all the values were above 0.8, it was confirmed that the questionnaire was reliable.

Table 02: Reliability statistics of variables

| Variable | Cronbach's alpha |
|---|---|
| Self-Efficacy | 0.922 |
| Career counseling opportunities | 0.962 |
| Family Support | 0.911 |
| Career Indecision | 0.869 |

Source: Survey data (2018)

## 5.3. Correlation analysis

To analyse the relationship between self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities, family support and career indecision (CI) Pearson Correlation Matrix was used as shown in Table 3. Many indicators were used to determine the influence of factors over career indecision. From the data, it was found that self-efficacy and career-counseling opportunities have a negative correlation with the controlling effect. Family support has a positive relationship with career indecision.

Table 03:Correlations with control effect

| | CI | SE | CCO | FS | Gender | University | Specialisation Area | Monitory source |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CI | 1 | | | | | | | |
| SE | -0.193** | 1 | | | | | | |
| CCO | -0.121 | 0.577** | 1 | | | | | |
| FS | 0.376** | 0.776** | 0.73** | 1 | | | | |
| Gender | -0.167* | 0.087 | 0.179** | 0.166* | 1 | | | |
| University | -0.021 | -0.032 | -0.041 | -0.022 | -0.085 | 1 | | |
| Specialisation Area | -0.011 | -0.047 | -0.093 | -0.051 | 0.118 | 0.04 | 1 | |
| Monitory source | 0.058 | -0.017 | -0.024 | 0.025 | -0.06 | -0.206** | -0.031 | 1 |

Source: Survey data (2018)

*Note: FS*=Family support, CCO= Career Counseling Opportunities, SE= Self Efficacy; P**<0.01, P*< 0.05

Table 04: Correlation analyse without control effect

| | CI | SE | CCO | FS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CI | 1 | | | |
| SE | -0.213* | 1 | | |
| CCO | -0.158* | 0.571** | 1 | |
| FS | 0.416** | 0.776** | 0.722** | 1 |

Source: Survey data (2018)

Note: FS=Family support, CCO= Career Counseling Opportunities, SE= Self Efficacy, P**<0.01, P*< 0.05

The correlation between the variables is important to find out the relationships between them. The correlations of self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities, family support and career indecision are given in Table 4. Accordingly, there was a negative relationship between self-efficacy and career indecision (-0.213, p<0.05). There was a strong negative relationship between career counseling opportunities and career indecision (-0.158, p<0.05). According to

Table 4, there was a positive relationship between family support and career indecision (0.416, p<0.000).

## 5.4. Independent sample t test

Table 05: Group statistics

|  | Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CI | Male | 82 | 2.9861 | 0.91971 | 0.10156 |
|  | Female | 133 | 2.6874 | 0.82049 | 0.07115 |

Source: Survey data (2018)

Note: CI= Career Indecision

According to Table 5 group statistics, there was a difference between males and females with regard to career indecision. High mean value (Males) represents the high career indecision and low mean value represents (Female) low career indecision. To check whether that difference is significant or not, the independent sample t test value has to be considered, and it is presented in Table 6.

Table 06: Independent sample t test

| Career Indecision | Levene's Test for Equality of 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 (2018)

According to Table 6, Levene's test for equality of variance significance value is 0.007. As the significance value was less than 0.05, equal variance not assumed was considered. The significance of t value in equal variance not assumed was 2.408 and significance was 0.017. It was indicated as less than 0.05. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference of career indecision between male and female undergraduates.

## 5.5. Regression analysis

Table 07: Coefficients[a]

|  | Unstandardised Coefficients | | Standardised Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | B | Std. Error | Beta |  |  |
| SE | -0.295 | 0.119 | -0.239 | -2.471 | 0.014 |
| CCO | -0.305 | 0.084 | -0.324 | -3.631 | 0.000 |
| FS | 1.084 | 0.157 | 0.798 | 6.901 | 0.000 |

Source: Survey data (2018)

Note: FS=Family support, CCO= Career Counseling Opportunities, SE= Self Efficacy

The partial regression coefficients ($\beta$), standardised beta coefficients, and t values are given in Table 7. According to that table, partial regression coefficient for self-efficacy was -0.295, -0.305 for career counseling opportunities and 1.084 for family support. This means that variation in one unit of self-efficacy will result to -0.295 variations in career indecision. In other words, if one unit of self-efficacy increases, the career indecision will decrease by -0.295. Similarly, one unit of variation in career counseling opportunities will result to -0.305 variations in career indecision. In other words, if one unit of career counseling opportunities increases, the career indecision will decrease by 0.305. Further, one unit of variation in family support will result to 1.084 variations in career indecision. In other words, if one unit of family support increases the career indecision will increase by 1.084.

Since the standardised beta coefficients is the good measure of regression, there was -0.239 for self-efficacy, -0.324 for career counseling opportunities and 0.798 for family support. This means that, one unite of variations in self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities and family support will result to -0.239, -0.324 and  0.798 variations in career indecision. This reveals further that self-efficacy and career counseling opportunities have negative relationshipswith career indecision. In addition, the relationship between family support and career indecision is positive; all the relationships between the variable are highly significant (p=0.000). This gives a high level of assurance that the coefficients is not equal to zero, and reveals that it is as a good predictor for the career indecision. It can be said at a 95% confidential level.

Further, the most significant independent variables were in order; career counseling opportunities (p=0.000) and family support (p=0.000). The least significant determinant was recorded as self-efficacy at 95% confidence interval.

## 5.6. Model Fit

Table 08: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | F | Sig. F Change |
|-------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|--------|---------------|
| 1 | .463a | 0.215 | 0.204 | 0.77623 | 19.235 | 0.000 |

a Predictors: (Constant), FS, CCO, SE -FS=Family support, CCO= Career Counseling Opportunities, SE= Self Efficacy

Source: Survey data (2018)

Since the model gives a high level of assurance for the career indecision, it is also important to find the overall predictive fit of the model. The predictive fit capacity is derived from the $R^2$ it is 0.215 for the model. This $R^2$ was obtained from the R, which was the correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient R for this model was 0 .463[a.] This value reflects the degree of the association between career indecision and the three independent variables of self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities, and family support. Further, Zikmund, (2003) defines the $R^2$ as "the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the variation in the independent variables". According to Table 8, and based on the definition of Zikmund,(2003), there was 21.5% variation career indecision in the three independent variables of self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities, and family support.

Further, the adjusted $R^2$ is taken in to consideration in order to reduce the inflation of the $R^2$ when adding the more independent variables to the model. Since there are three independent variables, it is better to take the adjusted R2 for interpretation. Therefore, 20.4 % of the career indecision is explained by the three independent variables used for this study. For this calculation, a statistical assurance can be given from the F value. The F value is 19.235 and it is highly significant (p=0.000). This means that the regression model is statistically significant; it can be said that at a 95% confident level the career indecision is influenced by self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities, and family support

# 6. Results and Discussion

In this study, career indecision was determined via three possible determinants, which were briefly discussed in the literature. Self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities, and family support have been pointed out as factors that negatively affect career indecision from previously done research(Stărică ,2012;Nota et al.,2007). However, according to the results of this study, self-efficacy and career counseling opportunities have negative impacts on career indecision and family support has a positive impact on career indecision. Therefore, in case of Sri Lankan Management undergraduates, if there is high family support, there is high career

indecision. This study provides new insight that; high supportive family culture leads to be high career indecisive. According to the Sri Lankan culture, most of the families give high care and support to their children until they get around 30 years of age (Cadwell et al., 1998). Family support can be seen in different angles in Sri Lankan culture. There may be financial support and emotional support. Due to having much support and caring, children are not motivated to get career related decisions easily. Therefore, the researcher found out that there is a positive impact of family support on career indecision. When it comes to western cultures, this situation may be different, because in western culture, parents do not care much about their children, when they reach around 15 years of age(Geller et.al., 2011) . Therefore, in that culture, children have to get career decisions quickly to be an independent person. Therefore, the Sri Lankan scenario is totally different according to the findings of this study.

The findings of this study revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between males and females with regard to career indecision. High mean value indicated high career indecision and low mean value indicated low career indecision. As a result, career indecisiveness of males is higher than of females. However, in a developing country like Sri Lanka, this kind of situation will create a negative impact on the labor market in the near future, with regard to the labor force participation rate of male vs. female. When considering previous literature, Gordon and Steele (2003) reported two studies which were conducted separately. The study conducted in 1974 revealed that more males were undecided than females. The second study conducted in 1999 revealed that more females were undecided than males. With respect to the findings of this study, it was found out again that males are more indecisive than females. Therefore, the researcher can see a pattern of being career indecisive with regard to the gender.

# 7. Conclusion

Career indecision of undergraduates is a crucial problem, which leads to create a negative impact on the labor market in Sri Lanka. The aim of this study was to identify the determinants of career indecision in Sri Lankan Management undergraduates. In conclusion, self-efficacy, career counseling opportunities, and family support were proved as the most important factors influencing career indecision in Sri Lankan Management undergraduates. This research has provided strong evidence to prove their impacts. The research model has been reconstructed according to the findings. In addition, the results emphasised that both self-efficacy and career counseling opportunities negatively affect on career indecision and family support positively affects on career indecision. Therefore, future research should be done on investigating above factors to find more evidence to say that. In addition, this study is only focused on Management undergraduates in Sri Lankan state universities. Therefore, more studies should be done by covering the other degrees as well.

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