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**Job Preferences of Management Undergraduates: Special Reference
of Management Undergraduates from University of Sri
Jayewardenepura**

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Abstract

Job preference of job seekers is an important human management aspect to many parties such as job offers, policy makers and job seekers. However, many academic programmes offered by the higher educational institutes are not orientated to the real needs of job seekers. It leads to mislead the job seekers. In this context, this study discusses the job seekers' predilection of job. In Sri Lanka, there is only one research done in this study. Therefore, there is theoretical and empirical knowledge gap between these areas. Then, the problems of the study are: what is the preference for job of management undergraduates and what are the factors they consider to select a job? Using 257 management undergraduates of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, primary data were gathered. The sampling method was simple random sample and questionnaire was designed with structured in nature. Using SPSS version 16, univariate analysis were done to analysis the primary data. Major findings of the study are: there is a demand for the private sector jobs as well as public sector jobs from the management undergraduates and the reasons of selecting a job from both sectors almost similar in these two groups. The recommendation of the study is that considering the factors concerned by the job seekers, specially the management undergraduates, public and private sector companies should enhance the qualities of jobs and offer the jobs.

Key world: Management undergraduates, Private sector, Public sector, Job preferences

Introduction

Human Resource is the most important resource for every business organizations. It is very difficult to manage human resource because of their unique characteristics. People as social and psychological creatures, are very sophisticated in nature to understand and manage things effectively and efficiently towards an objective (DeCenzo and Robbins, 1999). Human Resource is very essential to any organization, because they cannot manage or control other resources without human resources. So the role of the human resource is essential and it should be utilized in an effective and efficient manner in order to accomplish organization objectives. It is very critical when acquiring human resource for a job of an organization. Therefore we need to be very careful when recruiting an employee for an organization. Recruiting suitable people for an organization is a function of employment selection (Kumara, 2005).

It makes an impact on two parties, employer and employee; the demand for a job is based on many factors, such as individual factors organizational factors and etc

(Kumara, 2005). It is important to understand that industry attractiveness is measured not only by employers' ability to hire employees but also by their ability to attract the interest of job seekers (Edgington, online). But in the job seekers point of view, he or she tries to actualize his or her career ambitions and strategic goals. These two goals may be in two extreme points in the practical world. In order to balance of these goals, there should be a resemblance situation where an appropriate job seeker with an appropriate job and an appropriate organization. Equivalent of a job seeker for a job could happen in two ways: one is that organizational selection effort (Kumara, 2005). Organizations exercise several strategies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the selection process. Second way is that job seeker in the labour market look for an appropriate job for his or her aptness. Organizations have to consider these two factors together when hiring most suitable qualified employee for the vacancy. As well as in order to select outstanding person to a vacancy, employer has to realize what factors are being considered by job seeker in the labour market. At the micro level, government organizations as well as private sector organizations have to consider job selection factors of job seeker in the labour market (Kumara, 2005). At the macro level, government policies should be focused on planning and implementation various policies for government sector as well as private sector considering job selection factors of job seeker in the labour market.

Research Problem

Previous researches have focused on employment outcomes of graduates of undergraduate (Gandy, 1983; Geist & McMahan, 1981) and graduate (Crisler & Eaton, 1975; Gregg, 1977; Kelley, Dixon, Emener, & Wright, 1999; Scofield & Andrews, 1981; Sullivan, 1982; Trolley & Cervoni, 1999) rehabilitation education programs, career satisfaction of graduates, (Janes & Emener, 1986) and administrative/supervisory duties of graduates (Riggan & Matkin, 1984). However, all these studies were done in foreign contexts and those findings were difficult to apply to the Sri Lankan scenario.

According to the present scenario of the labor market and government policy regarding the public sector, there is a trend to develop private sector in Sri Lanka. However, Hemantha in 2005 found that many undergraduates and graduates of management liked to find the jobs in private sector. There were many reasons to find a job in private sector or shift to private sector job from the public sector by the management undergraduates (Kumara, 2005). However, at present, there is no any idea about the findings found by Kumara. Therefore, there is a theoretical and empirical gap about the findings found by Kumara. Then the problem of this study is: do management undergraduate like to do the public sector job rather than the private sector job? The main objective of the study is to find the preferences of management undergraduates of selecting a job in public sector and private sector. As specific objectives of the study, researchers tried to find the preference of management undergraduates of selecting job and what are the main reasons of selecting a job of management undergraduates.

Research Evidence on Job Selection Factors

More often than not, there may be numerous factors concerned by job seekers in choosing of a job. These factors may vary in different contexts, such as demographic

factors (gender, ethnicity, geographical basis, etc), psychological factors (physical needs, security needs, social need, motivational factors, self esteem factors, etc), social factors (Status, social norms, Social classless, etc), and other factors.

There are few available research findings that can be pointed out from the global context for this phenomenon. According to MBA Alumni perspective survey – August 2002 in UK, they found out following factors as job selection factors of the MBA students, the opportunity to do challenging work (99.8%), the opportunity to learn new things (99.8%), extending range of abilities (98.7%), competitive salary (98.6%), opportunity to use skills to the maximum (98.6%), opportunity for advancement (98.6%), the opportunity to make own decisions (97.8%), positive organizational climate (97.6%), achieving something that you personally value (97.6%), job security (95.4%), benefits (94.1%), company image and reputation (93.3%), location (93.1%), opinions of peers in your MBA class (71.0%), stock option or ownership program (65.9%), opinions of spouse/significant other (61.6%) [On Line¹].

Weller and Jolma revealed that the job decision factor ranked most important by respondents (nurses) were as salary, position in clinical area of choice, shift of choice, benefit package, geographical area, advancement opportunity, shift differential/bonuses, relocation allowance, educational opportunity, childcare provisions (Weller and Jolma [On Line²]. According to this survey, the survey respondents ranked salary and position in the clinical area of choice as most important overall. These results are similar to the findings of an early study of twenty-six job-decision factors as ranked by RNs in the state of Massachusetts (Cohen and Lowell 1989) and to another study of eighteen job-decision factors as rated by senior nursing students (Burton and Burton 1982). An analysis of the significance of these decision factors show that challenging and/or interesting work is significantly more important for graduates in choosing jobs than competitive salary; both of these factors are significantly more important than the opportunity for advancement (Edgington, [On Line³]).

According to Seidman, job seekers have to negotiate under two categories; category one is benefits such as annual bonus/incentive pay, signing bonus, commissions, stock options, profit sharing, deferred compensation, healthcare coverage - self/family, insurance supplements, pension plan, payment of taxes in 2 states, tax/legal/financial assistance, commutation expenses, evaluations/accelerated reviews, company car, tuition assistance/professional development, professional conferences, professional organization memberships, club memberships/gym memberships, extra vacation) based on level or seniority), pre-planned vacation, relocation pay, employment contract/severance guarantee, and category two is position such as position description, working hours, formal/informal reporting structure, promotion potential, job enrichment, long-term potential, performance appraisal system, and travel requirements (Seidman, 2005 [On line⁵]).

The findings of a readers' survey conducted by The American Nurse in which nurses ranked the following five factors for making a job change of an applicant (listed here in resulting order of importance): (1) higher pay, (2) upward career move, (3) better

employee benefits, (4) improved scheduling, and (5) appealing geographic location (Weller and Jolma [On Line²]. Although one survey of hospital RN-recruitment practices indicated that over one-fourth of all hospitals surveyed offered relocation assistance (Perry 1989), such an allowance was ranked low by both the student nurses and the more economically motivated RNs in our survey. Another factor that was ranked low by the applicants was childcare benefits. Although a recent American Hospital Association survey revealed that only 12 percent of hospitals surveyed provided childcare (“Survey” 1989), the availability of the benefit is often suggested as one possible means of increasing nursing employment rates in their study of factors influencing the job choice of nursing students. Burton and Burton (1982) also established that the availability of childcare was of low importance. It is often thought that women, to accommodate the demands of family and home life, select jobs that provide greater flexibility.

Out of 11 different job selection factors, job flexibility was the second-least important criteria among both women and men, although women graduates did emphasize it slightly more than men. In a study of university students Smith and Snider (1998) found that “an ability to balance work, family, and other interests” ranked fourth out of 33 work criteria, but only 6% rated this as the most important factor (a breakdown by gender is not provided). On the other hand, according to Stoddard, Back, and Brotherton in 2000, job location was the second-most important factor for both women and men, and here again women rated it somewhat more important than men.

Yet the similarity of values in these respects is more striking than the differences. There is an apparent contradiction in the importance of job location. As noted above, during high school, the majority of students report that they would be willing to move to obtain a job. After graduating from a post-secondary institution, job location is the second-most important criteria. This apparent contradiction might be reconciled by postulating that for graduates, the question may not be whether they would be willing to move, but to where they might be willing to move (Stoddard, Back, and Brotherton, 2000).

According to StepStone.com – Europe’s leader in online career services and recruitment solution, the job selection criteria are personal development, opportunity to learn, competent boss, ability to make an impact, more responsibility, higher salary, a company with a good reputation, corporate culture, flexible working hours, office location, more benefits, less commuting, business travel, opportunity to relocate, and more holidays ([On Line⁴]). According to Pan, Cull, and Brotherton, factors with the highest percentages of importance ratings were spouse/family considerations (90%), job security (87%), and geographic location (84%) (2002).

Healthcare organizations should also consider including the importance of other work-environment characteristics-such as staffing, management structure, and the system of care delivery-among the job-decision factors to be examined. Orr’s study of BSN graduating seniors found that the students ranked these kinds of employment factors higher in importance than choice of specialty unit, shift, and the availability of benefits such as relocation assistance and tuition reimbursement (1989) (Weller and Jolma [On

Line²]). Contrary to what one might expect, uncertainty appears to increase rather than decrease in the period immediately following high school (Sharpe 1996). Overall, job satisfaction as a selection factor, appears to have a major impact in job selection or retention. Nurses' expectations regarding employment must be met in order for job satisfaction to occur. New nurse graduates observed by McCloskey and McCain (1987) became less attached to their jobs, their employers, and the profession when their initial expectations and professional goals were not met.

According to survey conducted by Cohen and Lowell found significant relationships between certain job-decision factors and demographic variables for the group of nurses we sampled. Some researchers have suggested that national surveys or surveys limited to one region of the country may not be applicable to individual organizations, because local circumstances may affect job-factor preferences (Cohen and Lowell, 1989). However, which was national in that we had respondents from every state but one-found results very similar to studies conducted in specific regions of the country (Burton and Burton, 1982; Cohn and Lowell, 1989).

MBA Alumni perspective survey – August 2002 in UK, explained males and females differ significantly on two of the 16 factors. Females believe they weighed competitive salary too little, compared with males. Over one-third of the females say they weighed it too little (34%), compared with 21% of the males. Over one-half of the females (57%), however, believe they weighed competitive salary about right. Females also believe they weighed the opportunity to use their skills to a maximum too little, compared with males; although over two-thirds of the females overall believed they weighed this opportunity about right (68%) [On Line¹]. The overall structure of criteria when selecting a job is quite similar for female and male graduates. That is, the rank order of criteria is not remarkably different for the two genders. Nevertheless, some consistent patterns can be noted. First, women emphasize salary and pay less than do men (Lowe et al., 1997; Smith and Snider, 1998; Clark, 1999).

Women graduates are also less likely to consider career advancement and job security when selecting a job. There is a greater tendency for women than men to select jobs for enhancement of their skills and abilities, for the opportunity to work with people, and for offering them the kind of work that they like (Lowe et al., 1997; Clark, 1999). Relationships between the responses to the demographic items and the factors influencing job decisions were analysed using co relational statistics. Several statistically significant correlations (at the .05 level or less) were identified. For example, significant correlations demonstrated positive relationships between year of nursing experience and the importance of economic incentives: The more experienced the nurse; the most important financial incentives (such as salary and relocation allowance) were as job-decision factors. Earlier research described by Weisman (1982) suggested that prospects for future earnings as a result of increased experience were more important to nurses than current pay. Although new-graduate salaries are routinely adjusted for price inflation, experienced nurses' wages are compressed by a salary-scale maximum that has not been adjusted for inflation. Thus, given the limited lifetime salary increases of the nursing profession, nurses probably become more concerned with salary as their increases level off. The findings of other studies support

hospitals' common use of the "clinical-ladder" wage-scale concept to provide nurses with salary increases tied to career advancements (Weller and Jolma [On Line²]).

The geographic area and availability of a position in their clinical area of choice may be more important considerations. These two factors have been previously cited as important job-selection criteria for nurses (Hughes, 1979). We believe that social demographics such as age and marital status probably have a much greater effect than region of residence on job-selection factors. It is also likely that urban versus rural residence may affect demographic variables and practice patterns.

A study by Whaley, Young, Admins and Biordi (1989) did in fact find that nurses in one area of the country differed on various social, education, and practice variables according to whether they worked in an urban or suburban location. Therefore, there was a suggest that other organizations conduct similar studies to identify the specific desires of the RN and other professional applicants that they hope to attract to their institutions (Weller and Jolma [On Line²]). One reason may be that high school students appear not to be much involved in career planning (Geller, 1996). The implications of this uncertainty, coupled with the lack of concrete planning are that high school students are in need of, and receptive to, guidance in making their plans for the future (Thiessen, 2001).

Teenagers' occupational aspirations are in line with their educational plans, which, as shown above are appropriately high on average. A cohort analysis of several samples of Canadian youth indicates that high school girls show the greatest increase in occupational aspirations (Andres, Anisef et al., 1999). The same increase is found in the U.S., where studies prior to the seventies "showed that boys have higher achievement orientations than girls; studies in the seventies and eighties indicated no consistent gender difference. More recent research shows that adolescent girls' aspirations often surpass those of boys" (Mortimer, 1996). Youth's occupational expectations are extremely fluid. A longitudinal study of U.S. high school students found that, despite the use of 15 broad occupational categories, between any two successive years the highest level of consistent occupational expectations was 56% (Rindfuss, Cooksey et al., 1999) Comparable to the U.S., several features of Canadian society result in a high degree of uncertainty and flexibility in youth's choice of future occupation. As a society they feel the choice should maximize an individual's skills and abilities which often are not clear until they are young adults. Hence any decisions that might limit occupational choice are to be delayed as long as possible (Lewis, 1997).

The importance of the job selection factors also is varied by marital status. Unmarried residents had higher rates of reporting that research opportunities were very important (27% vs 23% and 17%; $P = .002$) and lower rates of reporting that family considerations (75% vs 96% and 98%; $P = .001$), future colleagues (compared with residents married to a physician, 79% vs 89%; $P = .004$), or control over work hours (compared with residents married to a physician, 77% vs 86%; $P = .009$) were very important (Pan, Cull, and Brotherton, 2002).

According to above global research revealed that there are many factors considered by job seekers in selecting a job. This also varies on different factors, and contexts. In the Sri Lankan context, according to the understanding of the authors, there are not any research findings addressing this issue. Then, there is a theoretical as well as empirical gap between these phenomena.

Method

The survey method characterized by a questionnaire was selected as the method of data collection in this study. This study was purely based on primary data. The non-contrived field-setting environment was used to collect the primary data. Therefore, the survey method was found to be more suitable to collect required original data because of its comparative advantageous position in terms of time and cost. To obtain the objective of the research, researchers selected management undergraduates from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. It consists of first year, second year, third year and final year management undergraduates. The selected sample of the study is limited to 57 first year undergraduates, 56 second year undergraduates, 74 third year undergraduates and 75 final year undergraduates from the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce. All workers were selected randomly. The research is purely based on primary data. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of 15 question statements. The variable in the research model were measured by the use of questionnaire with three point scales. The three point scales for the variables were ranged from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” with the point of 1 to 3 respectively for positive statement and 3 to 1 in reverse order respectively for negative statements. SPSS 16 version was hired to analyses the variables and univariate analysis was used to analyses the primary data. The decision rules used to analyses the data are given below.

Decision rules

- 1.0 – 1.66 = Highly significant factor
- 1.67 – 2.33 = Averagely significant factor
- 2.34 – 3.00 = Less significant factor

Empirical Evidences

The empirical evidences can be given in the table No 01 and 02. Table No 01 presents the job preference of management undergraduates for the public sector jobs. Table No 02 presents the job preference of management undergraduates for the privet sector jobs.

Table 01: The job preference of management undergraduates for the public sector job

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rating
Salary	1.0690	.31690	2
Other benefits	1.3276	.57393	9
Opportunity to develop skills and competency	1.0000	.0000	1
Freedom to decision making	1.3276	.47343	9
Working condition	1.1379	.34784	5
Respectability	1.2586	.47978	7
Social image	1.1724	.42459	6
Challenges	1.7759	1.49904	11
Promotion	1.5000	.73150	10
Personal goals	1.8793	.67739	12
Welfare facilities	1.1724	.38104	6
Other facilities	1.0862	.28312	3
Security	1.1207	.37825	4
No discrimination practices	2.6897	.68073	13
Image of the organization	1.2931	.49590	8

According to the table No 01, ‘opportunity to develop skills and competencies’ are the most significant factor by the management undergraduates from the public sector jobs. Secondly and thirdly they consider the public sector job on the salary and other benefits respectively. Security is the fourthly significant factor of the undergraduates selecting a job from public sector.

However, the slightest significant factor of selecting a job in public sector, according to the management undergraduates is no discrimination practices. Second slightest significant factor is personal goals.

Table 01: The job preference of management undergraduates for the private sector job

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rating
Salary	1.0619	.24214	2
Other benefits	1.2165	.43843	6
Opportunity to develop skills and competency	1.0515	.26501	1
Freedom to decision making	1.1959	.42424	5
Working condition	1.1031	.30566	4
Respectability	1.2990	.52371	10
Social image	1.2784	.53507	9
Challenges	1.5876	.60815	11
Promotion	1.6701	.68802	12
Personal goals	1.9072	.66274	13
Welfare facilities	1.0928	.35598	3
Other facilities	1.0515	.22226	1
Security	1.2474	.50064	7
No discrimination practices	2.6289	.65063	14
Image of the organization	1.2577	.50577	8

The mostly significant factor of selecting a job from private sector by the management undergraduates, according to the table no 02 is opportunity to develop skills and competencies. Second significant factor is salary. Third significant factor of selecting a

job from private sector is other facilities. Working condition is the fourthly significant factor considered by the management undergraduates.

However, the slightest significant factor of selecting a job in the private sector by the management undergraduates is ‘no discrimination practices’. Second slightest significant factor is personal goals. Third last factor of selecting a job is promotion.

Findings of the Study

The responses given by the sample for the preferences of selecting a job can be summarized as table No 03.

Table 03: The comparison of private sector and public sector

	Rating Public sector	Rating Private sector
Salary	2	2
Other benefits	9	6
Opportunity to develop skills and competency	1	1
Freedom to decision making	9	5
Working condition	5	4
Respectability	7	10
Social image	6	9
Challenges	11	11
Promotion	10	12
Personal goals	12	13
Welfare facilities	6	3
Other facilities	3	1
Security	4	7
No discrimination practices	13	14
Image of the organization	8	8

According to the table No 03, the following findings can be identified.

1. Salary is a common factor concerned in choosing a job either in the public or private sector by the sample respondents and its rating is high.
2. ‘Other benefits’ are common in both categories.
3. Opportunity to develop skills and competencies are perceived as number one factor to select a job from both sectors.
4. Freedom to decision making is a moderate factor to select a job.
5. Working condition is not a serious factor to select a job from both sectors.
6. Respectability is not much important, but undergraduates who like to select a job from public sector consider this as moderate level than the private sector.
7. Social image affect as averagely to the both categories.
8. Both categories of undergraduates perceived that challenge is not a significant factor to select a job.
9. Promotion is not significant factor to select a job in both categories.
10. Personal goals are less significant in both parties.
11. Welfare facilities are divergent in both sectors. The undergraduates who seek employment in the private sector expect more welfare facilities than the undergraduates who seek jobs in the public sector.
12. Both categories of undergraduates from both sectors expect ‘other facilities’.

13. When an undergraduate who seeks a job from public sector, concern the job security than the undergraduate who seeks a job from private sector.
14. Image of the organization is not a significant factor to select a job by both groups of undergraduates.
15. Discrimination practices of companies are less significant factor to both categories of undergraduates

Mean comparisons of both responses is given in table No 04.

Table 04: Mean comparisons of both responses

	Public Sector		Private Sector	
	Mean	Decision rule	Mean	Decision rule
Salary	1.0690	HS	1.0619	HS
Other benefits	1.3276	HS	1.2165	HS
Opportunity to develop skills and competency	1.0000	HS	1.0515	HS
Freedom to decision making	1.3276	HS	1.1959	HS
Working condition	1.1379	HS	1.1031	HS
Respectability	1.2586	HS	1.2990	HS
Social image	1.1724	HS	1.2784	HS
Challenges	1.7759	AS	1.5876	HS
Promotion	1.5000	HS	1.6701	AS
Personal goals	1.8793	AS	1.9072	AS
Welfare facilities	1.1724	HS	1.0928	HS
Other facilities	1.0862	HS	1.0515	HS
Security	1.1207	HS	1.2474	HS
No discrimination practices	2.6897	LS	2.6289	LS
Image of the organization	1.2931	HS	1.2577	HS

The table No 04 illustrates the mean comparisons of both undergraduates for the job preferences in public and private sectors. According to the table No 04, challenges and promotions are the factors that are not resemblance in these two categories. However all other factors either high significant or averagely significant or less significant are resemblance in nature.

Critical Analysis with Previous Research Findings

Kumara in 2005 found from his study the factors concerned by the graduates to select the private and public sector jobs. The findings can be summarized as below (Kumara, 2005).

Significant factors of graduates to select a job

- Wage/salary
- Convenience
- Relax
- Management practices
- Culture
- Benefits
- Retirement programme

Silent factors of graduates to select a job

- Status
- Social acceptance
- Job satisfaction
- Security
- Freedom
- Career development
- Branches of the organization
- Flexibility

In contrast to the findings of Kumara in 2005, there is a significant difference between the graduates and undergraduates' job preference factors. The reasons might be that graduates are not exposed to the real life and at the university level they have more expectation to the life. However, the reality of social, cultural, economical situations can be realized after getting degree and living in the society. Then, the expectations can be changed according to the pressures coming from these factors.

Recommendation

The objective of the study was to find out the job preferences of management undergraduates and the factors considered by them to select a job. According to the primary data gathered from the sample, majority of the students like to do the private sector jobs. However, there is a demand for the public sector jobs also. It concludes that public sector is not popular among the management undergraduates in Sri Lanka. This finding is similar to the finding of Kumara in 2005. However, majority of management undergraduates like to do the jobs in private sector. The reasons behind the preference of selecting a job from the both sectors were similar in both management undergraduates. Therefore, government has to increase the job opportunities in the public sector with these factors and private sector has to enhance these qualities of the career of employees.

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