

# **The Impact of Personality on Career Exploration Behaviors of Undergraduates: With Special Reference to University of Peradeniya**

**M.A. Fahmitha<sup>1\*</sup> and W.A. Edirisooriya<sup>2</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Management, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

*Fahmitha81@gmail.com*

*<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Management, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka*

*aeshsooriya@gmail.com*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Graduates are the one of the human capital resources of our country as they have the potential to determine the performance of an organization or a country (Hanapi & Nordin, 2013). Graduates transition from college to career is an important stage as it is going to decide their status, identity and self-esteem throughout their career decision. Accordingly, career exploration is the central construct to find out new jobs (Raveeswaran & Sivaskaran, 2016), graduates in this transition need career exploration behaviors. On the other hand, unemployment of graduates is one of the prominent issues that many countries currently struggling with (ILO's Flagship report, 2018). The study of UNESCO (2012) states that the worldwide graduate unemployment rate has been increased to 6.2% in 2012. Further, Aina (2017) states that a high percentage of jobless youth contributes to the overall unemployment in Malaysia. By supporting the above view, Oluwajodu, et al., (2015) mention that graduate unemployment in South Africa appears to be rising together with the overall unemployment rate. In Sri Lanka, there are number of graduates unemployed in each year and they have formed unemployed graduates union for the purpose of finding government employment opportunities (Raveeswaran & Sivaskaran, 2016). Thus, the purpose of this study was to address the graduate unemployability issue in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, Raveeswaran & Sivaskaran (2016) have mentioned that the activities of Sri Lankan unemployed graduates show that they are lack of career self-efficacy and career exploration behavior. Stumpf, et al., (1983) define career exploration as the individuals' activities of collecting and analyzing information on their personal characteristics, as well as information on jobs, organizations and occupations. Since graduates are vital for a countries performance (Hanapi & Nordin, 2013) it is essential to focus on the issue of graduates lacking career exploration behaviors. Among many factors personality has an important contribution in

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\* Corresponding Author

affecting career exploration behaviors (Nauta, 2007). Personality is defined as the unique, relatively enduring internal and external aspects of a person's character that influence behavior in different situations (Smith, 2011). In addition, he has reported that openness to experience related positively to career exploration, but extroversion related negatively to exploration. Whereas Li et al. (2015) report that career exploration correlated positively with conscientiousness, extroversion, openness to experience, and negatively with neuroticism, but they also reported a non-significant relationship between agreeableness and career exploration.

### AIM

Meanwhile, less attention has been paid to the study of relationship between personality traits and career exploration behaviors and very few studies were done in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore it is necessary to find out how personality impacts on career exploration behaviors of undergraduates in Sri Lankan context.

### THEORY

As this study examined the impact of personality on career exploration behaviors, big five personality factors were taken as independent variables and career exploration behavior was taken as the dependent variable.

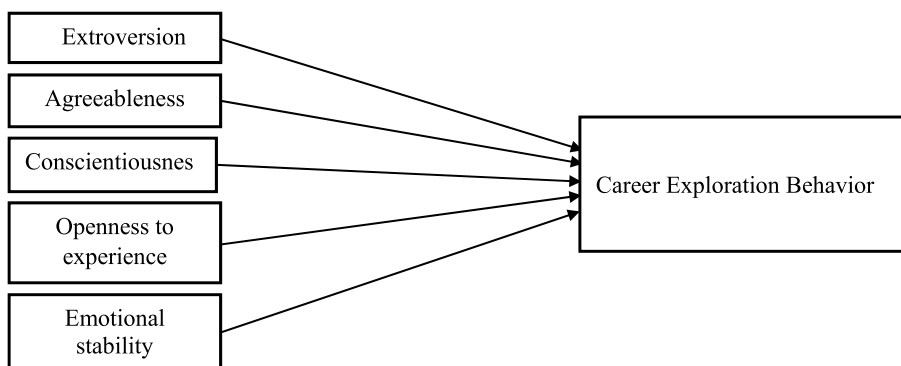


Figure 1: *Conceptual framework*

Source: *Author Developed*

### METHOD

The survey strategy was used since the survey strategy is associated with the deductive approach and it also allows the researchers to collect quantitative data and analyze quantitatively using descriptive and inferential statistics (Saunders, et al., 2009).

**Table 1: Operationalization**

Variable	Measure	Source
Career exploration behaviors	Career exploration survey (CES)	(Stumpf et al., 1983)
Personality	Big Five Inventory (BFI)	(John et al., 2008)

Source: *Author Developed*

Target population of the survey was final year undergraduate of University of Peradeniya since they are imminent to job market and also most of them currently gone for academic internships and trainings. Stratified sampling method was used since it results in better comparison and can get precise results (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2008). Finally, 500 questionnaires were mailed through a Google form to collect data from the sample of 335.

The study used SPSS software (Version 22) for preparing data for the main analysis. The data associated with electronic questionnaires are automatically generated. Data were prepared for analysis started after coding and cleaning. Further reliability and validity were tested in order to measure the adequacy of the data set.

## RESULTS

**Table 2: Results of Correlation Analysis**

	EX	AG	CON	OPN	NEU	PRNLTY	CE
EX	1.000						
AG	.149(**)	1.000					
CON	.199(**)	.399(**)	1.000				
OPN	.299(**)	.306(**)	.401(**)	1.000			
NEU	-.002	.040	-.041	.101	1.000		
PRNLTY	.493(**)	.645(**)	.617(**)	.661(**)	.436(**)	1.000	
CE	.171(**)	.213(**)	.303(**)	.172(**)	-.152(**)	.223(**)	1.000

Source: *Survey Data*

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Table 3: Results of the Regression Analysis**

Predictors	R <sup>2</sup>	B	P
EX	.036	.189	.001
AG	.044	.209	.000
CON	.061	.247	.000
OPN	.028	.169	.002
NEU	.012	-.111	.045
Personality	0.42	.206	.000

Source: *Survey Data*

## DISCUSSION

Findings of this study reveal that conscientious people tend to engage highly in career exploration behaviors than less conscientious people and highest predictor. Because conscientious people are generally task oriented and work hard to achieve their career goals. Therefore they use this as a key tool before and after they step into career ladder. This finding also consistent with Li et al., (2015), Reed et al.,(2004) and Rogers, et al., (2008) but inconsistent with the findings of Nauta, (2007). Further results show that extraverts engage in career exploration behaviors highly than introverts. Career exploration behaviors demand individuals to have contact with various people and to form various networks. This finding consistent with the findings of Reed, et al., (2004), Li, et al., (2015) and Brown & Hirschi, (2013) and inconsistent with Nauta, (2007).

Since Sri Lanka is one of the collectivistic countries, if any Sri Lankan need to collect information about themselves and about environment, they must possess traits like cooperative, trusting, and considerate. Thus, agreeableness positively predicts career exploration. This results also replicate by Li, et al., (2015) and contradict with Reed. et al., (2004) and Nauta, (2007).

Moreover curiosity, unconventional way of thinking, divergent thinking and autonomy of the people will lead them to explore more information about themselves and outer environment repeatedly even when they have satisfied job. Therefore openness to experience positively predict career exploration (Reed et al., 2004; Nauta, 2007; Li, et al., 2015).

Further results show that neuroticism negatively insignificantly predict career exploration behavior as when individuals involves in career exploration. Because they become aware of

their strengths, weaknesses, and skill gap which lead neurotic people to perceive as threatening to their self-esteem, anxiety provoking and stress. Therefore they avoid to involve in exploration behaviors. This results also supported by Reed, et al., (2004), Brown & Hirschi (2013), and Li, et al., (2015).

This study also revealed that personality as a whole positively associated and significantly predict career exploration behaviours. Which indirectly says that collective positive impact of four traits namely extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience are higher than the negative impact of neuroticism. Thus this findings also indirectly support the findings of Li, et al., (2015) and Ranwale & Dissanayake, (2016).

## IMPLICATIONS

Based on this results, universities can arrange various activities like emotional learning lessons, collegiate work, providing various resources in order to build the personality of undergraduates. There are some limitations; cross sectional study has been used and sample was only taken from University of Peradeniya. In future researches, researchers can carry out a longitudinal study.

## KEY WORDS

Environmental Exploration, Self-Exploration, Career Exploration, Personality

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