

DOES MANAGEMENT GRADUATES' CAREER PREFERENCE HAVE AN IMPACT ON THEIR EMPLOYABILITY?

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This study was conducted with the aim of exploring the role of career preference factors in predicting the employability of management graduates. A survey was conducted based on a sample of 150 recently passed out graduates who were employed as entry level casual academic positions in state owned universities in Sri Lanka. Correlation and regression analysis techniques were used with the assistance of the version 24 of the SPSS software. The results found that graduate perceptions such as stability and expertise (willingness to have a secure job that provided opportunity to use the expertise gained through education) and variety and creativity (need of individuals for a career that allows them to work on a variety of different tasks that require them to use and develop a wide range of skills, abilities and knowledge in innovative and creatives ways) are positively related to the employability of graduates. Conversely, graduates' perceptions such as doing a managerial job, willingness to do a job with independence and autonomy do not have significant relationships with their employability. Consistent with the literature, the results indicate that graduates are concerned about their job security and seek opportunities to demonstrate skills and knowledge gained from their studies in choosing a career. Contrary to prior research, the graduates do not have expectations to be employed in managerial positions in which they can enjoy more authority moreover their willingness to have freedom on the job and autonomy in making decisions are not factors that determine their employability. The outcomes of this study support the predictions made by the integrated model of graduate employability of Coetzee. The implications of the study are also discussed.

Keywords: *graduates, career preference, employability*