THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND PERCEIVED CAREER CHOICE OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine whether there is a relationship between personality and perceived career choice among Sri Lankan university students. This study was conducted using data obtained from 150 undergraduates of five different faculties (Management, Engineering, Law, Medical and Arts) and from three different universities in the Western Province in Sri Lanka. Data was gathered using a mixed method of questionnaire survey and interviews. The Five Factor Model (Big Five) was used to measure the personality of the students and perceived career choice was based on their degree program.

The results of the study revealed that there was no relationship between personality and career choice of the Sri Lankan university students. The qualitative analysis showed that there are other factors which influenced the career choice irrespective of personality, such as parental pressure and perceived societal status. These results implied that students who followed certain degree programs may not necessarily like what they are doing as well as they may not be very successful in their perceived future career. As such, it is recommended that student personality be factored into the career choice process for Sri Lankan students at an appropriate stage of their educational pathway.

Keywords: *Personality, Big Five Model, Career Choice, Undergraduates, Sri Lanka*

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1. Introduction

Individuals differ from one an another due to various factors such as personality, abilities, intelligence, background, attitudes, perceptions, motivation, culture, roles they play, gender, race, disability (Grba, 2009). These factors are the main contributors to our behavior or simply they make us individuals. In world literature we can find out many research work performed by many psychologists, counselors and academics to find out how individual differences effect peoples behaviors in different situations across their life span (E.g. education, vocation, family life, etc.).

Among major factors affecting individual differences, personality is a significant and decisive factor that makes oneself an individual. Almost all of us have differing personality traits which in turn decide our behavior. Although our behavior is also influenced by situational variables, our cognitive and thought processes (i.e. personality) also have a significant impact on deciding our behaviors in different situations (Arnold et al., 2005). Thus, personality has also become a major interest area of research. Many empirical studies have performed to find personality traits and their influence on peoples' behaviors such as education, vocation, family life, social life.

Vocational behavior involves how people behave in their work life. This includes many sub elements such as career processes, career related processes, occupational satisfaction and wellbeing and organizational outcomes (Tokar et al., 1998). Vocational psychology involves in studying these vocational behaviors of the people, thus many literature can be found out in this area specially relating to individual differences and its effect on vocational behaviors.

Career Choice is the first and the most important decision that any individual take in his or her life time. Thus, it is a major vocational behavior that should be considered. There are many studies done in international level to find out relationship between one's career and his or her personality. Many of these studies have revealed that it is very important to choose a congruent career with the personality as it can predict future career success. However, it was evident after an extensive search of literature, that this subject matter has not been given proper attention in Sri Lankan scenario. Although there are some studies done in areas such as career choice (Galhena and Rathnayake, 2011), personality and job satisfaction (Kappagoda, 2012); there were no or less empirical evidence available in Sri Lanka which have specifically addressed the relationship between personality and career choice. Thus, it is very important to research this topic in Sri Lanka. Outcomes of such research will aid people to find a suitable career for their personality while aiding to develop career development and career planning activities of the corporate sector.

2. Literature Review

There is no universally agreed definition for the concept "Personality". Different academics have defined personality in different ways. Luthans (2010, p. 126) states that "… personality will mean how people affect others and how they understand and view themselves, as well as their pattern of inner and outer measurable traits and the person-situation interaction". According Lau and Shaffer (1999, p. 255)"Researchers generally agree that personality is [defined as] the dynamic and organized set of characteristics of a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations and behaviors". Mckenna stated that "there is a general agreement between most of theorists that personality is a complex phenomenon which consists wide range of physical, mental, ethical, and social qualities specific for each individual." (Grba, 2009). Thus, the concept of personality has different perspectives.

In personality literature, academics discuss models and approaches for personality such as (Grba, 2009);

- Extroversion-Introversion typology
- Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- Type A and B personalities.
- Eysenck's approach
- Five factor model/ Big 5 model
- RIASEC typology

Among these personality models, many empirical studies which are related to career and personality have used Big Five model; Five Factor Model is a widely accepted framework because of its stability, reliability, validity, and universality (Gunkel et al., 2010). Based on comparisons of information gathered by NEO inventories of different countries, Five Factor Model has shown consistency across different cultures (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003). In a longitudinal study carried out using NEO PI, McCrea and Costa found that the factors show stability (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003, Grba, 2009). Also, the validity of broad dimensions are higher than too narrowly defined dimensions (Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003). Tokar, Fischer, & Subich (1998) referring McCrea & Costa (1989, 1988) state that Five Factor model holds claim to comprehensiveness which is proved through meaningful convergence between other major personality structures such as Murray's (1938) Taxonomy, Jung's (1923) psychological types, Eyesncks (1947) two factor model, Leary's (1957) interpersonal circumflex and Big Five measures.

Five personality dimensions can be broadly described as follows.

• Neuroticism: This dimension indicates tendency to experience negative effects such as fear, sadness, embarrassment, anger, guilt, anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability. A person who scores high on this dimension will also show maladjustment, less able to control impulses. But this is indeed a measure of general personality, not an indicator of psychopathology. High scorers may be at risk for psychiatric problems (Costa and McCrae, 2010, Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003).

• Extraversion: Extraversion consists traits such as warmth, sociable, assertive, excitement seeking, optimistic, energetic, and positive emotions. Extraverts also like large groups and gatherings and they are cheerful in their disposition. Often, we call opposites of the extraverts as introverts. But it is not the direct opposite of the extraversion traits; rather it can be seen as absence of extraversion. Introverts are reserved, independent, but they are not unfriendly, unhappy or pessimistic (Costa and McCrae, 2010, Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003).

• Openness to experience: This dimension includes fantasy, aesthetic sensitivity, and attentiveness to inner feelings, ideas, values, intellectual curiosity, and independence of judgment. A person who has a high score in openness dimension is very curious about his or her inner and outer world. They are willing to accept novel, unconventional ideas and values which promote new ethical, social and political tendencies. But that does not mean that they are unprincipled, thus they have an evolving value system. In contrast closed person may choose conventional behaviour and conservative philosophy. But they are not intolerant authoritarians (Costa and McCrae, 2010, Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003)

• Agreeableness: A person, who reports high level of agreeableness shows following traits trust, sympathy towards others, altruistic, compliance, modesty, and tender mindedness. Agreeable people are very cooperative and eager to help others and they also believe others will do the same for them. A low agreeable person can be identified through antagonism, egocentrism, competition, and skeptical to others intentions (Costa and McCrae, 2010, Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003).

• Conscientiousness: This includes competence, order, dutifulness, self-control, achievement striving, responsibility, and deliberation. Conscientious individuals often show strong will power and they always strive for achievements. Thus, high conscientious person is associated with academic and occupational achievements. But it also may have a negative side such as annoying fastidiousness, compulsive neatness or workaholic behaviours. High scorers of this dimension are scruples, punctual, and reliable. That does not mean low conscientious personality lacks in these traits but, yet they are less exact in applying them (Costa and McCrae, 2010, Rothmann and Coetzer, 2003).

There is vast amount of literature that explains relationship between variety of vocational behaviors such as occupational stress, burnout, undesirable organizational outcomes, career progression, career change, mentoring (Tokar et al., 1998). This shows that personality indeed an important factor in vocational behavior and choosing a career that is congruent with personality type is very important for successful career life. Career choice is also a subject that is widely researched in the vocational psychology. Many researchers have studies the relationship between personality and career choice of students and professionals such as; Nieken & Stomer using German sample Nieken and Störmer (2010); Ham et al. (2009a), Ham et al. (2009b) using Australian sample; (Rubinstein and Strul, 2007) and (Rubinstein, 2005) using an Israeli sample; Kline and Lapham (1992) using a UK university sample; Järlström (2000) using a sample of Finish business students. Here first five studies were based on Big Five model and latter was based on Myers Briggs Type Indicator.

Niken & Stomer (2010) classified occupations in to six groups'; manual workers, managers, technicians, Clerks, Service workers and professionals and studied their relationship with Big five personality dimensions of large representative male sample. They found that, manual workers report high neuroticism level than other occupational groups while managers reported lower level of neuroticism (i.e. emotional stability). Niken & Stomer (2010) also found that extraversion had significant relationship with managers and service workers who tend to have high social interaction while professionals and manual workers showed lower level of extraversion. Regarding openness technicians and professionals who work in changing work environments showed higher levels of openness while clerks and manual workers reported lowest. Evidence didn't support their hypothesis regarding conscientiousness, thus manual workers reported highest levels of conscientiousness. Even though they expected high level of agreeableness in social jobs such as service workers, professionals and technicians reported higher levels of agreeableness.

Ham et al. (2009b)in their study to find relationship between Five Factor Model (i.e. Big five) and white collar and blue-collar occupations stated that except for extraversion all other personality dimensions of the Five Factor Model have a significant impact on occupational outcome (i.e. being in a white collar or blue-collar job). Further in the same study authors stated that higher conscientiousness can lead a person to being in a white-collar occupation regardless of their gender. And for males' high openness and emotional stability (i.e. lower neuroticism) has an association with white collar jobs. They also found that agreeableness does not have a significant effect on a person to being in a white-collar job. However, referring to Heckman, Stixrud & Urzua (2006), Ham, Junankar, & Wells (2009b) stated that non-cognitive factors also have an effect on these findings especially for women.

Ham, Junankar, & Wells (2009a) in representative Australian sample found that openness to experience have an effect on person being in a managerial or professional role rather than an operator or a labourer. Higher conscientiousness level had associations with managerial and clerical jobs while lower level scores tend to be in sales, operator or labour positions. They also found extraversion may lead a person to being in a management or sales job, while lower extroverted person may choose a clerical or labour occupation. Social occupations, operators and clerks showed high level of agreeableness while managers and technicians showed least levels. Finally, higher emotional stability (i.e. lower neuroticism) scorer tended to be in professional job, while lower scorer may tend to work as a clerical worker.

Rubinstein & Strul (2007) researched personality of four male and female Israeli professionals using Five Factor Model of personality found that Artists are more neurotic than other professionals researched. (i.e. Clinical psychologists, Lawyers, Doctors.). Lawyers scored highest level of extraversion while Artists were more open than others. Clinical Psychologists tended to score high in agreeableness comparatively. Finally, regarding conscientiousness Artists scored significantly low level than others.

Rubinstein (2005) performed a study to explain big 5 personality of Israeli university students who belong to Law, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Arts Faculties. In this study Rubinstein revealed that law students are more neurotic and less open and agreeable compare to students of other faculties. Further, stated that there are no significant differences in conscientiousness level comparatively in all faculties while natural science courses are chosen by students who tend to show less extraversion traits.

Kline & Lapham (1992) in their research study they did using sample of 1472 UK university students, found that Science and Engineering students report high level of conscientiousness than other students. They also revealed that Science and engineering students report high level of conformity (i.e less openness to experience) compare to students of Arts and Social students. Engineers also show tough minded personality (i.e. lower agreeableness) compare to other students. In this study Kline & Lapham also state that science faculty students' show high level of neuroticism, which is different to results shown in then Rubinstein (2005) study of Israeli university students. Further in this study science students showed lowest level of extraversion compare to others.

Jarlstrom (2000) in her study based on Myers Briggs Type Indicator and career anchor theory with Finnish business students career expectations found that Introverts had expectations in Technical competence, Independence, Creativity while extroverts expected Managerial, Service, and Pure challenge. Sensing types associated with Technical and Managerial competence and Security. Intuitive types related with Independence, Pure challenge and Creativity.

Thinking type had expectations on technical competence while feeling type to Independence and Service. Judging types related to Technical competence, Management competence, and Security.

Although there is very less empirical evidence, directly relating to influence of personality in career choice found in Sri Lanka. Galhena & Rathnayake (2011) in their study to find factors affecting career choice of Sri Lankan management undergraduates, found that personality attributes as the second-best factor that undergraduates have considered when selecting a career. In gender level; male students have ranked personality average as third best factor while female students have ranked second best factor. This is in fact a very interesting finding which invites to research much about how personality affects career choice of the Sri Lankan university students. Especially in identification of different personality profiles in different career paths will be very vital.

Based on above empirical evidence following testable hypothesis were developed to test whether the relationships theorized hold true.

H0: There is no relationship between personality and career choice of Sri Lankan university students.

H1: Management students are more extraverted than other students.

Above expectation is based on evidence shown in Niken & Stormer (2010); Ham, Junankar, & Wells (2009a) which reported high level of extraversion in people who are in managerial occupations which have high level of social interactions.

H2: Engineering students are more conscientious than other students.

Tokar, Fischer, & Subich (1998) based on research study done by Silver and Malone (1993) and also Kline & Lampham (1992) suggests that engineers tend to report high level of conscientiousness [3, 16].

H3: Arts students report more neuroticism level than other students.

Based on evidence revealed in the studies carried out by Rubinstein & Strul (2007) and the comments made by Tokar, Fischer, & Subich (1998) based on research study done by Silver and Malone; we expect that arts faculty students will be more neuroticism oriented than other students.

H4: Medical Students report more agreeable than other students.

Results reflected in the study carried out by Rubinstein & Strul (2007) medical professions (i.e doctors and clinical psychologists) show high level of agreeableness compare to other professions they researched.

H5: Law Students report lower level of openness than other students.

In the studies carried out by Rubinstein & Strul (2007) and Rubinstein (2005) lawyers and law students have reported lower level of openness compared to other professions researched. So, it is expected that law students will report lower level of openness compared to other students.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

This research study analyzes data based on different student groups who follow different degree programmes such as engineering, arts, management, law, medicine. Thus, the personality patterns of different groups are analyzed in order to find out its relationship with their career choice (explained by their choice of university major). Hence the population of this study is Sri Lankan university students. According to University Grant Commission of Sri Lanka (2010) there are 94864 students in 15 Sri Lankan state universities.

Two staged stratified random sampling process was adopted to select the sample. In the first stage stratum was selected non-randomly and then elements within each stratum was chosen randomly. For this study, students from Management, Engineering, Arts, Medical, and Law faculties of different universities were used, as they are regarded as student's first choice in respective career field. 30 students from each of above-mentioned faculties were used in this study. Total amount of students in the sample was 150.

3.2. Data Collection

In this research study, primary data was gathered through two main sources, those are questionnaires and interviews. Data about personality attributes of the students were collected through questionnaires which represent the quantitative part of this study. Data which are related to qualitative aspect were gathered through face to face interviews and through a sub part in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire includes 4 sub parts or sections. First two part of the questionnaire was used to gather data about demographic information of the students such as gender and faculty of study. Third part of the questionnaire consists of data about personality attributes of the students based on Five Factor Model (i.e. Big Five) of personality. For this purpose, a scale of 60 items will be developed referring to other scholarly work which used Five Factor Model of personality to measure personality of a person such as Ham, Junankar, & Wells (2009a, 2009b); McCrae & Costa (2010). Since the native language of the respondents is Sinhalese, items were presented in Sinhala language, as it enhances the understandability of the items. Respondents was asked to record their agreement with the items through 5-point Likert scale, with being 5 "Strongly agree" and 1 being "Strongly Disagree" (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010,

Costa and McCrae, 2010). Each dimension of the Five Factor Model (FFM); Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness (O), Agreeableness (A), and Conscientiousness (C) will be represented by 12 items in the developed scale. All the facets explained in the conceptualization, which represent each dimension or factor in the Five Factor Model of personality were covered through these 12 items. The final part of the questionnaire asks respondent to explain any other factors that influenced his/ her career choice (i.e. selection of degree). This was helpful in the qualitative aspect of this study. That is to find whether there are any significant moderating or mediating variables that influence career choice of a person other than personality.

Content Validity of the instrument is optimum as it is based on consensual conceptual framework about personality (i.e. Five Factor Model of Personality) which was used in many international empirical studies with regard to personality, occupational psychology and specifically for career choice (Tokar et al., 1998, Costa and McCrae, 2010, Rubinstein and Strul, 2007). Further, operationalization of the Conceptual framework is also based on several validated international instruments such as NEO PI (Costa and McCrae, 2010) and (Ham et al., 2009a, Ham et al., 2009b). Accordingly, Personality is measured by 5 dimensions (i.e Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness) and each dimension is further divided into 6 facet scales or elements to ensure the validity of the measure. Ultimately there are 12 items which tap each personality dimension. Thus, the content validity of the instrument is high.

Face validity of the questionnaire is also ensured by giving draft questionnaires to small sample of university students and lecturers. Questionnaire was amended according to the comments given by the sample; in order to enhance the clarity and understandability of the statements.

Reliability of the 6o item personality measurement was tested using Cronbach's alpha reliability test. All the personality dimensions reported Cronbach's alpha (α) value more the 0.7.

In order to gather data for the qualitative part of this study, interviews were organized with students from each of the faculties where data was gathered for the quantitative study. Interviews were based on semi structured type. All the interviewees were asked a pre-determined set of questions and then if needed more questions were asked based on the answers given for structured questions. This was helpful to find whether there are any other factors affecting the relationship between personality and career choice. 5 students were selected from the sample representing each faculty as the participants of the interviews.

4. Results

A. Personality Profiles of students

Management students have reported more Neuroticism (N) level (M= 3.04) than other students, Arts students have become close second in Neuroticism levels (M= 3.02) with lesser standard deviation (SD= .44) compared to their management counter parts (SD= .47) who scored top in Neuroticism. Law students have reported lowest amount of Neuroticism level (M=2.74) while engineering and medical students have similar level of Neuroticism (M= 2.88) although medical students have a higher standard deviation (SD=.65) compare to engineering students (SD=.47).

Management students have also scored highest in Extraversion personality factor (M= 3.52) compared to other students with highest standard deviation (SD= .55). Law faculty students are the least extraverted (M= 3.39) compared to other students. Arts faculty students are also showing almost similar level of extraversion (M=3.40, SD= .47). Medical and engineering students have gained 2nd and 3rd place in the extraversion personality dimension.

In the Openness personality dimension again, management students have scored more (M= 3.44, SD= .42) than their other counterparts. Lowest scorers in the Openness dimension are law students (M= 3.28, SD= .51). But they have reported higher standard deviation compared to other student groups. Arts, medical, engineering students have ranked 2nd, 3rd and 4th places in Openness dimension.

Law faculty students are the most agreeable students compared (M= 3.69, SD = .52) to other faculties, although their standard deviation is highest compared to other faculties. Medical students are the lowest scorers (M=3.30, SD= .50) in the agreeableness dimension. Arts, management and engineering students have ranked 2nd, 3rd, 4th places in the agreeableness facets.

In the Conscientiousness personality dimension Law students again ranked first being the highest scorers (M= 3.77, SD= .60). However, their standard deviation is also higher compared to other students. Engineering students were the lowest scorers (M= 3.48, SD= .48) in conscientiousness dimension compared to other students. Management and arts students reported similar levels of conscientiousness.

Table 1: Faculty wise personality profile

Personality Factor		N	E	O	A	C
Engineering	Mean	2.88	3.42	3.31	3.36	3.48
	SD	.43	.51	.43	.37	.48
Management	Mean	3.04	3.52	3.44	3.46	3.63
	SD	.47	.55	.42	.42	.40
Arts	Mean	3.02	3.40	3.40	3.61	3.63
	SD	.44	.47	.41	.46	.45
Law	Mean	2.74	3.39	3.28	3.69	3.77
	SD	.42	.46	.51	.52	.60
Medical	Mean	2.88	3.46	3.39	3.30	3.57
	SD	.65	.44	.38	.50	.59

B. Differences in Career choice

In order to find out whether there are significant differences among faculties for each personality dimension, independent sample T tests were performed based on the hypothesis developed. T tests were performed comparing each faculty with the base faculty stated in the hypothesis.

a) H1: Management students are more extraverted than other students

According to theabove table, none of the faculties reported significant differences with management students (Base Faculty) for extraversion personality dimension at 0.05 significant level. Aggregated sample of engineering, arts, law medical students also didn't report a signi ficant difference with management students for Extraversion.

b) H2: Engineering students are more conscientious than other students

According to t test results, management, arts, medical students did not report any significant differences with engineering students (Base faculty) at 0.05 significant level. However, at 0.05 significant level, law students reported significantly higher level (M=3.77) of conscientiousness than engineering students (M=3.48) (t (58) = -2.069, p. =0.43). This was an opposing result for the hypothesized relationship where engineering students should report more conscientiousness level than other students. The aggregated sample consisting management, arts, law, medical students also did not report any significant difference with the engineering students on conscientiousness personality dimension.

c) H3: Arts students report more neuroticism level than other students

Based on the above information, Engineering, Management, Medical students did not show any statistically significant differences with arts students for Neuroticism scale at 0.05 significant level. But there was a statistically significant difference between law and arts students for Neuroticism at 0.05 significant level. Hence law students reported significantly low level (M=2.74) of Neuroticism compared to arts students (M=3.02) (t (58) =2.530, p. = 0.014). This finding supports the hypothesized relationship. However, the aggregated sample consisting engineering, management, law and medical students did not show any statistically significant difference in Neuroticism personality dimension at 0.05 significant level.

d) H4: Medical Students report more agreeableness than other students

Findings revealed that medical students did not show any statistically significant difference with engineering and management students at 0.05 significant level for Agreeableness personality factor. However, at 0.05 significant level, Arts (M=3.61) (t (58) =-2.511, p. = 0.015) and Law (M= 3.69) (t (58) =-3.0071, p. = 0.004) students reported significantly higher level of agreeableness level compare to medical students (M=3.30). Aggregated sample also showed significantly higher level of agreeableness (M=3.53) compared to medical students (M= 3.30) (t (148) =-2.460, p. = 0.015). These do not support hypothesized relationship; hence it shows a relationship opposite to hypothesis.

e) H5: Law Students report lower level of openness than other students

According to findings, there were no statistically significant differences between Law students and other students on individual basis or aggregated basis at 0.05 significant level.

5. Discussion

A. Management students are more extraverted than other students

In the mean comparison stage, management students indeed reported higher mean value (M= 3.52, SD= .55) than other students who were researched. However, in the independent sample t -test procedure, it is revealed that there is no statistically significant difference among mean level of management students and other students either in individual level or at aggregated sample of non-management students. This result did not support the hypothesis which was based on international studies of Niken & Stormer(2010); Ham, Junankar, & Wells (2009a, 2009b).

This contradictory result can be explained through qualitative analysis. In Case A, a person who wants to select arts field has selected management due to his parents' pressure. Further, in the questionnaires some have stated that following arts degree will not help them to get a good job in the future. So ultimately there are other factors that influenced career choice of the student than their own personal choice. This can also be explained by the research of Galhena & Rathnayaka (2011); they stated that management undergraduates consider personality as the second-best factor when selecting their career.

B. Engineering students are more Conscientious than other students

Although international research evidence such as Tokar, Fischer, & Subich (1998) based on research study done by Silver and Malone (1993) and also Kline & Lampham (1992) suggest that engineers tend to report high level of Conscientiousness. In Sri Lankan context, surprisingly engineering students scored the lowest among of Conscientiousness level (M= 3.48, SD= .48) compared to other students. Highest scorers in Conscientiousness personality factor was law students (M=3.77, SD=.60). Thus, at the mean comparison stage the hypothesis is rejected. Engineering students do not report higher Conscientiousness level compared to other students.

However Independent sample t-test was carried out to find out whether there are significant differences among Conscientiousness levels between engineering and other students. The results of the independent sample t test revealed that law students have significantly higher level of Conscientiousness than engineering students. Irony here is that it says that law students should be engineers. The students of other faculties did not show any statistically significant differences in their Conscientiousness scores with engineering students either on individual basis or aggregate non engineering sample. This result also gives insights that personality is not the only source that Sri Lankan students consider when selecting their career field. In case E, factors other than personality such as social

status and benefits of the engineering career, family influence has modified the career choice of the respondent.

C. Arts students report more neuroticism level than other students

In Sri Lankan context, most neurotic student groups are the management students (M=3.04, SD= .47). However, arts students reported mean level (M=3.02, SD=.44) for Neuroticism which is very closer to their management counterparts with a lower standard deviation. Again, at the mean comparison stage the hypothesized relationship is rejected as the current study do not support international research evidence of Rubinstein & Strul (2007) and the comments made by Tokar, Fischer, & Subich (1998) based on research study done by Silver and Malone (1993).

Independent sample t-test also did not reveal any statistically significant differences among arts and other students, except for law students. Law students reported significantly lower level of Neuroticism compared to arts students.

In interviews it was revealed, a person who has high neurotic oriented personality and he is very talented on artistic work. But due to parental pressure, as arts graduates do not have better job opportunities and social status. He selected management field. Now he finds management is not the best field for him. This may be the case that arts and management students report almost similar level of Neuroticism level. Many students who want to select arts field, moves to management as arts degrees do not have good social recognition. Further, these students are not good at science subjects. So, they naturally move on to management field. However, in interview evidence, there is a success story where the person selected her career 100% freely and now, she is self-fulfilled (i.e. her personality profile showed high neuroticism level).

D. Medical Students report more agreeableness than other students

On the independent sample t-test, it was found that arts students and law students have significantly higher level of agreeableness level compared to medical students. However, there was no statistically significant differences among engineering and management students compare to medical students. Aggregated non-medical sample also showed significantly higher level of Agreeable level compared to medical students. Hence the hypothesized relationship is clearly rejected.

In Sri Lankan context, entering into a medical faculty is a very competitive task as there are very fewer number opportunities. Due to this highly competitive nature; students also may have developed their behavior to be less agreeableness which means tough minded, lack of altruism and self-centered behaviors. On the other hand, one interviewee explained that parents have influenced him to choose

medicine field due to high social status and recognition. Cases like this may be also having an impact on this contradictory result.

E. Law Students report lower level of openness than other students

In the mean comparison law students reported lowest score for Openness factor (M=3.28, SD= 0.51). Management students who scored 3.44 mean levels with a standard deviation of 0.42 were the highest scorers in Openness factor. However, in the independent sample t-test, there were no significant differences reported among Law students and other students either individually or aggregated non-law student sample. In the studies carried out by Rubinstein & Strul (2007) and Rubinstein (2005) lawyers and law students have reported lower level of openness compared to other professions researched. This finding was only partially valid in Sri Lankan context as there is no statistically significant differences on Openness levels among the different students compared to law students.

In the Sri Lankan university culture, students often tend to be open minded, due to academic and peer socialization. This environment may lead them to score similar level of Openness without any significant differences. However, this may be different when they practice as professionals.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Implications of the study

There are several key learning points that should be considered with the outcomes of this research study. Although there is sound international evidence about personality and career choice of students as well as professionals; application of these results in Sri Lankan context is problematic. None of the hypothesized relationships were supported by the current study.

It seems that Sri Lankan university students' career choice is influenced by many other factors other than their personality, such as parental influence, advice given by teachers, friends and seniors, financial rewards relating to the career, social recognition for the career, job market opportunities. Although the exact significant level of these factors is not yet researched for overall university sector, in the research study performed by Galhena & Rathnnayaka (2011) based on management students sample explains there are lot of other influencing factors. However, in the same research study personality has ranked as the second-best factor when selecting a management career.

In the qualitative analysis, there were some critical points that should be considered. In summary majority of the case studies explain that if a person selects an incongruent career for his or her personality. There may be problems in the latter stages of the career. For example, some interviewees now suffering from wrong selection he made due to parental pressure. On the other hand, some interviewees explained their free choice helped them to be satisfied with their career. This also gives good insight on career satisfaction due to personality and career congruence. Further, case study analysis repetitively emphasize that arts field is perceived as a useless career field in Sri Lankan context and that has caused many students who can excel in that field select other careers.

Finally based on this data we cannot identify a clearly distinctive personality attributes for each of the students' groups and their careers. Thus, relationship between personality and career choice is very low. Cultural influences on these results must also be considered, as sometimes hypothesized relationships are based on the studies carried out in western cultures which are significantly different from Sri Lankan culture. However, this area is open for further research.

6.2. Conclusion

Career life is one of the most important parts of a person's life. Thus, selecting a congruent career in the early stage of the life helps individuals effectively develop their career. This not only helps the individual success of that person, but it also helps organizational success and there by country wide development.

In this research study, it is revealed that university students are influenced by other factors than their free choice when selecting a career field, especially parental influence. Therefore, it is recommended that Sri Lanka as a country should develop proper career guidance programme for students from their young ages. These programmes must also extend to the parents. This will give opportunity to parents to help their children to select a proper career that suits their personality. Government must take initiatives to promote proper career guidance programmes for students, especially for the students who live in rural parts of the country.

If these measures are not taken, nobility of these careers will be reduced; as professionals will seek more materialistic gain than reputation of their career. Higher education systems should also be modernized to develop more internationally marketable graduates in every career field. Many students have expressed that they have left arts and humanities as career field due to low demand in the labour market. Thus, arts and humanities should be given the priority in modernization of degree programmes. This will facilitate more freedom in career choice for students.

This study still lies in exploratory nature in the Sri Lankan context. Thus, there are many avenues for further research. Future research should be performed using a larger sample of students and universities in order to increase the generalization of the findings. Moderating and mediating variables which were identified through case study analysis must be inculcated in to the future research studies on this topic. It is also recommended to perform similar study to real professionals who practice the relevant profession than students who are mediated with academic and peer socialization. Finally, a longitudinal study taking a sample of advanced level students and studying their personality until they enter in to a permanent job will be ideal to assess the personality development of a person and how it relates to career choice.

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