

FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER PREFERENCES OF AGRICULTURE AND ANIMAL SCIENCES UNDERGRADUATES IN TELANGANA STATE

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SUMMARY

The process of career development is a lifelong process. Career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and finance. The decisions on these factors affect the rest of person's life; therefore it is important to understand the individual and the social factors that influence the process of undergraduates' career development. To explore the factors influencing career preferences of undergraduates, present study was conducted purposefully in Telangana state among 120 agriculture and animal sciences final year undergraduates who were selected randomly. Results indicate that irrespective of streams, employment security was the major factor influencing career preference, followed by long term salary prospect and career advisors play a very minimal role when it comes to career choice of undergraduates. It was observed during research study that there was no proper guidance cell to guide the undergraduates selecting their career paths after graduation. This study recommends that an exclusive career guidance/placement cell should be established by college administration for prompt career guidance and suitable advice to undergraduates.

Key words: Agriculture, Career preference, Undergraduates, Veterinary

Career decision-making, choice, and development which are usually influenced by factors that determine the choice of career are vitally important for today's youth, who are more than ever motivated but directionless (Schneider and Stevenson, 1999).

According to Kerka (2000), career choice is influenced by multiple factors including personality, interests, self-concept, cultural identity, globalization, socialization, role model, social support and available resources such as information and finance. Bandura *et al.* (2001) provided a thoughtful scenario that each individual going through career decision process is confronted with choice making and is influenced by several factors including the context or environment in which they live, their personal aptitudes, social contacts and educational attainment as well as the individual's self-efficacy. Factors like intellectual ability, aptitudes, and influence of schooling, family, personality, self-concept, remuneration, risk factors, security, satisfaction, needs, and interest influence the undergraduates' career choice (Taylor and Buku, 2006). These decisions affect the rest of person's life; therefore it is important to understand the individual and the social factors that influence the process of undergraduates' career development.

To improve better career decisions of undergraduates, the factors which affect these characteristics adversely are needed to be identified. Identification of these factors may lead towards remedial measures and to employ strategies for favorable satisfactory career development of undergraduates.

Telangana state was purposively selected as it had all desired streams of undergraduates in agriculture, horticulture, veterinary science and dairying who are studying in Professor Jaya Shankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJ TSAU), Sri Konda Laxman

Telangana State Horticultural University (SKLTSHU) and P.V. Narasimha Rao Telangana State Veterinary University (PVNRTSVU), respectively. From each major stream, one well-established college under these three universities was selected purposefully. Thirty final year bachelor's degree undergraduates from each selected college in each stream i.e. B.Sc. (Agri.), B.Sc. (Horti.), B.V.Sc & A.H. and B.Tech. (Dairy) were selected randomly from the list, making total sample size of 120 respondents.

Exploratory research design was employed for the present study. A set of possible factors influencing career preference were enlisted in consultation with experts and the data were collected from the respondents through personal interview schedule. Respondents were provided with a list of factors, which may be relevant in choosing a career and rated on five points continuum scale ranging from very important, important, moderately important, slightly important and not important. The considered statement was scored in the above said pattern, which received scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. The cumulative score of each respondent for all the statements was considered as individual score. The minimum attainable score was 14, whereas maximum attainable score was 70. The frequency, percentage, mean score and total weighted mean score was calculated for each statement and ranking was done based on obtained mean score.

Total score = Obtained frequencies for each items × score assigned for each item

Total weighted mean score = Mean score/Number of respondents

Factors influencing career preferences:

Table 1 reveals that among all the streams, employment security was considered as most important factor which influences career preference. Agriculture undergraduates perceived long term salary prospect as second most important factor, whereas, earning motive

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Table 1
Factors influencing career preferences of agriculture and animal sciences undergraduates (n=120)

Sr. No	Factors influencing career preferences	B.Sc. (Agri) n=30			B.Sc. (Horti.) n=30			B.V.Sc & A.H n=30			B.tech (Dairy) n=30		
		TWS	TWMS	Rank	TWS	TWMS	Rank	TWS	TWMS	Rank	TWS	TWMS	Rank
1.	Intrinsic interest in the work	75	2.50	XII	74	2.47	XI	83	2.77	IX	77	2.57	X
2.	Employment security	98	3.27	I	98	3.27	I	104	3.47	I	96	3.20	I
3.	Long term salary prospect	92	3.07	II	85	2.83	VI	96	3.20	II	85	2.83	VI
4.	Comparatively high starting salary	89	2.97	III	87	2.90	V	85	2.83	VII	82	2.73	VIII
5.	Status attached to the job	79	2.63	IX	78	2.60	IX	82	2.73	X	83	2.77	VII
6.	Impact of the work on social life	77	2.57	XI	75	2.50	X	84	2.80	VIII	75	2.50	XI
7.	Life style	82	2.73	VIII	81	2.70	VII	87	2.90	V	79	2.63	IX
8.	Family issues	87	2.90	V	87	2.90	V	86	2.87	VI	89	2.97	IV
9.	Job satisfaction	83	2.77	VII	80	2.67	VIII	93	3.10	III	86	2.87	V
10.	To earn more	71	2.37	XIII	72	2.40	XII	70	2.33	XIII	71	2.37	XIII
11.	Work environment	88	2.93	IV	90	3.00	III	85	2.83	VII	94	3.13	II
12.	Advice from seniors	86	2.87	VI	92	3.07	II	88	2.93	IV	74	2.47	XII
13.	Guidance of faculty	83	2.77	VII	89	2.97	IV	79	2.63	XI	92	3.07	III
14.	Career advisors	78	2.60	X	71	2.37	XIII	76	2.53	XII	70	2.33	XIV

TWS-Total weighted score; TWMS- Total weighted mean score

ranked XIII. These results are supported by findings of Daniel and Singh (2008).

Table 1 further envisages that horticulture undergraduates perceived advice from seniors as second most employment factor after employment security in selection of career preference followed by work environment (Rank III) and last ranked parameter was career advisors (Rank XIII).

The veterinary undergraduates also considered long-term salary as second important factor in selection of career path after employment security, followed by job satisfaction (Rank III). As for agriculture graduates, earning motive was at rank XIII and Career advisors at rank XII. These findings are in line with Bharadwaja and Sharma, 2016 and Thilakar *et al.*, 2014, where career advisors were least factor affecting career of veterinary undergraduates. In case of dairy technology undergraduates, second important factor was work environment followed by guidance of faculty (Rank III), whereas career advisors was at last (Rank XIV).

The foresaid results indicate that irrespective of streams, employment security was the major factor influencing career preference, this might be due to the reason that majority of undergraduates had career aspiration in the government organization which ensures employment security throughout their career. Family issues are one of the important factor affecting career preferences and earning more is least affecting factor of career preferences. It affirms that the undergraduates are not money-minded and greedy but they need future security. It may be because of majority of undergraduates belonging to low income earning rural families who perceive government job and employment security as their

long lasting dream since employment in government sector believed to give higher social status.

CONCLUSION

Employment security is the most influential factor in undergraduates' career choices. It's clearly depicting that undergraduates want to take little risk to settle in the carrier. Hence, our agriculture education system should improve the competency of the graduates to cater the needs of private sector jobs apart from the state departments. Further it should motivate and develop life, soft and communication skills among undergraduates to perform better aiming to accomplish long term career development. The study strongly recommends an exclusive career guidance/placement cell in each college to guide the students while choosing their career.

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