

Sustainability of Youth Careers: Vocational Personalities and Career Choice Fit of Agricultural Undergraduates at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka

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1. Introduction

Career sustainability enables a happy, healthy and productive workforce. It is understood by investigating its key dimensions, i.e. person, context and time. Higher Education Institutes are critical on grooming undergraduates and trying possibilities of aligning career and person fit. However, it is evident that Sri Lankan university graduates are often restored to stop-gap jobs without utilizing their academic expertise or potential (Gunarathne, Ramanayake, & Panagoda, 2018). Particularly, agriculture graduates who followed STEM education in English are highly and fully employed, yet their presence is not only limited to the agriculture sector but also expanded to various other economic sectors (e.g., education, public administration, engineering, manufacturing, scientific and IT) (Gunarathne, Ramanayake, & Panagoda, 2018; Rambodagedara & Jayasinghe, 2019), with various career choices i.e. from professional (teaching, science, and engineering), to managerial, technical, and even clerical jobs. This diverse engagement indicates an education-employment misalignment and a challenge for career sustainability. Underline factors for graduates to seek such diverse employment destinations may include job security, income stability, long-term career prospects, and career-vocational personality fit (Gunarathne, Ramanayake, & Panagoda, 2018; Hadiyati & Astuti, 2023; Puvendran, 2016; Rambodagedara & Jayasinghe, 2019; Vickraman, 2019).

Career-vocational personality fit by Hollands (1985), suggests that individuals are naturally drawn to careers that align with their vocational personalities, distinct personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional) that influence an individual's career preferences, work style, and satisfaction in various professional environments. Accordingly, a mismatch of career-vocational personality fit may challenge the sustainability of careers leading to various issues such as job dissatisfaction, burnout, and reduced job productivity.

The objective of this research is to explore the vocational personalities of agricultural undergraduate students, and their connections to potential career choices, and to analyze any gender-based associations in these relationships. This study would clarify whether undergraduate students' vocational personalities and their compatibility with chosen careers contribute to sustainable careers from an individual-oriented standpoint.

2. Materials and Methods

This study is mainly based on Holland's theory of career choice (1985). It emphasizes that individuals who opt to work in an environment matching their personality type are more likely to achieve success and satisfaction, thereby potentially enhancing their career sustainability. Primary data was collected from 110 voluntarily participated agriculture undergraduates at Rajarata University of Sri Lanka in 2024, using a self-administered structured questionnaire. Individual personalities were identified with Holland's Self Direct Search (SDS) (Holland, 1997). Each participant's dominant personality was determined based on the highest score in the RAISEC model (R- *Realistic*, A- *Artistic*, I- *Investigative*, S- *Social*, E- *Enterprising*, and C- *Conventional*). Career choices were categorized according to Holland's career codes (Holland, J.L. 1997). Descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests were used to analyze data using SPSS20.

3. Results and Discussion

According to the results, female undergraduates (70.9%) were prominent in the sample and many (59.1%) have studied biology stream at their General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examination. A higher number of these undergraduates were residing in suburban areas (53.6%), followed by urban (26.4%) and rural areas (20%).

Vocational: Personalities

Results revealed that *Investigative* (61.8%) personality was the prevalent vocational personality followed by *Social* (21.8%), *Artistic* (6.4%), *Realistic* (3.6%), *Conventional* (3.6%), and *Enterprising* (2.7%) yet has no significant association ($X^2 = (5, N = 110) = 8.627, p = 0.125$) with the gender (Figure1). The predominance of the Investigative personality suggests that most undergraduates have a strong inclination towards intellectual activities, such as problem-solving and analysis, which are essential for scientific and research-oriented jobs such as scientists, chemists, and lab technicians. The presence of a Social personality indicates a preference for interpersonal work in collaborative environments, which aligns well with jobs in education and community services such as teaching, counseling, and social workers. The lack of gender association may be due to a common academic environment and experiences among both parties.

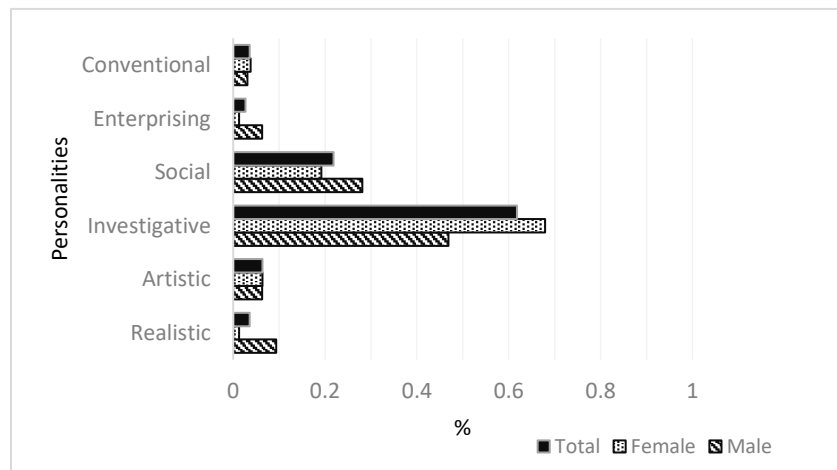


Figure 1: Undergraduates' vocational personality distribution (Source: Authors' survey, 2024)

Career Choices

Results indicate that undergraduates' career choices are diverse and can broadly be categorized into distinct career roles as, administrative and managerial roles (32%), scientific and technical roles (29%), educational roles (28%), and entrepreneurial (11%) (Table 1). This may be a result of broad skills, personal interests and the evolving job market. However, none of these career roles is significantly varied ($X^2 = (3, N = 110) = 1.619, p = 0.655$) between gender types indicating having similar interests and opportunities in an inclusive environment that enables both genders to pursue roles with equality.

Table:1 Undergraduates' Career Choice distribution and categories of career roles

Career choices		Categories of career roles			
Particular	Responses%	Particulars	Responses %		
			Total (n=110)	Male (n=32)	Female (n=78)
Office worker	6	Administrative and managerial	32	41	28
Banker	10				
Farm manager	5				
Manager	9				
Public administrator	1				
Lab technician	4	Scientific and technical	29	25	31

Chemist	1				
Scientist	25				
Entrepreneure	9	Entrepreneurial	11	9	12
Farmer	2				
Teacher	11	Educational	28	25	29
Lecturer	12				
Extension officer	5				

(Source: Authors' survey, 2024)

Alignment Between Career Choices and Vocational Personalities

The results reveal a significant association ($X^2 = (15, N = 110) = 29.642, p = 0.013$) between vocational personalities and career choices. Investigative and social personalities are fairly and evenly distributed across educational, scientific technical, and administrative career roles with *Investigative* types primarily in scientific and technical fields and *social* types more common in educational roles (Table 2). This distribution suggests that undergraduates are likely to pursue careers compatible with their personality types, supporting Holland's theory of personality-career alignment. The compatibility between personalities and career choices may ultimately lead to greater happiness and productivity for undergraduates, fostering sustainable career paths.

Table 2: Association of undergraduates' Career roles and vocational personalities

Vocational personalities	Career roles				Total
	Educational	Scientific and technical	Administrative and managerial	Entrepreneurial	
Realistic	1	1	2	0	4
Artistic	1	1	1	4	7
Investigative	17	23	21	7	68
Social	10	5	8	1	24
Enterprising	0	0	3	0	3
Conventional	2	2	0	0	4
Total	31	32	35	12	110

(Source: Authors' survey, 2024)

4. Conclusion

The findings indicate that agricultural undergraduates predominantly exhibit social and investigative vocational personalities. Their prospective career choices are diverse, competency-based, and extend beyond the agricultural sector highlighting competencies that match various sectors. There is a modest association between certain vocational personalities and career choices indicating a happy, healthy, and productive workforce with career sustainability. However, the likelihood of applicability of Holland's theory may be limited, due to the influence of other underlying factors which influence career sustainability.

To improve career alignment, universities should consider enhancing curricula and career counselling services to help students identify roles that align with both their academic expertise and vocational personalities. Further, it is recommended that future research explores additional factors influencing career choices among agricultural undergraduates, using a broader and more representative sample to gain deeper insights.

5. Keywords

Career choice, Holland's theory, Personality, RAISEC

6. References

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