

A Study on Career choice of Co-operative University's Graduates

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Abstract

In view of universities' role as a source of qualified labour, this research explores the common career choice of graduates of Co-operative University, Thanlyin. Also, it aims to examine the relationship between the graduates' demographic factors and their career choice with special reference to self-employed (creating one's own business). A descriptive test was carried out and the data was gathered through self-completion questionnaire distributed to 150 graduates who are willing to cooperate for this study. Thus, sampling method is based on non-probability convenient sampling technique. According to results, the most common career choice of Co-operative graduates is private sector employed, and the second one is self-employed. Also, it is found that the respondents who are the age of over 31, and have family business background have more propensities to establish own-business (Preference of self-employed). However, there is no gender and birth-order difference with regard to creating own business.

Key words: Career choice, Co-operative graduates, Demographic factors

I. Introduction

In today's world, universities, institutes and colleges play an ever-increasing role. Besides their traditional functions of teaching and research, they are now challenged to contribute to society's economic and social development, which is often articulated as relevance or the 'third mission' of universities (Gibb, 1996; Johannisson, Handström, & Rosenberg, 1998; Etzkowitz, Webster, Gebhardt, & Terra, 2000). How universities could contribute to economic progress and structural change is illustrated by the impressive examples of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other universities (Chrisman, Hynes, & Fraser, 1995; Hsu, Roberts, & Eesley, 2007; Bramwell & Wolfe, 2008). Hereby, producing qualified people is an important task and perhaps the most fruitful transfer mechanism. Accordingly, the university graduates' choice of career sector drew attention of researchers in many countries.

For university graduates, career choice is important decision since it determines the kind of profession that they intend to pursue in life. When students make career choice upon graduation, they have to try to match their career choice with their abilities and knowledge gained from their university. In Myanmar, every year, thousands of students graduate from many universities and they have to make their career choice for their future employment opportunities. Due to the large supply of graduated human resources, to find the solution for career choice problems for them becomes crucial in Myanmar. This study explored the career choice of graduates from Co-operative University, Thanlyin (formerly, Yangon Co-operative

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Degree College) and it is reported on the survey focused 150 graduates using self-administered questionnaire.

1.1 Rationale of the Study

In Myanmar, Co-operative universities are established with the aim to turn out young generations to be able to run their own business in conformity with the market economic system, to upbringing them to become civil servants who are able to take responsibilities in companies and organizations and also to turn out scholars with brilliant ideas to keep abreast of the advancing world. Now the University has nurtured over 4000 graduates in Business Science. However, the career choice of graduates from Co-operative University has not yet been addressed to any great extent by researchers. Thus, what are the careers choices of co-operative graduates become important question for this study. Accordingly, this study explored the career choice of graduates from Co-operative University, Thanlyin. In this study, career choice is measured based on three alternatives: (1) employed in private sector, (2) employed in government sector, and (3) self-employed by creating own business. In this study, only graduated students are studied because they are at a critical juncture in their life-cycle regarding the career choice decisions. The background of these university students are heterogeneous, thus they might have different attitudes and perceptions on career choice decisions. Thus, this research explores some demographic variables that might influence the students' career choice with special reference to the alternative of creating own business. This is very important for enhancing the role of graduates in the economic development of the country since accelerating entrepreneurship and business creation is needed for large-scale employment generation, particularly in developing countries. In addition, this study is very useful for the University policy makers to effectively recruit students since it provides much information regarding the students' career choice.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The fundamental aim of this research is to get better understanding on career choice decisions of Co-operative University's graduates. In order to achieve the fundamental aim of the research, the following objectives are formulated:

- To examine the co-operative graduates' career choice regarding the sector proposed in this research.
- To explore the demographic factors influencing on the graduates' career choice.

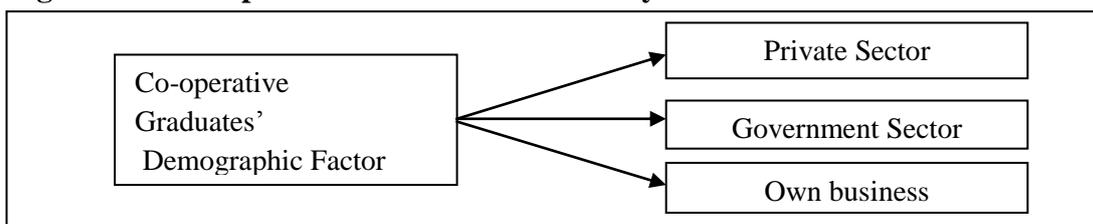
1.3 Methodology of the Study

This research examined the graduates' career choice upon graduation in Co-operative University, Thanlyin. This research employed a survey method to determine the career choice of the graduates. A sample of 168 graduates from Co-operative University, Thanlyin was conveniently selected to participate in the study. The research methodology followed in this study comprised of a literature review on career choice as discipline, followed by the empirical study in the chosen university. The primary data will be collected through the direct administration of a self-completion questionnaire which includes closed-end questions. The respondents were taken on a non-probability convenient sampling method since the questionnaires were distributed to those who willingly cooperate to answer the questions. However, 150 usable questionnaires were collected, yielding a response rate of 89%. Independent variables in the study included demographic factors affecting the graduates' career choice. The dependent variable in this research study was the career choice of the graduates. The demographic factors explored in this research include gender, age, birth order, and family business background.

1.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The primary purpose of the research is to explore the Co-operative graduates' common career choice among those defined in this study. The study has proposed that there are three main areas for Co-operative graduates to develop their career for long-life. They are Private sector, Government sector, and Creating own business. After that, the research explores whether there is any relationship between the graduates' career choice and their demographic factors including gender, age, birth order, and family business background. This is done with special reference to self-employed respondents. According to literature and previous research studies, there are many factors affecting the graduates' career choice. However, in this research it is assumed that the graduates' career choice is mainly influenced by the demographic factors such as gender, age, birth order, and family business background. Thus, the following figure shows the conceptual framework of the research.

Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: Current research

II. Analysis of the Co-operative Graduates' Career Choice

In this section, the analysis will explore the career choices of selected graduates by asking their current employment status. The objective of the analysis is to find out how many of Co-operative graduates have become self-employed (own-business) after graduation, how many of them have gone to private sector for their career and how many have gone to government sector. And also the research will explore some demographic factors that influence on the graduates' career choice on self-employed. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistical methods such as frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation, Chi square for independent test using SPSS 19. Then conclusions are made on these statistical calculations.

2.1 Profile of the respondents

Firstly, profile of the respondents covered in the survey is presented in this section. It has been constructed based on four factors namely, gender, age, birth order, Family business background. Table 2.1 presents the profile of the respondents.

Table 2.1
Profile of the Respondents

Particular	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	30	20%
Female	120	80%
Age		
20-25	32	21%
26-30	42	28%
31-35	61	41%
36+	15	10%
Birth order		
First Born	54	36%
Non First Born	96	64%
Family Business Background		
With business background	97	65%
Without business background	53	35%

Source: Survey Data (February, 2013)

2.2 Respondents' Career Choice

In this research, the respondents' career choice is measured by asking their current employment status; they are currently employed in private sector or employed in government sector or self-employed or unemployed. As mentioned in table 2.2, the majority of respondents have chosen their career in the private sectors which account for 43% of the sample. And then, 34% of the samples have created their own business as their career choice. 14% of the samples have worked for government sector. A least proportion of sample 9% has not made any career choice for some reason. The common reason is to continue their education.

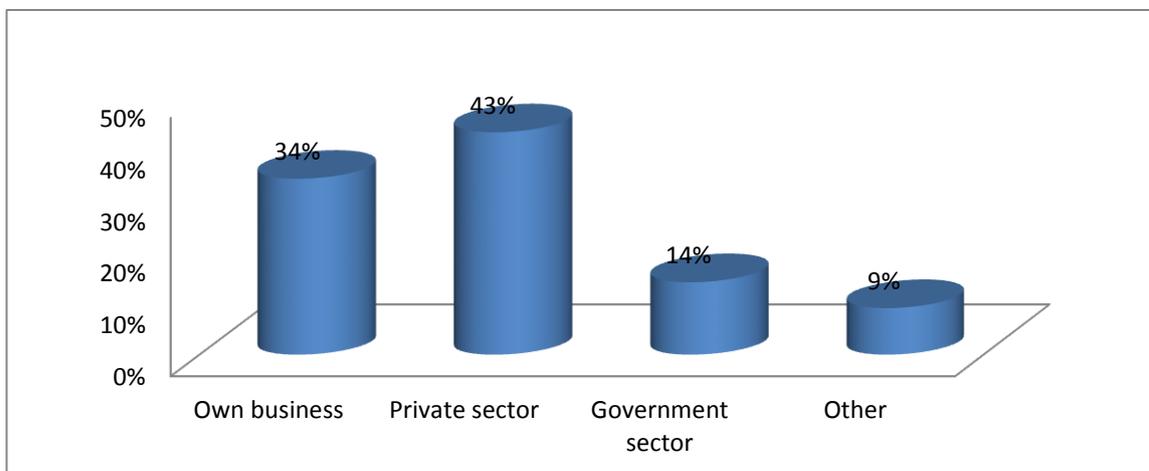
According to the data, the majority of Co-operative graduates have career choice on private sector and own-business. Thus, the policy maker of the University should device intervening policy for encouraging students' career preparations for these areas. The curriculum and syllabus should be prepared to promote the students' knowledge and skills on these areas. The following figure shows the respondents' common career choice in terms of percentage.

Table 2.2 Analysis of Respondents' Career Choice

Career Choice	Frequency	%
Own business	50	34%
Private sector	65	43%
Government sector	21	14%
Other	14	9%
	150	100%

Source: Survey Data (February, 2013)

Figure 2.1 Career Choice of respondents



Source: Table 2.2

III. Finding and Discussion of the Study

In this section, the study explored some demographic factors influencing on the graduates' career choice with special reference to self-employed. Thus, the following table answers how many graduates within the same class (for example, male) choose career of self-employed in comparison with other options and how many graduates under one class choose career of self-employed in comparison with another class (for example, male and female). For independent test between two variables, Chi square test is used. For this purpose the career choice is defined as independent variable and selected demographic factors such as gender, age group, birth-order (first-born or not), and family business background are dependent variables. By exploring these variables, it can conclude that whether these variables influence the graduates' preference of self-employed or not.

3.1 Career Choice and Gender

According to Table 3.1, out of 150 respondents in the sample, 30 respondents were male and 120 respondents were female. The sample of being consisting more female respondents is considered representative of the target population. This ratio in the sample is consistent with the gender ratio in the population. Generally, male to female ratio is 2.6 to 7.4 in the graduates from Co-operative University, Thanlyin. This is not surprising in the case of Co-operative University since females have been historically dominating in the student lists of the University. This scenario is understandably as the majority of students in the Co-operative University are female students.

Table 3.1 Career choice and Gender

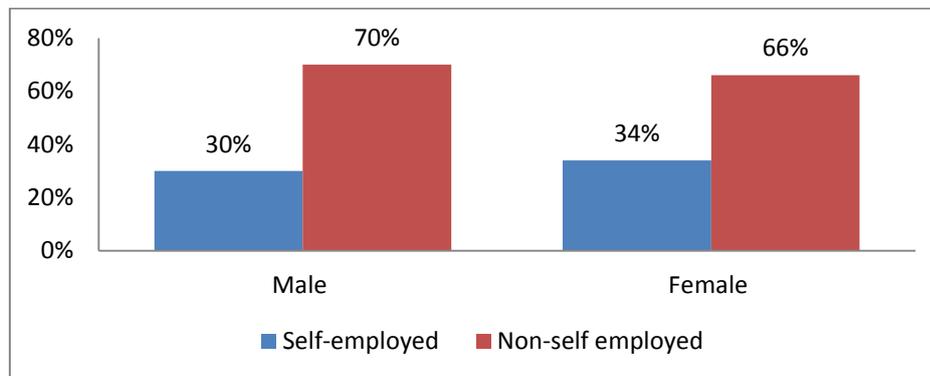
Career Choice	Gender				Total	%
	Male	%	Female	%		
Self-employed	9	30%	41	34%	50	34%
Private sector	15	50%	50	42%	65	43%
Government sector	4	13%	17	14%	21	14%
Other	2	7%	12	10%	14	9%
	30	100%	120	100%	150	100%

Source: Survey Data (February, 2013)

Referred back to Table 3.1, it can be seen that 50 respondents of the 150 selected graduates in the sample answer they have created their own business after graduation. Again, they are analyzed in terms of their gender, 30 % of male graduates have created their own business in comparison with 34% of female graduates have created have their own business.

Thus, from this comparison, female graduates seem to have slightly more entrepreneurial inclination than male graduates. However, this result is not considerably consistent with most researchers in the entrepreneurship field. In particular, much research has shown that males are more likely to venture into business compared to females. Perhaps this is mainly due to the fact that many female students do not choose entrepreneurship as a major study as remarked by Menzies and Tatroff (2006). Thus, the study continued with the Chi square test for independence between the two variables of respondents' gender and their career choice. The result shows the significance value of Pearson Chi-square 0.66 (larger than 0.05), thus it is concluded that there is no relationship between the two variables. The following figure shows the numbers of respondent who are self-employed and those who are not in terms of their gender.

Figure 3.1 Respondents' Employment Status by Gender



Source: Table 3.1

3.2 Career Choice and Age Group

As mentioned in Table 3.2, most respondents i.e. 61 respondents were aged between 31 and 35, which accounts for 41% of the whole sample, whilst 28% or 42 respondents were at the age of 26 to 30, which is followed by the minimum age group (20-25) accounts for 21% of the sample. These age groups are considerably suitable for studying their career since they can make their own decisions at these age levels. One exceptional case is that only 10% of the respondents were aged 36 and above.

According to the data in Table 3.2, the majority of respondents who have created their own business 10 and 30 respondents were aged between 31 & 35 and 36 + respectively. Therefore, the majority of respondents who have established own business is over 30 years of age. Thus, it is concluded that the ideal age slot for starting the own-business is 31 and above, according to this research. This is logical since the students have about ten years experience

after graduation to do their own business. Also, under statistical calculation, the mean age of respondents who have created their own business is 33.14 year with SD 3.5 years.

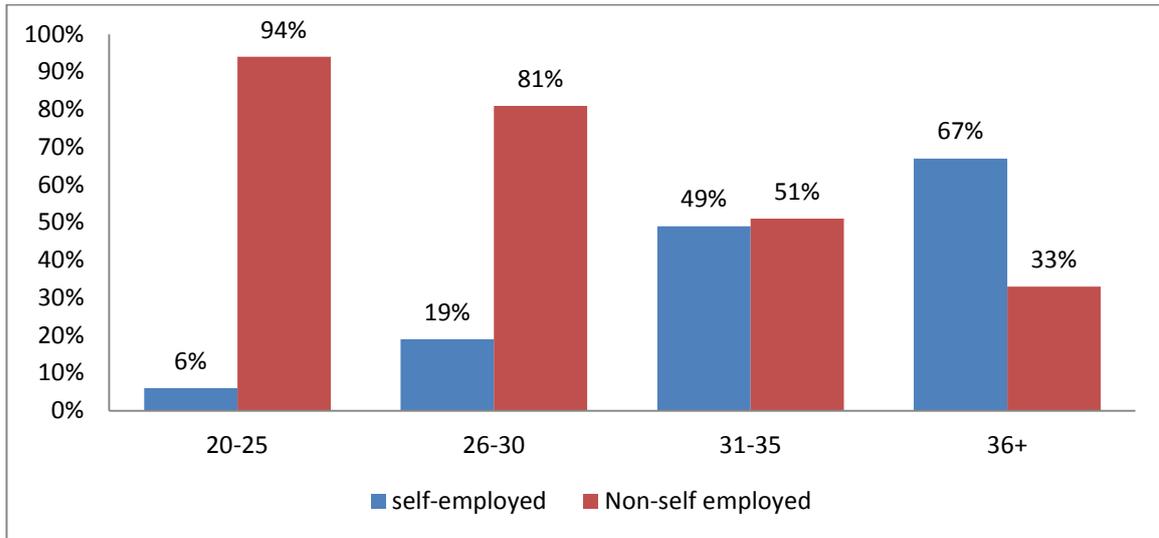
Table 3.2 Career Choice and Age Group

Career Choice	Age								Total	%
	20-25	%	26-30	%	31-35	%	36+	%		
Self-employed	2	6%	8	19%	30	49%	10	67%	50	34%
Private sector	16	50%	27	64%	19	31 %	3	20%	65	43%
Government sector	5	16%	7	17%	8	13%	1	6.5%	21	14%
Other	9	28%	0	-	4	7%	1	6.5%	14	9%
	32	100%	42	100%	61	100%	15	100%	150	100%

Source: Survey Data (February, 2013)

Referring to Table 3.2, only 2 out of 32 graduates whose age group is 20-25 have created their own business. This represents 6 % of the respondents fallen under this age group. The data shows that the higher the age group, the more respondents who have created own business. Thus, it is concluded that there is relationship between the respondents' age and career choice on creating own business. For Co-operative graduates, the age under 25 is too early to do own-business if they have no personal experience in their family business. For most of the graduates under 30 years old, their primary choice of career sector is private sector (58% of total sample under this age group). Thus it is concluded that most of the graduates may join private sector soon after graduation for their working experience. After that, they may alter their career to self-employed at some stage of life-cycle. Thus, in this study, it is found that the primary career sector of respondents aging 31 years and over is self-employed.

Regarding the independence test of Chi square, the P value of this variable in the model is .000 (less than .05). Therefore, it is concluded that the two variables are not independent. This means creating own business highly depends on the respondents' age level. The following figure shows the respondents' employment status by their age group.

Figure 3.2 Respondents' Employment Status by Age Group

Source: Table 3.2

3.3 Career Choice and Birth order

Table 3.3 shows that most of the respondent i.e. 96 respondents (64 % of the sample) are not first-born child while 54 respondents are first born respondents which account for 36 % of the sample.

Table 3.3 Career Choice and Birth- order

Career Choice	First Born				Total	%
	Yes	%	No	%		
Self-employed	22	41%	28	29%	50	34%
Private sector	23	43%	42	44%	65	43%
Government sector	6	11%	15	16%	21	14%
Other	3	5%	11	11%	14	9%
	54	100%	96	100%	150	100%

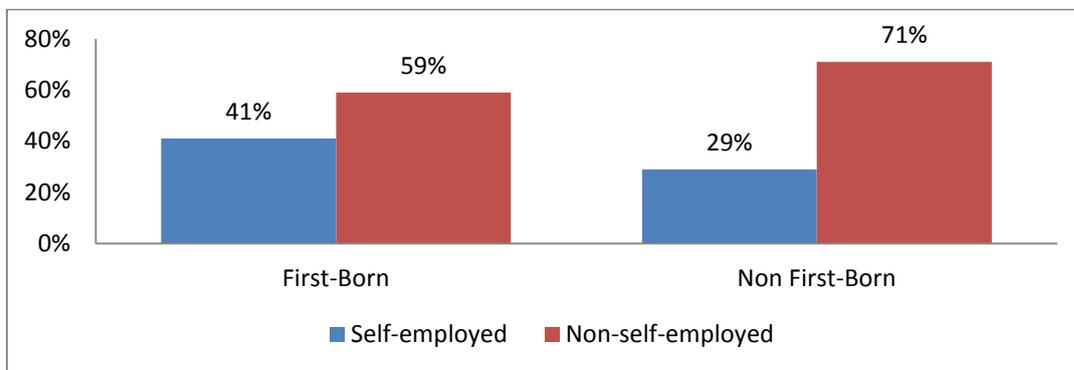
Source: Survey Data (February, 2013)

As per data in Table 3.3, 22 out of first born respondents (41 per cent) have created their own business in their life career, represents 41%, which is relatively higher than those who are not first born but have created their own business that represents 38 out of 96 respondents (29 percent). Thus, the first-born children seem to have higher inclination of creating own business than those who are not first-born in the family. This is consistent with some researchers in entrepreneurship field. Robinson and Hunt (1992) found that being first-

born in the family is significantly related to entrepreneurial inclination. However, other researchers in the field of entrepreneurship have found that there is no significant relationship between birth order and entrepreneurial inclination. For instance, Othman et al. (2005) conclude that there is no significant difference in birth order in their comparison study of 80 Chinese and Malay entrepreneurs in Malaysia.

Then, the study continued the Chi-square independent test for the two variables; respondents' birth order and career choice, the result shows the significance value of Pearson Chi-square 0.15 (greater than 0.05), thus it is concluded that there is no relationship between the two variables. The following figure shows the respondents' employment status by their birth-order.

Figure 3.3 respondents' Employment Status by their Birth Order



Source: Table 3.3

3.4 Career Choice and Family Business Background

Pertaining to the respondents' family business background, Table 3.4 displays that out of 150 respondents, 97 respondents (65% of the sample) have family business background while the rest of the respondents (53 respondents or 35%) have no family business background. In this research, respondents' family business background was explored by asking their father and mother's working status. It is assumed that the respondent has family business background if the respondent's father or mother or both are self-employed (having own-business).

Table 3.4 shows that the majority of the respondents who are self-employed (78 per cent or 39 respondents) have family business background. In detailed analysis, 39 out of 97 respondents with family business background have created their own business which represents 40 per cent of the sample respondents with family business background. This is considerably higher than the rate of creating own business by respondents without family business background which represents 21 percent (11 out of 53 respondents). Therefore, in this research, it is concluded that the graduates who have family business background have more

probability to create their own business at some stage of their life-cycle. This is because to their exposure to business in their earlier childhood and their personal experience in parent's business.

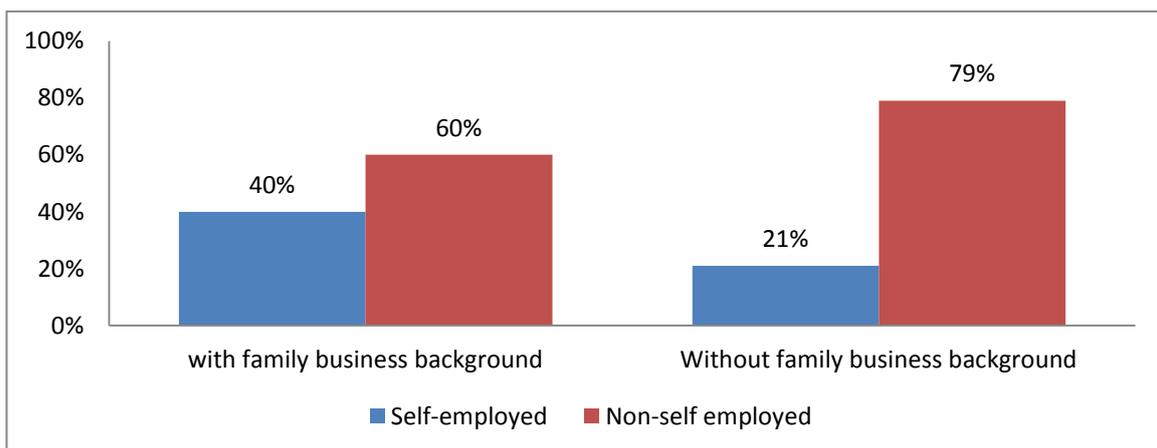
The study's test of independence shows the significance value of Pearson Chi-square 0.02 (lower than 0.05). Thus, it is concluded that the respondents' family business background influences their career choice on creating own business. Regarding this, many studies has recommended the impact of demographic and family background on a person's inclination towards entrepreneurship (e.g., Breen 1998; Dunn 2004; Kirkwood 2007; Koh 1995, 1996; Lin et al. 2000; Reitan 1997; Smith 2005; Veciana et al. 2005). The following figure shows the respondents' employment status by their family business background.

Table 3.4 Career choice and Family business background

Career choice	Family Business Background				Total	%
	With	%	Without	%		
Self-employed	39	40%	11	21%	50	34%
Private sector	35	36%	30	57%	65	43%
Government sector	13	14%	8	15%	21	14%
Other	10	10%	4	7%	14	9%
	97	100%	53	100%	150	100%

Source: Survey Data (February, 2013)

Figure 3.4 respondents' employment status by their family business background



Source: Table 3.4

IV. Conclusion

This research may be first attempt to get insight information of the Co-operative Graduates' career choice. Thus, this research firstly explored the career choice of graduates by

asking their current employment status. In addition, it explored demographic variables such as gender, age, birth-order, and family business background. The research found that majority of the graduates choose their career as staff in private sector, then the second ranked career sector is self-employed. The third sector, the graduates' choice was Government sector. Regarding this sector, some graduates choose their career as those who promote the co-operative development by working for Ministry of Co-operatives in Myanmar.

As second part of the research, it concluded that the graduates' career choice is not relevant to gender and birth-order. However, it is concluded that it has some degree of dependence between the respondents' age, and family business background and their career choice. Regarding this, the research found that

- The higher the age group, the more the propensity to create own business by respondents,
- The respondents with family business background have more propensity to create own business than those who do not family business background.

As suggested by many researches, the role of education has a major contribution to students' career choice. Thus, the role of the educator, the impact of university policy, designs of course syllabus are equally important to help students' employability. Thus, the policy makers of the university should develop the policy that would produce the graduates who will contribute to the development of the economy, in line with the expectations of various stakeholders concerned. Distinctive curricula and syllabuses, training system should support the development of intellectual and critical thinking skills that enable a graduate to be employable in the chosen career sector.

The field on choice of career sector is very challenging one for university's graduates in Myanmar. Thus, the field lends itself much more scope for further studies to get deeper level of insight understanding. Since there are many universities and institutions in Myanmar, similar studies can be done with graduates of other universities to generalize the career choice of university's graduates in Myanmar.

This study has produced significant results that inform our understanding of the employment status of graduates from Co-operative University, Thanlyin. However, this study is with its downstream. One of the major limitations of this study is being case in its study nature and as a result, its finding may not help for general conclusion. We also note that a number of the conclusions presented here are intriguing but simultaneously confirm the need for more research. The second limitation concerns the fact that only data from only one

university have been analyzed. A simple generalization for the whole country may be unlikely since there are many other universities in Myanmar. The third limitation is that only demographic factors are explored in this study. Many scholars and researchers have suggested that there are many other factors such as cultural aspects and mentality, industry structure, income level, economic climate, and so on, which determine career choice. Another important limitation of the study was sample size. Due to the paucity of time and fund at the disposal of the researcher, this study was confined to 150 samples. Hence, future research is also encouraged to overcome the concerned limitations of this study. Nevertheless, I hope the findings of this study will inspire other scholars, and the combination of this and future work will surely allow valuable comparisons and insights of graduates' career choice.

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