

## **Comparative Study of Factors influencing the choice in Area of Specialization among Management and Social Science students at University Level**

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### **Abstract**

*There are different factors that influence the choice of area of specialization among students. This research analyzed those choices made by management science and social science students. This descriptive survey research developed a close ended questionnaire for data collection. Public and private sector universities in Lahore were the population of this research. Using stratified random sampling techniques, 200 students were selected randomly from the strata of social sciences and management sciences faculties. Psychometric properties of the tool were ensured through expert opinion and coefficient of reliability. Among the various factors, the mean of academic factors was significantly higher than the other factors; it meant that academic factors highly affect the selection of area of specialization. Various demographic variables were also analyzed to see the significant differences in choices of area of specialization. These results have practical implications for university graduates, administration and career counseling centers.*

**Keywords:** area of specialization, management sciences, social sciences, university graduates, factors, Lahore

### **Introduction**

Choosing the right area of specialization can be an extremely troublesome assignment particularly when there are a lot of choices. Specific area of specialization can actually make or break a person, thus choosing a specialty is one of the significant decisions in a student's life. There are many factors in selection of area of specialization like socio-economic factors, mental and physical abilities, and personal characteristics (Braza & Guillo-Jr, 2015).

Edwards and Quinter (2011) described that choosing area of specialization has turned into a mind-boggling science with the start of

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data innovation, another reason is the rise of postmodern revolution and the employment rivalry. In this modern period of industrialization, it is feasible for an ordinary person to become a wealthy person as long as he will use his knowledge and skills (Wattles, 2009).

According to the Wattles (2009) today, one not only has to make due specialty planning but also comprehensive career research before selecting an area of specialization in order to conform to the creating financial framework. Most of the students' secondary schools do not have proper knowledge about occupational and proficient open doors which help them for the determination of proper specialization. According to Kerka (2000) selection of specific area of specialization is influenced by several factors including social, economic, academic, job opportunity, personality, interests, attitude, self-concept, cultural diversity, globalization, future prospective, socialization, modern trends, role model, social support and existing resources such as facts and financial matters.

Kotler (2006) expressed that most of student do not have correct information about job related opportunities which help them make appropriate choice of specialty. Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (2001) stated that every individual person is affected by several components including personality, the background in which the individual live in, his/her individual decision choice, aptitudes, social contacts and academic factor. As indicated by Hewitt (2010) elements that impact decision of specialization can be inherent or extraneous or both. Hewitt further clarified that it depends on individual choice why he/she select specific area of specialization.

Students perception regarding the selection of area of specialty suitable for particular jobs also can be impacted by various components including background of the students, personality, time spend in school, level of success, selection of science and arts subjects, attitudes, aptitude and various job (McQuaid & Bond, 2003).

Beggs and Bantham (2008) defined a "selection of right area of specialization as the most important and suitable for helping the student to accomplish their educational aim and post-educational objectives, and the one which gives a match between the student's capacities and interest which crucial for the major is vital in selection area of specialization at university level" (Al-Rfou, 2013). Jensen and Natalie (2006) described Specialization choice is an extremely complex errand for the students, as it considers numerous contemplations. Previous researches related to "factors affecting the choice of area of specialization" were of Bapat, Parab, and Shelke (2015) who had tried to find out, which are the

parameters, how job opportunity, future scope, modern demand and career counseling contribute for the right area of the selection.

Al-Rfou (2013) analyzed the effect of individual components and future occupation elements on decision of specialization in business as a noteworthy field of study. The study achieved that the parents affect the real determination of specialization. In the local studies, Sarwar and Masood (2015) investigated distinctive components that influence the determination of area of specialization by business Graduates. The analysis of this study showed that individual capacities, personality, attitude of the business graduates was the most persuasive components in selection of specialization while field competition and family factor were the minimum compelling elements. Din, Anjum, Ullah, and Latif, (2014) studied the perceptions of students regarding doing specialization in MBA and found academic and personal factors as most significant.

### Factors Affecting Choice of Specialization

Specialization in a specific area is helpful in multiple respects for students. Thus, it becomes essential that they make a correct choice of specialization at the very beginning (Bapat, Parab & Shelke, 2015). Following table summarizes the list of factors, found after extensive literature review, that influence the choices of area of specialization.

*Table 1 Factors identified in the literature on influencing the choice of area of specialization among students*

Factor	Literature Citations
Personal Factors	(Babad & Tayeb, 2003)
Personality	Splaver (1977), (Harris and Jones, 1997)
Natural Talents and Innate Abilities	(Beggs, Bentham, & Tylor, 2008), (Mcglynn, 2007)
Academic Ability and Aptitude	(Collins, 1989), (Beggs, Bentham, & Tylor, 2008)
Interest in the Subject	Al-Miskry (2009)
Academics Factor	(Babad & Tayeb, 2003)
Carrier Choice	Alutu (2001), (Sarwar, & Masood, 2013)
Social Factor	(Young, 1996), (Leong, 1993), (Perez, 2010), (Perez & McDonough, 2008), Lent and Brown (1996)
Peer Influence	(Ryan, 2000), Brown (1990)
Interpersonal Influences	Zhang, Anderson, Ohland and Thorndyke (2013)
Future Prospects	Al-Rfou (2013), (Olamide, & Olawaiye, 2013), (Beggs, 2008)
Future Job opportunities	Germeijs (2003)

Based on the factors found on the literature review, this study merged similar factors and came up with five major factors that could influence the choices of students. The five major factors that were put under study in this research were as follows: (a) personal factors (b) academic factors (c) job opportunity (d) future prospects and (e) social factors.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objectives of the study were.

1. Examine the factors that influence the choice of area of specialization of management science and social science students of public and private sector universities in Lahore.
2. Comparing factors influencing the choices of area of specialization of management science and social sciences students at university level in terms of demographic variables like age, gender, university type, father/ mother occupation, and university name.

### **Research questions**

Following research questions were made. 1. Is there any significant difference among the factors that affect the choice of area of specialization of management sciences and social sciences students of public and private sector universities? 2. Are there any significant differences in the factors that Influence the choice of area of specialization at university level in terms of demographic variables like age, gender, university type, father/ mother occupation, and university name?

### **Research Design**

The research was quantitative and descriptive in nature. A survey research design was used in this research.

### **Population**

The target population of this research was students of HEC recognized public and private sector universities of Lahore in Pakistan. It included students from management and social science area of specialization. There were 34 universities in Lahore out of which 13 were public sector and 21 were private sector universities (HEC, 2016).

### **Sampling Design**

The sample was selected by stratified random sampling technique. Universities were categorized into strata of public sector and private sector. From each stratum three public sector and three private sector universities were randomly selected. From each of the six universities only departments of social sciences and management sciences were selected by the researchers. As a result a total of 200 students were randomly selected from the social and management science departments of the universities the details of which have been given as under.

*Table 2 Sample Distribution*

Universities	No. of Students	Percentage
University of the Punjab	33	16.5
University of Sargodha	34	17.0
Lahore College for Women University	33	16.5
University of Central Punjab	33	16.5
University of Management and Technology	33	16.5
University of the Lahore	34	17.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 2 indicated the sample distribution from various public and private sector universities of Lahore. Out of the 200 sample, it was intended to get equal number of respondents from each university. It can be seen that 33 respondents were taken from four universities and 34 respondents were selected from two universities. In this way, a total sample from public sector universities was 100 and that of private sector universities was also 100.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument of data collection used in this study was a close ended questionnaire developed by the researchers. This questionnaire after ensuring content validity through taking expert opinion of three university teachers was administered by the researchers on 30 students other than the actual sample to ensure reliability of the tool. The reliability of that pilot study was reporting coefficient of Cronbach Alpha value at 0.87 for all items which was considered as good and the tool was finally administered to the actual sample. A five (5) point Likert Scale was used to gauge responses. The first portion of the questionnaire consisted of the demographic and personal information about the students. The second portion of the questionnaire was based

on items to measure the variable, categorized into five factors (Personal, Social, Academic, Future Prospect, and Job Opportunity) that helped in choosing the area of specialization of students.

## Results

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was done on the data. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated in descriptive statistics while independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA were used as inferential statistics.

Table 3 Responses of Sample students about Factors (N = 200)

Factors	M	SD
Personal Factors	26.91	3.49
Academic Factors	28.49	5.41
Job Opportunity	20.51	3.39
Future Prospects	23.11	4.15
Social Factors	20.23	4.58

The table above represented the mean and standard deviation values for the factors that were taken in this study. This descriptive analysis reported Personal Factors ( $M = 26.91$ ,  $SD = 3.49$ ), Academic Factors ( $M = 28.49$ ,  $SD = 5.41$ ), Job Opportunity ( $M = 20.51$ ,  $SD = 3.39$ ), Future Prospect ( $M = 23.11$ ,  $SD = 4.15$ ) and Social Factors ( $M = 20.23$ ,  $SD = 4.58$ ). The higher the mean score the higher was the responses of the respondents were in favor of that factor. It was seen that the mean score of 'academic factors' was higher than the other factors, followed by 'personal factors' which meant that the respondents of this study preferred academic factors and then personal factors over other factors in choosing their area of specialization.

Table 4 Comparison on the Basis of Institution name regarding Factors Influencing the Choice of Area of Specialization of Management Sciences and Social Science Students

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Between Groups	3402.347	5	680.469	3.362	.006
Within Groups	39269.873	194	202.422		
Total	42672.220	199			

Table 4 illustrated that  $F = 3.362$ ,  $df = 5$  and  $p = .006$  i.e.  $< 0.05$  therefore, it was interpreted that there is significant difference in choice of area of specialization by students on the basis of their institutions. In other words, institution does affect the choice of area of specialization of management sciences and social science students. To further analyze the difference, post hoc test was applied.

*Table 5 Post hoc test of significance (Tukey)*

Institution	Institution	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>
University of Sargodha	University of Management and Technology	11.84848*	.011
	University of the Lahore	12.10071*	.008

\* *The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level*

The mean score of university of Sargodha (UOS) was significantly more than that of University of Management and Technology (UMT) (11.85,  $p < 0.05$ ) and University of Lahore (UOL) (12.10,  $p < 0.05$ ). It meant that students of UOS significantly differed in the choice of area of specialization from the students of UMT and UOL. Demographic variables like age, gender, academic background of parents, their qualifications, intermediate subjects of students, their marital status and university type revealed no significant differences upon applying independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA (where applicable).

### *Discussion*

The results showed that Academic Factors influenced the most in the choice of area of specialization of university level students both in management science and social science faculties. Olamide and Olawaiye (2013) also discovered that academic factors are considerably affecting the choices of the students along with teacher personality factors and economic factors. This study however, only found significant results with academic factors. This could be because in our local scenario students cannot choose teachers of their choices, and economic factors are not associated with the degree one gets here in Pakistan. Economic factors are much related with other factors that were not discussed in detailed context in this research. Results also discovered that there was no significant difference between choice of area selection between management science and social sciences students. The students from both faculties had similar kind of preferences. It was observed that among six selected universities in this research the choices of area of

specialization were significantly different only in university of Sargodha students from university of Lahore and then from university of management and technology. It was interesting to note that university of Sargodha is a public sector university and university of Lahore and university of management and technology are private sector universities. This can be concluded from the results that our sampled students from the public sector university think differently from that of private sector universities. This is a limitation of this research as it did not account for the reasons that why was there a significant difference in the choice of area of specialization of students based on the university type. A separate study is suggested at this point by the researchers to exploring the possible reasons of this difference because research informs us that if students do not like their subjects it could lead to the serious threat of absenteeism (Chaudhry, Abdullah & Khatoon, 2017). All other factors like parents' occupation, their qualification, locality of students, age, intermediate subjects, and marital status does not affect the choice of area of specialization of management and social science students. Ryan (2000) studied the social and peer factors to be significant while selecting area of specialization. While in this research that has been insignificant and the mean score was the lowest of all factors. The results may vary from region to region or even for that matter from sample to sample within one region.

#### *Recommendations*

Given the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations were given.

1. There is need for parental and family discussion about the selection of area of specialization. Parents and family members should discuss specialization subjects with university students rather than forcing them into careers that might not suit their taste or personality.
2. Career counseling of the students should begin before they register in universities so that they have sufficient time to reflect on what they would like to be.
3. Personality tests could be taken when students join the university so the students and the career counseling centers could know what career types suit them best.
4. The fear of the job opportunity can be addressed if universities equip students with skills that prepare graduates for self-employment. Because some of the respondents cited lack of knowledge as a challenge in profession choice, educational

institutions should hold regular career fairs to sensitize the students to the opportunities available to them.

### Limitations

The present study had some limitations. The responses of students were the only source in determining the factors that played any role in the selection of their areas of specialization, other contextual and individual reasons for selecting the areas were not studied in this research. Further the scope of areas was limited as the researchers delimited to five factors only which could influence the choice of area of specialization.

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