

**A Survey on the Satisfaction of Graduands and Graduates:
Humanities and Social Sciences in the State Universities in Sri Lanka**

A SURVEY ON THE SATISFACTION OF GRADUANDS AND GRADUATES: HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE STATE UNIVERSITIES IN SRI LANKA

Prof. K.A.P. Siddhisena
Prof. Premakumara de Silva
Prof. Rameez Aboobacker
Dr. Sagara Chandrasekara
Mr. Migara Karunarathne

This study was conducted by the Standing Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences in relation to the Centenary Celebration of Humanities and Social Sciences Teaching in the University Education in Sri Lanka



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Lead Research Team:

Emeritus Prof. K.A. P. Siddhisena (Ph.D. Michigan)
Chair, Senior Prof. Premakumara de Silva (Ph.D. Edinburgh)
Prof. Rameez Aboobacker (Ph.D. NUS)
Dr. Sagara Chandrasekara (Ph.D. HUST)
Mr. Migara Karunarathne (M.Sc. Moratuwa)

Data Analysis:

Prof. KAP Siddhisena
Prof. Premakumara de Silva
Dr. Sagara Chandrasekara

Editorial Assistance:

Prof. MG Lalith Ananda
Electronic Data Processing Team:
Miss. A.C. Manamendra
Miss. A. S. Manamendra
Miss. I. P. Kalansooriya
Miss. H. M. R. N. H. Bandara
Mr. W. A. D. T. Chamara

Cartographic and GIS Assistant:

Miss. Nadeesha Jayatunga

Type setting:

Mrs. Dhammika Dharmadasa

Cover Design:

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It is not an easy task to conduct an island-wide survey research on a very important topic like ‘the Satisfaction of Graduands and Graduates on Humanities and Social Science Education in the Universities in Sri Lanka’ at a time of a pandemic such as the one we witness today. Nevertheless, work started on this ambitious project in which the present study occupies a prominent place. This study focuses on obtaining the views of graduands and graduates who are the main stakeholders of our university system to understand their level of satisfaction and training received from the State Universities to coincide with centenary celebrations (1921-2021) of Humanities and Social Sciences education in Sri Lanka. The Standing Committee of Humanities & Social Sciences at UGC has initiated a number of academic exercises to mark the centenary year and one such exercise entrusted to a team of experts chaired by Emeritus Prof. K.A.P. Siddhisena was to conduct the survey and make recommendations to improve the quality of graduate education in our universities. In this difficult and time-consuming process, many people helped and contributed towards completing this survey research.

As the Chairman of the Standing Committee, I am fully aware of the significance of conducting a graduate satisfaction and employability survey with a view to overcoming most of the criticisms levelled against the ‘Arts’ education in the country. First of all, we must thank many persons in the Standing Committee, University Grants Commission, National Universities and Ministry of Education who have contributed unstintingly towards the successful completion of this task. First of all, we would like to thank Hon. Minister Dinesh Gunawardene, Prof. Kapila Perera, the secretary, Prof. Sampath Amaratunge, Chairman, Prof. Chandana Udawatta, Vice-Chairman UGC, All Commission members, CVCD Chairman, Prof. Jayantha Lal Ratnasekera and all the Vice-Chancellors of the universities where the Humanities and Social Sciences faculties are established, Rectors, and Directors for their encouragement and support. Special thanks should go to the Deans and academic members for their excellent support for data collection of the study as without their commitment this report would not materialize. We must also deeply acknowledge the members of the Main Organizing Committee including the Secretary UGC, Dr. Priyantha Premakumara, Prof. Wimal Hewamanage, Dr. Asha Fernando, Mr. Rasika Karunarathna, Mr. RAU Ranaweera, Ms. Chamini Gunawardena and Ms. Maheepa Senadeera and all other sub-committee Chairmen and members, and the Editorial Committee for their crucial contributions in conducting and producing the survey report for the UGC. We are very grateful to the graduands and graduates who dedicated their valuable time to complete the questionnaires of our survey. Thank you very much for sharing your experiences and honest opinions. Lastly, we would like to thank all the members of the research team without whose commitment and dedication, this task would not have been accomplished so well.

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Abbreviations

BA	-	Bachelor of Arts
CATI	-	Computer Aided Telephonic Interview
G.C.E (A/L)	-	General Certificate in Education (Advanced Level)
HRM	-	Human Resource Management
HSS	-	Humanities and Social Sciences
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IT	-	Information and Technology
SCHSS	-	Standing Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences
TVTC	-	Technical and Vocational Training Courses
UGC	-	University Grants Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study mainly investigates the satisfaction on university education by the graduands of the final year and the graduates of the last five years who have followed degree programs in the fields of Humanities and Social Science in the State Universities in Sri Lanka. Finding out the skills and aspirations of employability together with the job satisfaction, and assessing the perception of graduands and graduates on Humanities and Social Science Education in the State Universities are also focused in this study. The study considered, 2,592 successfully completed (95.1% out of uploaded) questionnaires from graduands and 3,260 completed questionnaires from graduates after processing of all filled questionnaires and selecting eligible respondents. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, two separate questionnaires; one for undergraduates and the other for graduates were developed to collect information through electronic methods of data collection mode adopted in Google platform.

During the recent past, the Sri Lankan education system, which is predominantly public with state authorities running most primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions, has been undergoing rapid transformations. The strategies of transformation in higher education aim to strengthen the wider relationship between university, industry and society. Although the state provided education is free of charge, and equity is protected by providing equal access to the education, the education sector especially, higher education sector is criticized for its quality and relevance in responding to increasing challenges in local and global spheres. Therefore, it is important to understand strategies adopted to meet these demands, and how attitudinal changes are introduced in the higher education system (with specific focus to state universities) to bring about greater accountability and responsiveness in terms of relevance and quality and in this case the field of Humanities and Social Sciences. One of the major criticisms for the state universities is connected with quality and relevance of education to secure employment. It was stated that the pattern and content of the state university education system have been largely determined by the needs of the public services of the colonial period, which continued even after regaining independence. As a result, the state university education has not provided the country with a work force ready to face the challenges of a dynamic, market oriented economy of the country.

The Government of Sri Lanka with the assistance of the World Bank introduced three projects to address these issues in the recent past, namely, Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education project 2003-2009 (IRQUC) and Higher Education for the Twenty First Century project 2011-2015 (HETC) and currently, Accelerated

Higher Education Advance Development (AHEAD). Likewise, there have been a number of recent initiatives to improve the quality and standards of undergraduate education in Sri Lankan universities with mixed results. A critical - constructive, and not self-congratulatory, review of these initiatives, with focus on their strength as well as limitations, is long overdue. Thus, the UGC initiated the current study at the very important historical conjunction of higher education in Sri Lanka which celebrates its centenary in this year. The study mandate is to suggest overcoming existing limitations and quality improvement of graduands and graduates in relation to employment opportunities and assess their satisfaction of the degree programs offered in the field of humanities and social science education in the state universities which come under the purview of UGC

The study reveals that the vast majority of both undergraduates and graduates in Humanities and Social Science disciplines are females and thus majority of respondents for this study are also females; for every male student, there are 6 female students; they have enrolled in the Special/Honours degree programs in Sinhala medium rather than in the general degree programme. Interestingly, more number of undergraduates follow the degree in English medium than the passed-out graduates. Moreover, among the undergraduates who follow English medium degree programmes, there are more female undergraduates than the male undergraduates.

Further, a considerable proportion of undergraduates and the passed out graduates have followed the degree courses in Tamil Medium too. The respondents' satisfaction is high on the subjects, course content and evaluation methods, teaching techniques, and the competency of lecturers for subject-specific courses. However, the satisfaction on University infrastructure and the practicality of the subjects is at moderate level. Approximately, more than 40 percent of undergraduates and graduates are above the satisfied level in terms of infrastructure and the practicality of the subjects.

Majority of both respondents do not follow professional courses, however, some undergraduates tend to take some professional courses with the degree programme in anticipation of better career prospects. Majority of female graduands' view is HSS degree would be suitable to find a job. Contrast to this opinion, a significant portion of graduates believe that the degree they had followed is not sufficient to find a job. Further, of undergraduates as well as graduates, more males than female students have reported the degree they followed is not sufficient to find a job. It indicates that the graduates with experience in job market believe that the degree is not sufficient to find a job with their degree qualification. Nearly 59 per cent of responded graduates who passed-out during the last 5 years have reported that they are employed, but a considerable proportion of graduates are unemployed at the time of the study and they are predominantly females.

The study further suggests that the delay of final examination results, due to prevailing Covid-19 pandemic related issues, lack of new recruitment of employees to any positions by the government or private sector, weakening prospects of business enterprises and the lack of job opportunities are the key factors for the unemployment of graduates at present. It is interesting that female graduates' unemployment is higher than that of

their male counterparts. The employed graduates are now at several key positions like development officers, teachers at schools, lecturers at universities and managerial and administrative positions in several institutions. It also reveals that a significant percentage of employed graduates obtained an occupation within 2 years (less than 1 year plus 1-2 years) after graduation; however, the most number of graduates of HSS are not satisfied with their earnings from the employment since they expected a high salary, but ended up with a less salary than they expected. At the same time, most number of undergraduates prefers to have government jobs though it is largely determined by political decisions and influences, employment policies and absorption of graduates directly to public sector jobs from time to time by several governments. Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of graduates are actually employed in the Private Sector. It also indicates that though undergraduates and graduates of HSS are willing to work in the private sector, they always have no chance or less chance perhaps due to a mismatch between their qualifications and private sector requirements or the government policies recruiting graduates. Besides the sports and other extracurricular activities involved in the university life, the study shows that the undergraduates follow Technical and Vocational Training Courses (TVTC) and obtain the level of Computer Literacy to fulfil the requirements in the job market. Furthermore, the study shows that a vast proportion of undergraduates and graduates are aware and also have competency on Microsoft packages and basic IT knowledge which is a gateway for employment opportunities in the job market. Most number of undergraduates and graduates have reported that their reading and writing ability in English and communication skills in English are at a moderate level.

In conclusion, the majority of undergraduates and graduates suggested that improving more practical aspects of the degree programmes such as field studies and industrial trainings, improving infrastructure facilities, soft skills like communication skills, creativity, work ethics, interpersonal skills and time management, revision of multidisciplinary course structure, etc. are beneficial for improving skills of the graduates of HSS to ensure that they are employed in the future world of work upon their graduation.

1. Background to the study

The formal 'Western model higher education' in Arts, and Science in Sri Lanka began almost a hundred years ago with the establishment of Ceylon University College in 1921. The central office of the Ceylon University College that provided facilities for teachers and students was housed in the "Rejina Walawwa", now known as "College House" which is the prime office for central administration of the present University of Colombo. At the early part of the 20th century, a smaller social group of elite students entered the Ceylon University College to study subjects based on the London University syllabi for external examinations conducted by the University of London and students obtained the BA or BSc degrees from that University. Later, there were several suggestions to review all aspects of the establishment of a national University and hence a Committee headed by Sir Walter Buchanan Riddell was appointed to submit a report and draft an ordinance for the establishment of a national university in 1928. Although the initiative in this regard took place in 1928, the establishment of an autonomous University of Ceylon in Colombo succeeded only in 1942 (University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1999).

The noticeable landmark in the University Education in Sri Lanka that can be discerned after 1942 is the shifting of the University of Ceylon from Colombo to Peradeniya. Thus, there was a great debate and request made by Ceylon University Association which commenced in 1906 and was headed by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, to establish a unitary autonomous residential University either at Peradeniya in Kandy or Dumbara in Ratnapura. Once the decision was taken to shift the University of Ceylon in Colombo to Peradeniya and with the commencement of building construction and other infrastructure, the Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Science, and Law were transferred to Peradeniya in 1950, and the Faculties of Arts and Oriental Studies in 1952. In view of the increased demand for higher education, a second Arts faculty was established in Colombo in 1963 (de Silva & de Silva, 1990).

As the campus form of the University of Ceylon began once again in 1965, admitting students for Arts and Law to the Colombo Campus continued till 1967. Thereafter, as per invitation of the National Council of Higher Education of Sri Lanka, Professor Frank Thistlethwaite, Vice-Chancellor, University of East Anglia, had given advice on the establishment of a separate University in Colombo in 1967 (University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1999). Thus, the Faculties of Arts and Oriental Studies flourished considerably to expand the Universities of Peradeniya and Colombo. Similar developments of some disciplines in the Arts stream commenced in Education and Sociology in 1949, while the Faculty of Oriental Studies with the single department of Indo-Asian Studies split into Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit in 1943 and also Arabic in 1945 (de Silva & de Silva, 1990).

Moreover, the fields of Arts and Oriental Studies in the institution of higher education have remarkably expanded with the upgrading of Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara Pirivenas to University status in 1959. At the inception of University of Vidyodaya (1959), there were five faculties; Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, Languages, Arts, Ayurveda and Science, with 22 academic departments within the five faculties mostly offering the Arts and Oriental Studies disciplines for the degree programmes. Similar developments can be seen at the inception of the University of Kelaniya (1959), which commenced with five Faculties, viz., Faculty of Languages, Faculty of Buddhism, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Philosophy & Research. Though the University of Vidyalandara had offered mostly Pali and Buddhist Studies programmes in the beginning and permitted only the students of male category with clergy, in the later years (since 1965) these Faculties offered, in addition to Pali and Buddhist studies, more humanities disciplines such as various language programmes (Modern Languages, English, Hindi Sinhala, Linguistics etc), Fine Arts, Sanskrit and Eastern Studies, Western Classical Culture and Christian Culture, Philosophy, and Social Science fields such as Archaeology, Geography, Sociology, Economics, History, Political Science, International Studies and Library and Information Sciences, and by 1963, female students were also permitted to obtain their degrees as external students. Thus, the disciplines in the Social Sciences and Humanities or the Arts fields as called in some universities (e.g., Universities of Colombo, Peradeniya and Jaffna) have flourished within the University education in Sri Lanka since 1970s. In addition to premier Universities of Colombo and Peradeniya, with the establishments of University of Jaffna (1974), Ruhuna (1978), Open University (1980), Eastern (1981), South Eastern (1995), Rajarata (1995) and Sabaragamuwa (1995) and the two Campuses viz. Sri Pali Campus (1998) of the University of Colombo and Vavuniya Campus (2001) of the Eastern University, the several disciplines related to Humanities and Social Sciences have been offered through the Faculty of Arts (University of Jaffna) or the Faculty of Arts and Culture (Eastern University and South Eastern University) or the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities (Universities of Sri Jayewardenepura, Kelaniya, Ruhuna, Rajarata and Open University) or the Faculty of Social Sciences & Languages (University of Sabaragamuwa) till now (University Grants Commission, 2020).

Though it can be clearly discerned that the admission to all faculties grew swiftly in the early 1960s, the highest rate of growth was in the sphere of Arts and Oriental Studies (de Silva & de Silva, 1990). For instance, while the admission for such courses in the universities of Peradeniya and Colombo was 49.2 per cent of total admissions in 1958, this admission in these fields had increased to 84.1 per cent of all university undergraduate admission in 1965 (de Silva & de Silva, 1990). The students who are eligible for admission to the universities in Sri Lanka even today mostly secure placements to the Arts faculties. Thus, the total number of students and the proportion of students admitted to the Arts faculty are recorded as of the highest (53,310 or 32.4%) out of the total admission by subject streams during the academic years 2014/15 -2019/20. (Table 1).

Table 01: Number of Undergraduates admitted to the Higher Educational Institutions in Sri Lanka by subject streams.

Subject Stream	2015/16	%	2016/17	%	2017/18	%	2018/19	%	2019/20	%
Arts	9,891	34.0	9,418	30.7	9,923	31.6	10,400	32.6	12,009	28.8
Commerce	5,441	18.7	5,793	18.9	6,179	19.7	6,020	18.9	7,807	18.7
Physical Science	5,374	18.5	6,023	19.6	5,787	18.4	5,707	17.9	7,874	18.9
Biological Science	6,288	21.6	7,032	22.9	6,889	21.9	7,014	22.0	9,805	23.5
Other	210	0.7	324	1.1	370	1.2	385	1.2	545	1.3
Engineering Technology	1,130	3.9	1,215	4.0	1,309	4.2	1,361	4.3	2,095	5.0
Bio-system technology	721	2.5	857	2.8	958	3.0	994	3.1	1,506	3.6
Total	29,055	100.0	30,662	100.0	31,415	100.0	31,881	100.0	41,641	100.0

Source: University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka; University Statistics, 2018, 2020.

Table 02: Undergraduate Student Intake at Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences Faculties for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic year.

University	No. of students Intake 2018/2019	No. of students Intake 2019/2020
1. University of Colombo	788	847
2. Sripalee Campus	156	215
3. University of Peradeniya	1,122	1,173
4. University of Sri Jaywardenepura	1,018	1,018
5. University of Kelaniya	1,568	1,647
6. University of Jaffna	870	944
7. University of Ruhuna	523	797
8. Eastern University, Sri Lanka	689	925
9. South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	814	892
10. Rajarata University of Sri Lanka	492	570
11. Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	348	403
12. University of Visual Performing Arts	620	757
13. Swami Vipulananda Institute	282	382
Total	9,438	10,829

Source: University Grants Commission, Sri Lanka; University Statistics, 2019, 2020 based on Table 02-02

The above facts disclose that the state sector universities (universities under the UGC) play a major role in producing graduates in several disciplines since the inception of higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. However, the main criticism faced by the higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka is about the mismatch between the employment opportunities and job satisfaction of graduates or employability or unemployment particularly in the fields of Social Science and Humanities or popularly known as ‘Arts Graduates’. Generally, unemployment means the inability of members of the labour force to find gainful work. The rate of unemployment in a country depends on different factors; mainly it may be due to the mismatch of supply-side and demand-side factors. Concerning the supply side generally, the education is the most important and influential factor in labour market supply. Education has also influenced the increase of females to the job market especially during last two decades. The composition of population such as age, gender, and ethnicity etc. is also another crucial factor that aggravates the unemployment issue. For example, population growth in the 1960s, 1970s had increased the job market in numbers in Sri Lanka. Yet, in the demand side, creating necessary job opportunities has not happened due to hindrance of economic growth thereby increasing the unemployment, especially youth and graduate unemployment in Sri Lanka. On the other hand, when the job opportunities are limited, some of other attributes are imperative, such as level and kind of education, skills, personality, and social network. Further, the expectations of the graduates of Social Science and Humanities fields have affected the supply of labour. In other words, those graduates who have high ambitions as they have necessary educational qualifications are psychologically not ready to accept basic jobs. As revealed in previous studies, this situation is basically explained as skills mismatch; mismatch between the skills possessed by the graduates and the skills required by the employers from graduates (Gunaratne et al., 2018). In addition to the educational qualifications and hard skills required, it is essential that the graduates should have the soft skills expected in the job market for the easy securement of suitable jobs and for progress throughout their career. However, the people believe that these issues have been aggravated due to the increasing trend of admission to Arts subject stream which is also identified as Humanities and Social Sciences. Hence, it is of paramount importance to explore the current status of the degree programmes in Social Sciences and Humanities, graduates’ employability, satisfaction with the degree programme followed by graduands and graduates and their future expectations for improving skills for future world of work.

Thus, the UGC Standing Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences (SCHSS) decided to carry out an opinion survey on the satisfaction of graduands and graduates of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) on the higher education in the State Universities (universities under the UGC) and the ‘Arts’ graduates’ employability in Sri Lanka. The survey was conducted from May to August 2021 in the 13 State Universities where Humanities and Social Science faculties are established to offer (Bachelor of Arts) several disciplines in its field.

The remainder of this survey report is organized to describe the objective, literature review, the survey design and the sample, methodology and the results which provide insights into the graduands' and graduates' satisfaction in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences higher education and the employability in Sri Lanka based on this survey results.

1.1 The Study Objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess the satisfaction of the graduands (undergraduates) who are currently at the final year and the passed-out graduates during the last 5 years in the field of Humanities and Social Science in the State Universities.

1.1.1 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- I. Examine the required employability skills and aspirations
- II. Assess the level of job satisfaction of the internal and external graduands and graduates who are currently enrolled in the final year of either 3rd or 4th year and the passed-out from the universities in the fields of Social Science and Humanities during the last 5 years (2016-2020) in Sri Lanka.
- III. Find out the types of jobs obtained by the graduates in the field of Social Science and Humanities disciplines in the State Universities.
- IV. Assess the perception of graduands and graduates on Humanities and Social Science Education in the State Universities
- V. Ascertain the views of graduands and graduates for way forward to improve HSS in the University Education.

1.2 Study Design, Data and Methodology

1.2.1 Sample Design

The probability sample design was used to determine the number of graduands and graduates for the survey. In order to cover two distinct groups of students, viz., graduates who have passed out during the last 5 years (2016-2020) and the graduands who are in the final year of 3rd or 4th year at the state universities where Humanities and Social Science

degree programs are conducted, two samples are selected to represent those two groups of graduands and graduates.

As per the UGC statistics of passed-out students, there are about 25,000 (about 5,000 per year) graduates in HSS from the state universities during the last five years in the country. Taking that as a universe, the total sample of 5,000 passed out graduates (internal and external) is selected to ensure a statistical validity of findings at 95% confidence level and 1.4% margin of error. A sampling frame is the complete list of graduates in HSC, passed out during 2016-2020, provided by the Examination Departments of the 13 universities where the degree programme in HSS is offered (Annexure- figure 4). Although the study targeted to cover 5,000 passed out graduates, perhaps due to pandemic situation, 3,693 graduates have uploaded the filled questionnaires which recorded a response rate of 73.9 percent. However, when we scrutinized and edited the filled questionnaire, the study considered a sample of 3,260 respondents (passed-out graduates) who have successfully completed the questionnaires.

The universe of the current students who are in the final year of the degree programme, either 3rd year (general Degree programme) or 4th year (Honours Degree programme) had been chosen by the Focal Point members appointed from 13 Universities by the UGC. As per the records of current students in those universities, there are about 14,000 students who are currently (2021) in the 3rd and 4th year degree programmes of HSS in the 13 universities. A sample of 1000 was targeted to be drawn from this universe to ensure a statistical validity of findings at 95% confidence level and 2.3% margin of error. Contact details of final year undergraduates (graduands) have been collected from each faculty. Although the sample of 1,000 undergraduates of the final year was targeted, 2,724 students have filled the questionnaires and uploaded to Google which was an unexpected response rate, due to the continuous persuasion and cooperation of the Focal Members of the Universities. However, under the editing and scrutinizing process, the Study Team decided to consider 2,592 successfully completed (95.1% out of uploaded) questionnaires, which provided more valid findings than we expected at the beginning of the survey.

1.2.2 Data Collection Methods

1.2.2.1 Questionnaire

This study by its nature can be designated as a quantitative research, adopting survey method to capture a larger population of graduands and graduates in the HSS of state universities. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation, two separate online questionnaires; one for graduands (undergraduate) and the other for graduates were developed to collect information through an electronic method of data collection mode using Google platform instead of interviewer administered questionnaire method (Annexure 01). The graduate questionnaire in Google Form was used for the internal and external passed out graduates.

To identify the eligible targeted graduands and graduates for the specific period and the year of degree programme, their National Identity Card number and registered University Student Number were used.

Both questionnaires had mainly four sections, namely 1) background information such as age, sex, marital status, ethnicity and current place of residence of the respondents who are in this survey graduates or graduands, 2) satisfaction with the degree followed, 3) Choice and occupation and satisfaction with it and 4) Respondent's job and professional education expectations. Both questionnaires were prepared in all three languages: Sinhala, Tamil and English and most of the questions were structured using standard pre-codes and, a few open-ended questions were also developed to obtain the responses on perceptions of course and job satisfaction of the students.

1.2.2.2 Telephonic Interviews - (CATI)

If the response rate is not at an acceptable level, telephone interviews, which is called Computer Aided Telephonic Interview (CATI) are conducted, where Research Assistants ask questions and fill the questionnaire executed via telephone calls with selected respondents and uploaded through emails and social media. To deploy this tool for quantitative data collection, there should be a validated database of selected respondents with accurate contact numbers drawn from each University. Thus, this method has been successfully deployed for quantitative data collection during Covid-19 Locked down period. The collected Google Form data are transformed via EXCEL format and then generated into SPSS format for analysis purpose.

1.2 Analytical Methods

The study used basically descriptive cross sectional analysis. Thus the background profile and the status of employment and income distributions of the graduands and graduates were analyzed through the framework of the univariate and bivariate analysis using descriptive statistics, cross tabulations and chi-square test. The data were presented through tables, charts, maps etc.

2. An Overview of Previous Studies (Literature Review)

High quality and the practicality of the higher education system have always influenced to bridge the gap between demand and supply of the labor market (Weligama, 2003). Especially, a qualified graduate with numerous skills has more opportunities in the job market. However, the opportunities that can be captured by the graduates differ by the subjects or discipline that they have specialized in or studied. The graduates who have received their bachelor's degree from the selected disciplines face a lot of issues and challenges when finding jobs. Due to the longer period of unemployment and dissatisfaction with the received jobs, most of the graduates are having a bad image of their degrees (Gunaratne et al., 2018). Therefore, this section provides the literature published by different scholars regarding satisfaction on social sciences and humanities-related education in state universities and graduates' and graduands' employment expectations and skill requirements for career development.

A study on "Tracer Study of Graduates; University in Sri Lanka", conducted in 2018 to find out the employment level of graduates after their graduation and to evaluate the capability and relevance of the undergraduate degree programs offered by the state and non-state sector universities in Sri Lanka revealed that, around 50 percent (50.4%) of Arts graduates are unemployed during two to three years after their graduation. Further study revealed that unemployed percentage (57.1%) is high among Performing Arts graduates. According to the study, 12.1 percent of Arts graduates waited for more than two years after their graduation to find a job and only 23.8 percent of Arts graduates had gained professional qualifications when they start their first employment (Gunaratne et al., 2018).

Further, nearly one third (32.9%) of Arts graduates are employed in public sector-teaching while 31.2% are employed in Private sector. Gunaratne et al. (2018) revealed that more than 55 percent of the Arts graduates are employed in the education sector followed by 12.7 percent employed in the administration field. Further, this study explored the graduates' perception of university teaching and it revealed that 51.3 percent of Arts graduates were having a good perception while 21.2 percent were having an average

perception of teaching. Although this study focused on tracing the employability of graduates, an in-depth analysis of Arts graduates' satisfaction with university education and their perceptions and skill requirements for future employment have not been focused here.

As clearly revealed from research done by Ariyawansa in 2008 on "Employability of Graduates of Sri Lankan Universities" there are fewer job opportunities in the current job market for areas of Social Sciences and Humanities graduates compared with the other graduates. As further reported by the study, most Arts and Social Sciences graduates are less proficient in English due to the degree programs being conducted in Sinhala medium. This study emphasizes that the degree programmes in Social Sciences and Humanities lack quality and relevance, and therefore, is the main reason for the higher unemployment rates among Arts graduates (Ariyawansa, 2008). Thus, this research has not been focused on job expectations of Arts graduates and their satisfaction with education on Social Sciences and Humanities.

The study by Weligamage and Siengthai (2003) reveals that educational background is the most crucial factor for securing a job according to the employed graduates and undergraduates, while unemployed graduates' view was the lack of professional experiences as the most reasonable factor for their unemployment. The study further elaborates that, prospective employers are more concerned on the personality, general knowledge, ICT skills, language proficiency, practical experience, and communication skills with the educational background to provide jobs. Nevertheless, the undergraduates stressed that they cannot gain more ICT knowledge, practical experience, and professional experience through the current university education system (Weligamage & Siengthai, 2003). However, the differences in the skill requirements and job expectations among the different disciplines and satisfaction with the university education system have not been much focused in this study.

Weligamage and Siengthai's (2003), findings can be justified by the research done by Thennakoon and Perera in 2016 regarding "Importance of enhancing employability skills of undergraduates in Sri Lankan universities". This research, based on secondary data and in-depth interviews indicated that those who have obtained degrees from the social sciences discipline are in a critical stage in linking with the development of employability skills. Further, it revealed that some of the students in social sciences degree programs are self-preparing to obtain supplementary qualifications in Human Resource Management, Marketing, English, and ICT, etc. in order to have a proper job in the future. However, this study elaborates that, the employers' requirements such as communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork, personal relationship, etc. are seriously lacking in the majority of social sciences graduates (Thennakoon & Perera, 2016). However, this study has not focused on graduates' satisfaction with their current jobs, quality of university education, and their future job expectations.

According to the Report on “Propensity to tend education under the Arts stream and the unemployment of Arts Graduates” by Sri Lanka Auditor General in 2020¹, lack of working experience, non-availability of professional qualifications, expecting a government job, lack of IT skills and lack of communication skills are main factors for Arts graduates to be unemployed. Further it disclosed that, more undergraduates enrolled in the Arts faculties are females and the majorities are studying in Sinhala medium and therefore, job opportunities in the private sector are denied to them. Notably, the report emphasizes that, 84 per cent of Arts graduates needs to have the skills in English language, presentation skills and leadership skills to find a proper job. Nevertheless, the satisfaction of HSS education among graduates and the differences of job expectations among the different disciplines have been focused very less in this study.

As another perspective of university education, Sonnadara and Shanika conducted a quantitative research in 2020 on “Factors affecting student satisfaction in higher education; A comparison between state and non-state universities in Sri Lanka”. According to the study, university facilities, degree programs, student assessments, and academic staff have influenced student satisfaction of higher education. The study further elaborates that, student satisfaction differs by their university as state and non-state. Notably, it emphasizes that student satisfaction on academic staff is significantly different among state and non-state university students (Sonnadara & Shanika, 2020). This study emphasizes mainly undergraduates’ satisfaction with university education, but satisfaction by their study stream and graduates’ satisfaction with university education has not been focused here.

The above findings can be justified by the statistical research carried out by Weerasinghe and Fernando (2018) which points out that, insufficiency of infrastructure facilities, such as lecture rooms, library facilities, ICT labs, social areas, hostel facilities, and student cafeterias, are the major factors that significantly influence student satisfaction levels at state universities in Sri Lanka. Further, research confirmed the significant influence of the quality of the degree program on the student satisfaction levels in state universities in Sri Lanka (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2018). However, the coverage of this study is

1. Group of academics have argued for and against this report and those who were supported have brought out ‘customer needs or satisfaction’ view and critically suggest that arts faculties of state universities fail to understand the long-term needs of the students, graduates and social, political and economic environment in which they work, they will be producing graduates without knowing the customer needs. It is better to be far-sighted and introduce necessary changes to be compatible with the aspirations of the society (see Senaratne and Dahanayake <https://island.lk/myopia-in-arts-stream-education-in-state-universities-in-sri-lanka/>). Other group look at the issues not necessarily as ‘unemployment’ issue but as a broader issues faced by socio-economic and education sectors in general. And argue the report’s lack of interest in understanding what positive elements of Arts education might be attracting the large student numbers and what elements of Arts education are worth supporting and developing, is quite telling of its general devaluing of Arts education (see: <https://island.lk/myth-of-unemployable-arts-graduates/>).

restricted only to graduates who have passed out from the Management Faculties in the State Universities in Sri Lanka.

Thus, the above discussed scholarly literature emphasizes the lack of studies on Social Sciences and Humanities graduates' and undergraduates' university education-related satisfaction and their perceptions on employment and skill expectations. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by conducting a study on graduates' and undergraduates' satisfaction on Humanities and Social Science Education in State Universities and to find out their current and future employability and skill expectations.

3. Survey Results

3.1 Background Characteristics of Sample Population

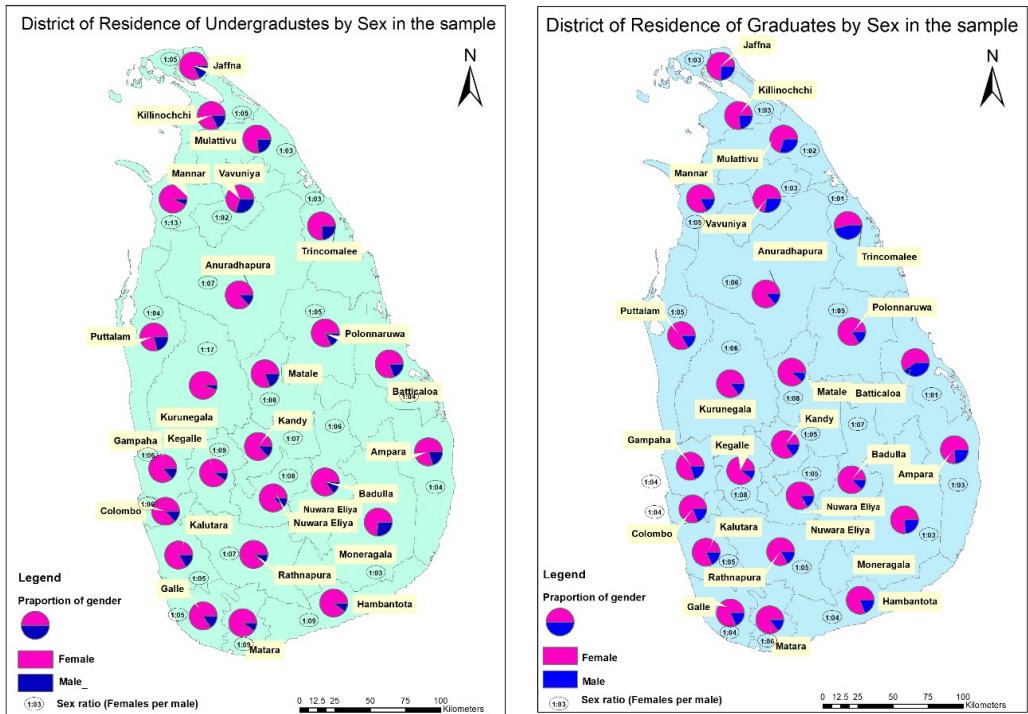
This section provides basic background characteristics including age, sex, marital status and ethnicity of the graduands who are currently enrolled in the final year, and the graduates who have passed-out during the last five years in the Humanities and Social Science fields in the State Universities in Sri Lanka. This information will help in understanding some of the factors that affect their satisfaction on university education, perception and expectation on employability and skill development.

Of a total of 2,592 undergraduates (graduands) who are currently in the final year degree programme of HSS, 59 percent (58.6%) are 20-24 years of age, followed by a considerable proportion (37.2%) are 25-29 years of age. It is obvious that the vast majority of passed-out graduates (86.8%) are 25-29 at the survey, since they are aged 3-5 years after graduation (Table 3).

As generally expected, the vast majority of both undergraduates (85.5%) and graduates (81.2%) in Humanities and Social Science disciplines are females. Thus, for every male student, there are 6 female students (sex ratio is for every 100 male students there are 588 female students) among the graduands at the final year. In other words, this indicates that there are 6 female undergraduates for every male counterpart. According to the UGC statistics also the proportion of female undergraduates to total undergraduates is 84.5 percent (UGC, 2020). This substantial gender inequality in the Humanities and Social Science fields is discerned when compared with the proportion of females that are much lower in other subject streams such as Commerce (66.6%) Physical Science (33.1%), Biological Science (71.2%), Engineering and Technology (15.9%) and Bio-system Technology (80.1%) (UGC, 2020). Also, this gender disparity is mostly seen when the district of residence of undergraduates is concerned; for instance, for every male there are 17 female students in Kurunegala district, for every male there are 9 female undergraduates in Matara and Kegalle districts, and for every male 9 female undergraduates in Hambantota whilst the sex ratio of 1:8 in Nuwaraeliya district (Figure 01(a)). Notably, this trend can be seen among graduates' sample as well where the ratio of females is higher than the males among all districts (Figure 01(b)). Thus, as generally

believed, more females in the Humanities and Social Science fields face employability issues as there are lesser amount of job avenues and opportunities for females in the State and Private sector other than the teaching jobs.

Figure 01(a) and Figure 01(b): District of residence of undergraduates and graduates by sex in the sample



As expected, majority of undergraduates (87%) are unmarried. The proportion of married graduates who passed-out (33.1%) are higher than that of undergraduates (12%) of final year of the degree programme (Table2). Among the undergraduates, there are more married female students (13.5% or 300 female students) than the male students (8.8% or 33 students).

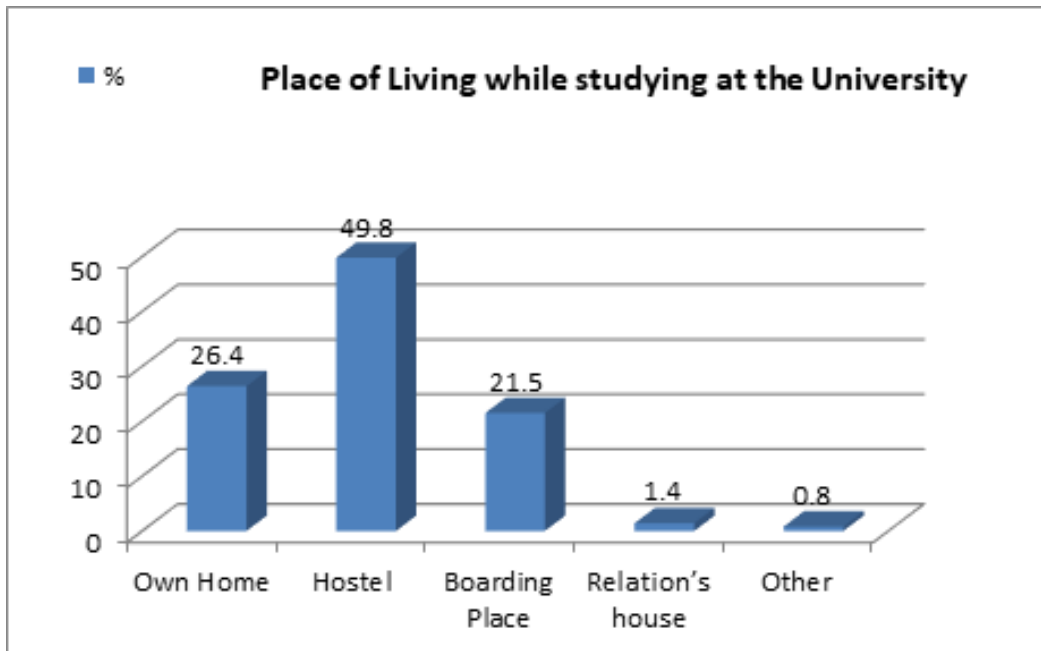
The distribution of both undergraduates and graduates by ethnicity reveals that the majority of them are Sinhalese (66% and 73% respectively) followed by Moors (17% and 15% (respectively) at the Survey (Table 3). Thus, a considerable proportion of Moors is represented in the sample as of the total of undergraduates and graduates who passed-out, as a substantial proportion of students have responded from the South–Eastern University at the survey (Annexure-Table 01). However, a considerable proportion of Tamils (16.2%) of the total undergraduates has also responded at the survey (Table 03).

Table 03: Background Characteristics of Graduands and Graduates

Demographic Characteristics	Graduands		Graduates	
	No	%	No	%
Age Composition				
20-24	1,520	58.6	102	3.1
25-29	963	37.2	2,830	86.8
30-34	54	2.1	238	7.3
35-39	27	1.0	32	1.0
40+	28	1.1	58	1.8
<i>Mean</i>	24.7	<i>S.D=3.2</i>	27.3	<i>SD=3.5</i>
Sex composition				
Male	377	14.5	613	18.8
Female	2,215	85.5	3,647	81.2
Marital Status				
Married	333	12.0	1,079	33.1
Unmarried	2,254	87.0	2,171	66.6
Divorced/Separated	5	2.0	10	0.3
Ethnicity				
Sinhalese	1,721	66.4	2,374	72.9
Tamils	419	16.2	378	11.6
Moor	443	17.1	497	15.3
Other	9	0.3	9	0.3
Total	2,592	100.0	3,260	100.0

An understanding of the above demographic characteristics is useful to explore the satisfaction of the graduates and graduands on higher education in the field of HSS, job aspirations and employability.

As revealed from Figure 1, majority of the undergraduates (49.8% out of 2,592) of HSS stay at the hostels even at their final years of degree programme whilst twenty-six percent (26.4%) live in their own homes, followed by the boarding places (21.5%) at the time of the survey. That the majority live in hostels is due to the usual practice of all universities providing hostel facilities in the 1st year as well as the final year.

Figure 02: Place of living of Graduands while studying at the University

As seen in Table 4, it is noteworthy that out of the total female graduands at the final year (2,215), the majority live at the hostels (51.3%) and their own homes (26.6%) whilst of the total male students (377), most live at hostels (41%) and boarding places (28.1%). The chi-square test confirms that the sex difference in the living places while studying at the universities is highly significant statistically ($p=.000$).

Table 04: Living Places of Graduands while studying at the universities by Sex

Living places while studying at the universities	Male %	Female %
Own Home	26.2	26.6
Hostel	41.1	51.3
Boarding Place	28.1	20.4
Relation's home	2.9	1.2
Other	2.7	0.5
Total (n)	377	2,215

3.2 Selecting the Types of Degree Programme and Subject Stream

As revealed in the sample survey, there is a tendency among graduands (70.9%) as well as graduates (68.1%) to enroll in the Special/Honours degree programmes (Table 5). However, there is a slight gender disparity in the enrollment in special/honours degree programmes among current graduands and the passed out graduates. Thus, while there are more male students (78.8%) than female students (69.5%) of the graduands, there are more female students (69.3%) than male students (62.6%) of the graduates who followed the special/honours degree (Table 5). This sex difference is significant ($p < 0.5$) and it concludes that gender is a significant factor which affects the choice in the selection of general or special/honours degree.

Table 05: Enrollment of graduates and graduands by Type of Degree

Type of degree	Graduands –Final Year			Graduates –passed out		
	Male %	Female %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
Enrolled						
General	21.2	30.5	29.1	37.4	30.7	31.9
Special/Honours	78.8	69.5	70.9	62.6	69.3	68.1
Total (n)	377	2215	2592	613	2647	3260

The choice of selecting the subject stream, namely Humanities or Social Sciences or both depends on the subjects followed at the GCE A/L classes and the results obtained at its final examination. In addition, some students consider the crucial factors such as the employment opportunities and earning potentials (after graduation) when selecting subject stream. However, the expectations of employability and earning potentials are not only crucial to the candidates but also to the society as well. As revealed from Figure 3(a) and 3(b), the majority of graduands (55.5%) and the graduates (42.5%) have followed both Humanities and Social Science subject streams in their General Degree Programme. Moreover, there are more graduates who passed out during the last 5 years (32.1%) including majority of whom are males (55.7%) with a higher tendency to follow the Social Science subject stream than the final year-undergraduates (22.9%). This apparent choice of Social Science or both subject streams by graduates is perhaps due to the intention of having more job opportunities in the Social Science subject streams than in the Humanities. It is also noticeable that there are more female students than male students of graduands as well as graduates who follow the Humanities subject stream (Figure 3(a) and 3 (b)).

Figure 03(a): Subject Streams Enrolled at the General Degree Programme by Graduands

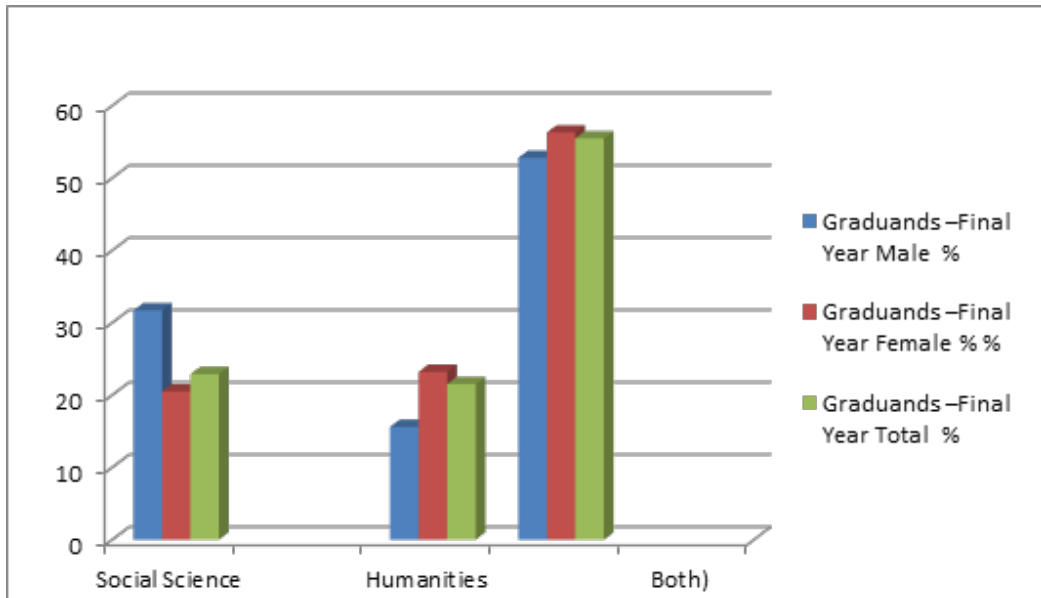
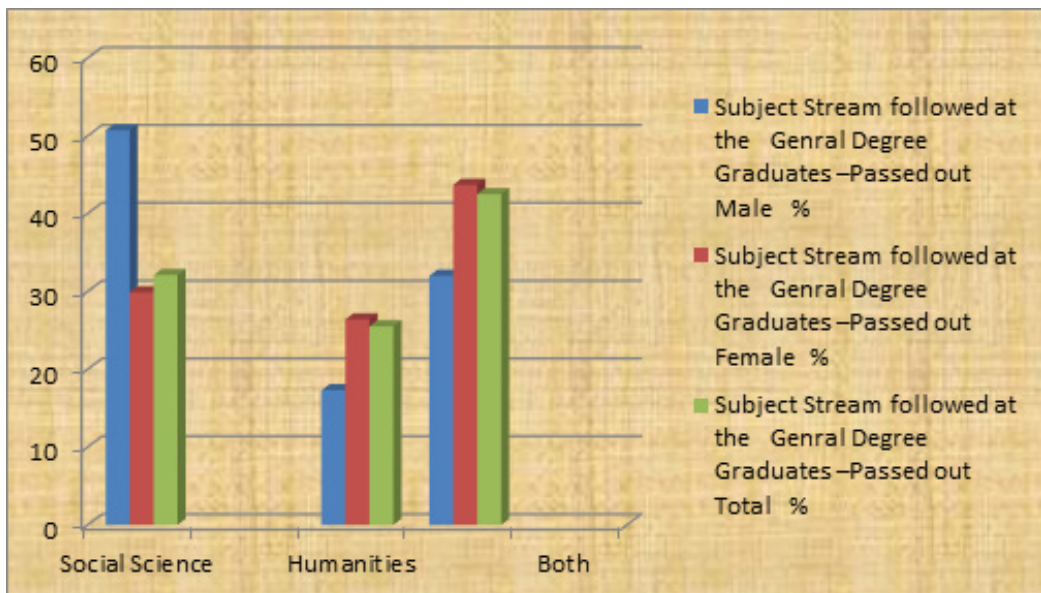


Figure 03(b): Subject Streams Enrolled at the General Degree Programme by Passed-out Graduates



3.2.1. Nature of the degree programme (Internal/external)

It is important to understand the number of undergraduates and graduates who follow their degree programme either internally or externally. Although a vast number of students have succeeded to enter the universities as a result of high performance at the GCE (A/L) examination, a few percentage of students have a chance to enter the university to follow a degree programme. Hence, the prospective students who are eligible to enter the degree programme attempt to follow external degrees. However, in this regard, most State Universities have restricted the registration for external degree programmes due to administrative and financial constraints. On the other hand, the UGC also has imposed several conditions when conducting external degree programmes by an institute (e.g. library facilities, quota allowed for external degrees should not exceed internal number of students etc.). Further, as a result of providing a bank loan to the prospective students by the government, they are motivated to follow a degree programme at the private universities rather than following external degree in the State Universities. According to the responses of this survey, it is also revealed that a vast majority of total graduands (96.8%) and graduates (97.8%) have followed their first degree programme internally (Table 6). Out of graduates who followed degree externally, there are more male graduates (2.6%) than female graduates (2.1%).

Table 6: Nature of Degree currently follow and followed (Internal or External)

	Graduands (Undergraduates)			Graduates		
	Internal %	External %	Total (N)	Internal %	External %	Total (N)
Male	96.8	3.2	377	97.4	2.6	613
Female	96.7	3.3	2,215	97.9	2.1	2,647
Total	96.8	3.2	2,592	97.8	2.2	3,260

3.2.1. Medium of instruction at the degree programme

The undergraduates and the graduates are very much concerned about the importance of medium of lecture instructions for the employability and for their own satisfaction. However, choosing the medium of instruction of the discipline depends on several factors such as its availability for the subjects they wished to do, their family background, the personal ability to follow the required medium and the ability to express their ideas through the medium etc. As revealed from the survey data, majority of both graduands (41.2%) and graduates (48.9%) have followed the degree courses in Sinhala medium as against English medium counterparts, 27.8 percent and 24.5 percent respectively. This suggests that more undergraduates at present tend to follow the course units in English medium compared with the graduates who have already passed-out. Moreover, among the

undergraduates who follow English medium degree programmes, there are more female undergraduates (28.5%) than male undergraduates (23.3%). A considerable proportion of undergraduates (27.6%) and the passed out graduates (22.5%) have followed the degree courses in Tamil Medium. The relationship between medium of instruction and the gender is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

3.3. Satisfaction with the first degree- different aspects

Table 7, illustrates a detailed evaluation of undergraduates' and graduates' level of satisfaction in various aspects such as subjects, course contents, and the facilities provided by the universities, when they were following their first degree.

As seen in Table 7, approximately 60 percent of undergraduates were in or above the satisfied level on the subjects and the course content offered in each subject. In percentages, 23.4 percent and 16.2 percent of undergraduates are highly satisfied with the subjects and the course content respectively whilst the rest of the undergraduates are on the level of satisfaction on those two areas. When compared with graduates' opinion, it can be seen that the slight decrease of percentages of satisfied and highly satisfied levels (Table 7). The opinion of Undergraduates and graduates about their lecturers is comparatively similar. Moreover, about 38.5 percent and 41 percent of undergraduates and graduates are of the view that the lecturers are competent for teaching the respective subject. More than 20 percent of undergraduate and graduate students are highly satisfied with their subject-specific lecturers. The opinion of the majority of undergraduates and graduates (30.7%) regarding the University infrastructure is moderate. However, approximately more than 40 percent of undergraduates and graduates are above the satisfied level. On the opinion of the practicality of the subjects, a considerable proportion of undergraduates (35.1%) reported as of satisfied whilst an equal proportion of graduates (about 30.1%) reported as of satisfied or moderately satisfied (Table 7). This positive perception of both undergraduates and the graduates on the practicality of the subjects in the fields of Humanities and Social Science disciplines suggests the importance of the discipline for their satisfaction and avenues to enter the job market.

Further, the medium of instruction which is Sinhala medium for most subjects in HSS, the majority of both groups are satisfied as of 60.3 percent and 51.5 percent of undergraduates and graduates respectively (Table 07).

When considering the satisfaction on teaching techniques and Course Evaluation Methods, majority of both undergraduates and graduates (above 35%) are on satisfied level (Table 07).

Table 07: Graduands' and graduates' satisfaction when following the degree

Items	Graduands' opinion (%) n = 2,592				
	Highly unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Moderate	Satisfied	Highly satisfied
Subjects	16.7	5.3	14.2	40.4	23.4
Course Content	14.7	7.6	20.9	40.6	16.2
Lecturers	15.9	5.2	16.6	38.5	23.9
University infrastructure	14.1	15.2	30.7	29.6	10.5
Practicality of the subjects	14.3	12.7	27.7	35.1	10.3
Medium of instruction	15.1	6.1	18.6	42.7	17.6
Teaching techniques	14.0	7.9	24.8	39.2	14.2
Evaluation methods	13.6	7.6	26.7	39.2	13.0
Developing soft-skills	13.3	11.4	27.8	36.5	11.0
	Graduates' opinion (%) n = 3,260				
Subjects	13.2	6.1	22.5	39.2	18.9
Course Content	12.0	10.0	29.6	36.5	11.9
Lecturers	13.4	4.6	19.5	41.0	21.5
University infrastructure	11.0	16.0	30.7	30.1	12.2
Practicality of the subjects	12.7	17.3	30.2	30.1	9.6
Medium of instruction	13.0	8.4	22.0	39.9	16.6
Teaching techniques	11.5	9.2	29.8	37.5	12.1
Evaluation methods	11.9	10.5	29.8	36.4	11.3
Developing soft-skills	11.7	14.3	33.0	31.9	9.1

Thus, the majority, 39.2 percent, and 36.4 percent stated that the evaluation methods conducted for the evaluation process are at satisfied level and 13 percent and 11.3 percent stated that it is at a highly satisfied level among undergraduates and graduates respectively. During the first degree, the development of soft skills is at a satisfied level for 36.5 percent of undergraduates whilst the majority of graduates (33%) believed it is at a moderate level and requires more attention (Table 07).

In all the criteria given, approximately 15 percent of undergraduates are highly unsatisfied about all aspects of their first degree; however, the percentages are apparently lower among the graduates after obtaining their degrees. It is striking that, as far as the satisfied and highly satisfied levels are collectively concerned, majority of both groups believe that all aspects given in the above table are at satisfactory or above satisfactory level.

3.4. Engagement in Professional Courses and Job while following Degree

Generally, some undergraduates desire to engage in other professional courses or/and in a job while they are studying for the degree due to economic difficulties or career prospects. However, the majority of male undergraduates (69.8%) and male graduates (71.3%) do not follow professional courses. Twenty-seven percent (26.6%) of both male and female undergraduates and among them more male undergraduates than females are following other professional courses, whereas 34 percent (33.6%) of both male and female graduates and out of them more female than male graduates are following other professional courses (Table 8). This indicates that the demand for following other professional courses by undergraduates and graduates while studying degree programme is not much significant.

Table 8: Engaging other professional courses while studying the degree by Sex

Status of Following Professional Courses	Graduands			Graduates		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Following professional courses	30.2	26.0	26.6	28.7	34.8	33.6
Not following professional courses	69.8	74.0	73.4	71.3	65.2	66.4
Total (n)	377	2215	2592	613	2647	3260

Notes: Chi-square test for Undergraduates ($\chi^2=3.023$, $df=1$, $p = .048$)

Chi-square test for Graduates ($\chi^2=8.150$, $df=1$, $p = .002$)

The sex differentials in engaging in other professional courses while studying the first degree programme by undergraduates and graduates are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 04: Engaging in other professional Courses by sex



Chi-square test was run to identify the association between following professional courses and sex of undergraduates and graduates. It was assumed that there is a significant association between following professional courses and sex. Among undergraduates, there was a slight significant relationship at 5% significant level between following professional courses and sex of undergraduate respondents ($\chi^2=3.023$, $df=1$, $p = .048$). Hence, there is a slight significant relationship between following professional courses and sex of graduate respondents. Among graduates, there was a statistically significant relationship at 5% significant level between following professional courses and sex of graduate respondents ($\chi^2=8.150$, $df=1$, $p = .002$). Thus, there is a significant relationship between following professional courses and sex of graduate respondents.

3.5. Suitability/Satisfactoriness of the HSS Degree for Employability

Table 9 reveals the opinion of the graduands and graduates regarding the satisfactoriness of the HSS degree that they are following or followed to obtain a suitable job by Sex.

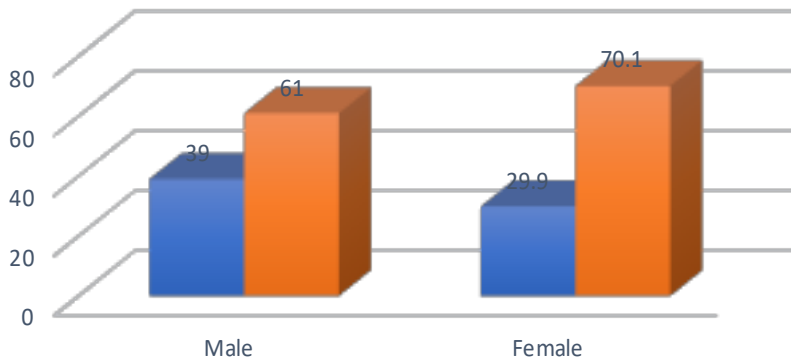
Table 09: Sufficiency of the Degree followed and following to find a job by Sex

Suitability of the degree to find a job	Graduands			Graduates		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Sufficient	64.5	86.9	71.7	45.2	50.0	49.1
Not sufficient	35.5	27.1	28.3	54.8	50.0	50.9
Total (n)	377	2215	2592	613	2646	3259

Majority of graduands by both sex (71.7) and of those more female graduands (86.9%) are of the opinion that the HSS degree they are following would be sufficient to find a job. The association between the opinion of the degree and finding a job by graduands by sex is significant ($p < 001$). Contrast to this opinion, the graduates believe that the degree they had followed is not sufficient (50.9%) to find a job (Table 8). Further, of graduands as well as graduates, more males (35.5% and 54.8% respectively) than female students have reported the degree they followed is not sufficient to find a job. It indicates that the graduates having experience in job market believe that the degree is not sufficient to find a job for their degree qualification.

Figure 05: Employability while studying at the University by Sex

Employability while studying at the university by Sex



As shown in Figure 5, a considerable proportion of male Graduands (39%) and female Graduands (nearly 30%) have reported that they do jobs while studying at the university. However, the majority of Graduands (68.7%) do not engage in a job while they study and out of them, majority are female students (70.1%) compared to male students (61%). The relationship between employability while studying at the university and the sex of undergraduate respondents is significant ($\chi^2=12.308$, $df=1$, $p = .000$).

With regard to the reasons for doing a job while studying is given in Table 10. It clearly indicates that they do jobs while studying mostly due to economic hardships (40.2%), followed by desire and experience (33.2%) and personal expenses (21.8%). More male undergraduates (60.2%) have reported that they face economic hardships compared to their counterparts of females (32.6%). However, more female undergraduates than the

male undergraduates have tendency to do a job while following the degree due to their own desire (38.8%) and experience (23.8%). It indicates that the undergraduates believe that they need job experiences when they try to find a job.

Table 10: Reason for doing a job while studying by Sex

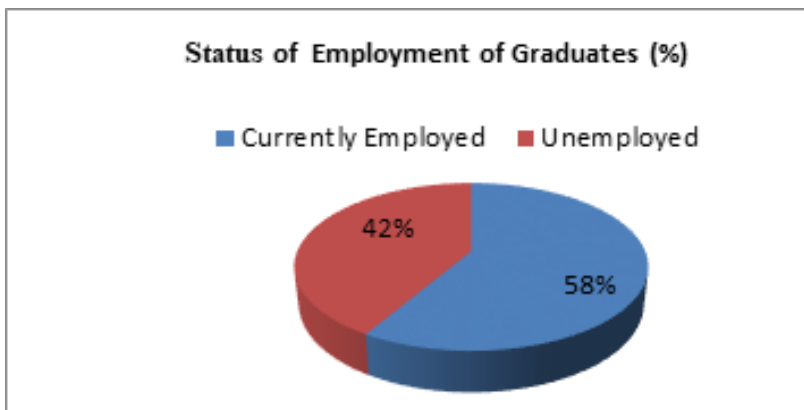
%	Male	Female	Total
Due to economic hardships	60.2	32.6	40.2
Own desire and experience	18.4	38.8	33.2
For personal expenses	16.5	23.8	21.8
Other	4.9	4.8	4.8
Total (n)	103	273	376

3.6. The occupation and Graduates' satisfaction with it

It is widely accepted that the ultimate objective of all graduates is to obtain a suitable occupation relevant to the degree programme they have followed. Thus, it is important to study the status of employability, reasons for unemployment, the duration to obtain a job after graduation, type of occupation, the expected salary and the current salary obtained and overall satisfaction of these aspects.

As revealed in Figure 6, nearly 59 per cent of responded graduates who passed-out during last 5 years (1,907 graduates out of 3,260 or 58.5%) have reported that they are employed but a considerable proportion of graduates (41.5% or 1,353) are unemployed at the time of the survey.

Figure 06: The employment status of Graduates



Further, when the employment status by sex is considered, it is clearly noted that among the currently employed graduates more male graduates (69.3%) than female graduates (56%) were employed whilst of the unemployed graduates, there were more females (44%) than male graduates (39.7%) at the time of the survey (Table 11). This gender inequality of unemployment is also confirmed by the Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics for several years.

Table 11: Employment Status of Graduates by Sex

Employment status	Male	Female	Total
Currently Employed	69.3	56.0	58.5
Currently Unemployed	30.7	44.0	41.5
Total (n)	613	2,647	3,260

As evident from many other studies in Sri Lanka, it is worth noting that the overall graduate unemployment and the female graduates' unemployment issue are not limited to Social Science and Humanities field, but even in many other fields as well (Ariyawansa, 2008; Gunaratne et. al., 2018; Thennakoon & Perera, 2016).

There are multifaceted factors affecting the graduate unemployment and those factors have been discussed in the previous studies. According to this survey, the following factors have been reported by the unemployed graduates of Humanities and Social Science fields at the time of survey. As revealed from Table 12, over 20 percent of unemployed graduates in the sample reported that the delay in final examination results (21.8%), prevailing Covid-19 pandemic related issues including no new recruitment to the government or private sector for permanent/ semi-permanent/ temporary positions and losing businesses of enterprises are the critical factors for the unemployment during the devastating period. The lack of job opportunities (17%) is also reported as a considerable reason for the unemployment situation at this moment. Most of female graduates too have reported the above two reasons for the unemployment whilst among the male graduates, relatively most of them (29.3%) have reported lack of job opportunities (Table 12). It is important to note that the female graduates' unemployment is higher than that of their male counterparts which is evident from the survey, while 12.2 percent of female graduates and 9.1 percent of male graduates are seeking for jobs at the time of survey (Table 12). It is interesting to note that the proportions of graduates who have reported lack of experience and skills factor are rather minimal (3.3%) for the graduate unemployment. It is suggested that the graduates of HSS have necessary experience and skills to obtain a suitable job. However, more male unemployed graduates (9.1%) than their counterparts (4.8%) believe that there is a mismatch between the degree and the job opportunities (Table 12).

Table 12: The reported reasons for Graduate Unemployment by Sex

Reasons for Unemployment	Male %	Female %	Total %
Delay in releasing final exam results	18.9	22.3	21.8
Covid-19 pandemic related issues	18.9	21.2	20.9
Lack of experiences and skills	3.5	3.3	3.3
Lack of job opportunities	20.3	16.5	17.0
Mismatch between the degree and the job opportunity	9.1	4.8	5.4
Seeking for a job	9.1	12.2	11.8
Waiting for the responses from the applied job	2.1	2.5	2.4
Job Mismatch	6.3	11.3	10.6
Other	11.9	5.9	6.7
Total (n)	143	919	1062

3.7. Position of Employment

In general, the occupational position of an employed person displays the status of the employment and career path. Hence, most graduates anticipate a better position of occupation. As revealed from Table 13, the employed graduates in the sample (1,857 graduates) held several key positions; majority of both male and female employed graduates of HSS hold the position of Development Officer (31.1%), followed by the position of teaching (28.8%). It is also striking that 10 percent of employed graduates of HSS hold the position of lecturer and are in Managerial and Administrative related jobs (Table 13). Further, it is noticeable that female employed graduates had more chances than those of their counterparts to obtain the teaching posts (31% versus 20.9%), Development Officer (31.5% versus 29.8%) and Lecturer Post (10.8% vs 7.5%) whilst male employed graduates had more chances to obtain managerial and administrative related jobs than the female graduates (14.9% versus 8.5%) (Table 13). About 5 percent of employed graduates worked as Management Trainee at the time of the survey. Thus, this analysis reveals that the employed graduates of Social Science and Humanities fields (Arts Graduates) are engaged in higher or middle level accepted jobs. These finding contrasts with some previous findings of the highest percentage (20%) of lower level jobs such as support staff (Clerical/ Secretarial) occupied by Arts graduates (Gunaratne, et al., 2018).

Table 13: Position held by the employed Graduates

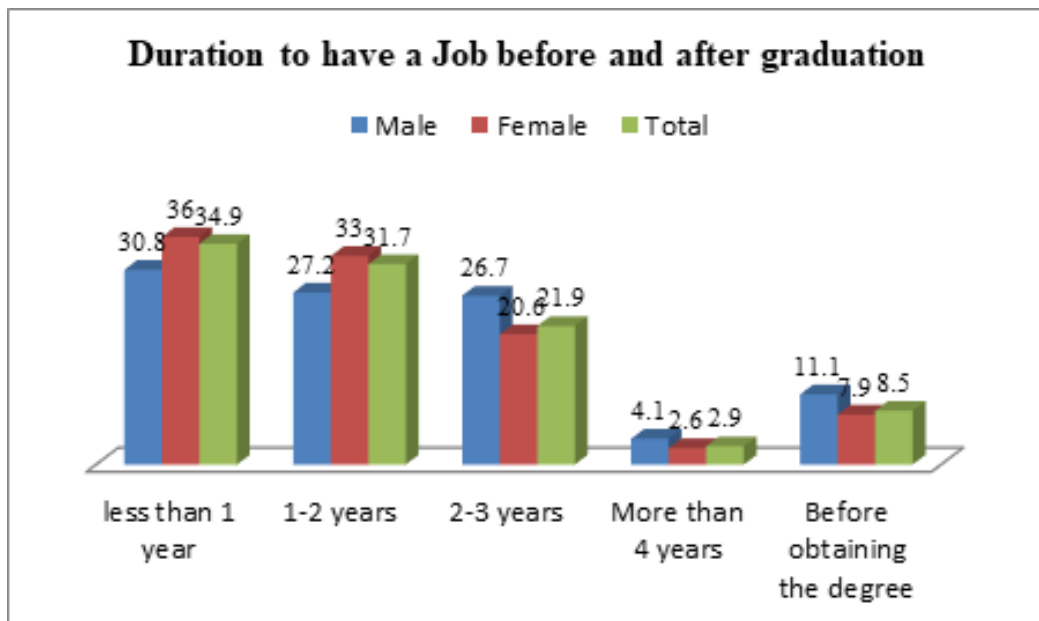
Position of Occupation	Total Employed Graduates		Male %	Female %
	No.	%		
Banking Officer	14	0.8	1.0	0.7
Business Analyst	10	0.5	1.2	0.3
Development Officer	578	31.1	29.8	31.5
Entrepreneurship and businesses	43	2.3	5.3	1.5
HRM related jobs	17	0.9	1.0	0.9
ICT related jobs	22	1.2	1.2	1.2
Lawyer	13	0.7	1.2	0.6
Lecturer	186	10.0	7.5	10.8
Managerial and Administrative related jobs	184	9.9	14.9	8.5
Media related jobs	24	1.3	2.4	1.0
Research officer	68	3.7	4.8	3.3
Teaching	534	28.8	20.9	31.0
Trainee	94	5.1	1.7	6.0
Other	70	3.8	7.2	2.8
Total	1,857	100.0	416	1,441

With regard to policy perspective, it is important to understand how long it took to have the above occupations after or before graduation. The results of the survey revealed that a significant percentage of employed graduates (66.6%) obtained an occupation within 2 years (less than 1 year plus 1-2 years) after graduation (Figure 6). Further, another 22 percent of employed graduates had a job within 2-3 years after graduation. It is also noticeable that 8 percent of employed graduates had their job before graduation (Figure 6). However, these findings also suggest that the majority of employed graduates (cumulatively 88%) were unemployed for 1-3 years after graduation. This situation of a longer period to find a job after graduation is a critical issue, on the one hand, as it creates unrest among the graduates, and on the other, it is an impediment to economic growth due to delay of returns from the investment in higher education.

As shown in Figure 6, it is notable that the female graduates (69%), more than male counterparts (58%), have waited for almost 1-2 years to obtain a job after graduation. This also indicates that the female unemployment is greater than that of their male counterparts. Further, this result summarizes the answers provided by 1,302 employed graduates against 346 male employed graduates who attributed the duration to have a job after graduation to a particular reason.

The longer delay of graduates to have a job in general for most Humanities and Social Science (Arts) graduates or particularly for female graduates is due to multifaceted factors such as socio-economic, institutional and political factors. It is widely debated that the main factor is mismatch of the skills as the training of graduates of HSS does not meet the employers' perspectives in the modern world. Thus, some people argue that the degree programmes offered by state universities do not produce a graduate that the commercial world demands at present. However, it is not always true as revealed from this survey as most Arts graduates even at present pursue several Professional and IT courses, in addition to their degree programmes. Further, most studies found that the governments do not provide the necessary jobs for the graduates according to their skills (Gunaratne et al., 2018). Relatively, less sufficient number of opportunities for female graduates to enter the labour market is also a main factor for the female unemployment (Gunaratne et al., 2018). Due to the political influences or some other reservations and personal manipulations, the graduates do not get suitable positions at the right job position, according to their training in the degree.

Figure 7: Duration to have a job before and after Graduation by sex



3.8 Job and income aspirations of undergraduates and graduates

It is interesting to note that there are significant differences on job and income aspirations among undergraduates and graduates who have passed out during the last 5 years. Table 14 presents the expected salary of undergraduates and graduates as well as the actual salary that a graduate (61.9%) expects to receive is Rs. 30,001-50,000, or generally, in their opinion both groups expect to receive Rs. 50,000/ of median salary. However, in

contrast with this expectation of graduates, majority of them (48.0%) actually receive a salary less than Rs. 30,000 or as on an average it is a median salary of Rs. 35,000/= (Table 14). The second most expected salary category by undergraduates and graduates is Rs. 50,001-100,000, but the second most actually receiving category by a graduate employee is Rs. 30,001-50,000. It indicates the dissatisfaction of graduates of HSS since they expect a high salary although they actually receive a less salary than they expected.

Table 14: Expected salary from a job by Undergraduates and Graduates and actual salary that graduates receive by Sex

Expected/ Actual Salary	Expected Salary by Undergraduates			Expected Salary by Graduates			Actual salary that Graduates receive		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
10,000-30,000	7.2	7.3	7.3	3.1	3.4	3.4	42.4	49.6	48.0
30,001-50,000	57.2	63.3	62.4	42.8	67.0	61.9	37.3	40.4	39.8
50,001-100,000	33.5	28.2	29.0	46.1	27.4	31.4	13.0	7.9	9.0
100,001 and above	2.0	1.3	1.4	8.0	2.2	3.4	7.3	2.0	3.2
Total (n)	346	2080	2426	488	1805	2293	399	1382	1781
Median			50,000			50,000			35,000

Expected Salary of Undergraduates by sex ($\chi^2=5.921$, $df=3$, $p = .116$).

Expected Salary of Graduates by sex ($\chi^2=117.940$, $df=3$, $p = .000$).

Table 15 presents an idea on the preferred employment category of undergraduates and present employment category of graduates. A considerable proportion of undergraduates (41.6%) prefer to have government jobs, and that aspiration is evident as of the majority of graduate employees (67.4) belong to government sector jobs. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the political decisions and influences, employment policies and absorption of graduate directly to public sector jobs from time to time by several governments have also contributed to increase the number of graduate in the public sector in Sri Lanka. Thus, though 23.7 percent of graduate employees are expected to work in private sector, only 17.4 percent is actually employed in the Private Sector. It indicates that though undergraduates and graduates desire to work in the private sector, they always have no chance perhaps due to a mismatch between their qualifications and private sector requirements and also due to the above noted factors. The finding of mismatch is also confirmed by previous studies as well (Vidanapathirana, 2000; Gunaratne et al. 2018).

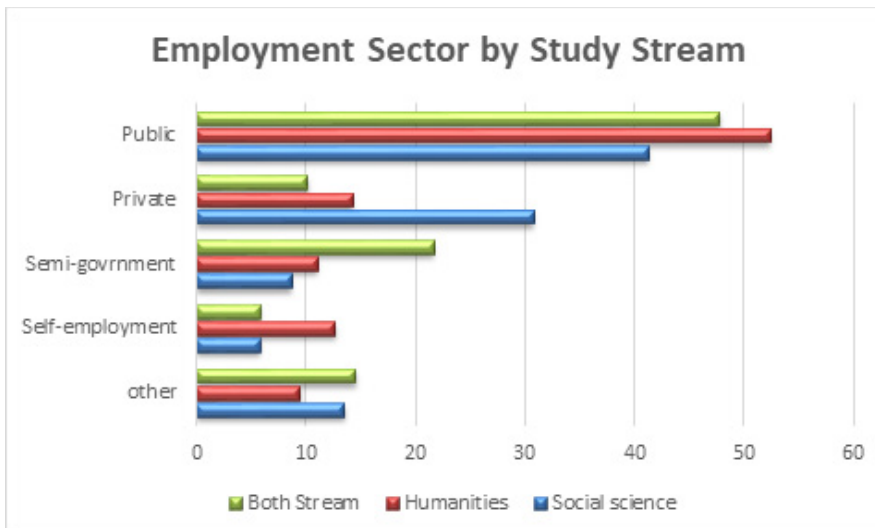
Table 15: Preferred employment category of Undergraduates and present employment category of Graduates by Sex

Sector of Employment	Preferred employment category of Undergraduates %			Present employment category of Graduates %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Public	29.3	44.4	41.6	55.3	70.8	67.4
Private	35.4	21.1	23.7	21.9	16.1	17.4
Semi-government	5.4	13.3	11.8	15.4	11.0	12.0
Self-employment	18.4	9.3	11.0	5.5	1.3	2.2
Other	17.9	11.9	11.8	1.9	0.8	1.1
Total (n)	377	2214	2591	421	1470	1891

Prerred employment category of Undergraduates ($\chi^2=52.585$, $df=4$, $p = .000$).

Further, when the employment sector of graduates by study stream of Social Science, Humanities or both streams in the first degree is concerned, it is noticeable that the majority of graduates (52.4%) who followed Humanities disciplines at their first degree are engaged in the public sector employment whilst majority of graduates (30.8%) who followed Social Science disciplines are engaged in the private sector (Figure 7). A considerable proportion of graduates (47.8%) who followed both Social Science and Humanities disciplines at the first degree are also engaged in the Public sector. Of the graduates who are in Semi-government sector, 22 percent have followed both study streams (Figure 7). These findings disclose that most graduates who followed the Humanities and Social Science subject streams at their first degree have engaged in the Public sector when compared with Social Science graduates.

Figure 08: Employment Sector by Study Stream of the Graduates



3.9 Technical and Vocational Courses and Level of Computer Literacy Skills

It is imperative to understand the extent of other skills obtained in addition to first degree by the undergraduates and the graduates of Social Science and Humanities fields. Amidst the sports and other extracurricular activities involved in the university life, the undergraduates follow the Technical and Vocational Training Courses (TVTC) and obtain the level of Computer Literacy to fulfil the requirements in the job market. These professional and technical exposures are important attributes for their future prospects. In addition, the proficiency of English is also an added qualification to obtain a good employment position in the public sector, and especially in the private sector. This section analyses these aspects through the survey results.

As evident from the survey responses, 28 percent of graduates who passed out during the last 5 years have followed TVTC whilst 14 percent are currently following the TVTC courses (Table 16). However, there are 70.5 percent of undergraduates, among them more females (71.4%) than male (65.3%) undergraduates, who have reported that they hope to follow TVTC courses in future. A considerable proportion of both male and female graduates (56.0% and 58.5 respectively) have reported that they did not follow such courses at all (Table 16). As revealed from the survey, the undergraduates who are not willing to follow TVTC courses (209 undergraduates) have responded that the main reasons for not following TVTC courses are financial issues in the family (34%) age and time factors (18.7%), and requirement to do a job immediately (10.0%). However, this may be a hindrance to find a job at the present job market as there are avenues in the present employment environment.

Table 16: Technical and Vocational Courses followed or hope to follow after obtaining first degree

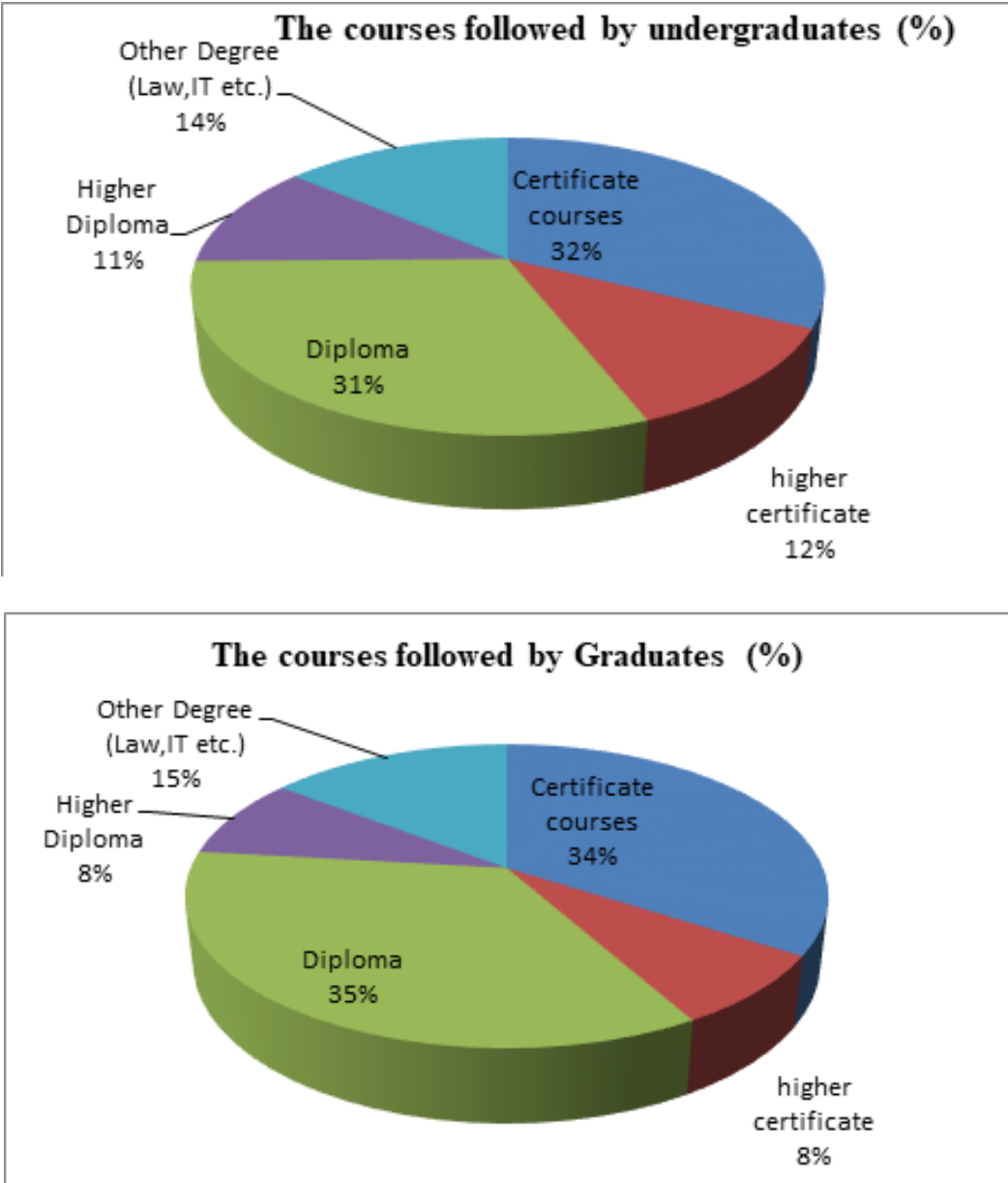
Status of following	Undergraduates*			Graduates		
	hope -after degree			Followed/f after degree		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Followed	Na	Na	Na	27.9	28.4	28.3
Currently Following	14.3	15.0	14.9	15.7	13.5	13.9
Not followed/hope to follow	65.3	71.4	70.5	56.4	58.0	57.7
No hope	20.4	13.6	14.5	Na	Na	Na
Total	377	2215	2592	614	2646	3260

Note: Na- not applicable

*the relationship between hope to follow and sex ($p < 001$)

As Figure 8 illustrates, when the undergraduates hope to follow TVTC courses, the majority of undergraduates (32%) reported that they will follow Certificate Courses (32%) followed by Diploma Courses (31%). Further, the majority of graduates (35%) followed the Diploma Courses and next highest proportion of graduates (34%) followed Certificate Courses.

Figure 9: The Course Levels expected to be followed by undergraduates and graduates



3.10 Information Technology (IT) skills

Table 17 provides information about the literacy on the sections related to Information Technology (IT) that undergraduates at their final years and the passed out graduates possess. It was revealed that a vast proportion of undergraduates (60.9%) and graduates (65.1%) are aware and also having competency on Microsoft packages and basic IT knowledge. It is interesting to note that more graduates (10.1%) than undergraduates (5.8%) are competent in data analysis software packages (Table 17). It is also encouraging to note that more than 15 percent of undergraduates are competent in Photoshop and Graphic designing, and web designing and process whilst about 12 percent of graduates are competent in the use of Photoshop and graphic designing. There is no doubt that this computer literacy enhances the undergraduates' and graduates' prospects of obtaining technical oriented occupation in the job market. Further, the undergraduates and graduates who follow the Social Science subject stream for general degree are competent in mostly MS Office and basic IT knowledge, and Web Designing and Processing, compared to those in the Humanities fields, whilst most humanities stream general degree undergraduates and those who are already graduated have a knowledge of Photoshop and Graphic Designing. However, the students who follow both streams generally have computer literacy in most sections in IT, except data Analysis software.

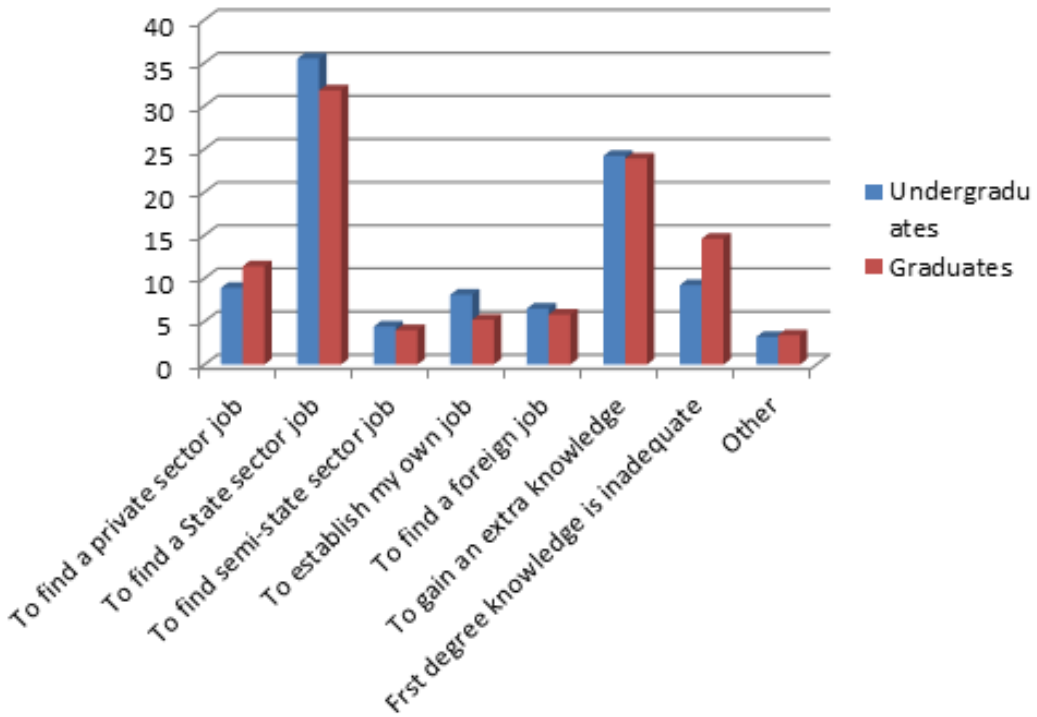
Table 17: Knowledge on Information Technology (IT) sections

IT Sections	Undergraduates	Graduates
	%	%
MS Office package and Basic IT knowledge	60.9	65.1
Photoshop and Graphic Designing	15.3	12.2
Data Analysis Software	*5.8	10.1
Web Designing and Processing	15.9	8.3
Other	2.1	4.2
Total (N)	2,142*	2,906*

Note: *: multiple responses

As Figure 10 depicts, both undergraduates and graduates have responded to the main objectives of following TVTC and IT courses while following the first degree. It is worth noting that the majority of undergraduates (35.5%) and graduates (31.8%) have responded that they pursue the TVTC and IT programmes during their first degree mainly in order to find a government sector job that relate skills and knowledge obtained by the course. Further, a considerable proportion of both undergraduates and graduates also stated that their main objective of following those TVTC and IT courses was to gain extra knowledge than the knowledge gained from the first degree (Figure 10). This indicates that the extra professional and technical qualifications obtained by undergraduates and graduates enrich them to obtain a suitable job.

Figure 10: Main objectives of following Professional Courses (TVEC and IT)



3.11 English language Proficiency

English teaching within the universities has been identified as a significant curriculum in the university education since 1970s (de Silva & de Silva, 1990). In addition to offering English Language as a degree subject, the universities had initiated several English Language Intensive courses to encourage the undergraduates to improve their communication and writing skills in English language. Thus, the faculty of Arts in most universities in Sri Lanka insisted on a compulsory pass in English at the first year examination of the degree programme in order to promote English language proficiency among the graduates. In this context, most undergraduates and graduates at present have realized that deficiency in English language communication skills is a severe impediment to their prospects of securing a suitable employment, especially in the private sector. As revealed from Table 18, it is evident that most undergraduates and graduates have reported that their writing (38% and 41% respectively) and reading ability (38.7% and 39.5% respectively) are at a satisfactory standard though their communication skills (speaking ability) is moderate (48% and 42.3% respectively).

Table 18: Proficiency of English Language of undergraduates and graduates.

Items	Graduands' (Undergraduates) opinion (%)				
	n = 2,592				
	Very Good	Good	Moderate	Poor	Very Poor
Writing Ability	21.3	38.0	35.7	4.3	0.6
Reading Ability	31.4	38.7	27.7	1.8	0.4
Speaking Ability	8.4	27.4	48.4	12.8	1.9
	Graduates' opinion (%)				
	n = 3,260				
Writing Ability	23.9	41.0	32.4	2.5	0.3
Reading Ability	34.2	39.5	24.8	1.2	0.2
Speaking Ability	13.4	34.5	42.3	8.9	0.8

Thus, the above section provides a snapshot of undergraduate and the graduates in Social Science and Humanities fields who have extra TVTC and IT abilities and English language proficiency, gained either during the first degree or after graduation to secure a suitable job in the job market.

3.12 Future suggestions to improve the HSS and expectation of Satisfaction

It is important to understand the suggestions given by final year undergraduates for improving their skills for future career development and those of passed-out graduates for enriching their working life. To this end, the survey raised a particular open ended question as 'what are the suggestions they can make for the improvement of the skills of the future of those who are going to enter the world of work'. Table 19 summarized some of the most important and common suggestions. The majority of undergraduates (26.9%) suggested that improving more practical aspects of the degree programmes is beneficial for them to prepare for the future world of work. In fact, this is an imperative suggestion as the training of undergraduates should be widened to understand the contemporary issues not only from theoretical or analytical perspectives, but also from practical aspect in the present digital world. Moreover, the undergraduates' suggestions to enhance language proficiency (18.1%), improve soft skills (16.2%) and changing the teaching and learning structure (15.7%) for the improvement of skills for the future world of work are also vital (Table 19).

Table 19: The suggestions of undergraduates and graduates to improve skills in the future world of work

Proposed Suggestions	Undergraduates' opinion	Graduates' opinion
Change the teaching & learning structure	15.7	23.5
Enhance IT skills	6.0	6.7
Enhance language proficiency	18.1	13.4
Improve practical scenarios	26.9	21.7
Improve socio-emotional skills	4.3	6.2
Improve Soft skills	16.2	10.6
Provide internship opportunities and improve professional skills	10.4	13.8
Other	2.4	4.0
Total (N)	2,592	3,260

As revealed in Table 19, the highest percent of graduates (23.5%) have suggested that the structural changes in the teaching and learning process is vital for improving the skills of graduates in the future world. As same as the views of undergraduates, the graduates have also indicated that the improvement of practical training (21.7%) and language proficiency (13.4%) to be further enriched for improving skills for the future world of work. In the context of practical scenarios, they have emphasized that more field studies and industrial affiliated work are useful to empirically learn what they learn from lectures and course units. Further, it is worth to notice that 14 percent of graduates stated the need of internship opportunities and enhanced professional skills to improve their skills for future working environment. With regard to improving soft skills, the graduands and graduates pointed out that it is useful if they will have training and exposure to communication skills, creativity, work ethic, interpersonal skills, time management etc. in addition to their routine studies. In fact, this proactive suggestion is very important to understand the issues and applicability of what they learn in the curriculum of degree programme. Also, as pointed out by graduates, the suggestion of providing internship programmes is also beneficial to develop a good working relationship between them and the corporate or private sector (Gunaratne, 2018).

4. Summary, Conclusion

This study investigated the opinion and perceptions of final year graduands and passed-out graduates of the last five years in the field of Humanities and Social Science on university education in the State Universities in Sri Lanka, and on their skills and aspirations of employability, and job satisfaction. Due to Covid-19 pandemic situation, the survey was conducted through electronic methods of data collection adopting Google platform instead of using interviewer administered survey questionnaire. Accordingly, two separate questionnaires; one for graduate students and the other for undergraduates were developed to collect necessary information based on the selected sample of 2,592 undergraduates and 3,260 passed-out graduates.

The study reveals that majority of graduands at the final year belong to 20-24 whilst graduates are in 25-29 age groups, with more married graduates compared to graduands, and among graduands, more married female graduands than their male counterparts. Majority of both graduands and graduates are Sinhalese followed by Moors in the sample.

The study discloses that the vast majority of both graduands of the final year and graduates of the last five years in Humanities and Social Science disciplines are females. Thus, for every male student, there are 6 female students at the final year. This substantial gender inequality in the Humanities and Social Science fields differs from the other subject streams such as Commerce, Physical Science, Biological Science, Engineering and Technology and Bio-systems Technology.

As revealed from the study, majority of the undergraduates and graduates of HSS stay at the hostels even during their final years of degree programme whilst a considerable proportion of them also live in their own houses, and in boarding places. Moreover, it is noteworthy that out of the total final-year female graduands, most of them live in hostels and own homes whilst of the total male students, majority live in hostels and boarding places.

The study also revealed that there is a tendency among graduands and graduates to enroll more in the Special/Honours degree programme than in the general degree programme. It is important to note that while there are more male students than female students of the

graduands, there are more female students than male students among the graduates who have followed the Special/Honours Degree.

It is apparent that the graduates selecting either Social Science or both subject streams rather than Humanities discipline alone is due to the availability of job opportunities in the former. It is also noticeable that the preference to select Humanities' discipline is higher among female students than male students of graduands.

As revealed from the survey data, majority of both undergraduates and graduates have followed the degree courses in Sinhala medium rather than in English medium. This suggests that more current undergraduates tend to follow the course units in English medium than the passed-out graduates. Moreover, among the undergraduates who follow English medium degree programmes, a significant proportion of female undergraduates does so when compared with male undergraduates. However, majority of graduands and graduates are following degree programmes either in Sinhala or Tamil. Thereby, instead of having bi-lingual instructions including English, monolingual education is quite evident. In view of the crucial need of English language skills in the employment market of university graduates, innovative initiatives are needed to identify their shortcomings and address them with sustainability.

When the satisfaction of undergraduates and graduates on Humanities and Social Sciences subject stream is concerned, the study found that a considerable proportion of undergraduates are highly satisfied with the subjects and the course content. Moreover, undergraduates and graduates are of the view that the lecturers are generally competent in teaching the respective subjects whilst more than 20 percent of undergraduate and graduate students are highly satisfied with their subject-specific lecturers. The opinion of the majority of undergraduates and graduates regarding their satisfaction about University infrastructure is at a moderate level. However, approximately more than 40 percent of undergraduates and graduates are above the satisfied level. Regarding the practicality of the subjects, a considerable proportion of undergraduates reported 'satisfied' whilst an equal proportion of graduates reported 'satisfied' or 'moderately satisfied'. This positive perception of both undergraduates and the graduates on the practicality of the subjects in the fields of Humanities and Social Science disciplines suggests the importance of the discipline for their satisfaction and avenues to enter the job market. When considering the satisfaction on teaching techniques and Course Evaluation Methods, the majority of both undergraduates and graduates are at satisfied level.

It is conspicuous that generally some undergraduates are desirous of engaging in other professional courses or/and a job while they are studying for the degree in anticipation of better career prospects. However, majority of male undergraduates and male graduates do not follow professional or skill-based courses.

The study discloses that majority of both male and female undergraduates in general and especially more female than male undergraduates believe that the HSS degree would be

suitable for them to find a job. However, the graduates, especially more male than female graduates believe that the academic degree they had followed is not adequate to find a job. It indicates that the graduates with experience in job market believe that their degree qualification alone is not sufficient to find a job.

The majority of undergraduates do not engage in a job while they pursue studies and most of them are female students as against male students.

As revealed from the study, though almost 59 percent of responded graduates have reported that they are employed, a considerable proportion of graduates are unemployed at the time of the survey. Further, among the employed graduates, there were more female graduates than male graduates who are employed whilst as expected, of the unemployed graduates, there are more females than male graduates at the time of the survey.

As evident from many other studies in Sri Lanka, it is important to note that the overall graduate unemployment and the female graduates' unemployment issue is not limited only to Social Science and Humanities field but also to many other fields as well. The multifaceted factors which influenced this unemployment issue is elaborated by the graduates as; 1) the delay of final examination results 2) due to prevailing Covid-19 pandemic related issues including not recruiting the new employees to the government or private sector for permanent or semi-permanent or temporary service and 3) losing businesses of enterprises which are the critical factors for the unemployment during the devastating period. The lack of job opportunities is also reported as a considerable reason for the unemployment situation at this moment. It is interesting to note as the proportion of graduates who are reported to be of less experienced and skill factor is rather minimal, it is suggested that the graduates of HSS should have necessary experience and skills to obtain a suitable job. However, more male unemployed graduates (9.1%) than their counterparts believe that there is a mismatch between the degree and the job opportunity

It is important to note that the employed graduates in the sample are at several key positions; majority of both male and female employed graduates of HSS are in the position of Development Officer, followed by the position of teaching. It is also striking that 10 percent of employed graduates of HSS are engaged in the position of Lecturer, and Managerial and Administrative related jobs. This analysis discloses that the employed graduates of Social Science and Humanities fields (Arts Graduates) are engaged in higher or middle level accepted jobs. These findings contrast with some previous findings of the highest percentage (20%) of lower level jobs such as support staff (Clerical/ Secretarial) are occupied by Arts graduates (Gunaratne, et al., 2018).

The study reveals that most of the graduates of HSS are not satisfied with their earnings from the employment. Their monthly salary for the employment is less than Rs. 30,000/= which is far below compared with their expected median salary of Rs. 50,000/ per month.

As noticed in the sample, the second most expected salary category by undergraduates and graduates is Rs. 50,001-100,000, but in actual fact what they had received as the

salary category of graduate employees is Rs. 30,001-50,000. It shows the dissatisfaction of graduates of HSS on their earnings from the employment.

As widely expected, the study reveals that a considerable proportion of undergraduates prefer to have government jobs and this aspiration is evident as of the majority of graduate employees belong to government sector jobs. It indicates that either the graduates of HSS have a low opportunity to obtain the jobs in private sector or they have less chances of gaining jobs in private sector, perhaps due to a mismatch between their qualifications and private sector requirements.

Amidst sports and other extracurricular activities involved in the university life, the graduands and graduates tend to follow Technical and Vocational Courses (TVEC) and Computer Literacy courses to fulfill the requirements in the job market. The study also reveals that proficiency in English is an added qualification to obtain a good employment position in the public sector and especially in the private sector.

The study finally analyzed the opinion of graduands and graduates about the improvement of HSS education in future. The majority of undergraduates suggested that improving more practical scenarios to the degree programmes is beneficial for improving skills of the future undergraduates to make them ready for the world of work. In fact, this is an imperative suggestion as the training of undergraduates should be widened to understand the contemporary issues not from theoretical or analytical perspectives, but also from practical aspects as well in the present digital world. Further, the suggestion to enhance language proficiency is also imperative in improving their skills for the future world of work.

The above findings suggest that the graduands and graduates in the field of Humanities and Social science disciplines are satisfied on the higher education in the state universities and they expect to use their training and skill gained from the university and other technical and professional fields for the development of the country.

4.1 Policy Recommendation

It is important to consider the above discussed findings of the study by the policy makers and higher education authorities to formulate better policies and programmes to meet the aspirations of graduands and graduates and to promote more opportunities and facilities to the betterment of the university life and employability of graduates and graduands in the State Universities in Sri Lanka. It is widely accepted that the Humanities and Social Science disciplines contribute in several ways to the socio-economic development in the country. Further, due to multidisciplinary nature of the HSS field, it can contribute to enrich the development policies on archeological, cultural, environmental, economic and social phenomena for the development of the country. Hence, it is important to re-examine and re-interpret HSS education in the University system in Sri Lanka, which has

been gradually expanded since 1940s by the policy makers. Based on the graduands' and the graduates' opinion on satisfaction of Humanities and Social Science education in the Universities in Sri Lanka, it is important to consider and implement the following policy options, higher education planning and recommendations for the further development of the field of HSS education in the state Universities:

- Rather than de-valuing 'Arts degree', a strong humanities and social science education can provide invaluable skills that are very much relevant to jobs.
- The students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, which should be valued, assessed and presented as performance indicators of their degree programs.
- Incorporating multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary components in university teaching in HSS (Educational Planning).
- Promote and incorporate internship/externship programmes during and after studying at the university.
- Career guidance and psychological counselling is extremely necessary, especially from the first year onwards to support students in planning and developing their career paths and developing their emotional skills.
- Encouraging students to find jobs in private and semi-government Sector.
- The undergraduates should be encouraged to do casual or part time jobs as self-financing opportunities to meet their needs while studying for the degree programmes.
- Policy changes to bridge the gap between government policies and job recruitments. (Try to reduce the graduate recruitment schemes).
- Enhancing socio-emotional skills of the students by including soft skill development programmes in the course curricular which are very important in emerging modern work places to help a graduate's cross mobility within many job fields, while hard skills should be gradually replaced by mechanization and automation with emerging new technology.
- More opportunities must be provided to female graduates because over 50% of the unemployed females face gender-based disadvantage at job interviews. Further, female graduate unemployment rate is much higher than that of males. The gendered reasons as to why university educated women may be unemployed or opt out of employment need to be further investigated.
- English education needs further improvement with staff, classes etc. University courses in the Arts Faculties should be conducted in English Medium at least in the

final two years. Similarly, IT training should be given to the university graduates within the university system.

- The public and private sectors need to invest in graduate training to suit their needs. The public and private sectors take young graduates as ‘graduate employees’ and provide them on-the job and skills training for about two years. The government needs to motivate the private sector and public sector to do this. The government can give tax deductions for training of graduates in the corporate sector.
- Provide them more opportunities to improve their skills in other technical areas especially, postgraduate education and professional education.
- Restructuring of BA external programs offered by six universities is very important to stop over-production of ‘low quality’ Arts graduates. UGC has already taken several remedial actions as instructed by the government in August 2020 and complete restructuring process has been initiated after the issue of 1/2021 Circular.
- Quality Assurance and standardization of external degree programmes offered by the state universities.
- Strengthening of the existing work-based training including internships and externships.
- Encourage future research in these areas. Using different research approaches such as surveys and case studies will deepen the understanding and may become valuable in policy making.

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Annexure 01

Questionnaire on Undergraduates' Satisfaction on University Education

Undergraduates' Satisfaction on University Education - Opinion Survey 2021

Conducted by the Standing Committee of Humanities and
Social Sciences of University Grants Commission

Introduction to the research team

Good Day!

We are from the Standing Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences of University Grants Commission conducting an opinion survey regarding undergraduates' satisfaction on university education in Sri Lanka. We hope that you will answer this questionnaire by thinking this as a social responsibility to improve quality of university education. This will take about 15 minutes. We would like to let you know that all personal information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for research purpose.

Background information

1. National ID Number:
2. University Registration Number:
3. E-mail Address:
4. Age in Years:
5. Sex: (Male = 1, Female = 2)
6. Marital Status: (Married = 1, Unmarried = 2, Divorced = 3, Separate= 4)
7. Ethnicity: (Sinhalese -1, Tamil =, Muslim =3 Others =4)
8. Where do you live while studying at university? (1 = Own home, 2 = Hostel, 3 = Boarding, 4 = Relation's home, 5 =Others)
9. What is the district you reside now? _____

Degree and its satisfaction

10. What is the degree that you are following? (General =1, Special/Honor's = 2)
11. If general degree what are the subjects? 1 ____ 2 3_
12. If special /honour's degree what is the subject?_____
13. Medium you following the degree: (Sinhala = 1, Tamil = 2, English=3)
14. Name of the University you following the degree_____

15. The year you entered to the university: _____
16. Are you following the degree? (As an internal student=1, As an external student=2)
17. Are you satisfied on the followings, when following your degree? (Put (X) Symbol)

		Highly unsatisfied	unsatisfied	Moderate	satisfied	Highly satisfied
1	Subjects					
2	Course Content					
3	Lecturers					
4	University infrastructure					
5	Practicality of the subjects					
6	Medium of instructions					
7	Teaching techniques					
8	Evaluation methods					
9	Developing soft-skills					

18. Are you following any other professional courses while studying for the degree? (Yes = 1, No = 2)
19. If the answer is yes, what are those?
1.
 2.
 3.
20. What are you hope to do, just after you obtain your first degree? (Job = 1, Post graduate degree = 2, Both Job and Post graduate degree = 3)
21. If you are willing to follow a post graduate degree, in which subject do you prefer to follow?
22. As you think, what should be changed in the social sciences and humanities degree programmes offered by the state universities? (You can mark more than one answer).

1	Course Content	
2	Examination methods	
3	Semester method	
4	Teaching techniques	
5	Infrastructure	
6	Medium of instructions	
7	Evaluation methods	
8	Other (Specify)	

Respondent's job and professional education expectations

23. Do you think, the degree that you are following will be sufficient to find a job? (Yes = 1, No = 2)
24. Are you employed while studying at the university? (Yes = 1, No = 2)
25. If the answer is yes, what is the occupation? _____
26. What is the reason for doing that job? _____
27. What is the employment category of your occupation? (Public = 1, Private = 2, Semi-government = 3, Self-employment = 4, Others=5)
28. How much of a salary do you expected from a job: Rs.....
29. Do you think that, you can use the knowledge you received from the first degree in your future job? (Yes=1, No=2)
30. What is the future employment category that you prefer to work? (Public = 1, Private = 2, Semi-government = 3, Self-employment = 4, Others=5)
31. After you obtained your first degree, are you planning to find a foreign job? (Yes=1, No=2)
32. Are you hope to follow any technical & vocational courses after you obtained your first degree?

Yes, I am following now	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, I am hope to follow in future	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

32. If you are not willing to follow, what are the reasons?
- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
33. If you followed or following, what are those courses?

	Courses	
1	Certificate Courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Higher Certificate Courses	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Higher Diploma	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Other Degree (Law, IT, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>

34. If you aware on Information Technology (IT), what are the sections that you know?
- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

35. How about your English proficiency?

	Very Good	Good	Moderate	Poor	Very Poor
Writing ability					
Reading ability					
Speaking ability					

36. What is the main objective of following the above professional courses (Technical & Vocational) while following your first degree? (Put (X) mark).

1	To find a private sector job that relate to skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
2	To find a Government sector job that relate to skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
3	To find a semi-government sector job that relate to skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
4	To establish my own job by using skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
5	To find a foreign job by using skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
6	To gain an extra knowledge than the knowledge gain by first degree.	
7	The knowledge gained by the first degree will insufficient to find a job.	
8	Others (specify).....	

37. As a university undergraduate, what are the suggestions that you can make for improving skills of the future undergraduates those who are going to enter the world of work?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for responding!

Annexure 02

Questionnaire on Graduates' Satisfaction on University Education

Graduates' Satisfaction on University Education- Opinion Survey 2021 Conducted by the Standing Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences of University Grants Commission

Introduction to the research team

Good Day!

We are from the Standing Committee of Humanities and Social Sciences of University Grants Commission that conducting an opinion survey regarding graduates' satisfaction on university education in Sri Lanka. We hope that you will answer this questionnaire by thinking this as a social responsibility to improve quality of university education. This will take about 15 minutes. We would like to let you know that all personal information, will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for research purpose.

Background Information

1. National ID Number:
2. Phone Number
3. E-mail Address:
4. University Registration Number:
5. Age in Years:
6. Sex: (Male = 1, Female = 2)
7. Marital Status: (Married = 1, Unmarried = 2, Divorced = 3, Separate= 4)
8. Ethnicity: (Sinhalese =1, Tamil =, Muslim =3 Others =4)
9. What is the District you reside now?

Satisfaction of the first degree and details of the degree

10. What is the first degree you obtained? (General =1, Special/Honor's = 2)
11. If general degree what were the subjects? 1 ___ 2 3_
12. If special /honour's degree what was the subject? _____
13. Medium you followed the degree: (Sinhala = 1, Tamil = 2, English=3, Bilingual=4, Trilingual=5)
14. Name of the University you obtained the first degree: _____
15. The year you entered to the university: _

16. The year you obtained the first degree: _____
17. The class you obtained for the first degree: (First class= 1, Second Upper=2, Second Lower= 3, General Pass =4)
18. Have you obtained the first-degree programme through internally or externally? (Internally=1, Externally =2)
19. Have you satisfied on the followings, when obtaining your first degree? (Put (X) Symbol)

		Highly unsatisfied	unsatisfied	Moderate	satisfied	Highly satisfied
1	Subjects					
2	Course Content					
3	Lecturers					
4	University infrastructure					
5	Practicality of the subjects					
6	Medium of instructions					
7	Teaching techniques					
8	Evaluation methods					
9	Developing soft- skills					

20. Did your first degree sufficient to obtained a suitable job? (Yes=1, No=2)
21. Have you followed any other professional courses while studying for first degree? (Yes=1, No=2)
22. If the answer is yes, what are those?
1.
2.
3.
23. What did you hope just after you obtain your first degree? (Job = 1, Post graduate degree = 2, Both Job and Post graduate degree = 3)
24. If you hope to followed a post graduate degree, in which subject?
25. As you think, what should be changed in the social sciences and humanities degree programmes offered by the state universities? (You can mark more than one answer).

1	Course Content	
2	Examination methods	
3	Semester method	
4	Teaching techniques	
5	Infrastructure	
6	Medium of instructions	
7	Evaluation methods	
8	Other (Specify)	

Respondents' occupation and its satisfaction

26. Currently are you employed? (Yes=1, No=2)
27. If the answer is No, what is the reason?
28. If the answer is yes, what is the occupation?
29. How long it took to have a job after your graduation?
30. You are employed in (Sri Lanka = 1, Other country = 2)
31. What is the employment category of your occupation? (Public = 1, Private = 2, Semi-government = 3, Self-employment = 4, Others=5)
32. How much of a salary have you expected from a job: Rs.....
33. How much of a salary now you obtained from your job: Rs.....
34. Do you expect a job that you received a higher salary than you received now? (Yes=1, No=2)
35. Are you using the knowledge you received from the first degree in your current job? (Yes=1, No=2)
36. Are you satisfied with followings, that relevant to your current job?

		Highly unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Moderate	Satisfied	Highly satisfied
1	Salary					
2	Work					
3	Working environment					
4	Social respect					
5	Number of working hours					
6	Match between degree and job					
7	Using the subject knowledge					

37. Have you followed any technical & vocational courses after you obtained your first degree?

Yes, I have followed	
Yes, I am following	
No	

38. If you followed or following, what are those courses?

1	Certificate Courses	
2	Higher Certificate Courses	
3	Diploma	
4	Higher Diploma	
5	Other Degree (Law, IT, etc.)	

39. If you aware on Information Technology (IT), what are the sections that you know?

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....

40. How about your English proficiency?

	Very Good	Good	Moderate	Poor	Very Poor
Writing ability					
Reading ability					
Speaking ability					

41. What is the main objective of following above professional courses (Technical & Vocational) instead of your first degree? (Put (X) mark).

1	To find a private sector job that relate to skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
2	To find a Government sector job that relate to skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
3	To find a semi-government sector job that relate to skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
4	To establish my own job by using skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
5	To find a foreign job by using skills and knowledge obtained by the course.	
6	To gain an extra knowledge than the knowledge gained by first degree.	
7	The knowledge gained by the first degree is insufficient to find a job.	
8	Others (specify).....	

42. As a university graduate, what are the suggestions that you can make for improving skills of the future undergraduates those who are going to enter the world of work?

.....

Annexure 03

Selected Data Tables

Table 01:

- A) Current student population (3rd & 4th year) and the number of students who filled survey questionnaires in the universities (as of 15th September, 2021)

	Name of the University	3 rd year		4 th year		Total 3 rd year	Total 4 th year	Total (3 rd + 4 th year)	# Filled questionnaires	% Out of total students
		Male	Female	Male	Female					
1	Colombo	102	629	62	338	731	400	1131	115	10.7
2	Peradeniya	144	753	133	568	897	701	1598	117	7.3
3	Sri Jayewardenepura	181	767	199	810	948	1009	1957	111	5.7
4	Kelaniya	123	739	96	679	862	775	1637	435	26.6
5	Open Uni.	551	854	635	401	1405	1036	2441	234	9.6
6	Ruhuna	73	405	28	228	478	256	734	353	48.1
7	Rajarata	72	471	14	126	543	140	683	111	16.2
8	Sabaragamuwa	33	241	26	217	274	243	517	181	35.0
9	Jaffna	126	538	151	564	664	715	1379	166	12.0
10	Eastern	233	828			1061	140	1201	388	32.3
11	Southeastern	26	303	10	139	329	149	478	268	56.1
12	Sri Palee Campus	21	123	26	134	144	160	304	293	96.4
13	Trincomalee Campus EUSL	40	123	4	25	163	29	192	69	35.9
	Total	17729	67941	1,577	4,912	8,670	6,489	14,251	2,841	19.9

- B) Passed-out Graduates who filled survey questionnaires in the universities (as of 15th September, 2021)

Filled Graduate Questionnaires up to 15th September 2021		
No	Name of the University	Filled Questionnaires
1	University of Colombo	352
2	University of Peradeniya	295
3	University of Sri Jayewardenepura	360
4	University of Kelaniya	348
5	The Open University of Sri Lanka	168
6	University of Ruhuna	360
7	Rajarata University of Sri Lanka	308

8	Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka	344
9	University of Jaffna	226
10	Eastern University	193
11	South Eastern University of Sri Lanka	447
12	Sri Palee Campus	203
13	Trincomalee Campus	89
Total		3693

Annexure 04

Locations of the State Universities

Annexure 05:

List of Assisted Focal Point Members, State Universities.

1. Dr. Indira Mawella, University of Sri Jaywardenepura
2. Dr. M. Ganeshamoorthy, University of Colombo
3. Prof. Sakunthala Yatigammana, University of Peradeniya
4. Prof. Niroshini Gunasekara, University of Kelaniya
5. Prof. R.M.Mahinda, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
6. Prof. HIGC Kumara, University of Ruhuna
7. Prof. Manoj Ariyaratne, University of Sabaragamuwa
8. Dr. S. Muhunthan/ Prof. (Mrs). S. Ramesh, University of Jaffna
9. Prof. A. Murugathas, Eastern University, Sri Lanka
10. Dr. Rifah Mahroof/ Mr. Santhirakumar, South Eastern University
11. Mr. Andy Schubert, Open University of Sri Lanka
12. Dr. Nissansala, Trincomalee Campus
13. Dr. Kumdeni Maddumage, Sri Palee Campus