

Factors Shaping Students' Choices in Professional Education

Dr.Shiji.R¹ ,Janani.R.²

Assistant Professor, Sri Krishna Arts and Science College1, Coimbatore, India./ Student, Sri Krishna Arts and Science College2, Coimbatore, India.

ABSTRACT

Professional courses play a significant role in shaping the career paths of undergraduate students by providing specialized knowledge and practical skills required in the modern job market. This study focuses on examining the perception and level of awareness about professional courses among undergraduate students. The primary objective is to understand students' knowledge, attitudes, and interest toward various professional programs such as management, law, engineering, chartered accountancy, and other career-oriented courses. The study also explores the sources through which students obtain information about professional courses, including educational institutions, career guidance programs, social media, and peer groups. Data collected from undergraduate students helps to identify the factors influencing their awareness and decision-making, such as family background, career aspirations, availability of information, and employment opportunities.

KEYWORDS

Professional Courses, Undergraduate Students, Awareness, Perception, Career Guidance, Higher Education, Career Development, Educational Choices, Skill Development, Employment Opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Professional courses are specialized educational programs designed to provide individuals with the skills and knowledge required for specific industries or professions. Unlike general education, these courses are focused on practical training and career development, making them highly relevant to the needs of the job market. Professional courses cover a wide range of fields, such as IT certifications, project management, finance, healthcare, and vocational training, offering students the opportunity to pursue careers that align with their interests and aspirations. For undergraduate students, awareness and perception of professional courses play a crucial role in shaping their career paths. These courses are tailored to meet the entry-level requirements of various industries, equipping students with specialized skills that enhance their employability. Many industries and professions consider such courses essential, and candidates who complete them often have a competitive edge in the job market. For instance, fields like technology, management, and design frequently require candidates to possess certifications or specialized training beyond their regular degrees.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Professional courses play a crucial role in equipping students with specialized skills and knowledge, enhancing their employability and career prospects. Despite their importance, awareness and perception of professional courses among undergraduate students vary widely due to factors such as financial constraints, parental influence, institutional support, and access to career guidance. While some students actively seek information about these courses, others remain unaware of available opportunities, financial aid options, and career prospects.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the level of awareness among undergraduate students about various professional courses available to them.
2. To understand the perceptions of students regarding the benefits and career opportunities of professional courses.
3. To identify the factors that influence students' decisions to pursue or avoid professional courses.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sl. No	Authors	Period of Study	Objectives	Research Approach	Sample Size	Main Findings
1	Smith J. et al.	2024	To examine student perceptions of learning environments	Mixed methods	180 students	85% emphasized real-world clinical engagement as crucial for skill development.
2	Smith, L., Brown & Garcia	2024	To analyze supportive learning environments and identity development	Survey	220 students	Supportive environments strengthen professional identity and increase motivation for professional careers.
3	Lee S. et al.	2023	To study sequential research experience impact	Longitudinal study	150 students	72% showed greater confidence and clearer career goals through structured research exposure.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1. The study focuses on analyzing the level of awareness about professional courses among undergraduate students.
2. It examines the perception and attitude of students towards different professional courses.
3. The study identifies the sources of information through which students learn about professional courses.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study aims to evaluate the perception and awareness of professional courses among undergraduate students. A descriptive research design is used to systematically analyze the attitudes, awareness, and influencing factors related to professional course preferences.

SOURCE OF DATA

1. PrimaryData:

Primary data is collected directly from undergraduate students through questionnaires, surveys, or interviews to understand their perception and awareness about professional courses

2. SecondaryData:

Secondary data is collected from books, journals, research articles, educational websites, government reports, and previous studies related to professional courses and higher education.

SAMPLE SIZE

A sample size consist of 117 respondents of undergraduate students will be selected for the study

SAMPLING METHOD

1. Stratified Random Sampling will be applied to ensure representation across key groups.
2. Strata: The student population will be divided into distinct groups based on relevant characteristics, such as academic discipline (e.g., engineering, commerce, humanities) or year of study (e.g., 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year).
3. Random Selection: Participants will then be randomly selected from each group to minimize bias and ensure all sub-groups are proportionately represented

TOOLS USED FOR ANALYSIS

Rank analysis , chi-square test and corelation analysis were employed to analyze the data and extreme relationship between and variable.

Rank Analysis

Rank Analysis of Motivational Factors

Factor	Percentage (%)	Response Rank
Better Career Prospects	40%	1
Skill Enhancement	25%	2
Interest in the Field	20%	3
Higher Earning Potential	15%	4

Interpretation:

The results indicate that Better Career Prospects (40%) is the primary motivation for students opting for professional courses, followed by Skill Enhancement (25%). Interest in the Field (20%) and Higher Earning Potential (15%) ranked lower

Chi-Square Test Calculation

1. Results and Interpretation

The results of the Chi-Square test are summarized in the table below:

Test Statistic	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2) Value	2.54
Degrees of Freedom (df)	1
p-value	0.11
Significance Level	0.05

INTERPRETATION

$p = 0.11$ is greater than 0.05 , we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that institutional support does not have a statistically significant impact on students' awareness of scholarships.

Correlation Coefficient Calculation Results and Interpretation

The correlation coefficient obtained is **-0.82**, indicating a **strong negative correlation** between financial constraints and students' awareness of scholarships.

Test Statistic	Value
Correlation Coefficient (rr)	-0.82
Significance Level	0.05

Since the correlation is negative and close to -1 , it suggests that students who face financial difficulties tend to have lower awareness of scholarships.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- **Primary Motivation:** Better Career Prospects (40%) is the main factor driving students to choose professional courses.
 - **Secondary Motivation:** Skill Enhancement (25%) ranks second, while Interest in the Field (20%) and Higher Earning Potential (15%) are less influential.
 - **Institutional Support:** Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 2.54, p = 0.11$) shows no significant effect of institutional support on scholarship awareness.
 - **Financial Constraints:** A strong negative correlation ($r = -0.82$) indicates students with financial difficulties have lower awareness of scholarships.
- ### SUGGESTION
- **Enhance Career Guidance:** Institutions should provide structured career counseling to help students understand professional course options and future prospects.
 - **Increase Awareness of Scholarships:** Organize workshops, seminars, and information sessions to inform students, especially those facing financial constraints, about available scholarships and financial aid.
 - **Promote Skill Development:** Encourage students to choose courses that align with both career goals and skill enhancement to improve employability.
 - **Peer Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship initiatives where senior students guide undergraduates on course selection, exams, and scholarship opportunities.
 - **Strengthen Institutional Support:** While support alone may not increase awareness, providing clear resources, online portals, and regular updates can assist students in making informed decisions.

CONCLUSION

The study explores undergraduate students' awareness of professional courses, revealing that while most are generally aware, many lack detailed knowledge about course options, entrance exams, and financial aid. Factors such as institutional support, career aspirations, financial constraints, and peer influence significantly shape students' perceptions and their willingness to enroll in these courses.

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