Determinants of Career Success of Fresh IT Graduates: Views of Professionals

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Transitioning from academia to the industry has become a formidable endeavour for fresh graduates in the IT domain. Although graduates possess strong theoretical knowledge, the shortage of practical skills hampers their potential for successful employability. This gets further complicated by the fast-paced and dynamic nature of the IT field. The disparity in perceptions regarding the determinants of career success between academia and industry can cause the lack of work readiness of graduates. To ensure the graduates are industry-ready and competent, academia should proactively identify and align with the industry's expectations. The objective of this study was to identify the key determinants for entry-level graduates to succeed in distinct career paths in the IT sector. Thus, a descriptive quantitative survey approach was employed. A questionnaire survey was developed and administered among Sri Lankan IT professionals belonging to five career paths. A total of 383 responses were received and data analysis was conducted independently for each career path. Frequency counts, percentages and mean values were used to describe the collected data. Results revealed that domain-specific technical skills, soft skills, internship experience and personal preference are the most influential determinants for career success in all five career paths. While academic specialisations, academic projects, professional certifications, and extracurricular activities were found to have a positive impact, academic performance parameters CGPA or grades were found to be insignificant. Individual factors such as gender, socio-economic background, and physical well-being were also found irrelevant. Additionally, a set of domain-specific technical skills was determined based on the professional's option. In conclusion, the findings reveal the existence of a perception gap in academia regarding industry expectations of graduates. It is vital that academia collaborate with industry to assist graduates' transition more smoothly into the world of work.

Keywords: *Career paths, Career success, Entry-level graduates, IT Industry*