

**POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS TOWARD THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF MANAGEMENT UNDERGRADUATES AT STATE UNIVERSITIES IN SRI LANKA**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Undergraduates at the university level attempt to attain their objectives despite several obstacles. Undergraduates may confront various obstacles as they begin their academic careers as undergraduates. As a result, individuals must strike a balance between positive psychological capacity and academic performance to be successful graduates. Hence, undergraduates must assess their ability to meet future goals. To meet these challenges, it is essential to motivate university students to strive for excellence in academic performance through positive psychological capacities to seek a competitive advantage. Psychological capital is a bundle of positive psychological resources that includes self-efficacy, optimism, hope, resilience, and lower-order variables (Luthans et al., 2007). Psychological capital is a positive psychological concept that plays a vital role in task performance and goal achievement. Undergraduate students draw on their psychological capital resources when completing a task or achieving an academic program goal (Datu & Valdez, 2015). Students may require a high level of self-efficacy in various complex academic scenarios to make the obligatory effort to fulfill the required tasks. Optimism also aids students in making positive assessments of their chances of success. Moreover, when obstacles and adversity arise, hope and resilience generate valuable psychological resources for pursuing academic goals (Siu et al., 2014). As a result, it is critical to see if psychological capital can improve academic performance.

Most of the entrants to university have a higher probability of dropping out in the final year, without achieving their level of achievement (Amarathunga et al., 2022). When university enrollment vs. graduate output is considered, it focuses on the problem gap, which is 'why management undergraduates drop their academic achievement at the end of their university life?'. Although lecturing patterns, university facilities, and the opportunities to learn something new become similar to every management undergraduate of all government universities in Sri Lanka, the university system has a low graduate output than the university enrollment count each year. Accordingly, this problem gap has been affecting the undergraduates' academic performances where the reasons for this dropout can be less capable psychological factors such as attitudes of undergraduates, academic self-efficacy, student interaction, hope and motivation (Martínez et al., 2019; Carmona-Halty et al., 2021; Malak et al., 2022). However, little research has been undertaken in the Sri Lankan context to examine the relationship between positive psychological capital and undergraduate students' academic performance. Hence, at present, the researcher aims to bridge this contextual research gap in the existing knowledge pool by focusing on the impact of the positive psychological capacity

of management undergraduates in Sri Lankan government universities on their academic performance. Thus, the study is based on the objective; of investigating the impact of positive psychological factors on the performance of management undergraduates in Sri Lankan government universities. The study is significant for all undergraduates who could replicate the study to find out the extent of academic performance and its perceived causes and therefore will be able to find out positive psychological factors that have an impact on academic performance, which is to come up as good practices and strategies for dealing with the undergraduate's performances.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study used an explanatory research design with a significant focus on testing hypotheses based on empirical research findings. The current study is cross-sectional and quantitative because the data is gathered only once and is measured and analyzed quantitatively. The researcher developed a model to conceptualize the theoretical framework of the study. The model indicates the positive psychological factors that impact the academic performance of management undergraduates.

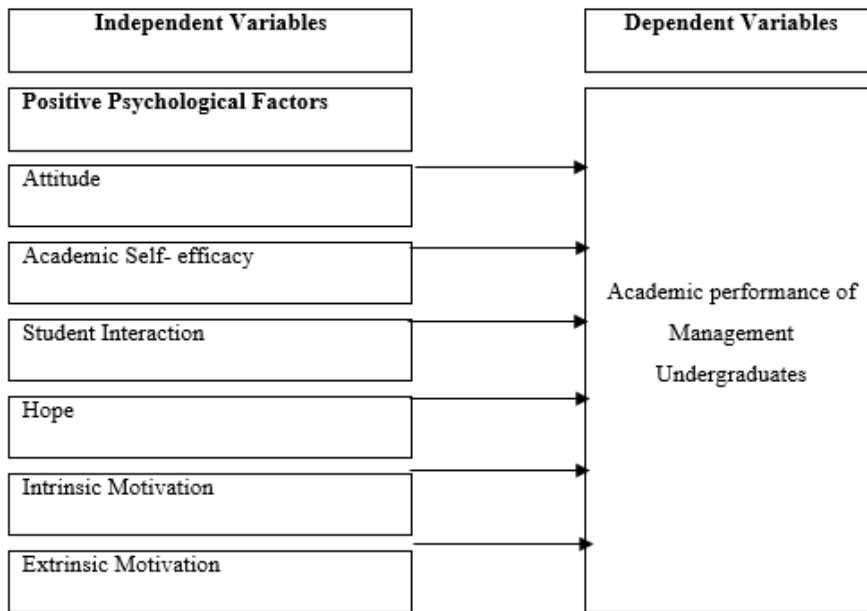


Figure 1 Research Framework

The study population comprised 5285 management undergraduates in Government universities in Sri Lanka. The sample size of 357 is given by Morgan's table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) under a 95% confidence level as the appropriate sample size for the population of 5285. The researcher used the stratified random sampling method for selecting the sample.

Data collection has been done through primary sources and secondary sources for this study. Primary data is collected through a standard questionnaire administered to the respondents. Standardized questions were included in the questionnaire. There were two sections in the questionnaire consisting of Section A: Demographic factors and Section B: measurement of positive psychological factors and academic performance of undergraduates. The variables of Academic performance, attitudes, self-efficacy, and student interaction, and hope, intrinsic

and extrinsic motivation were covered by part B of the questionnaire. The academic performance of the undergraduates was measured through the value of Grade Point Average (GPA), participation in extracurricular activities, and achieving awards at university colors awarding ceremonies. The constructs' validity and the scales' reliability and regression and correlation analysis were tested through Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research study focuses on Management undergraduates in state universities. Even though the estimated sample was 357, only 352 responses were able to collect. Accordingly, the actual sample size, the total number of respondents, was 352. Considering the demographic profile of the respondents, the majority were female, with a count of 178, which was 50.6% of total respondents, and 174 were male. Further, the 352 respondents have four different GPA ranges for their degree programs. They are first-class degree, second upper degree, second lower degree & General degree. Out of 352 respondents, 33.2% had general degree GPA values. Also, 27.6% had a Second lower GPA and first-class and second upper GPA holders were about 19.6%. The impact of positive psychological factors on the academic performance of the undergraduates was measured using regression analysis. The findings of the regression analysis of the study are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of Regression analysis

Variables	R - squared	P value
Attitude	0.747	0.000
Self-efficacy	0.833	0.000
Student's interaction	0.777	0.000
Hope	0.761	0.000
Intrinsic motivation	0.818	0.000
Extrinsic motivation	0.682	0.000

Results of Alternative Hypothesis 1: Attitude impacts management undergraduate academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities: According to the results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1, the test is significant ( $R^2 = 0.747$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, hypothesis 1 is accepted, revealing that attitude impacts management undergraduates' academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities.

Results of Alternative Hypothesis 2: Academic self-efficacy impacts on management undergraduate's academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities: Based on the results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1, the test is significant ( $R^2 = 0.833$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). As a result, hypothesis 2 is accepted, proving that self-efficacy impacts management undergraduate academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities.

Results of Alternative Hypothesis 3: Student interaction impacts management undergraduate academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities: As per the results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1, the test is significant ( $R^2 = 0.777$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is accepted, proving that student intersection impacts management undergraduate academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities.

Results of Alternative Hypothesis 4: Hope impacts on management undergraduate's academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities: According to the results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1, the test is significant ( $R^2 = 0.761$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, hypothesis 4 is accepted, and it was found that hope impacts management undergraduate academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities.

Results of Alternative Hypothesis 5: Intrinsic Motivation on management undergraduate's academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities: Based on the results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1, the test is significant ( $R^2 = 0.818$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 5 is accepted, revealing that intrinsic motivation impacts management undergraduate academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities.

Results of Alternative Hypothesis 6: Extrinsic Motivation on management undergraduate's academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities: According to the results of the regression analysis presented in Table 1, the test is significant ( $R^2 = 0.682$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, hypothesis 6 is accepted, and it was found that extrinsic motivation impacts management undergraduate academic performance in Sri Lankan state universities.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This paper aimed to examine the influence of positive psychological factors on undergraduate academic performance of management undergraduates at state universities in Sri Lanka. The study found that all prediction factors have a significant favorable influence on students' academic performance. In this respect, it can be deduced that demonstrating positive psychological factors can effectively enhance better academic performance in learning institutions. The results of the present study revealed that self-efficacy has the highest impact on the academic performance of management undergraduates, and intrinsic motivation has the second-highest impact on academic performance. Accordingly, the findings revealed that management undergraduates' self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation strongly predict academic performance. Baltimore-Aufflick et al. (2016) found a strong link between self-efficacy and students' academic outcomes.

Further, self-efficacy is linked to self-regulation, metacognition, intrinsic motivation, values, locus of control, and strategy learning. Self-efficacy among undergraduates can be uplifted using collaborative teaching and strategies emphasizing student-centered learning (Schütze et al., 2021). Therefore, improving undergraduates' positive psychological capital is essential for improving academic achievement and making them more employable (Amarathunga & Wijethunga, 2021).

The study's results may have repercussions for undergraduate management, academic staff, and relevant authorities on the significance of enhancing positive psychological aspects in raising undergraduates' academic performance. Future researchers suggest that the study's scope can be further expanded to measure similar relationships related to undergraduates in other subject disciplines, and comparisons can be made among the different subject disciplines. Moreover, present research found that the level of positive psychological factors differed based on gender, residential area, type of university, and the class obtained by the undergraduates. Future research can be conducted to test the impact of these factors to demonstrate deviations, if any. Furthermore, demographic characteristics such as gender,

degree class, ethnicity, undergraduates' residence location, university ranking, and reputation may mediate or moderate the association between positive psychological factors and academic performance. Moreover, in light of the current COVID- 19 issue, it is vital to examine efficient approaches for boosting positive psychological factors of undergraduates through virtual teaching and learning modes.

**Keywords:** Academic performances, attitudes, motivation, positive psychological factors, self-efficacy

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