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## **DEMAND FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FROM YOUTH IN URBAN LOW INCOME FAMILIES IN COLOMBO DISTRICT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The subject of this study is the demand for vocational education from youth in urban low income families. The central focus of this study is to examine the relationship among student-specific factors such as gender, academic performance, career awareness and socio-economic factors and as well as identifying the reasons for lesser enrollment for vocational training and education by youth in urban low income communities.

The research was conducted using two-part survey instrument containing questions related to demographics and questions related to vocational education. This study was helpful in illuminating the contradictions in youth demand for vocational education. A hypothesis was tested relative to the relationship between student personal factors and demand for vocational education. Demographic factors were related to youth's image on vocational education, with socio-economic status most appreciable among the several predictors. Correlation analysis was used as a method of statistical evaluation on this study, to test the strength of the relationship between indicators of the theory of planned behavior and of the demand for vocational education from urban youth in low-income communities.

The study reflects that there is a less demand for enrollment in vocational education from urban youth. The finding dictate the root causes as, the lack of motivation from parents and family, less awareness regarding vocational educational training programs, high tendency in youth to engage in easy and fast money earning activities, the lack of awareness of how important skilled labour market is, the reluctance to spend a period of training and the reluctance to leave easy and fast earning jobs. There is a gap between the community and government officers who are responsible for providing relevant public service for them.

**Keywords:** Vocational education, Urban Youth, Low income Communities

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## INTRODUCTION

Vocational education has been a historical part of Sri Lankan public. Vocational Education Institutions have been on the forefront from the early part of the last century, primarily due to the availability of federal funding to support and maintain vocational education programs. Technical Education in Sri Lanka has a history of over 120 years, with the first Government Technical School established in 1893, in the terminal of the Ceylon Government Railway in Maradana. The beginning of federal influence in secondary vocational education programs began with the establishment of Tertiary and Vocational Education Policies. Vocational education prospered throughout most of the twentieth century. However, as recent as 2000, it was reported that there was a nationwide crisis in the decreasing of enrollment for vocational education programs in youth. There are appreciable numbers for dropout students from vocational education.

This dropout trend in youth enrollment in vocational education programs has continued through the last decade and there is problem with why these students have not earned a diploma or certificate. Dropout rate alone could have tremendous economic consequences for the country's economy. While dropout rates are not the topic of the present study, it is logical to speculate that increasing dropout rates may be linked to a unsatisfactory vocational education programs.

Youths represent the future and hope of every county. The high returns on resources invested in youth today have both immediate and long-term benefits. Where they exist and are functioning well, youth programs play an important role in building life skills of individual, youth, strengthening families and communities and working towards sustainable development as a major contributor to the overall progress of a country (Lynch, 2000).

In Sri Lanka for instance, training is given to youth at the secondary school level in both pre-vocational and academic aspects. According to the Tertiary and Vocational Educational Policy (TVEP) their aim is to make a person be productive to him and the society. They try to make citizens acquire the skills, knowledge and competence required of them in today's knowledge based economy. TEVT aims to ensure that the labor market is open to all those who wish to acquire vocational qualifications through lifelong learning, which provides access to 21<sup>st</sup> century employability skills.

In contrast to many developing economies and especially those of South Asia, Sri Lanka has experienced relatively low rate of urbanization. The urban sector in Sri Lanka has experienced a rapid growth of its wider suburban areas espe-

cially with Colombo district experiencing a population growth of 31% between 1981 and 2002 and urban population rising to over 60%. The urban sector has the lowest rate of poverty line (DCS 2002) As well as the economically active population is above 1348256 and the youth is 48% who are in 15-29 age categories.

For the purpose of the study, young population who live in urban low income communities represent the less interest and low demand for vocational education as well as less enrollment for vocational education. The researcher hopes to identify the reasons or factors for low demand and low enrollment for vocational education from low income urban communities.

The impending critical shortage of highly trained and skilled employees throughout many industries, coupled with a declining enrollment in vocational education course, does not bode well for the future of the economy. Nor does it bode well for those secondary school students who do not desire to further their education at the tertiary level and who plan to enter job market after high school. Most of students will enter the job market with few or no job skills.

### **Research Problem**

The total youth population in the world today is estimated to be about 1,500 million and is projected to grow to 2 billion by year 2050 (Seider,1985). He also states the total number of youth will remain greater in rural areas over the next ten to fifteen years; all future growth in number of youth will be in the cities (Pihlaja, 2014).

Going by what is happening and considering the rate at which the youth in Sri Lanka are dropping out of vocational education programmes, unemployment rate in Sri Lanka increased to 4.6 percent in the second quarter of 2016 (Labor Force Survey Report, 2016). Common knowledge has shown that some of youth are unemployed, because the majority is unqualified for the current career demands. Therefore they become a liability to both, their parents and society. Some engage in vices that are detrimental to themselves and society. However efforts have been made by the government to address some of this problem by setting up training centers and vocational educational institutions.

However, these training opportunities are not very attractive among the youth from low income urban communities and there is low demand and low enrollment, higher numbers of drop outs, poor youth who come from low income communities. It is against this background this study make an effort to analyze

the reasons examines the reasons for low enrollment in Vocational Education by low income urban communities.

Sri Lankan government is committed to develop a sound and efficient technical and vocational and training sector in the country by providing clear direction and overall policy guidance, and the level of unemployment can be reduced by provides vocational training in different fields. Trained and skilled, semi-skilled youth can contribute to the productive sectors by engaging in as well as being employed in those sectors. However, those who have no vocational training used to employ in unskilled and daily paid casual income earning activities and low income earners in many instance become unemployed.

### Research Question

From the above unemployment related research seeks providing answer to the following research questions.

- What are the determinants of demand for vocational education among the youth in urban low income communities?
- Does planned behavior of youth affects demand for vocational education in urban low income communities?

### Research Objectives

The major objective of this research is to identify the determinants of demand for vocational education among the youth in urban low income communities.

In order to achieve the main objective, the following specific objectives are identified, to investigate how the planned behavior of youth impacts on demand for vocational education in urban low income communities

### Literature Review

Marshall and Tucker (1993) reported that the national dropout rate exceeds 25%. The current trends in national, state, and local graduation rates suggest that it may even be higher. The high school dropout rate, along with the decline in enrollment for high school vocational programs and the growing number of technical opportunities for which preparation can occur in vocational schools, indicates that educational leaders would benefit from a better understanding on the perceptions held by students towards these programs. Hence, the researcher conducted an examination of literature related to this topic. The objective of this examination was to gain information and insight into what the reasons are and

what is known about the perceptions or mental models held by urban youth in low income communities about vocational education programs.

The social rate of return to education is high in Sri Lanka, especially at the compulsory basic and senior secondary education grade cycles. Among men, social rates of return to education are 20 percent at the senior secondary schooling level and at the compulsory basic education level. Among women, social rates of return to education are at the compulsory schooling level and 18 percent at the senior secondary schooling level.

A good education can often be a passport to moving to a new generation out of poverty, so the denial of such an asset can be considered a serious deprivation. It is also evident from statistics on health, nutrition and child abuse, that children with more educated parents are less likely to be vulnerable to problems in these areas.

Vocational Education is "any form of education whose primary purpose is to prepare persons for employment in recognized occupations" (Chambliss,1998). To further reinforce the definition given above, vocational education can be conceived as a comprehensive term referring to those aspects of educational process involving, in addition to general, the achievement of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupations in various sectors of economic and social life (Chambliss ,1998).

A well-known social psychological model of behavior, Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior proposes that behavior is influenced by intention to carry out the behavior (Behavioral Intention). According to the theory, the criterion variable Behavior is related to Behavioral Intention. Behavioral Intention, according to Ajzen, is predicted by the following three predictors: ***Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioral Control***.

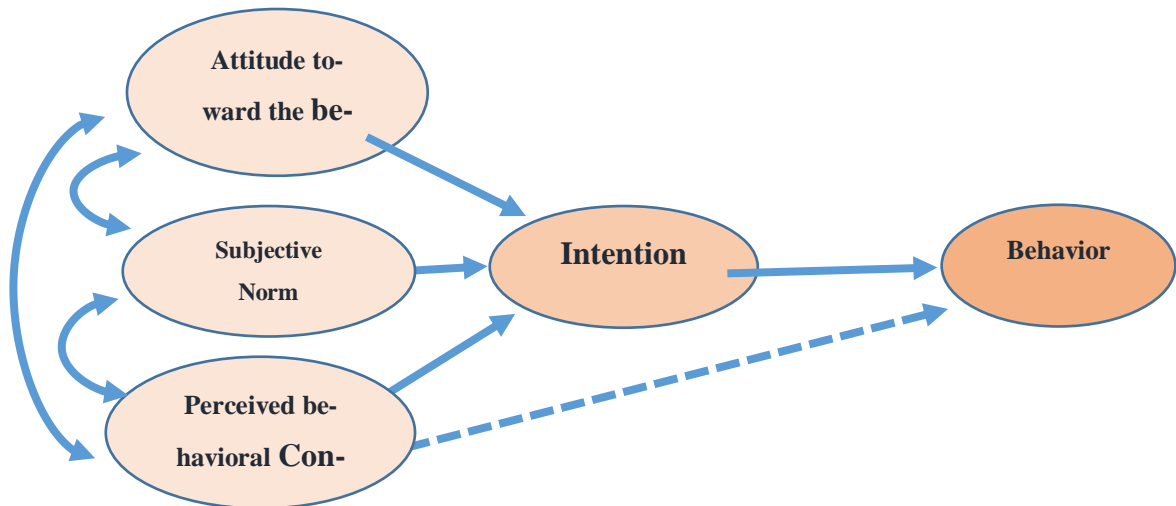
Using the Theory of Reasoned Action as a conceptual framework, Ajzen and Fishbein

(1988) surmised that attitudes toward behaviors stem from underlying beliefs concerning these behaviors. The Theory of Reasoned Action assumes attitudes result from a combination of beliefs about the characteristics of particular attitude objects and evaluations of these characteristics. Intent plays a critical role in this theory, and is identified as the greatest predictor of whether or not someone will complete a specific behavior (Ajzen, 1988).

The perceived opinions of these key people help determine whether a person will actually perform the behavior. The equation can be expressed as:

$$A_{Act} + SN + PBC = BI$$

Figure 1 Theory of Planned Behavior



Source: Ajzen, 2002, Theory of planned behavior

### Research Methodology

The major element of the research is the collection of data about the demand of Vocational Education from youth in urban low income families including basic information on unemployment, education, income and family background.

Both primary and secondary data sources will be used to answer research questions. Primary data will mainly be obtained through administering a structured questionnaire while secondary sources like annual reports and journals are reviewed for information.

The study is a survey research. A survey research is a research that employs the study of large and small population by selecting and studying sample chosen from the population to discover the relative incidence, which by impact can easily serve as a forecaster and predictor.

In this study, the key factors that cause to low demand and low enrolment of youth for vocational education from low income urban communities will be examined and described.

The area of the study was Colombo District. Colombo district is the capital of Sri Lanka and Center of the Urbanization.

The population of the study comprises of all 16-29 years old out of vocational education youth from low income urban communities in Colombo district.

The questionnaire is consisting of 26 questions. It was concerning with the questions to assess the image of youth towards vocational education and the reasons behind the drop out of youth based on student-related characteristic, institutional related factors and family-socioeconomic status. The research instrument designed is based on the two sections, in section one, demographic information were gather through close-ended questions. Through section two focused scale survey with multiple choice.

All the questions are multiple-choice and close-ended questions. Because of being closed ended and multiple-choice in nature the result of the questions are easy to compare, tabulate and analyze. Closed questions offer efficiency to the researcher. They are certainly easier to analyze and are usually quicker to administer and ask. Thus, they are often used in large sample and in self-completion interviews. Closed questions help the researcher to make quick decisions to choose among the several alternatives before them.

In this study, Objective one measured the youth's image toward vocational education differ based on gender, career awareness, performance and socioeconomic status. These four indicators were measured using with question 01 to question number 11.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

A quantitative research was carried out and this involves some quantitative analyses with the use of statistical tools (descriptive and inferential). Eview software package was used for the analysis of quantitative data since it is a user friendly package for this type of analysis.

To analysis the objective descriptive statistics mainly involving the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis are used in the data analysis. The mean simply put is the average of the sum of all values which is representative of a distribution seeks to measure the average amount of variability in a set of scores between values and measures. Skewness on its part is used to explain how asymmetrical a probability distribution is and the asymmetry may be to the right or to the left or it may just be asymmetrical about a valve. When a distribution has values that are heavily concentrated around the mean the distribution will have a high peak and when the valves are dispersed from the mean there will be a low peak of the graph and this is often referred to as kurtosis. Generally in a normal distribution the kurtosis is 3. In addition to the arithmetic mean score ( $\bar{X}$  variable), Standard Deviation (SD) was calculated for each factor as per statisti-

cal criterion, larger the standard deviation value higher the variance (dispersion). Therefore relevant factors becomes insignificant. On the other hand smaller the Standard Deviation value, larger the influence, therefore factor becomes significant and also the given factor is treated as “Variable” which affects to change the dependent variable (Y variable). Accordingly all indicators have been tabulated in a row-Column order.

Data will be present in research with the use of pie, chart and table so that the data analyzed can be clear and understandable to the reader.

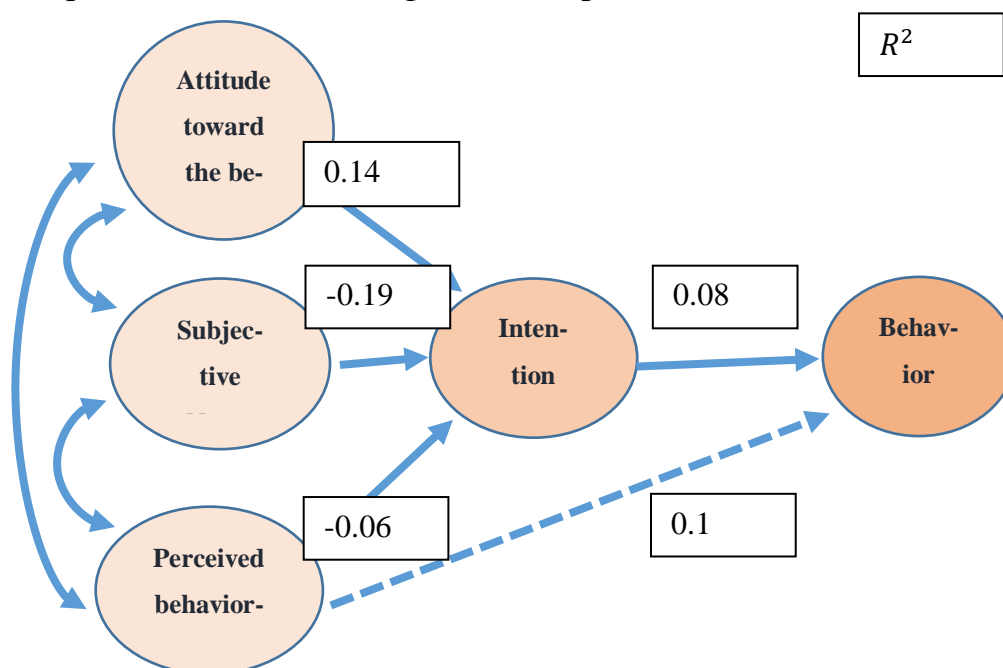
**Correlation analysis** is used a method of statistical evaluation used to study the strength of a relationship between indicators of theory of planed behavior and demand of vocational education from urban youth in low income communities.

### Correlation Analysis

Correlation among variables can exists in the sample and that relation and measurements are important to understand the situations. Therefore variables such as with vocational training, without vocational training, PBT indicators can correlate. Pearson correlation test was used where a summary is given in the following figure.

Figure 2: Path analysis for the theory of planned behavior.

All path coefficients are significant at  $p < .95$ .



Source: field survey data 2017



Attitudes toward “Completing the vocational training course” were assessed by means of a series of five evaluative semantic differential scales.. High scores were assigned to the positive end of each scale. All items had high loadings on the attitude factor (0.003 to 0.084) and much lower loadings on the other factor (–0.61). Responses were averaged to provide a direct attitude measure. Scores were found to range from 2.7 to 5.2. The coefficient alpha for this measure in the stability coefficient was found to be 0.14 ( $p < .95$ )

Subjective norm, that three items were used to assess subjective norms with respect to completing the vocational training. Respondents were asked to indicate, on 5-point unlikely–likely scales, the extent to which they believe that most people who are important to them think they should complete the course, would be disappointed if they did not complete the course, and expect them to complete the course. These three items, they had low loadings on the remaining three factors (–0.35 to 0.32). The average response to the three items served as a direct measure of subjective norm, with a coefficient alpha of -4.3. The coefficient of stability from the VE, however, was only -0.19 ( $p < .95$ ). Scores were found to cover the whole range from 1 to 5.

Perceived behavioral control, the following two items assessed perceived control over completing the VE: “I have complete control over completing the VE” (disagree–agree), “I can overcome any obstacles or problems that could prevent me from completing the present school year if I want to” (disagree–agree). These two items loaded highly on the perceived behavioral control factor (0.0336), with much lower loadings on the other factor (–0.053). Responses to the two items were averaged to yield a measure of perceived behavioral control which, in the VE, had a 3.19 alpha coefficient and r stability coefficient was -0.06 ( $p < .95$ ). Scores were found to cover the whole range from 1 to 5.

Chart 01: Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control and Intention in Vocational Education: Means Standard Deviations

	Inten- tion	Atti- tudes	Behav- ior	Perceived behavior	Subjective norms
<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.58</b>	<b>2.25510</b> <b>2</b>	<b>2.70408</b> <b>2</b>	<b>2.505051</b>	<b>2.454545</b>
Median	2	2	3	2	2
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>1.36463</b> <b>3</b>	<b>1.27069</b> <b>4</b>	<b>1.42300</b> <b>1</b>	<b>1.327678</b>	<b>1.303627</b>
Skewness	0.50216 2	0.69448 5	0.27298 8	0.488657	0.419395
Kurtosis	2.04463 1	2.38548	1.76516 8	2.036645	1.940191
Jarque-Bera	8.00581 1	9.41973 6	7.44351 4	7.768188	7.535394
Probability	0.01826 2	0.00900 6	0.02419 1	0.020566	0.023105
Sum	258	221	265	248	243
Sum Sq. Dev.	184.36	156.622 4	196.418 4	172.7475	166.5455
Observa- tions	100	98	98	99	99

Source: Field Survey Data – 2017

Chart 2: Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control and Intention in Vocational Education: Correlation

	CORRELATION		
	Attitudes	Subjective norms	Perceived behavior
Attitudes	1	0.026956	0.041707
Subjective norms	0.026956	1	0.103117
Perceived behavior	0.041707	0.103117	1

Source: Field Survey Data - 2017

Correlation is significant at 0.95 levels, according to nonparametric correlation vocational training and the individual attitudes positively correlate at the 0.02

confidence level correlation coefficient is 0.0269. Subjective Norms also positively correlates with perceived behavior where coefficient is 0.103 at the same level of confidence. These relationships can be further tested with the regression analyze method.

### **Results of the study**

Sri Lankan vocational education system is committed to develop a sound and efficient technical and vocational and training sector in the country by providing clear direction and overall policy guidance, and the percentage unemployment level can be reduced by giving vocational training in different feeds.

There are problems that youth who are from low income urban underserved settlements face, leading to not engaging in vocational education.

The research questions find answers for the determinants of demand for vocational education by the youth in urban low income communities and whether planned behavior and youth have an impact on demand for vocational education.

The study was structured with major objective; the research is to identify the determinants of demand for vocational education by the youth in urban low income communities. The research model for describing the three of main determinants of Theory of Planned Behavior influence to make demand for VE in urban low income communities. "Attitude towards behavior" of youth on VE is make positive relationship with demand for VE. There are negative and less motivational factors in urban underserved settlements and if is negatively influence to less demand on VE. Subjective norms and perceived control behavior factors also show positive relationship on demand for VE. In urban settlements, those factors are less on youth. **Therefore there are fewer enrollments on VE because of positive relationship between planned behaviors of youth on demand for VE in urban low income communities.**

The nature of impact of gender, academic performance, and career objective and socio economic status of youth in urban low income communities in determining the demand for VE and planned behaviors of youth on demand for VE in urban low income communities are **determinant of demand for vocational education by the youth in urban low income communities.**

The subjects of this study were Demand on Vocational Education from Youth in Urban Low Income Families. The central focus of the present study was to examine the determinant of demand for Vocational Education by the youth in urban low income communities. The sub objectives carryout impact of student

personal factors including gender, academic performance. Career Awareness and Socio-economic factors & as well as the planned behavior of youth on demand for VE in urban low income communities was analysed.

Findings of the research lead the researcher to conclude that factors of planned behavior dimensions towards youth demand on vocational education with special reference to urban low income settlements in Colombo district, depends on the three critical factors (Dimensions). They are Attitude towards behavior, Subjective norms and Perceived behavior control.

The study assessed levels of interest and self-image on youth demand on vocational education at low income communities in Colombo district. Generally, the responses to planned behavior dimensions used to measure the performance of the youth in urban low income communities. All items measuring the planned behavior dimensions gave average score more than 0.12. By comparing the average score to the scale of measurement, demand on vocational education is agreed by youth to be high. The demand on vocational education from youth depends on the behavior response confidence in youth and mostly the attitude towards behavior. Moving forward, the above supporting factors remove the negative influence on youth that reduce the demand for vocational education, and instill a sincere interest in youth towards the same.

This study was helpful in illuminating the contradictions in commonly held youth's demand towards vocational education. A hypothesis was tested relative to the relationship between student personal factors and demand on Vocational Education. A hypothesis sampled was statistically significant, and Chi-squared values indicate that an appreciable amount of variation in image can be accounted for by youth's background. Demographic factors are related to youth's image on vocational education, with socio-economic status most appreciable among the several predictors

It was observed that the expectations of the youth demand on vocational education differ from gender, career objective, performance and socio economic status related to student-related characteristics, institutional factors and Family Socio-economic status.

### **Applicability of theory into study findings**

In Ajzen's (2002) Theory of Planned Behavior, Behavior Beliefs are a predictor of Attitude toward the Act. However, in this application of the theory, Subjective Norms are relating to both Behavioral Beliefs and Attitude toward the Act.

It is possible Subjective Norms are shaping the Behavioral Beliefs – in other words, public relations faculty may be looking at what they believe others think when they are forming their own beliefs. Similarly, it is possible what public relations faculty think others are thinking may also affect their own attitudes.

Based on these findings, the significant relationship between Subjective Norm and Behavioral Beliefs merits more exploratory study in future research

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on Gender.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand on vocational education determinate on academic performance consider on Father's Occupation, Mother's Occupation, Career Objective, and Career Choice. The trainees must make aware of the working environment that they have to work; they have to deal and also provide knowledge on how to attract the management when they are in a work environment, how to absorb to the experience they gain from their environment.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on career awareness consider on Parents occupation and respondents career objectives and career choice.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on socio-economic factors such as parents' educational levels and House hold income as well as nature of respondent's living arrangements.

This study also leads to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education depends on TPB: Attitudes towards the behavior.

It leads to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education depends on TPB: Subjective Norms.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education depends on TPB: Perceived Behavior Control.

Youth in Urban Low Income Families show that the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model's predictors; attitude, Subjective Norms, and perceived behavioral control related to enroll in Vocational Education and then identified the reasons behind the less enrollment of Vocational education from youth in urban low income communities.

As found during the study it has a major problem in advocating training awareness and guidance. Especially urban youth in low income communities were not aware of training courses and training organizations. Therefore, many of them

do not have awareness or interest to involve in the vocational training courses. On the other hand, parents also are not well aware in this sector and their attitude is to encourage the children to find job after the school education. Their understanding on NVQ, economic value of the technical education and vocational training programme remain low.

The Government conducts TEVT programmes but does not have an attractive marketing strategy to make parents and children aware. However, private sector has better strategy in this regard. Good marketing strategy can change the mindset of the school children and also the parents.

The other important factor recognized as to low linkage is peers' attitude. However, many of them do not have any opinion about TEVT programmes. Therefore they do not acquire the opportunity to select the right career path.

## **SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on TPB: Subjective Norms. The findings of the present investigation suggest that the difference between youth who stay in VE and those who drop out can be understood in terms of cognitive, motivational, and situational factors that are reflected in beliefs about the likely consequences of staying in VE and about the difficulties involved in doing so.

There should be programmes to reduce the gap between government resources and public society. There are no bond and correct directions for youth for buildup link between resource institutions and needy groups.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on academic performance. This study has identified contractions in commonly held academic performance of youths and their interest in vocational education help clarify the perception of youths regarding VE. The vocational programs and courses while highlighting the need for the direction of ongoing effort to improve and strengthen vocational education with in urban low income communities.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education differ determinate career awareness. It is important to note that the youth participating in this study were not particularly aware of career options available to them after graduation. School systems must do a better job of instilling in them the importance of career and an awareness of the economic impact on the student's future.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on socio-economic factors. This study indicated that guidance direct the youth towards vocational programs and the environment surrounding of them can have a positive effect on the urban youth's demand on vocational education by working closely with vocational education their families to encourage all youngsters.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on TPB: Attitudes towards the behavior. The present study suggests that students in this some communities have only a moderate interest in vocational education. Administrators should encourage guidance authorized parties to participate in vocational education.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the analysis and the findings, the following are recommended to help improve the demand and performance on vocational education according to the Theory of Planned Behavior dimensions measuring youth perception on the vocational education from youth in urban low income settlements in Colombo District. The following recommendation are forwarded under the relevant sub headings.

Findings of the research also lead to conclude that youth's demand of vocational education determinate on Gender.

It is important that administrators, counselors and teachers understand the nature of participation on vocational education clarified as gender male are more interested in VE than females. When designing the program more attention could be paid to garner and improve the interest in the program.

It is recommended for the authorities to conduct workshops once a year for the future benefits of the trainees and to get the youth's inputs to develop the courses up to their requirements

With these results it is better to conduct follow up studies with the pass out trainees and make institutional arrangements to update knowledge and skills for the betterment of their future advancement.

It is recommended to identify the modern equipment and introduce modern technical equipment which is used in industry to enhance vocational education for youth to increase the number in trained trade.

Finally the researcher recommended conducting continuing the study island wide as the researcher limited this study to Colombo district. The demands for

the vocational education are different in various part of the country. It depends on the availability of industries in the areas.

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