

## **REVIEW PAPER: DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS' CHOICE OF COURSES AND UNIVERSITY SELECTION**

**Nurul Liyana Hussin<sup>1</sup>, Nurulhayah Muhamad<sup>2</sup> & Muhammad Khalil Tarmizi Abdul Sukor<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Lecturer of Faculty of Business Innovation and Technology, Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka

<sup>3</sup>Student of Bachelor of Business Administration (Marketing), Kolej Universiti Islam Melaka

### **ABSTRACT**

The rapid growth of education in Malaysia nowadays encourage the higher educational institutions to provide the best features of courses which align to national aspirations. The positive competition between public university and private university in the admission of students create the great impact of sustainability of the institutions as well. Thus, this study concentrated to give an overview of the factor that encourage students to choose certain courses in higher educational institutions. The determinants of selection addressed consists of the future career, passion, parental influence and peer influence. As conclusion, this study can help the higher institutions to provide some strategies in increasing the number of admission of students and at the same time improve the academic quality and the governance of institution.

**Keywords:** *higher educational institutions, determinant of selections, strategies*

## **FAKTOR PENENTU PEMILIHAN KURSUS DAN UNIVERSITI OLEH PELAJAR : TINJAUAN LITERATUR**

### **ABSTRAK**

Pertumbuhan pesat pendidikan di Malaysia kini menggalakkan institusi pengajian tinggi untuk memberikan yang terbaik dalam kursus yang ditawarkan supaya bersesuaian dengan aspirasi negara. Persaingan positif antara universiti awam dan universiti swasta dalam pengambilan pelajar memberi impak yang besar terhadap kemampuan institusi pendidikan tinggi. Oleh itu, kajian ini tertumpu untuk memberi gambaran keseluruhan tentang faktor yang menggalakkan pelajar memilih kursus tertentu di institusi pengajian tinggi. Penentu pilihan yang digariskan terdiri daripada kerjaya masa depan, minat, pengaruh ibu bapa dan pengaruh rakan sebaya. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini dapat membantu institusi pendidikan tinggi untuk merangka strategi dalam meningkatkan bilangan kemasukan pelajar dan pada masa yang sama meningkatkan kualiti akademik dan tadbir urus institusi.

**Kata Kunci:** *institusi pendidikan tinggi, faktor penentu pilihan, strategi*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The World Economic Forum has recognized Malaysia as the country with the highest level of competition in education among 141 countries around the world in 2018. According to its latest report, Malaysia ranks 19th better than developed countries such as United Kingdom (UK) in 20th, France (26), and Japan (31). Eventually, the landscape of higher education has undergone many changes in line with current evolution. Changes in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0, and beyond 5.0 should be welcomed openly and the country of higher education should be ready to accept this rapid change. Recognizing the importance of the country's higher education moving forward with the rapid changes of industrial revolution (IR), the Ministry of Education (MOE) has undertaken various initiatives to ensure that Malaysia remains relevant as a hub for higher education in the region. Furthermore, the presence of IPTS in the country's education scenario is very promising and has a positive impact especially in making Malaysia a Regional Center for Educational Excellence. The presence of private institutions of higher learning is not seen as a competitor to public institutions of higher learning, but it also helps the government in providing more opportunities for higher education.

As of August 2014, there were 2,316 of Private Higher Educational Institution of (PHIE) who were recognized by the Malaysian Public Services and Malaysia Qualifications Agency (MQA) ([www.mqa.gov.my](http://www.mqa.gov.my), August 19, 2014). Nowadays, the role of PHIE has changed dramatically as a platform of students who are unable to continue their studies in the public university to quality tertiary education providers. The courses offered at the PHIE at the certificate level, diploma and degree level in various fields are in line with the current requirement to produce human capital graduates who meet the requirements of the National Philosophy of Education as the higher education system now more open. Furthermore, higher education is essential in supporting the national economic objectives of every country in the world and for the development of labor forces, including a direct increase in national incomes. Abeless (2001) stated that education is the second largest domestic market after health care industry in United States of America. There are four national goals to be realized in the restructuring of private higher educational institutions for Malaysia perspective where; i) to produce the necessary human resources for the country; ii) to export higher education; iii) to stem the flow of higher education students offshore in order to reduce the outflow of Malaysian currency and iv) to enroll 40 % of student-age cohort in higher education by the year 2020 in order to realize the aim to make Malaysia an industrialized country (Tan, 2002).

Otherwise, choosing a course to take in the next level of education is very important as it has a long-term impact on the students themselves. According to Nadzri Mohammad and Abu Osman Md Tap (2002) in Nurzatil et al (2015), the process of selecting places and courses of study has also become more difficult as there are many institutions offering a variety of quality and competitive programs aimed at attracting students. The accuracy of the course choice is closely related to the information a person has about a job.

Therefore, the goal of this article is to provide a review of the literature on determinants of students' choice of courses in PHIE in Malaysia considered to be important in shaping the career of students and to give some insights to PHIE in developing strategies to meet the demand of people outside.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is based on a review of the relevant literature from business, management and marketing field which consists few of attributes that can influence students to make choice of interested courses and preferred university.

Many researchers have studied different method in order to determine the factors of selection of courses and institution in furthering study. Azizi Yahaya & Norhashimah Ismail (2011) selected the data from school students where the study was conducted to determine factors that influence the choice of courses and their effect on their academic achievement and their relationship by using correlation test statistic. The respondents from technical stream, majoring in Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering from Technical School in Negeri Sembilan. Nurdzifazura & Emyzatul (2015) studied 52 new students from culinary courses to get the feedback. Yahya & Mahadhir (2010) collected data from agricultural students to identify the factors that influence course selection which consists 50 respondents. Meanwhile, Abd Hair Awang et al. (2012) aimed on postgraduate students who are studying at one of public university where 380 international graduate students selected as a 97 percent sample provided complete feedback. The survey form including factors of economic pull, university reputation and image and sociocultural factors. The other study conducted by Mohd Ridzuan et al. (2017) to identify the factors that led the respondents to continue their studies at a local Institution of Higher Learning. The study involved 150 staff working at three organizations in Kuala Lumpur which is 50 samples from each organization. Convenient sampling was chosen because this study is a preliminary study in which collection can be done immediately.

Zanariah et al (2017) surveyed to the undergraduate students which consists 145 respondents where to identify the factors that attract students to choose undergraduate programs in the field of Islamic studies as well as analysing perceptions students after graduation. The researchers using purposive sampling technique which means that the sample of the study was selected for a specific purpose. Besides Ruswahida et.al. (2014) studied the factors that influence students' selection of higher learning institution in Malaysia which includes campus characteristics, academic quality, financial, socialization and external factors. A total of 200 sets of questionnaire were distributed randomly among students at one of the institution located in north of Peninsular of Malaysia. Joseph (2010) investigated the institution factors that influence students' selection of higher learning centre. The variables studied are location, academic programme, college reputation, educational facilities, cost, availability of financial aid, employment opportunities, advertising and campus visit. Jacqueline Liza Fernandez (2010) examine the factors that influence students' choices of public versus private institutions and the factors that influence students' decisions to study at USM. The researcher used three tertiary institution choice models consists economic models, sociological models and combined models. The sample only 167 students and was restricted to undergraduates of one particular programme. Asnul & Siti Azizah (2011) conducted a study that consisted of 43 people fourth grade students who take the Design and Sewing course in two school in Muar district, Johor. Questionnaire set used as to identify the factors influence the selection of course Design and Sewing courses based on four factors namely passion, workshop facilities, careers and student attitudes.

## **FINDINGS**

### **I. Career**

In a study conducted by Nurdzifazura & Emyzatul (2015) where they studied the factors that encourage college students to choose culinary fields. The findings of their study indicate that 84.6% of students agree that career factors motivate them to choose a culinary program and they also agree that culinary graduates have good job opportunities. Their research also shows that 88% of students choose culinary fields because of their deep interest in cooking. Furthermore 90% of respondents

answered that their parents encouraged and supported them to apply for the courses. This demonstrates that the influence and support of parents greatly influence students' decision making in the selection of courses they are interested in. This is also supported by Fernandez (2010) where the result shows that majority of respondents (70%) believe that higher education is needed to secure a lucrative job.

In a study conducted by Asnul & Siti Azizah (2011) on the factors that influence the choice of design and sewing courses, it is noted that career factors are the most influential factors in choosing of that course. Proven by the mean value of 3.80 which is the highest value compared to other factors namely passion (3.66), convenience (3.44) and attitude (3.64). This is supported by Abd Hair Awang et al. (2012) who found that a number of factors that international students choose to pursue in one of the public universities in Malaysia are the opportunities for employment after graduation and more attractive careers. Thus, it can be described that future career determine the selection of courses among students.

## **II. Passion**

Whereas a study conducted by Yahya & Mahadhir (2010) shows that factors of passion influence the choice of courses by students in the field of agriculture where the mean value is 3.97. This is followed by a mean value of 3.84 which means that the facilities provided by the institution influence the selection of student courses. This is also supported by a study conducted by Mohd Rizal & Rusli (2008) in which their findings indicate that the passion factor in responding to the course choice was 74.14% compared to other factors namely parental factors (51.76%), academic eligibility factors (41.92%) and peer factor (37.6%). Passion can be referred as something that can lead people to choices they want and Nurzatil et. al (2015) stated that the course is selected because of passionate in that particular subject.

## **III. Parental Influence**

The study of Azizi Yahaya & Norhashimah Ismail (2011) shows that most respondents agreed that they did not object to their parents' wishes in choosing programs at their institution. This can be described that their decisions are influenced by parents and that parents are always encouraging them in decision making. This is in contrast to the results of a study conducted by Baharin & Nor Fatimah (2010) which shows that 61% of the total number of respondents disagree that choosing a teaching profession as a career is driven by parents who also work as teachers.

## **IV. Course offered**

However, a study conducted by Zanariah et al (2017) showed a different perspective from respondents regarding course selection determinants. According to their research, the main factor that students choose for their program is that the program offered itself has added value which does not depend solely on the physical aspects of the program. The fee factor is one of the factors that do not attract students to the program selection. The findings of the study conducted by Rahmahtunnisah et.al (2014) also show that the programs in the institution that have the development and character formation are the driving force for the entry of students into educational institutions. In addition, the students stated that it was important that their chosen field of study must be the courses itself is strong (Rebecca, 2016). Nevertheless, studied conducted by Yusof et.al (2008) shows that the availability of the required courses is top factors of university chosen among students.

## **V. University Image & Reputation**

There is also a study conducted by Abd Hair Awang et al. (2012) focusing on international postgraduate students studying at one of the Public Universities (UA) in Malaysia. This study focuses on three factors: economic attractiveness, reputation and image of the university as well as socio-cultural factors. The researcher used descriptive analysis to obtain the demographic picture of the respondents and at the same time used the T-test and the Kruskal-wallis Test to examine differences in attraction factors between gender and country of origin. Their findings prove that the reputation and image of the university is a major factor that attracts international students to the institution. Respondents rated it highly ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SP = .91$ ) on the relevance of the course to their future

employment and career. While comprehensive learning facilities (M = 3.78, SP = .88) and easy accessibility requirements (M = 3.69, SP = .80).

## **VI. Facilities Provided**

In the study conducted by Abeygunawardena (2018) shows that infrastructure facilities, marketing strategy, cost, university characteristics, programme evaluation, messenger (sources of information) and peers have been identified as the most influential factors which affect in selecting the courses. While infrastructure facilities were identified as the strongest factor in choosing courses.

Ruswahida et.al. (2014) have studied the determinant factors in university selection show that four variables namely institution, academic quality, financial and external factors influence the choice of higher education institution among students in Malaysia. Peer influence has also been identified as a catalyst in helping students make decisions in choosing higher education institutions (School Relations and Diversity Outreach Office and Institutional Research Office, 2008). Kitsawad (2013) stated in the study that majority of students in Thailand choose the university that provide conducive environment with adequate and quality library and IT resources.

In the study conducted by Agrey et al. (2014) to find which factors influenced decision-making in selecting a university or college and which factors accounted for the most variance, the researcher used the method of principal factor extraction with varimax rotation was performed through XLStat on 23 items of questionnaire from the sample of 261 respondents. The result indicate that potential of good career prospects was the strongest determinant and learning environment as well as the factor for university selection among the respondents. This indicates that students favour those institutions which provide for an updated learning environment and modern facilities.

Thus, the review of literature for this study are simplified as below;

Table 1: Literature Review

<b>No.</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Sources</b>
1.	Career	Limited employment opportunities nowadays encourage respondents to choose programs that provide sufficient preparation before moving into the realm of employment.	Nurdzifazura & Emyzatul (2015), Asnul & Siti Azizah (2011), Abd Hair (2012), Fernandez (2010), Agrey et al. (2014)
2.	Passion	Passion play an important role in determining the success of the learning process and it influence the student achievement.	Yahya & Mahadhir (2010), Nurdzifazura & Emyzatul (2015), Azizi Yahaya & Norhashimah Ismail (2011), Mohd Rizal & Rusli (2008), Nurzatil et. al (2015)
3.	Parental influence	Parents are the most important reference group among children in the family.	Nurdzifazura & Emyzatul (2015), Azizi Yahaya & Norhashimah Ismail (2011)
4.	Course offered	The courses itself offers value added.	Zanariah et al (2017), Rahmahtunnisah et.al (2014), (Rebecca, 2016)
5.	Peer influence	Students are more likely to discuss and be influenced by their peers in making decisions about their choices.	Nurdzifazura & Emyzatul (2015), Azizi Yahaya & Norhashimah Ismail

			(2011), (School Relations and Diversity Outreach Office dan Institutional Research Office, 2008).
6.	Image and Reputation of College	The university's reputation and image consists of comprehensive facilities, recognition of courses in the home country, ease of entry and ease of work courses.	Ruswahida et.al. (2014), Abd Hair Awang, Zaimah Ramli & Izzurazlia Ibrahim (2012)
7.	Facilities provided	The complete facilities encourage students to enjoy the learning process	Zanariah et al (2017), Yahya & Mahadhir (2010), Kamol Kitsawad (2013), Abeygunawardena (2018), Agrey et al. (2014)

## **DISCUSSION**

Though a number of scholars and researchers have defined the attributes which influence students' selections of courses and university. But there is a gap in all studied that none of the studies that cover all the perspectives includes society, technology and individual itself. Otherwise, there are a lot factors that can contribute to students' selection where the institution itself should be aware the demand of youth nowadays who can change from time to time. Thus, the researchers hope this focus of study can be continued in future due to the changes of education landscape in Malaysia which can shift the demand of education.

## **CONCLUSION**

Higher education in Malaysia has changed dramatically which to fulfill the aspirations of national development makes the knowledge-based services sector (K-economy) and to compete in an increasingly viable international market, various strategies have been developed. It includes the Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) which will be the main driver or "game changer" to spur human capital development for the country. Similarly, the TVET program will ensure that local youths and graduates will have the necessary skills that are much in demand within the country's main industries. Thus, the right choice of courses and university play an important role for the purpose of furthering education because it will give long term impact towards students due they will spend very long time periods of study time. It includes the adaptation of university environment and the cost of study. Select the right program of study based on current needs, interests and place of study is very important for learning and creating success in it areas of expertise.

## REFERENCES

- Abdul Hair (2012). Faktor Tarikan Pelajar Siswazah Antarabangsa Ke Universiti Penyelidikan di Malaysia dalam Geografia online Malaysia Journal of Society dan Space.
- Abeygunawardena, K. A. V. (2018). Influential Factors in Selecting a Bachelor's Degree from Private Higher Educational Institutes in Sri Lanka: A Study Based on Undergraduates of International Degree Programmes. PEOPLE. *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(2), 75-96.
- Agrey, L., & Lampadan, N. (2014). Determinant Factors Contributing to Student Choice in Selecting a University. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, 3(2), 391-404
- Asnul Dahar Minghat dan Siti Azizah Disun (2011). Faktor-faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Pemilihan Kursus Rekaan Dan Jahitan Di Daerah Muar, Negeri Johor. *Journal of Technical, Vocational & Engineering Education, Volume 4*, 58-76.
- Azizi Yahaya dan Norhashimah Ismail. (2011). Faktor-faktor Pemilihan Kursus dan Masalah-masalah Pembelajaran dalam Mempengaruhi Pencapaian Akademik Pelajar Tingkatan 4 Aliran Teknikal di Tiga Buah Sekolah di Negeri Sembilan. Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.
- Baharin Abu dan Nor Fatimah A. Aziz (2010). Faktor-faktor Yang Mendorong Guru Pelatih Fakulti Pendidikan Memilih Bidang Perguruan pp. 1-9. Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Tidak Diterbitkan.
- Yahya Buntat dan Mohd, Mahadhir. (2010). Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Pemilihan Kursus Oleh Pelajar Kolej Komuniti Yayasan Pelajaran Johor (KKYPJ) Terhadap Kursus Pertanian (Landskap Dan Nurseri) Yang Ditawarkan. pp. 1-8. (Unpublished)
- Fernandez, J. L. (2010). An Exploratory Study of Factors Influencing the Decision of Students to Study at University Sains Malaysia. *Journal Kajian Malaysia*, 28(2). 107-136.
- Joseph Sia Kee Ming. (2010). Institutional Factors Influencing Students' College Choice Decision in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. Vol. 1 No. 3.
- Kitsawad, K. (2013). An Investigation of Factors Affecting High School Student's Choice of University in Thailand (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Wollongong). Retrieved from [Http://Ro.Uow.Edu.Au/Theses/3779](http://Ro.Uow.Edu.Au/Theses/3779)
- Mohd Ridzuan bin Naemat, Mohd Nor Khairil, Mohd Radzuan Harun, Azhar Ahmad & Lokhman Hakim Osman. (2017). Faktor Pendorong yang Mempengaruhi Keputusan Melanjutkan Pengajian ke Institusi Pengajian Tinggi (IPT) di kalangan Staf Kerajaan dan Swasta. *Jurnal Personalita Pelajar*: 59-65
- Mohd Rizal Mohd Said dan Rusli Radzi (2008). Faktor-faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Pelajar Memilih Kursus Hospitaliti Sebagai Pembentukan Awal kerjaya Di Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara, Peretak. *Fakulti Pendidikan, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia*.
- Nurdzifazura D. & Emyzatul Najlaa' R. (2015). Faktor-Faktor Yang Mendorong Pelajar Memilih Program Kuliner Di Kolej Komuniti Nibong Tebal, Pulau Pinang
- Nurzatil, I. A., Zanariah, D., Nazneen, I., & Sahlawati, A.B. (2015). Faktor-Faktor Yang Mendorong Pemilihan Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Di Kalangan Pelajar, E-Proceeding of the 2nd International Conference on Arabic Studies and Islamic Civilization, 567-571.
- Rahmahtunnisah Hj. Sailin, Norziah Othman, Nor 'Adha Abd. Hamid, Nurkaliza Khalid, Abdul Hadi Awang dan Mohd Farok Mat Nor (2014). Faktor pendorong Kemasukan Pelajar Baharu Ke Kolej

Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS). *1st International Research Management and Innovation Conference, Kuala Lumpur, 17-18 November.*

Rebecca J. Mosely. (2016). Understanding The College Choice Process of Students Enrolled In An Early College High School. A Dissertation.

Ruswahida binti Ibnu Ruslan; Ku Halim Ku Ariffin, Md, Aminul Islam, Noor Idzanfashila bt Zaidi (2014). Determinants students' selection of higher education institutions in Malaysia. *The Free Library*. (2014). Retrieved Nov 20 2019 from <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Determinants+students%27+selection+of+higher+education+institutions+in...-a0392176390>

Yusof, M., S.N.B. Ahmad, M. Tajudin & R. Ravindran, (2008). "A Study of Factors Influencing the Selection of a Higher Education Institution", *UNITAR e-journal*, 4(2): 27-40.

Zanariah Dimon; Nurzatil Ismah Azizan; Nazneen Ismail; Sahlawati Abu Bakar; Hanis Najwa Shahrudin. (2017). Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Pelajar Memilih Bidang Pengajian Islam: Kajian Di Fakulti Pengajian Peradaban Islam, KUIS, *Malaysian Online Journal of Education* Vol. 1, No. 1