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**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SELECTION OF HIGHER LEARNING
PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS AMONG STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA**



**Thesis Submitted to
Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business,
Universiti Utara Malaysia
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(Management)**



**Pusat Pengajian Pengurusan
Perniagaan**

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Universiti Utara Malaysia

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**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SELECTION OF HIGHER LEARNING PRIVATE
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the factors influencing the selection of higher learning private institutions among students in Malaysia. There are three variables identified which influences the students choice of private institutions which are institutions reputation, cost of education and influence of family and peers. Quantitative analysis approach was used in this study and the instrument is questionnaire, distributed through email. There were 200 respondents involved from the students of various private institutions in Malaysia. The Pearson correlation and multiple regression technique were used to explain the results. By implementing these findings, marketing team would be able to identify new marketing plans to improvise and increase the number of enrollments in their respective institutions. Based on the study, cost of education is the main factor of students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia, followed by university reputation and the last one is influence of family and peers.

Keywords: Institutions Reputation, Cost of Education, Influence of Family and Peers, Higher Education Institutions and Students.



ABSTRAK

Objektif kajian ini bertujuan mengenalpasti pemboleh ubah yang mempengaruhi pemilihan pengajian tinggi swasta di kalangan pelajar di Malaysia. Terdapat tiga pemboleh ubah yang dikenalpasti mempengaruhi pilihan pelajar, iaitu reputasi institusi pengajian tinggi swasta, kos pengajian, dan pengaruh keluarga dan rakan-rakan. Kajian ini telah dijalankan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dan instrument kajian yang digunakan ialah borang soal selidik diedarkan melalui email. Seramai 200 responden terdiri daripada pelajar daripada pelbagai pengajian tinggi swasta terlibat dalam kajian ini. Kaedah Korelasi Pearson dan regresi berganda digunakan untuk menerangkan hasil kajian. Kajian ini juga mengesahkan bahawa pemboleh ubah yang mempengaruhi pemilihan pengajian tinggi swasta di kalangan pelajar amatlah penting kerana pemboleh ubah tersebut akan membantu bahagian pemasaran di pengajian tinggi swasta untuk merangka strategi-strategi yang dapat membantu unit pemasaran untuk meningkatkan bilangan pelajar yang akan memasuki pengajian tinggi swasta. Daripada dapatan kajian, ini menunjukkan bahawa kos pengajian merupakan pemboleh ubah utama yang dipertimbangkan oleh pelajar untuk pemilihan pengajian tinggi swasta di Malaysia, diikuti reputasi institusi pengajian tinggi swasta, dan pengaruh keluarga dan rakan-rakan.

Kata Kunci: Reputasi Institusi Pengajian Tinggi, Kos Pengajian, Pengaruh Keluarga dan Rakan-rakan, Institusi Pengajian Tinggi and Pelajar



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS TITLE	i
CERTIFICATION OF THESIS	ii
PERMISSION TO USE	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview	1
1.2 Background of the Study.....	3
1.2.1 Public Institutions	7
1.2.2 Private Institutions	11
1.3 Problem Statement.....	13
1.4 Research Objectives	16
1.5 Research Questions	17
1.6 Significant of the Study.....	17
1.7 Structure of Thesis	18
1.8 Summary	19
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	20
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Review of Previous Studies	20
2.3 College Choice Models.....	21
2.3.1 Hossler and Stage Model (1992).....	23
2.3.2 Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987)	24
2.3.3 Hanson and Litten Model (1989)	26
2.3.4 Jackson Model (1982)	27
2.3.5 Summary of College Choice Models.....	29

2.4	Higher Education Institution Reputation	30
2.4.1	University Ranking Order	32
2.4.2	University Branding	33
2.4.3	High Employment Rates of the Graduates from the Institution	35
2.5	Cost of Education	35
2.5.1	Academic Cost	37
2.5.2	Non-Academic Fees	37
2.6	Influence of Family and Peers	38
2.6.1	Influence of Parents	40
2.6.2	Influence of Peers attending College	40
2.6.3	Influence of Peers	41
2.7	Summary	41
 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		42
3.1	Introduction	42
3.2	Research Methodology	42
3.3	Theoretical Framework	43
3.4	Hypothesis Development	45
3.5	Research Design and Measurement	46
3.6	Data Collection Procedures	48
3.7	Sampling Techniques	50
3.8	Techniques of Data Analysis	52
3.9	Summary	52
 CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS		53
4.1	Introduction	53
4.2	Reliability	53
4.3	Descriptive Statistics	54
4.4	Respondents' Profile	54
4.4.1	Age Group	54
4.4.2	Gender	55
4.4.3	Current Education Level	55
4.4.4	Parents Education Level	56

4.4.5 Household Income	56
4.5 To Determine the Selection of Higher Education Private Institutions	57
4.6 To Determine the Higher Education Institutions Reputation	58
4.7 To Identify Cost of Education.....	59
4.8 To Identify the Influence of Family and Peers	60
4.9 To Determine the Rank of Factors Influencing Student Selection of Private Institutions	62
4.10 To Determine the Association of Factors Influencing Student’s Selection	64
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS....	66
5.1 Introduction.....	66
5.2 Discussion	67
5.2.1 Higher Education Institutions Reputation.....	68
5.2.2 Cost of Education.....	69
5.2.3 Influence of Family and Peers	69
5.2.4 Pearson Correlation Test.....	70
5.3 Implication	71
5.4 Limitation of Study	72
5.5 Direction for Future Research.....	73
5.6 Recommendation	74
5.7 Conclusion	75
REFERENCES.....	77
APPENDICES	86

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Summary of Malaysia's Education System	4
Table 1.2	Breakdowns of Public Universities in Malaysia	8
Table 1.3	Breakdowns of Polytechnics in Malaysia	9
Table 1.4	Summary of Community College in Malaysia	10
Table 1.5	Summary of Private University in Malaysia.....	11
Table 1.6	Summary of Private University-Colleges in Malaysia	12
Table 1.7	Summary of Foreign University Branch Campus	13
Table 1.8	Summary of Private Colleges in Malaysia	13
Table 2.1	Diagram of Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987)	25
Table 3.1	Demographic Profile	47
Table 3.2	Three Main Attributes and Sub Attributes.....	48
Table 4.1	Reliability Analysis.....	53
Table 4.2	The Details of Age Group.....	55
Table 4.3	The Elements of Gender	55
Table 4.4	The Elements of Current Education Level of Students	56
Table 4.5	The Elements of Parents' Education Level.....	56
Table 4.6	The Details of Students Household Income.....	57
Table 4.7	The Selection of Private Institutions.....	58
Table 4.8	The Details of Higher Education Institution Reputation	59
Table 4.9	The Details of Higher Education Cost	60
Table 4.10	The Details of Influence of Family and Peers	61
Table 4.11	Rank of Factors Influencing Student Selection	62
Table 4.12	Five Most Important Item Factors Influencing Student Selection	63
Table 4.13	Five Least Important Item Factors Influencing Student Selection	63
Table 4.14	Relationship between Factors Influencing Student Selection.....	64
Table 4.15	ANOVA	65
Table 4.16	Multiple Regression	65
Table 5.1	Cronbach's Alpha Value.....	67
Table 5.2	The Correlation Between Variables.....	71

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Overview of Higher Education Routes for SPM Holders.....	5
Figure 1.2	Overview for SPM or GSCE O-Level	5
Figure 1.3	Overview of STPM or GCE A-Level	6
Figure 2.1	Diagram of Hossler and Stage Model (1992)	24
Figure 2.2	Diagram of Hanson and Litten (1989)	27
Figure 2.3	Diagram of Jackson Model (1982)	29
Figure 3.1	Diagram of Theoretical Framework.....	44
Figure 3.2	Diagram of Hypotheses Development	45
Figure 3.3	Diagram of Primary Data Collection Methods	49
Figure 3.4	Diagram of Sampling Methods	51



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In Malaysia, the education sector has seen fast development particularly in the private sector. Public universities are responsible to provide education for students who are pursuing higher level education has private institutions have existed for decades. With government support and certain privileges, private institutions produce their own syllabus and unique technical and professional courses. The market sensitive education system is advancing in our education sector where private institutions are playing a vital role in providing education for tertiary level. The formation of private institutions of higher learning from the Private Higher Educational Institutions Act 1996 require them to certify their own courses. As of now, there are more than 47 private universities in Malaysia.

The presence of private institutions in Malaysia's education sector has created an innovative and healthy competition among the private institutions to attract more students to enrol in their courses. Furthermore, the strategic team of private institutions and government institutions have implemented competitive actions on their marketing strategies to implement new ideas and procedures to attract students to enrol in their preferred institutions. With the introduction of tuition fees, it shows that the education sector in Malaysia is clearly commercialised where each institution has its own marketing plan and strategy. Therefore, a study on the factors

influencing students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia was conducted.

As the enrolment of students' figure increased in private institutions, they are aggressively promoting their marketing strategies and implement unique techniques in recruiting students. Nowadays, students have different perspectives regarding their enrolment in private institutions. They consider many factors before choosing their preferred institutions compared to previous generations. Therefore, a student recruiter or marketing department needs to understand the importance of fundamental factors which will play the main part for a student in choosing the right private institution.

There was a study which proposed that the selection of students' enrolment in a higher learning institution is a multi-level strategy where many factors can play a part when a student wants to choose the right one for them. It can be classified into personal characteristics, access to information and materials from recruiters, institution's reputation and ranking, and suitable academic courses (Hossler, Braxton and Coopersmith, 1989). Besides that, studies on the formation of educational aspirations indicated that the role of parents is also important (Galotti and Mark, 1994). In addition to the parents, students' academic success plays a significant role in students' college choice, as does the influence of friends (peers) and the high school track in which the students are enrolled in (McDonough, 1997).

In summary, the objective of this investigation is to determine the variables which will influence the students in choosing their preferred private institution in Malaysia.

1.2 Background of the Study

The federal government is responsible for the education system in Malaysia, which starts from pre-school until the higher learning institution. There are a few stages in our education system which starts from pre-school followed by primary, secondary and tertiary education. The Minister of Education (MOE) is responsible from the pre-school to secondary school education. As for tertiary school, it is handled by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).

Basically, every Malaysian at the age of seven years old can enrol for primary education. There are several types of primary schools where the student has to study for six years, and at the end of primary education which is in the sixth year, they have to sit for UPSR exam to enable them to move to secondary education. Secondary education can be completed in five years whereby the first three years is in lower secondary and two years in upper secondary. At the end of each level, students are required to sit for the entrance exams PT3 and SPM for both lower and upper secondary, respectively. In total, students will spend 11 years studying in primary and secondary education in Malaysia. The cost of education for this 11 years is fully sponsored by the Malaysian government.

There are a few options for students once they complete their secondary level education where one of it is post-secondary education. In post-secondary education, students have to study for one to two years and at the end of their studies, they have to sit for STPM exam. By obtaining their STPM results, students can apply and enrol in public institutions. On the other hand, with the secondary education results, students can apply for pre-university courses such as GCE A-Levels, Diploma, Australian

matriculation, local matriculations program, certificates, and others. After completing their respective pre-university exams, they can further their studies according to the course of their choice at the tertiary level. The duration of study in tertiary level depends on the course structure chosen where it can take around three to five years to complete their Bachelor's degree.

At tertiary level education, most of the institutions provide courses from certificate until postgraduate qualifications. There are some institutions that offer professional certificates like ACCA, CPA, CFP and others where this will provide a platform for the students to choose their preferred courses to further their studies. Table 1.1 summarises the education system in Malaysia. Figure 1.1 shows the flow for SPM holders. Figure 1.2 shows an overview for SPM or GCSE O-Level. Figure 1.3 shows an overview of STPM or GCE A-Level.

Table 1.1
Summary of Malaysia's Education System

Education Level	Duration
Primary Level	6 years
Secondary Level	5 years
Higher Secondary Level	2 years
Tertiary Level (Degree Level)	3-5 years
Postgraduate qualifications (Master or PhD)	1-5 years

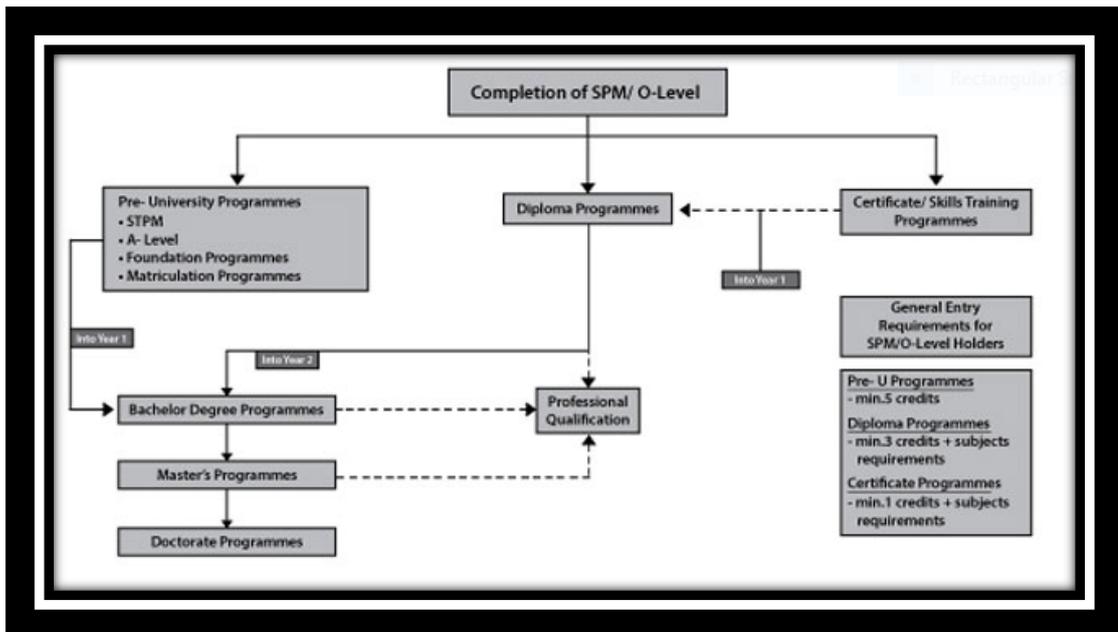


Figure 1.1
Overview of Higher Education Routes for SPM Holders

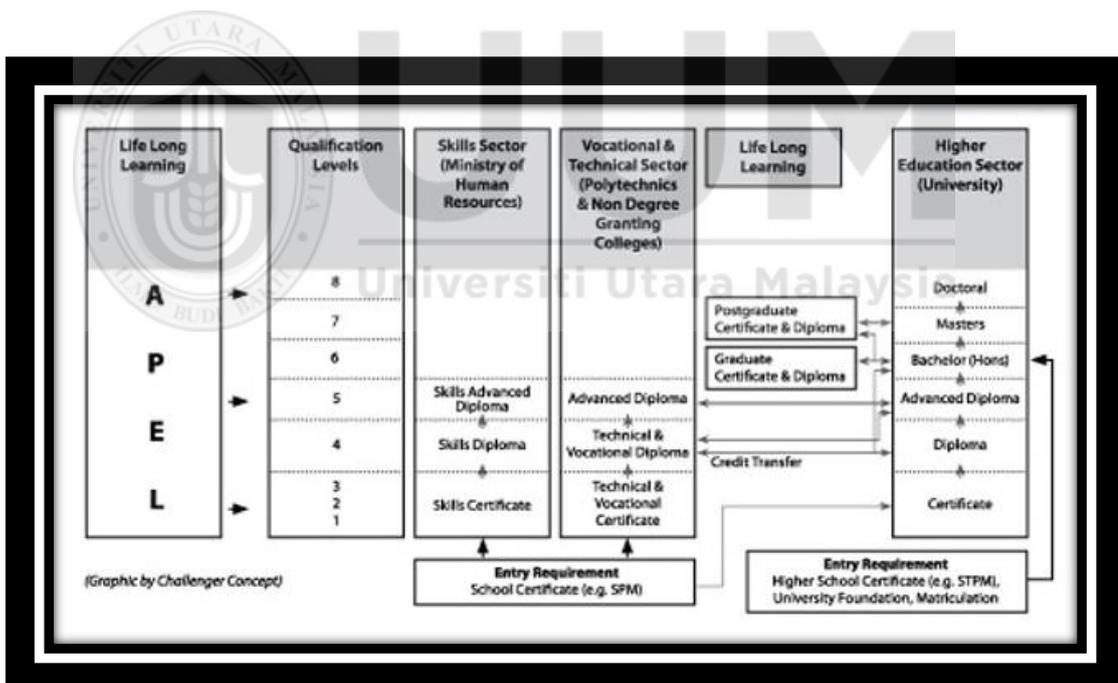


Figure 1.2
Overview for SPM or GCSE O-Level

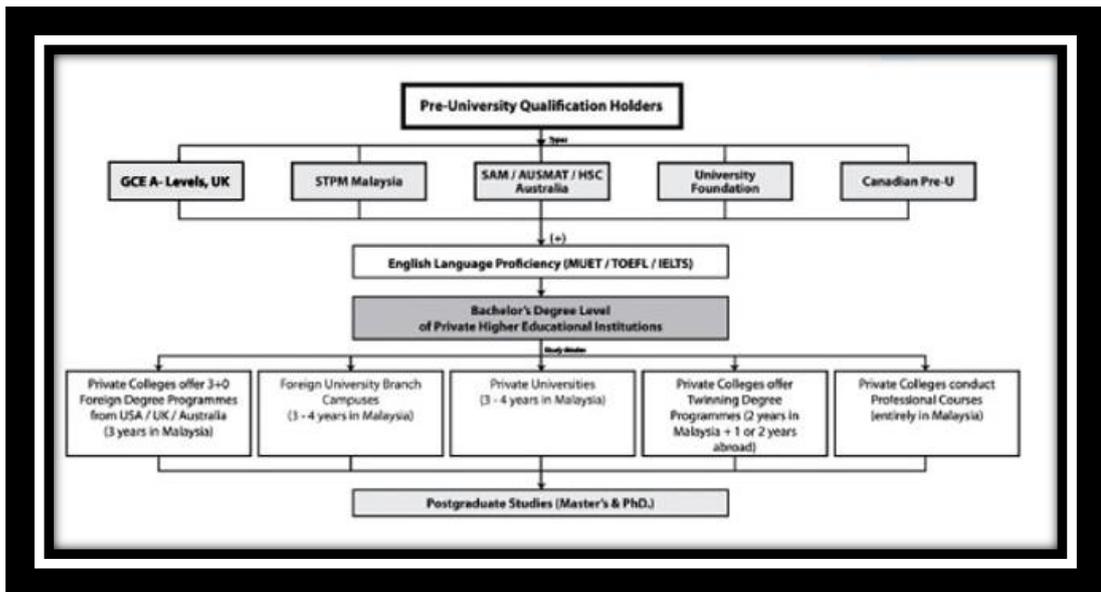


Figure 1.3
Overview of STPM or GCE A-Level

The development and liberalisation of the higher learning industry has contributed to the development of private institutions. Moreover, this growth encourages the involvement of foreign university to set up their campuses in Malaysia. These foreign universities offer twinning/linked courses with other universities and they provide their own degree and postgraduate courses. In Malaysia, since the 1990, the expansion of private institutions of higher learning has broadened the choice of institutions (from colleges to universities). The higher learning system can be grouped into two major categories as per below:

- a) Public Institutions
 - (i) Public universities
 - (ii) Polytechnics
 - (iii) Community colleges

b) Private Institutions

- (i) Private universities
- (ii) Private university-colleges
- (iii) Foreign university branch campuses
- (iv) Private colleges

1.2.1 Public Institutions

Public institutions are established and funded by the government. The undergraduate programs are carried out either in Malay (Malaysia's national language) or English depending to the university's syllabus. Public institutions can be classified into university, polytechnics and community college.

a) Public University

In Malaysia, as of June 2020, there are a total of 20 public universities in the country. The 20 public universities can be divided into Research University, specialised technical university and comprehensive university. Table 1.2 shows the breakdown of public universities in Malaysia.

Table 1.2
Breakdowns of Public Universities in Malaysia.

Category	List of Public Universities	Total
Comprehensive Universities	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)	11
	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIA)	
	Sultan Zainal Abidin (UNISZA)	
	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)	
	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)	
	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	
	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)	
	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional (UPNM)	
	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)	
	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)	
	Universiti Teknologi MARA (UITM)	
Research University	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	5
	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	
	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	
	Universiti Malaya (UM)	
	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	
Specialised Technical University	Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UNIMAP)	4
	Universiti Teknikal Melaka Malaysia (UTEM)	
	Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP)	
	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)	

b) Polytechnic

Polytechnic is a category under public institutions. It is designed to meet today's growing demand for skilled human capital in order to fulfil the country's needs in embracing global challenges in the dynamic future. These institutions offer certificate and diploma level courses. As of June 2020, there are 33 polytechnics in the country. Table 1.3 shows the breakdown of polytechnics in Malaysia. Polytechnics can be divided into premier polytechnics, conventional polytechnics and metro polytechnics.

Table 1.3
Breakdowns of Polytechnics in Malaysia.

Category	List of Polytechnics	Total
Premier Polytechnics	Politeknik Ibrahim Sultan (PIS)	3
	Politeknik Ungku Omar (PUO)	
	Politeknik Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah (PSA)	
Conventional Polytechnics	Politeknik Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin (PSMZA)	25
	Politeknik Merlimau (PMM)	
	Politeknik Sultan Azlan Shah (PSAS)	
	Politeknik Tuanku Sultanah Bahiyah (PTSB)	
	Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah (PSIS)	
	Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin (PTSS)	
	Politeknik Muadzam Shah (PMS)	
	Politeknik Balik Pulau (PBU)	
	Politeknik Jeli (PJK)	
	Politeknik Nilai (PNS)	
	Politeknik Banting (PBS)	
	Politeknik Mersing Johor PMJ	
	Politeknik Hulu Terengganu (PHT)	
	Politeknik Sandakan (PSS)	
	Politeknik Pagoh Johor (PPJ)	
	Politeknik Mukah Sarawak (PMU)	
	Politeknik Kuching Sarawak (PKS)	
	Politeknik Port Dickson (PPD)	
	Politeknik Kota Kinabalu (PKK)	
	Politeknik Seberang Perai (PSP)	
	Politeknik Melaka (PMK)	
	Politeknik Kuala Terengganu (PKT)	
Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah (POLISAS)		
Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (POLIMAS)		
Politeknik Kota Bharu (PKB)		
Metro Polytechnics	Politeknik Metro Kuantan (PMKU)	5
	Politeknik Metro Johor Bahru (PMJB)	
	Politeknik Metro Betong Sarawak (PMBS)	
	Politeknik Metro Kuala Lumpur (PMKL)	
	Politeknik Metro Tasek Gelugor (PMTG)	

c) Community College

Community colleges were established on 5th of July 2000 under MOHE. Initially, there were only five community colleges. These community colleges were set up to be the platform that offers quality and dynamic education and training. SPM/SPM (V) students who want to pursue their studies in technical skills can enrol here. Community colleges' mission is to provide the ability to grow secondary school leavers and the local community's talent and achieve success through education and training via short courses. As of June 2020, there are 86 community colleges in the country. Table 1.4 shows the summary of community colleges in Malaysia.

Table 1.4
Summary of Community College in Malaysia

Category	Total Number of Community College	Example of Community College
Community College	86	Kolej Komuniti Ampang
		Kolej Komuniti Klang
		Kolej Komuniti Sabak Bernam
		Kolej Komuniti Selayang
		Kolej Komuniti Shah Alam
		Kolej Komuniti Sungai Siput
		Kolej Komuniti Tapah
		Kolej Komuniti Seberang Jaya
		Kolej Komuniti Kluang
		Kolej Komuniti Bayan Baru
		Kolej Komuniti Bukit Beruang
Kolej Komuniti Teluk Intan		

1.2.2 Private Institutions

Private institutions come under the jurisdiction of MOHE. Private higher education institutions are sponsored and entirely financed by the private sector through non-governmental funding. In support of Malaysia's aim to be the centre of educational excellence in the Asia-Pacific region, the majority of private institutions use English as the medium of instruction for the programs conducted. Besides offering education opportunities to the general information on Malaysian higher education, private institutions are also the preferred choice of many local students. Private institutions can be classified into universities, university-colleges, foreign university branch campuses and private colleges.

a) University

Private university is categorised as a university which can confer their own degree qualification. Its qualification is similar with the public universities. In total, there are 47 private universities in Malaysia. Table 1.5 summarises the private university in Malaysia.

Table 1.5
Summary of Private Universities in Malaysia

Category	Total Number of Private University	Example of Private University
Private	47	Multimedia University (MMU)
		Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN)
		Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNITAR)
		Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP)
		International Medical University (IMU)
		Universiti Selangor (UNISEL)
		AIMST University
Universiti Kuala Lumpur (UNIKL)		

b) University Colleges

Private university-college is similar to private university but is smaller in size. The number of students per intake is lesser. Usually, most private university-colleges will collaborate with foreign institutions. They will also offer twinning programmes where students will have an option to do their final year overseas. Table 1.6 lists the breakdown of private university-colleges in Malaysia.

Table 1.6
Summary of Private University-Colleges in Malaysia

Category	Total Number of Private University College	Example of Private University College
Private University College	34	Linton University College
		KDU University College
		Widad University College
		University College of Yayasan Pahang
		Geomatika University College
		Fairview University College
		Bestari University College
		Tunku Abdul Rahman University College
		KPJ Healthcare University College

c) Foreign University Branch Campus

Foreign university branch campus enables students to obtain prestigious university qualifications in the country without travelling overseas. This foreign university branch campus offers a wide range of courses to choose from, unlike the twinning programmes which only offer selected courses. Table 1.7 shows the breakdown of private foreign university branch campuses in Malaysia.

Table 1.7

Summary of Foreign University Branch Campus in Malaysia

Category	Total	Example of Foreign University Branch Campus
Foreign	10	Curtin University Malaysia
		University of Reading Malaysia
		The University of Nottingham Malaysia
		Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia
		Monash University Malaysia

d) Private Colleges

In Malaysia, most private college offers pre-university and diploma programmes. There are also some private colleges that offer professional certificates and qualifications. Table 1.8 shows the breakdown of private colleges.

Table 1.8

Summary of Private Colleges in Malaysia

Category	Total	Example of Private Colleges
Private	110	Sunway College
		Putra Inteltek International College
		The One Academy
		Southern University College
		Olympia College
		Metropolitan College
		Stamford College
		Advance Tertiary College
		Kolej Yayasan UEM
		Ramsay Sime Darby Healthcare College

1.3 Problem Statement

In Malaysia, due to the rapid growth in the education industry, there is a greater opportunity for school leavers to choose their preferred higher education institutions to further their studies at tertiary level. Higher education institutions' selection process should focus on collecting the best information possible and choose according

to the data available (Gabert, Hale and Montalvo, 1999). It is difficult for students to decide on their next level of education when they are incapable of weighing the pros and cons of their decisions. It was stated that post-secondary institutions have the right to select specific elements (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987).

Keling (2006) stated that an institution's image and credibility, tuition fees and degree programs have a strong power of explanation for how students decide on which university to enrol in. Besides that, it is found that institutions' reputation as well as influence from parents and peers have a major moderating impact on the students' selection of private institutions (Yukse and Solakoglu, 2016).

Malaysian students emphasise their concern on the degree's content and structure, as well as the potential of higher education institutions to deliver a wide variety of courses and specialist programmes that suits the need of students when selecting their preferred higher education institutions (Wagner and Fard, 2009). Moreover, experienced lecturers, suitable syllabus, qualified lecturers and knowledgeable lecturers were also the main attributes on the students' selection of private institutions (Zain, 2013).

Moreover, it was also observed that the availability of the required programmes offered in the university, quality of the facility and also financial assistance offered by the university were also important in the students' consideration when choosing their preferred private institution (Yusof, Ahmad, Tajudin and Ravindran, 2008). With the growth and intense competition in this field, past research has accepted that there is

minimal study on the factors affecting students' choices in deciding to study in private higher education institutions (Shah, Sid Nair and Bennet, 2013).

The objective of this investigation is to address the gap and add to the body of information about the consideration the students will look into when they make their decision to choose their preferred private institution. In this research, three important attributes which will contribute to the students' selection of higher education institutions are the cost of education, higher education institutions and the influence of family members and peers.

The importance of higher education institutions' reputation is another factor which needs to be considered. The university's reputation includes the process of creating, constructing and organising the judgement of an entity (Kewell, 2006). Organisations with a reputable reputation can attract the institutions to a target audience with a greater perceived value than its rivals would offer. Ranking helps private institutions to grow its credibility and where they stand in the education sector.

Secondly, the cost of education plays an important role when students select their preferred higher education institutions. There are concerns raised about the increase in academic fees by the universities and colleges in and around Beijing (Xiaoping, 2002). Parents are concerned that the increasing cost of education will discourage their children's opportunities for higher education. Tuition costs are a moderately significant factor that parents consider when choosing a particular institution for their child (Xiaoping, 2002).

The influence of family members and peers are also one of the factors which influence students' selection of private institutions. Family factors play two important roles in socialising individuals and influencing students' decision-making (Bearden, 2007). Baharun (2006) reported that the most important factor was family advice and recommendation, with peer advice ranking second in impacting the choice of private institutions by the student. According to Manski and Wise (1983), the greater the proportion of classmates in a student's decision to enrol in college, the more likely they make the same choice as well.

Most of the research was conducted to help the students to choose the right institution to further their studies at a higher level. A study on the factors influencing the students' selection of private institution of higher learning in Malaysia will help to explain the students' preferred choice in choosing their higher level education.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to discover the main factors that will influence the students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

- a) To investigate the importance of higher education institutions' reputation in students' selection of private institutions.
- b) To investigate the importance of cost of education in students' selection of private institutions.
- c) To investigate the influence of family and peers in students' selection of private institutions.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the problem statement, there is a need to identify a set of research questions related to the research. The research questions are shown as per below:

- a) How does higher education institutions' reputation influence the students' selection of private institutions?
- b) How does cost of education influence the students' selection of private institutions?
- c) How do family and peers influence the students' selection of private institutions?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Education is an instrument that decides an individual's social status. The investment in higher education can also increase the productivity and employability of people in the current society. As a result, many students intend to further their studies in higher learning institutions, especially in private institutions. The findings of this study will provide a platform for recruiters to understand each factor that influence students' decision-making process in selecting a higher learning institution. This will enable private higher learning institutions to increase and enforce better marketing tactics to increase their enrolment. These findings will be beneficial for both recruiters and students for better planning and decision-making. In summary, this research will contribute to:

- a) Students having a clearer picture on how to choose their preferred tertiary education.
- b) This result would be useful for the recruitment and marketing departments in developing their own marketing strategy to increase the number of students studying in their university.

- c) It will help the private universities to consider the needs of students and will incorporate the result of this study as a part of their enrolment and marketing efforts through their own strategic planning.

1.7 Structure of Thesis

There are five chapters in this thesis and the classification of each chapter is shown below:

CHAPTER ONE

It begins with the introduction, followed by the background of the study. It then describes in detail the problem statement, research objectives, research questions and ends with the significance of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter focuses on the literature review, nature of education studies, comprehensive reviews on previous researches and contributions and comprehensive reviews of important factors and attributes such as academic characteristics, non-academic characteristics, personal characteristics and socioeconomic characteristics.

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter three consists of the methodology, hypotheses development, theoretical framework, development of questionnaire, sampling techniques and data collection processes.

CHAPTER FOUR

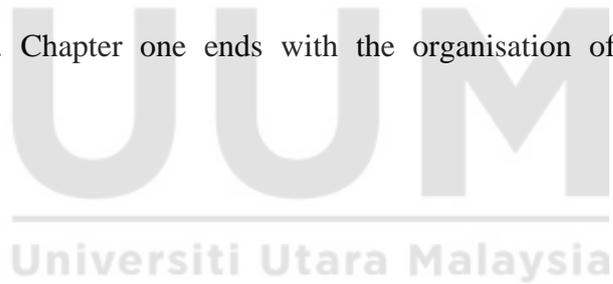
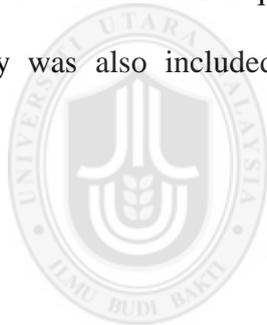
This chapter presents the analysis on the respondents' demographic profile, results of samples and a detailed data analysis and the findings from the SPSS analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter consists of the summary of the outcome, conclusions, consequences, suggestions and propositions for upcoming studies.

1.8 Summary

This defined the overall understanding of the study. The problem statement, research objectives and research questions were clearly stated. Furthermore, the significance of study was also included. Chapter one ends with the organisation of the thesis.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section discusses the analyses of literature and theories related to the topic ‘Factors Influencing the Students’ Selection of Private Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia’. The first part of the chapter discusses the nature of education in Malaysia. The second part will discuss the factors which influence the students’ selection of private institutions.

2.2 Review of Previous Studies

There are a lot of factors that need to be considered by consumers when making a decision. A higher learning institution is purely a service provider. Their fundamental point is to provide education to students and create quality and talented graduates.

Research on the factors influencing the students’ selection of higher learning institution has been ongoing for a few decades. Most of the research focused on the general topic of the selection of higher learning institutions. Past researchers mainly examined the factors that determine the decision of students’ choice of private higher education in China (Liu, 2005). For this research, this study focused more on the factors influencing the students’ selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

Students face a crucial decision when choosing a higher education institutions to further their tertiary studies. It is a complex decision that involves several stages for the student to choose their preferred institution as this decisions is very important for their future education and career.

From this research, we can conclude that there are many factors involved when a student wants to choose their higher education institution and it involves a few stages. Each factor will contribute to different decisions which can affect the number of students' enrolment figures in higher learning institutions. Not all higher education institutions could go along with all the factors that are influenced by the students' selection. The objective of this study was to determine how each variable contributes to the students' selection of institutions which will help the marketing and recruitment departments to improve the figure of students' enrolment in their university.

2.3 College Choice Models

The principle of college choice has become an essential basis for the post-secondary education access and destination. Iloh (2019) argued that a timely and context-driven alternative to previous college choice structures needs to depart from framing college-going around 'choice'. Choice in college choice models also sees the participation of a student at college as a one-time experience that is likely to occur after high school graduation.

Keling (2006) mentioned that six main institutional variables influence students to pursue their higher education in Malaysia. The variables are the institution's reputation, the job prospects of future graduates, the environment of higher education, cheaper costs, institutional relationship, entry flexibility and campus environment of the institutions.

Two years later, a similar study was conducted by Yusof, Ahmad, Tahudin and Ravindran (2008) where the purpose of their research was to study the expectations

among prospective students of higher education institutions. Potential students were those who are about to finish their secondary education and who attended secondary school.

The highly competitive and dynamic nature of college choice and the growth of the student recruiting marketing strategy strengthens the need to better understand and influence the college choice process more effectively. This has allowed more efforts broadened by educational institutions in order to recognise and improve the process of college choice among future students where this has led both researchers and practitioners to develop a more comprehensive criteria or model for the college choice process (Sung and Yang, 2008).

Over the years, college choice models have supported college administrators in recognising the weights and stresses which assist the policies for institutional hiring (Chapman, 1981). Colleges may overlook ways to increase the efficacy of their hiring, or equally, over targeting the effect of hiring they are involved in. College choice models have helped most recruiters in higher learning institutions to identify the causes and factors that influence students' selection of their chosen university. In this research, a few college choice models are reviewed as per below:

- a) Hossler and Stage Model (1992)
- b) Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987)
- c) Hanson and Litten Model (1989)
- d) Jackson Model (1982)

2.3.1 Hossler and Stage Model (1992)

The model of Hossler and Stage (1992) drew on the literature of college choice literature, as well as the work of sociologists who studied status attainment. This model emphasised that family background and the history of family features influenced the student's participation in high school.

Parent's educational background is an important factor in the student's decision to enrol in college where students from the family background of educated parents are keener to further their studies in the higher education compared to students' parents who are not well educated (Hossler and Stage, 1992).

Hossler and Stage (1992) concluded that the parents' academic achievement level was strongly associated to high parental expectations of the student, high expectations of the student for him or herself, high student GPA and significant student involvement in extracurricular activities. Regardless of other factors such as socioeconomic status, parents play a vital part in the students' decision-making process.

Research indicated that students whose parents have had some college education were more likely to begin the college selection process earlier than those whose parents were without college education (Litten, 1982). Figure 2.1 shows the diagram of Hossler and Stage Model (1992).

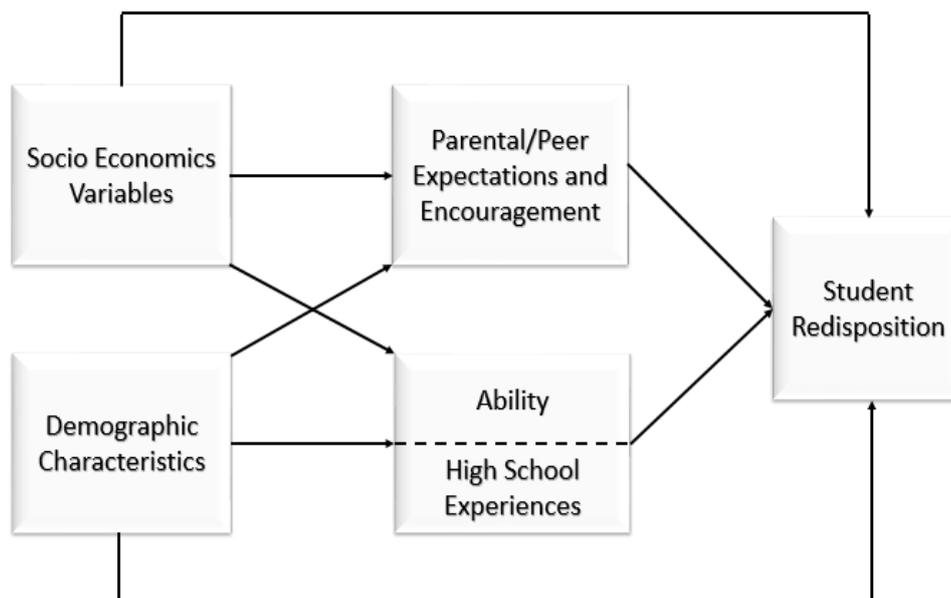


Figure 2.1
Diagram of Hossler and Stage Model (1992).

2.3.2 Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987)

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model was established based on previous models (Chapman, 1984) to recognise the three-stage process. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) work on college choice influence the students' selection of higher institutions. It is a very important starting point, where it not only focuses on how students decide to enrol in college, but how students select their preferred college.

This model consisted of a three-stage model process as per below:

- a) Predisposition
- b) Search
- c) Choice

The first stage of this model is predisposition. It is the beginning stage of the phase where students will decide if they want to further their studies to a tertiary level. In

this stage, a lot of factors will influence the students to make the decision such as university's reputation, students' result, socioeconomic status and others. The intention to enrol to college is decided in this process.

After the students decide to further their studies at the tertiary level, the students will then progress to the second stage which is searching. In this process, students will survey and gather all the data about their preferred institutions and try to seek information via peers, family members, internet search and so on. Once they decide on their preferred institutions, they will move on to the next process.

The last process is choice where students will evaluate the best institution based on the list which was done in the second stage. At this point, students will choose their selected institutions in which they are more likely to apply. The process is complete after the students receive the offer letter from the institution and they accept the offer.

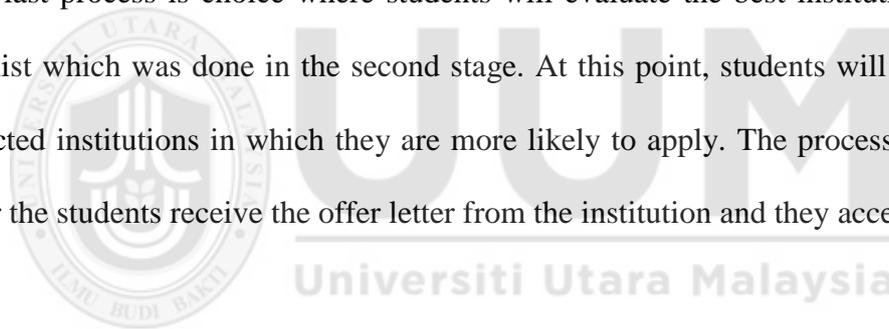


Table 2.1
Diagram of Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987)

Model Dimensions	Influential Factors (Individual Factors)	Influential Factors (Organisational Factors)	Student Outcomes
Predisposition (Phase One)	Student characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant others Educational activities	School characteristics	Search for: College options Other options
Search (Phase Two)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student preliminary college values • Student search activities 	College and university search activities (Search for students)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice set • Other options
Choice (Phase Three)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice Set 	College and university courtship activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice

2.3.3 Hanson and Litten Model (1989)

The Hanson and Litten Model (1989) elaborated on college selection as an ongoing flow. The process of the flow is shown as per below:

- a) Having college aspirations
- b) Starting the search process
- c) Gather information
- d) Sending applications
- e) Enrolling in institutions

Hanson and Litten's (1989) model recognised a number of factors influencing the college choice process. There are few factors which contribute to this, such as background characteristics (parental income, education and gender), personal characteristics (academic ability, class rank and self-image), high school characteristics (social composition, programmes and curriculum) and college characteristics (costs, size, programmes and punctuality in responding to questions). They also introduced public policies, such as financial support, as intervening variables. Hanson and Litten's (1989) model showed a cross between Jackson's student-based demonstrate and the more institutional-based Chapman demonstrate. Figure 2.2 shows the diagram of Hanson and Litten's model (1989).

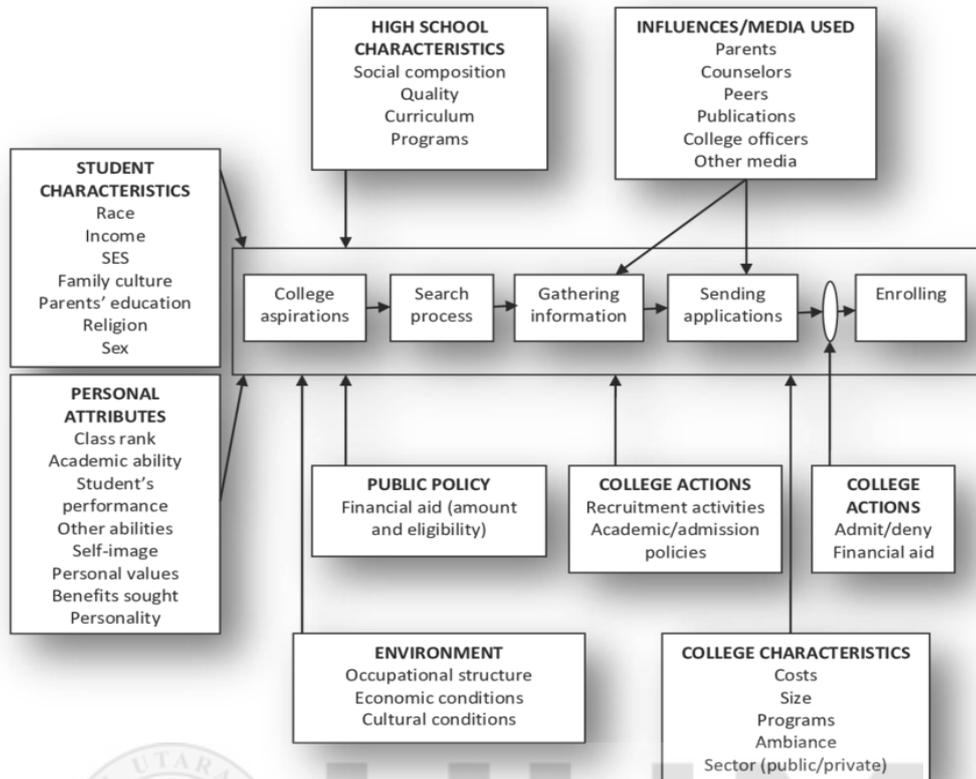


Figure 2.2.
Diagram of Hanson and Litten Model (1989).

2.3.4 Jackson Model (1982)

Like Hanson and Litten (1989), the Jackson Model (1982) also consists of three stages of students' college choices as per below:

- a) Preference stage
- b) Exclusion stage
- c) Evaluation stage

The first stage of this model is the preference stage. This model emphasised characteristic as the most important attribute in the process. The main attribute of the students' selection is their academic results. Students who score a good result in their secondary school will have higher chances to further their studies in higher learning

institutions compared to students who scored below average. Besides academic results, there are also other factors which were examined in this model based on the parent's education, socioeconomic status and worth of the institutions. It was proven that academic achievement was the main factor of this college's choice decision.

The second phase of this model is the exclusion stage. This is the stage where information and data collection will be gathered to find out about the reputation of the institutions. At this stage, a lot of factors will influence the students as students will find more about the institutions' reputation. The data obtained at this stage must be correct, and exact information should be gathered. After obtaining the exact data, a number of institutions will be selected for the next consideration. This selection will be the preferred institution where the students will most likely set their mind to enrol in one of the institutions. Apart from this factor, the location of the institutions, accuracy of the information collected, family background and academic background also play a part.

The last stage of this model is the evaluation stage. This is the most crucial stage where the students will decide on the institutions where they prefer to further their studies. The major attributes in this part will be their career path and the cost of their education. Figure 2.3 shows the diagram of the Jackson Model (1982).

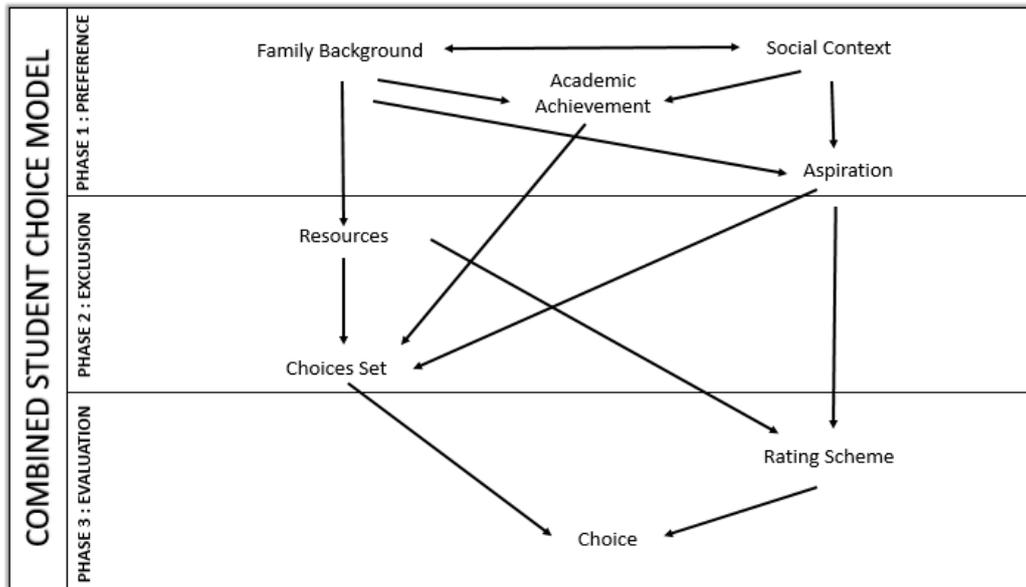


Figure 2.3
Diagram of Jackson Model (1982).

2.3.5 Summary of College Choice Models

Having studied the different models that characterise the choice of college for students, this study considers the four models that are the most representative which are Hossler and Stage Model (1992), Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987), Hanson and Litten Model (1989) and Jackson Model (1982) and converted them into a hybrid-combined model. This integrated or hybrid model incorporates a few factors related to the students' consideration of college choice such as parental influence, family background, parents' education background, peers influence, peers attending colleges, reputation of the university, cost of education, location, distance, socioeconomic status, quality of the education and course availability.

This college choice model is a useful instrument for this research. It is a formation of a comprehensive college choice model for students that integrates all applicable variables that can be used to assist students in choosing their preferred private institutions.

2.4 Higher Education Institutions Reputation

Wagner and Fard (2009) have shown that higher education institutions are increasingly competing to attract students at both the local and international arena. Malaysian students consider the higher education's reputation in their choice of higher education. The institution's academic reputation and prestige are the main significant considerations for prospective students during the selection process (Kotler and Fox, 1995).

In Malaysia, there are ranking positions for the higher education institutions. These ranking orders are selected based on the academic prestige and the value of teaching. Students are now in a position to rate the credibility for their option of institutions. Based on the previous studies, the students in a college selection process attributed ratings as an influential factor.

Indeed, the institution's reputation has been found to be the most significant factor in determining the right institution for students to enrol for their studies (Moogan and Baron, 2003). Paramewaran and Glowacka (1995) found that private universities need to preserve a distinct reputation in order to build a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive market. Institutional reputation and image have a tremendous impact on the choice of college. It is a powerful influence on potential students, and in the college search and selection process, college reputation is extremely persuasive. Students value a college's reputation and rate it as an influential factor in the college choice process (Lay and Maguire, 1981). Reputation is one of the important variables which students take into consideration when they choose their institution (Keling, Krishnan and Nurtjahja, 2007).

Kusumwati, Yanamandram and Perera (2010) indicated that an institution's honourable reputation was the most important factor in students' choice of university. To this end, the considerations for students in New Zealand, by rank, have been academic reputation, job prospects and programmes issues. However, the order for students in the United States of America is academic reputation, cost/time problems and software problems. Institutional image and reputation impact college choice tremendously. A university's reputation is very important in the university search and selection procedure (Lay and Maguire, 1981).

The organisation's credibility refers to the public views of an entity expressed over time by its various members (Sung and Yang, 2008). Various university ranking systems suggest the credibility or prestige of academic institutions, the overall view of society and favourable media attention. According to Gatfield, Barker and Graham (1999), an institution's credibility or reputation for quality is often more important than its actual quality, because it reflects the institution's perceived excellence that directs potential students' decision to enrol with the institution.

Reputation is explored from the perspective of corporate branding, which addresses positive assumptions about the university. An institution's present reputation comes from its past record. A competitive advantage for institutions is created by building a respected reputation by its past performance.

Students who obtain lower results may not continue to enrol in a prestigious university because the chances are lower (Drewes and Michael, 2006). Hagel and Shaw (2007) stated that analyses such as academic reputation, accessibility of tracks,

place, education fees and living expenses, as well as university facilities, are fundamentals that affect the university option of the students. Ciriaci and Muscio (2014) stated that good universities can be an attraction for students of higher grades. The reputation of the institutions can lead to benefits for the organisation such as the development of companies and customer order accumulation (Carmeli and Tishler, 2005). Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) proved that the university's credibility affects the student's commitment rate. Keling, Krishnan and Nurtjahja (2007) mentioned that students would have the most influential factor on the institutions' reputation when choosing their institutions.

2.4.1 University Ranking Order

In Malaysia, globalisation has intensified competition among colleges and universities. Currently, in the domestic higher education markets, colleges and universities in Malaysia run races to achieve better status. University rankings made by magazines and the media are at the core of the current excessive competition between universities.

Hartog, Sun and Ding (2010) reported that the positive relationship between university's ranking and the salaries of bachelor's degree holders is a core aspect of a university's reputation where bachelor's degree holders who have graduated in the top ten positions from one of the 100 universities received 23 per cent higher salary than bachelor degree holders in universities ranked between 200 to 400. Ranking order helped to build the public understanding of the university's education value.

Lindsay (2013) mentioned that institutions emphasised the importance of publications and prestige, which contributed to their national and institutional reputation. This is not only because of its role as a basis for tactical marketing, but also for its role in building long-term brand equity, where reputation has been recognised as one of the core tenets of marketing research (Keller, 1993). In order to build and sustain a loyal customer relationship, Dick and Basu (1994) stated that image and reputation are essential elements. Airey and Bennett (2007) mentioned that one of the key considerations for foreign students when looking for the right institution to pursue their studies is the reputation of the institution or the organisation.

Altbach (2012) argued that rankings are a result of the higher education's massification, competition and commercialisation, which contributed to the complexity of higher education. In literature, a consensus was reached that the rankings were not likely to disappear (Rauhvargers, 2013).

2.4.2 University Branding

In this period of intensified competition due to numerous factors such as globalisation, economic and cultural transparency, and the spread of multinational corporations and many others, corporations are now trying to make their names, goods and services brighter. In order to gain new students, retain the current students and even gain professional employees, they are focused on publishing appealing characteristics.

A broad range of public organisations, ranging from municipalities to ministries and agencies, have branded themselves through organisational branding, in which

organisations as a whole, in addition to services, have become platforms for identity information and differentiation (Balmer, 2006). The branding of companies leads to the development of a favourable mental picture of future clients, workers and even society as a whole. With this brand image, the prospects of any private institutions of higher education will rest. One with an established brand will have definite advantages over its rivals. Branding refers to a name, term, sign or symbol that defines an organisation and differentiates it.

Private institutions of higher education require a catchy slogan or symbol to stand out from the crowd. Tertiary education is arguably a product of high participation (Zaltman and Kotler, 1976). Products with high participation are those that customers need to take time to reflect on their purchases. This is because the goods are costly and customers are inclined to evaluate the benefits in order to justify their ruling decision. In this context, it is important to properly brand an institution to communicate the benefits it offers which is highly competitive.

Higher education institutions can be classified under profit-organisations. The aim of branding is to assist the university to distinguish itself from the others and maintain its name in people's minds where brand represents a promise from the university to provide significant benefits to the students. It is reported that there are two kinds of benefits: rational and emotional. Rational benefits include reputation, academic excellence, research status, links with industry, and employment record, while emotional advantage includes place, quality of life, character, community and empathy (Kotler, 2003).

2.4.3 High Employment Rates of the Graduates from the Institutions

Paulsen (1990) stated that students often make college choices based on existing job opportunities. Students are more interested by what graduates do, what graduate school they attend, and the social contributions they made as part of their decision-making process, including career prospects, better return on investment and a better future (Sevier, 1997).

In New Zealand, career opportunities greatly influence potential students when choosing a university (Joseph and Joseph, 1998). In Indonesia, job prospects have also been rated as one of the key factors affecting students' choice (Kusumawati, 2013). Various empiric studies in the USA showed that career opportunities are the most important factors that students consider when selecting a university (Ugwu, 2014). In the Malaysian higher education environment, job opportunities are also one of the factors students take into consideration when enrolling in an university (Baharun, 2002).

2.5 Cost of Education

Education cost can be classified as an amount the students have to pay or give up if the students want to gain something. This shows that educational cost is a major concern for parents and students when selecting a particular higher education institution. Hossler and Stage (1992) stated that most parents are willing to spend on the tuition fees of the children's education regardless of the family's income. The results showed that 70 per cent of students and 87 per cent of parents stated that they were well informed about the financial aid and their eligibility to obtain it. Typically, it will impact a person's choice of college. Joseph (2000) mentioned that cost related

matters tend to have more importance with the passing years. It was concluded that price adversely affects college choices while financial assistance is a beneficial force to minimise costs (Jackson, 1982).

Before joining higher education institutions, each student who applies for their desired institutions must pay a certain fee. Fernandez (2010) mentioned that students are cost-conscious when applying for higher education institutions that offer them quality courses at an acceptable low cost. According to Wagner and Fard (2009), in order to entice and encourage their college programmes, managers, advertisers and policy makers should focus on the education costs. If the higher education institution focuses on reducing the university fee rates, then more students will be motivated to apply.

Xiaoping (2002) raised concerns about the increase in tuition fees charged by most of the universities in and around Beijing. This could affect the increase or decrease in the number of foreign or international students applying for opportunities for higher education in other countries such as Malaysia.

Enaigbe and Olubor (2016) analysed the factors that influence the private cost of teaching in public tertiary institutions in South Nigeria during the 2014/2015 academic session. There are two categories of education cost where one is academic cost and the another is non-academic cost. Academic costs include examination fees, books, admission fees, project/assignment costs, student handbook costs, faculty fees, stationary materials, practical materials and tools while non-academic costs are food, accommodation, transport, entertainment, snacks, medical, laundry, identity card, damages and club/societies.

2.5.1 Academic Cost

The education cost is the most important factor in influencing the student's choice of choosing higher education institutions. Academic cost can be classified into a few categories as per below:

- a) Tuition fees
- b) Registration fees
- c) Deposit fees
- d) Facility fees
- e) Insurance Premium fees
- f) Library fees
- g) Incident fees

As the fee for schooling increases, enrolment tariffs tend to fall (Leisie and Brinkman, 1987). Parents are concerned that rising costs of education would affect the selection of universities for their children's higher education but on the other side, the rise in tuition fees is strongly supported by the academicians because they benefit from this increase as they will get a better salary pay and other perks (Yusuf, 2017).

2.5.2 Non-Academic Fees

The cost of education can only be school fees, or the cost of living and travel expenses together with tuition fees in a foreign country. Non-academic fees can be categorised as per below:

- a) Accommodation
- b) Food
- c) Clothing and laundry

- d) Mobile phone bills and utilities
- e) Transportation
- f) Personal expenses

Foreign students are not allowed to work full-time when studying at any Malaysian higher education institution and therefore need to consider their living expenses during their duration of study. Many studies have indicated that the cost of education is significant (Wagner and Fard, 2009).

2.6 Influence of Family and Peers

A family is a mix of marital and blood ties that produces its own kids. A traditional family is held by the primary bond of emotional, love and care (Collins, 1998). Ismail, Lew, Chen, Lim and Ng (2007) said outside factors like third parties could influence the decisions of the students to pursue higher education. The third party refers to the influence of the parent or of the family. Kember, Ho and Hong (2010) established that the social influence is stronger in Asian rather than Western countries. The influence of parents was found to be a significant factor for students in deciding their institutions (Kusumwati, Yanamandram and Perera, 2010). The family expects their children to obtain a good education and gain valuable life experience.

It was reported that family therapy and recommendations were the most important factor, followed by peer advice (Baharun, 2006). Hossler, Schmit and Vesper (1999) noted that peers were equally important as parents when it comes to the decision to attend class. Based on Weiler (1994), peer pressure is a factor that influences the student's predisposition to go to college. It was also stated that family expectations

have a great influence on the decision made by the students to pursue their tertiary education (Pimpa, 2004).

Most students tend to pursue their higher education to fulfil their parents' wish. Students feel that it is their responsibility to bring up their family status through entry to high school. Family has been identified as an influencing factor for students in deciding to register for tertiary education. Family considerations include being a provider of resources, source of incentives for tertiary education and as a role model for their children (Chenoweth and Galliher, 2004).

Furthermore, it was also concluded that a person is more likely to want to go to college when the educational achievement of the parents is greater, the job status of the father is higher and when the parental motivation is higher (Paulsen, 1990). Students depend on the views of their parents and peers when making critical decisions regarding their tertiary education (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001).

Parents who have earned university education are capable of modelling and could put greater focus on children by instilling the importance of higher education (Chenoweth and Galliher, 2004). Parents or the family who give encouragement and support to their children would have a significant effect on their determination (Koe and Saring, 2012). In Haveman and Wolfe's (1995) view, the positive influence of family and parent support has showed a positive achievement in students' selection. Influence can be described as the ability to influence someone or something or the effect itself on the character, growth or actions. A student who communicates with other students

on the option of college plans has a higher likelihood of considering going to that college (Sia.M, 2011).

2.6.1 Influence of Parents

Parents are more intensively active in the learning of their children (Wikelund, 2006). Nonetheless, students also appear to make clear choices by approaching their parents and at the same time avoid confusion. Nevertheless, the characteristics of a person, socially condition by family influence, social positions and relationships, and characteristics of a social role, are also responsible for the decision making of career preference where it is shows that students' perception of parental expectations are an important factor in career choice (Kumar, 2016).

Based on Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), parental control takes two forms: motivational and proactive. During the motivational stage, parents ensure their children get the high educational level and at the proactive level, parents are involved in school matters and college debate plans (Perna, 2000).

2.6.2 Influence of Peers Attending College

Based on the study done in the year 2000, the views of former students when selecting universities weigh heavily on the minds of college applicants (Hayden, 2000). To some extent, peers also control the college selection of students. Fernandez (2010) stated that the relationship between student contact with other college-bound students and their involvement in college is studied. This study indicates that the more a student communicates with other students about the college plan, the more likely that the student will contemplate going to college.

2.6.3 Influence of Peers

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) stated that about 27% of the students turned to their families and friends for their higher education studies. There are two sources which can be referred to, which are formal sources and informal sources. Formal sources are less convenient to obtain data such as agents, consultants, and university staff than casual bases such as peers, families, neighbour and relatives. However formal sources are more trusted if the product is viewed as highly technical and highly involved.

2.7 Summary

This chapter discussed the relevant literature review. There are a few attributes which contribute to the students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. These attributes are categorised into three main criteria as per below:

- a) Higher education institution reputations (university ranking order, university branding, and high employment rates of the graduates from the institutions).
- b) Education cost (academic cost and non-academic cost).
- c) Influence of family and peers (Influence of parents, Influence of peers attending college, and influence of peers).

Thus, with these factors, we can identify the significant aspects which influence student enrolment of higher education learning in Malaysia.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Throughout this chapter, we will discuss the research methodology, theoretical framework, hypotheses development, research design and measurement, data collection procedures, sampling techniques, technique of data analysis and summary.

3.2 Research Methodology

Research methodology is one of the most important parts in the research. It helps researchers to solve the research problem systematically. The research methodology explains the strategies that needs to be conducted in the research. Research can be described as an activity involving finding out the solution which is known in a more or less systematic way (Walliman, 2011).

Methodology is the philosophical context within which the analysis is carried out or the basis on which the analysis is focused (Rabiee, 2004). A review chapter on research methodology explains in depth the research methods, approaches and designs that illustrate those used in the report in explaining the preference by identifying the advantages of each approach and design while taking into account their practical applicability to our research (Gliner, 2011).

In this research, three main attributes were selected to analyse the research. The purpose was to investigate the relative importance of each factor that influence the

students' selection of private institutions in Malaysia. To be precise, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was selected to quantify each attribute. On top of that, the research methodology involves the learning of different techniques that can be used in the conduct of the research. It is a systematic way to solve a problem by considering how the investigation should be carried out.

Research methodology is a procedure where the researchers conduct their task by describing, explaining and predicting phenomena. With the research methodology, the information was gathered to measure each variable of the data. The purpose of this research was to design a proper working plan to carry out the study.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

A conceptual model comprises of several modules, classifications and current principles from the literature review. The conceptual model should demonstrate and explain the information which are relevant to the study. Based on the review of the readings and relevant investigation on the research study, the theoretical framework was designed. The selection of the theory depends on its suitability, ease of application and illustrative control.

There are a lot of attributes which can affect the students' selection of private higher learning institution such as the students' academic result, family background, peers' influence, university reputation, university academic qualification, university ranking, courses offered, financial background, students' preference, cost of the studies, location of the institutions, campus facilities, availability of financial aid and job opportunities.

Based on these factors in previous studies, our research focused on three main attributes. To design a theoretical framework, two important variables need to be identified as per below:

- a) Dependent Variable
- b) Independent Variable

The dependent variable is the variable that depends on other components that are measured. Based on this research, our dependent variable will be the students' selection of private institution in Malaysia. This variable changes according to the manipulation of the independent variable. The independent variable is the variable which will control the whole research. The dependent variable will be affected if there are changes in the independent variables. The independent variables based on this research will be higher education institutions' reputation, cost of education and influence of family and peers. Figure 3.1 shows the theoretical framework.

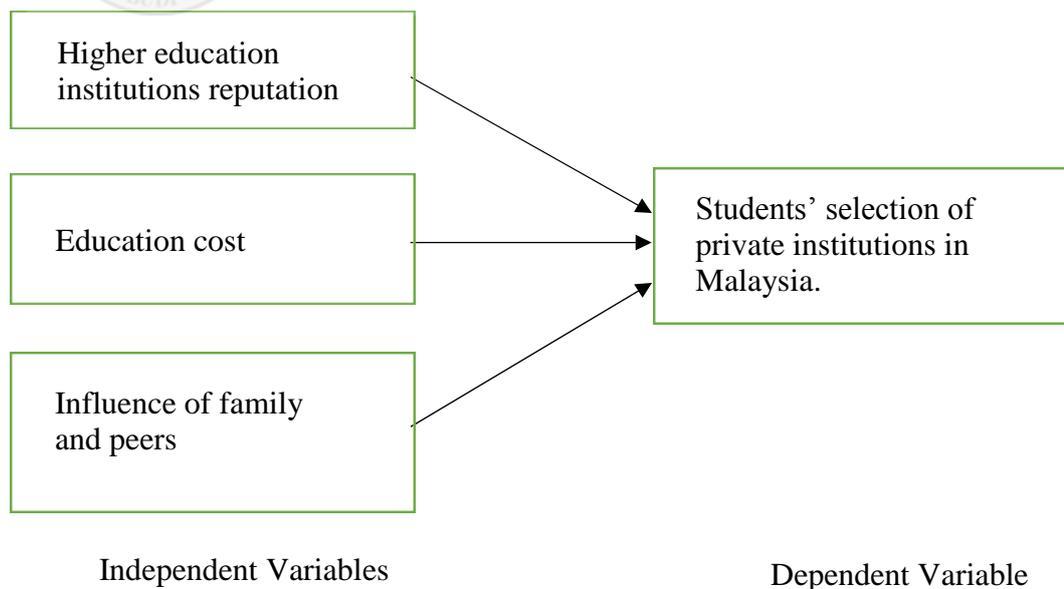


Figure 3.1
Theoretical Framework

3.4 Hypotheses Development

Quantitative research is a method of testing a hypothesis and making a conclusion by rejecting or not rejecting the null hypothesis (Rubin and Babbie, 2005). Hypotheses are the predictions that explain the relationship among the variables (Creswell, 2002). To draw the inference about the population from the sample study, a hypothesis needs a statistical method such as correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The hypotheses development in this research will provide the theoretical framework to investigate any relationship between the higher education institution's reputations, cost of education, influence of family and peers with the students' selection of private institutions. Figure 3.2 shows the diagram of hypotheses development.

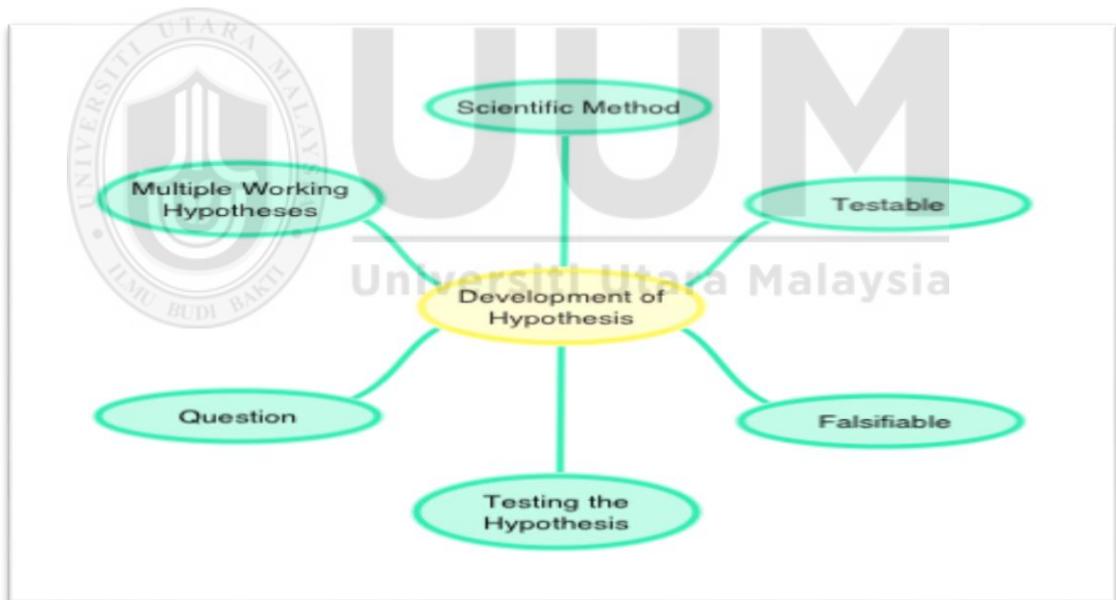


Figure 3.2
Diagram of Hypotheses Development

Based on this research, the hypotheses developed were:

Hypothesis 1: Higher education institutions' reputation has a significant effect on the students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 2: Cost of education has a significant effect on the students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

Hypothesis 3: Influence of family and peers has a significant effect on the students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

3.5 Research Design and Measurement

Research design is outlined as a system of ways and techniques chosen by a researcher to combine in an extremely logical manner varied elements of analysis such that the study's downside is treated with efficiency. It gives insights into how a certain approach is used to perform a research.

This research will be conducted as a correlation research because this study aims to investigate the relationship between higher education institutions' reputation, cost of education and influence of family and peers. This research consisted of data gathering method and investigation to determine the factors influencing the students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia through a questionnaire which was developed by Blake (2016).

In this research, the quantitative approach was used to measure the variables. In addition, the data collection was based on a group of individuals to describe the phenomenon by using the quantitative method whereby there is a probability to get detailed results with the correct population or sample by using the quantitative method (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Questionnaires were used as an intermediate for getting information because it is the easiest technique to collect information from the targeted

population. A questionnaire is described as the collection of information through questions and their responses from a sample of people (Ponto, 2015).

There are two parts in the questionnaire in which the first part dealt with the demographic details of the students which was designed based on a nominal scale such as age, gender, current education level, parents' education level and household income. These variables were believed to influence the selection of private institutions by students in the selection of their education platform. The second part consisted of the three independent variables and fifteen items under the independent variables which were calculated based on an ordinal scale. The questions were designed based on the five-point Likert scale.

This research used a close-ended questionnaire to easily measure variables such as the university's reputation, cost of education and influence of family and peers. The following subsections were discussed as per below. Table 3.1 shows the demographic profile:

Part A : Demographic Profile

Table 3.1
Demographic Profile

No	Item	Category
1	Age	18-20, 21-23, Above 24
2	Gender	Female, Male, Prefer not to say
3	Current Education Level	Secondary School, Pre-University (Foundation or Diploma), Undergraduate (Degree), Postgraduate (Master or PhD)
4	Parents' Education Level	SPM, Degree, Master, PhD
5	Household Income	RM 0-RM 2000, RM 2001-RM 4000, RM 4001-RM 6000, Above RM 6001

Part B : Three Main Attributes and Sub-Attributes

Table 3.2

Three Main Attributes and Sub-Attributes

No	Variables	Items
1	University Reputation	This institution has a good academic reputation
		The lecturer have a good academic qualification
		I have heard of successful graduates from the institutions
		There are quality students
		Strong global brand name
		Top ranking national and international university
2	Cost of education	Because the fee is comparatively affordable
		Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable
		Lower and cheaper price of basic foods
		Lower and cheaper price of rental
		Lower and cheaper price of basic necessities
3	Influence of family and peers	My parent(s) prefer the institutions
		Someone recommended the institutions to me
		My friend(s) is /was/were studying in the institutions
		My relative(s) is /was/were studying in the institutions

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection is the process of collecting and evaluating information in a defined and systematic fashion on variables of interest, which helps one to answer specified research questions, test hypotheses and analyse results in all fields of study including physical and social sciences, humanities, business and others (Kothari, 2004).

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2013), there are a few data collecting methods that can be used to get an accurate measurement in the research studies. The methods are as per below:

- a) Observation
- b) Personal interview
- c) Telephone interview
- d) Experiments
- e) Questionnaire and survey distribution (by hand, fax and email).

There are a number of methods used to collect the data but the most popular distributions are questionnaire, statement and discussion (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). This study applied a measurable technique. Figure 3.3 shows the diagram of primary data collection methods.

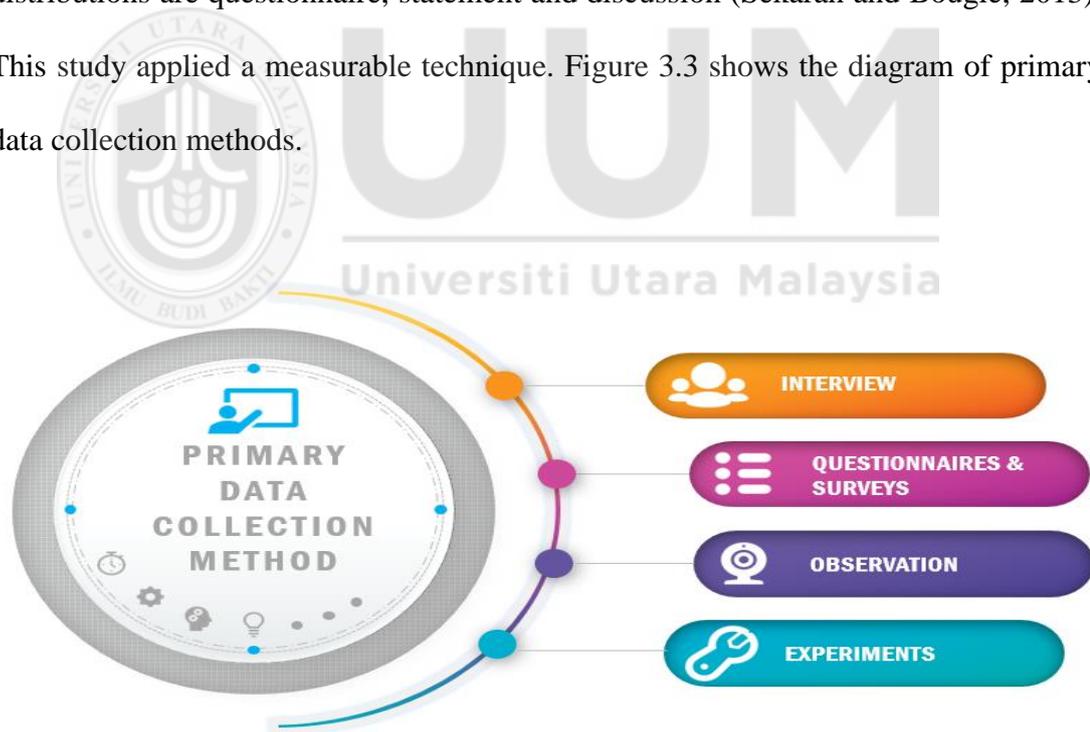


Figure 3.3
Diagram of Primary Data Collection Methods

Questionnaire is the appropriate option as the target population will have to fill up the questions based on the selection of the answers given. A set of questionnaires were

distributed through online media such as WhatsApp, email and Facebook. These methods were used because of the analysis method and the ease of quantification. The measured components must be clearly named based on the properties of the variables that were carried out for this research. In this research, the researcher directly administered the questionnaires. A set of questionnaires were delivered to the target population. The sampling method will be discussed in the next section.

3.7 Sampling Techniques

There are two main techniques involved in acquiring samples in a research, namely probability and non-probability sampling. To be specific, these techniques principally varies in the involvement of random selection which plays a major role in determining the odds representing a population or a group of people. Probability sampling uses techniques which involve large population samples using the probability method where the participants are chosen randomly. In contrast, non-probability sampling is carried out in a way that the selected samples are subjective based on the researcher's judgement. Both techniques have their own set of advantages as well as disadvantages which should be explored during this research. Figure 3.4 shows the diagram of sampling methods.

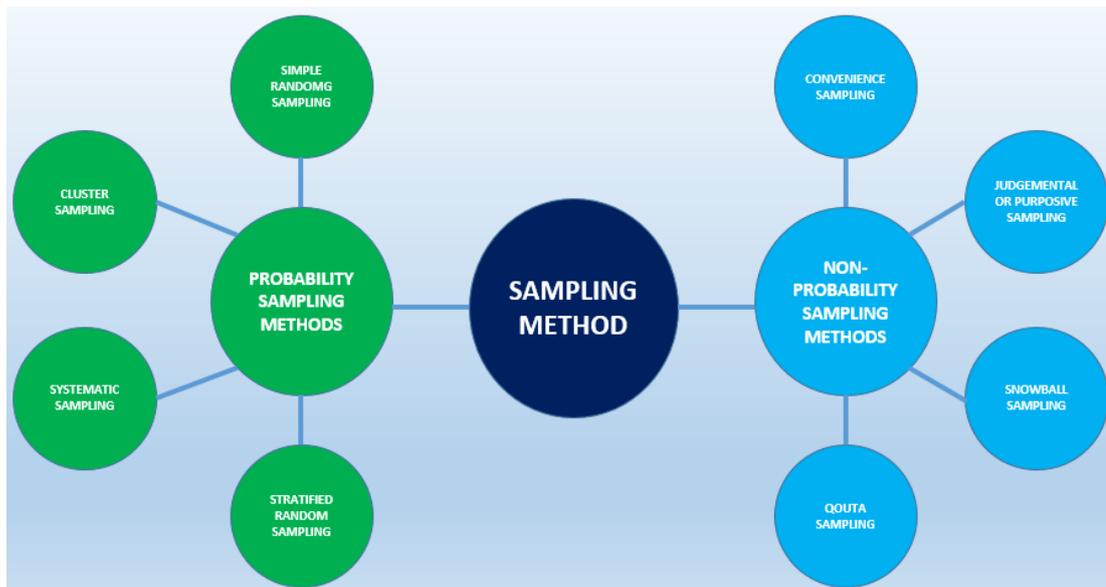


Figure 3.4
Diagram of Sampling Methods

The first step in the process was to obtain the full list of private institutions in the Klang Valley via an online portal to determine the potential participants of private institutions. The next step was to request permission from the universities to seek assistance to facilitate data collection. To illustrate further, the researcher interacted with the management by means of emails and telephone to distribute the questionnaire through emails.

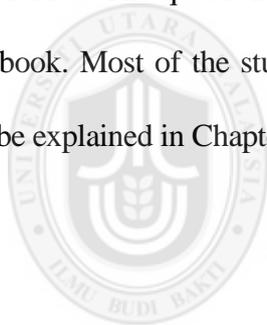
The respondents were categorised into three groups. The first group consisted of those who have completed high school and are currently pursuing their pre-university programs such as foundation, matriculation, GCE A Level, SAM, Canadian pre-university courses, STPM, diploma and those currently preparing to enrol in higher education institutions. The second group consisted of existing students already enrolled in private institutions in the bachelor's degree program. The third group consisted of students who already completed their undergraduate program and are pursuing their postgraduate program.

3.8 Technique of Data Analysis

In this research, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for data analysis. The data is presented in percentages where statistical analysis was used. Pearson correlation was used to understand the connection between the students' selection of private institutions. As a measure for the estimation and contribution of independent variables and the mediator of the independent variable, multiple regressions were used.

3.9 Summary

This research used quantitative approach and was carried out in selected private universities. The questionnaires were distributed to the target population via email and Facebook. Most of the students responded to the survey and the findings of the survey will be explained in Chapter Four.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Based on the details mentioned in Chapter Three, all the data collected based on the information of the respondents were analysed. This is followed by an analysis on the factors influencing students' selection of private institutions which are higher education institutions' reputation, cost of education and influence of family and peers.

4.2 Data Reliability

The findings from the data stated that there are three variables suitable for this study. The Cronbach's alpha value for higher education institution reputation was 0.814. As for the cost of education, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.869 and for the influence of family and peers, the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.868. All the variables were acceptable as the Cronbach's alpha value was more than 0.6. This showed that all the data in this research was adequate and acceptable in this study.

Table 4.1
Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	No of Items
Higher Education Institutions Reputation	.814	6
Cost of Education	.869	5
Influence of family and peers	.868	4

4.3 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1 showed the data reliability. Descriptive statistics used tables, figures, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and mean to describe the data analysis in the simplest way.

4.4 Respondents' Profile

A total of 225 questionnaires were distributed to the private institutions in the Klang Valley. However only 200 students responded to the survey which meant a 88.89% response rate. The respondents were students who are currently pursuing their pre-university studies and students who are already pursuing their tertiary studies in higher education level. These students were selected and analysed based on their age, gender, current education level, parent's education level and household income. The students' demographic profile data is essential when we discuss the factors which contributed to the students' selection of their preferred institutions.

4.4.1 Age Group

The result for the age group of respondents (students) showed that 98 respondents (49.0%) were in the age group of 18-20, followed by 38 respondents (19.0%) in the age group of 21-23 and 64 respondents (32.0%) who were above 24 years. This shows that the age group of 18-20 years old had the highest response rates to the survey, where pre-university students fall in this category. Table 4.2 shows the age group.

Table 4.2
The Details of Age Group

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage
18-20	98	49.0
21-23	38	19.0
24+	64	32.0
Total	200	100.0

4.4.2 Gender

Based on the result, it showed that 116 respondents (58%) were female and the balance 84 respondents (42%) were male. More female respondents participated in this survey compared to male.

Table 4.3
The Elements of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	116	58.0
Male	84	42.0
Total	200	100.0

4.4.3 Current Education Level

The result for the current education level of the students showed that five respondents (2.5%) were SPM holders, followed by 112 respondents (56%) with the pre-university education level (Foundation/Diploma). The remaining 68 respondents (34%) and 15 respondents (7.5%) were undergraduates (Degree) and postgraduates (Master/PhD), respectively. Table 4.4 shows the current education level of students.

Table 4.4
The Elements of Current Education Level of Students

Current Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary School	5	2.5
Pre-University (Foundation/Diploma)	112	56.0
Undergraduate (Degree)	68	34.0
Postgraduate (Master/PhD)	15	7.5
Total	200	100.0

4.4.4 Parents' Education Level

The result for the parents' education level of the students showed that 137 of the respondents' parents (68.5%) were SPM holders followed by 51 (25.5%) who were degree holders. The other 11 of the respondents' parents (5.5%) had a Master's qualification and only one of the respondents' parents (0.5%) was a PhD holder. Table 4.5 shows the parents' education level.

Table 4.5
The Elements of Parents' Education Level

Current Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
SPM	137	68.5
Degree	51	25.5
Master	11	5.5
PhD	1	0.5
Total	200	100.0

4.4.5 Household Income

From the sample collected, the household income of the respondents were analysed and discussed here. The result showed that 36 respondents (18.0%) had a household income between RM 0 to RM 2,000, followed by 73 respondents (36.5%) had between RM 2,001 to RM 4,000, 37 respondents (18.5%) had between RM 4,001 to

RM 6,000 and 54 respondents (27.0%) had more than RM 6,001. Table 4.6 shows the students' household income.

Table 4.6
The Detail of Students' Household Income

Household Income	Frequency	Percentage
RM 0 to RM 2,000	36	18.0
RM 2,001 to RM 4,000	73	36.5
RM 4,001 to RM 6,000	37	18.5
Above RM 6,001	54	27.0
Total	200	100.0

4.5 To determine the selection of higher education private institutions

In the selection of private universities, there were four items listed under this variable. The data showed that most of the respondents chose the statement "The environment of the universities achieves student's requirements" which were the responses of 82 respondents (41%) as the most important for consideration. This was followed by "The programme is accredited and approved by local accreditation and approval authorities" which were the responses of 80 respondents (40%) as very important, and extremely important with "The course provided suits students' passion and qualification".

Besides that, the lowest mean was the statement "The programme is accredited and approved by local accreditation and approval authorities" ($M=2.135$, $SD=0.99$) and the highest mean was the statement "The environment of the universities achieves student's requirements" ($M=1.85$, $SD=0.794$). Thus, the overall mean and standard deviation were 1.965 and 0.722, respectively. Table 4.7 shows the selection of private universities.

Table 4.7
The Selection of Private Institutions

Statement	EI	VI	N	SI	NI	Mean	SD
The course provided suits students passion and qualification	80 (40%)	69 (34.5%)	47 (23.5%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	1.885	0.869
The environment of the universities achieve students 'requirement	76 (38%)	82 (41%)	38 (19%)	4 (2%)	0 (0%)	1.85	0.794
The lecturer give quality academic advice and guidance	73 (36.5%)	66 (33%)	53 (26.5%)	6 (3%)	2 (1%)	1.99	0.918
The programme is accredited and approved by local accreditation and approval authorities	58 (29%)	80 (40%)	44 (22%)	13 (6.5%)	5 (2.5%)	2.135	0.99
Overall						1.965	0.722

4.6 To Determine the Higher Education Institutions' Reputation

As for higher education reputation variables, there were six items listed under this variable. Based on the observations, the majority of the respondents selected the statement "The institutions has a good academic reputation" which were by 101 respondents (50.5%) as an extremely important factor to be considered followed by "The lecturers have good academic qualification" which were by 99 respondents (49.5%). Another statement "There are quality students" was the responses by 98 respondents (49.0%) as a very important factor to be considered, followed by "Top ranking national and international university" (48.5%).

Besides that, the lowest mean was the statement "Strong global brand name" (M=1.995, SD=0.888) and the highest mean was the statement "The institution has a

good academic reputation” (M=1.6, SD=0.672). The overall mean and standard deviation of the higher education institution reputation were 1.839 and 0.57, respectively. Table 4.8 shows the higher education institutions’ reputation.

Table 4.8
The Details of Higher Education Institutions’ Reputation

Statement	EI	VI	N	SI	N I	Mean	SD
This institution has a good academic reputation	101 (50.5%)	78 (39%)	21 (10.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1.6	0.672
The lecturers have good academic qualification	99 (49.5%)	74 (37%)	24 (12%)	2 (1%)	1 (0.5%)	1.66	0.766
I have heard of successful graduates from the institutions	69 (34.5%)	85 (42.5%)	44 (22%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	1.9	0.789
There are quality students	57 (28.5%)	98 (49%)	37 (18.5%)	6 (3%)	2 (1%)	1.99	0.826
Strong global brand name	63 (31.5%)	87 (43.5%)	42 (21%)	4 (2%)	4 (2%)	1.995	0.888
Top ranking national and international university	66 (33%)	97 (48.5%)	32 (16%)	3 (1.5%)	2 (1%)	1.89	0.794
Overall						1.839	0.57

4.7 To Identify Cost of Education

For the cost of education variables, there were five items listed under this variable. Based on the results, the statement that was mainly chosen by the respondents was “Because the fee is comparatively affordable” which was by 90 respondents (45%) as an extremely important factor to be considered followed by “Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable” which was the response by 86 respondents

(43%). Another statement “Lower and cheaper price of rental” was the response by 82 respondents (41%) as a very important factor to be considered, followed by “Lower and cheaper price of basic necessities” (39%).

Besides that, the lowest mean was the statement “Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods” (M=2.155, SD=1.012) and the highest mean was the statement “Because the fee is comparatively affordable” (M=1.74, SD=0.771). The overall mean and standard deviation of the higher education cost were 1.912 and 0.726, respectively. Table 4.9 shows the higher education cost.

Table 4.9
The Details of Higher Education Cost

Statement	EI	VI	N	SI	NI	Mean	SD
Because the fee is comparatively affordable	90 (45%)	74 (37%)	34 (17%)	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	1.74	0.771
Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable	86 (43%)	83 (41.5%)	27 (13.5%)	4 (2%)	0 (0%)	1.745	0.763
Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods	61 (30.5%)	69 (34.5%)	54 (27%)	10 (5%)	6 (3%)	2.155	1.012
Lower and cheaper price of rental	74 (37%)	82 (41%)	33 (16.5%)	6 (3%)	5 (2.5%)	1.93	0.937
Lower and cheaper price of basic necessities	71 (35.5%)	78 (39%)	38 (19%)	8 (4%)	5 (2.5%)	1.99	0.966
Overall						1.912	0.726

4.8 To Identify the Influence of Family and Peers

In the influence of family and peers' variables, there were four items listed under this variable. Based on the collection of data, majority of the students chose the statement “Someone recommended the institutions to me” which were the responses of 77

respondents (45%) that was neutral to be considered, followed by “My parent(s) prefer the institutions” by 70 respondents (35%). Another statement “My friends(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions” was the response by 52 respondents (26%) as a very important factor to be considered, followed by “My relative (s) is/was/were studying in the institutions” (21.5%).

Besides that, the lowest mean was the statement “My friends(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions” (M=3.09, SD=1.272) and the highest mean was the statement “My parents(s) prefer the institutions” (M=2.555, SD=1.105). The overall mean and standard deviation of the influence of family and peers were 2.908 and 1.012, respectively. Table 4.10 shows the influence of family and peers.

Table 4.10
The Details of Influence of Family and Peers

Statement	EI	VI	N	SI	NI	Mean	SD
My parent(s) prefer the institutions	35 (17.5%)	65 (32.5%)	70 (35%)	14 (7%)	16 (8%)	2.555	1.105
Someone recommended the institutions to me	21 (10.5%)	62 (31%)	77 (38.5%)	18 (9%)	22 (11%)	2.79	1.105
My friend(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions	19 (9.5%)	52 (26%)	65 (32.5%)	20 (10%)	44 (22%)	3.09	1.272
My relative (s) is /was/were studying in the institutions	19 (9.5%)	43 (21.5%)	66 (33%)	23 (11.5%)	49 (24.5%)	3.2	1.287
Overall						2.908	1.012

4.9 To Determine the Rank of Factors Influencing Students' Selection of Private Institutions

The factors influencing students' selection consisted of three factors which were university reputation, cost of education and influence of family and peers. Based on the summarised ranking of factors influencing the student's selection in Table 4.11, the most important factor influencing the students' selection was university reputation (M=1.839, SD=0.57) followed by the cost of education (M=1.912, SD=0.726). Meanwhile, the least important was the influence of family and peers (M=2.908, SD=1.012).

Table 4.11
Rank of Factors Influencing Students' Selection

Factors	Mean	SD	Rank
University Reputation	1.839	0.57	1
Cost of education	1.912	0.726	2
Influence of family and peers	2.908	1.012	3

Table 4.12 presents the five most important items rated by respondents. The items that were related to the university reputation were most prominently represented in the five most important items. Based on the findings, the first most important was "This institution has a good academic reputation" (M=1.6, SD=0.672), followed by "The lecturers have good academic qualifications" (M=1.66, SD=0.766) from the university reputation and "Because the fee is comparatively affordable" (M=1.74, SD=0.771) from the cost of education. Next was the statement "Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable" (M=1.745, SD=0.763) and "Top ranking national and international university" (M=1.89, SD=0.794) from the university reputation.

Table 4.12

Five Most Important Item Factors Influencing Students' Selection

Statement	Factors	Mean	SD	Rank
This institution has a good academic reputation	UR	1.6	0.672	1
The lecturers have good academic qualifications	UR	1.66	0.766	2
Top ranking national and international university	UR	1.89	0.794	5
Because the fee is comparatively affordable	CE	1.74	0.771	3
Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable	CE	1.745	0.763	4

Table 4.13 presents the five least important items rated by respondents. The items that influence family and peers were most prominently represented in the five least important items. Based on the findings, the first least important was “My relative(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions” (M=3.2, SD=1.287) followed by “My friends(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions” (M=3.09, SD=1.272) and “Someone recommend the institution to me” (M=2.79, SD=1.105) from the influence of family and peers. Meanwhile, the fifth least important was “Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods” (M=2.155, SD=1.012) from the cost of education.

Table 4.13

Five Least Important Item Factors Influencing Students' Selection

Statement	Factors	Mean	SD	Rank
Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods	CE	2.155	1.012	5
My parent(s) prefer the institutions	IFP	2.555	1.105	4
Someone recommended the institutions to me	IFP	2.79	1.105	3
My friend(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions	IFP	3.09	1.272	2
My relative (s) is /was/were studying in the institutions	IFP	3.2	1.287	1

4.10 To Determine the Association of Factors Influencing Student's Selection

Table 4.14 displays the results of the overall relationship between factors influencing student's selection. The Pearson correlation showed that students' selection was positively significant with the cost of education ($r=0.237$, $p=0.0001$) but was not significant with university reputation ($r=0.077$, $p=0.2800$) and influence of family and peers ($r=-0.039$, $p=0.582$). Besides that, university reputation was positively significant with the cost of education ($r=0.400$, $p=0.000$) and influence of family and peers ($r=0.240$, $p=0.001$). Next, the cost of education was not significant with the influence of family and peers ($r=0.116$, $p=0.101$).

Table 4.14
Relationship Between Factors Influencing Student's Selection

		Students' Selection	Reputation	Education	Influencer
Student Selection	Pearson Correlation	1	0.077	0.237**	-0.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.280	0.001	0.582
	N	200	200	200	200
Reputation	Pearson Correlation	0.077	1	0.400**	0.240**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.280		0.000	0.001
	N	200	200	200	200
Education	Pearson Correlation	0.237**	0.400**	1	0.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000		0.101
	N	200	200	200	200
Influencer	Pearson Correlation	-0.039	0.240**	0.116	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.582	0.001	0.101	
	N	200	200	200	200

Table 4.15 shows the sample of student selection. Based on the ANOVA test, the overall students' selection was significant [F (3, 196) =4.220, p < 0.05]. The multiple regression results in Table 4.16 showed that the cost of education was significantly related to the students' selection. This means that there is a relationship between cost of education with students' selection. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) was 0.246. The cost of education explained that 24.6% of the variance was of the students' selection. Meanwhile, the R² (6.1%) of the students' selection was mainly due to the cost of education and 93.9% indicated another factor. However, university reputation and influence of family and peers showed no significance with the students' selection at p>0.05.

Table 4.15
ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.302	3	2.101	4.220	0.006 ^b
	Residual	97.578	196	0.498		
	Total	103.880	199			

Table 4.16
Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.647	0.213		7.745	0.000
	University reputation	-0.008	0.098	-0.006	-0.079	0.937
	Cost of education	0.246	0.075	0.247	3.271	0.001
	Influence of family and peers	-0.047	0.051	-0.066	-0.932	0.353

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Five consists of a detailed discussion about the analysis carried out in Chapter Four and the conclusion of the study was determined by the findings gathered through the research findings. Based on the results, suggestions will be given to the private institutions of higher learning recruiters and marketing team to gain some ideas on how to plan their marketing strategies in line with the needs and expectations of the students. The research contributions are discussed in terms of theoretical, methodological and practical approaches. This study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

- a) How does higher education institutions' reputation influence the students' selection of private institutions?
- b) How does the cost of education influence the students' selection of private institutions?
- c) How do family and peers influence the students' selection of private institutions?

The limitation of the study refers to the restrictions encountered when this research was conducted. There are two categories of recommendations proposed in this research whereby the first one is from the people who were involved in this study and secondly the suggestion which will be helpful for future research. The summary of this chapter describes the outcome from the data and how the next study can be carried out through this research.

5.2 Discussion

Questionnaire's psychometric properties were measured by the measurement of the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient and an item-to-total correlation. According to Preston and Colman (2000), reliability is important to ensure the stability and quality of the research method. Before continuing with further research, it was necessary to perform the reliability test. The Cronbach's alpha varies from 0 to 1 in which the value closer to 1 implies greater stability and consistency, but the threshold value of 0.60 was set by the researchers for basic research (Nunnally, 1978). The effect of Cronbach's alpha for the instrument used in the current study is shown in Table 5.1. Results indicated that all the readings were adequate as the alpha value was more than 0.6 which indicated the appropriate accuracy and stability of the instrument.

Table 5.1
Cronbach's Alpha Value

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	No of Items
Higher education institutions reputation	.814	6
Cost of education	.869	5
Influence of family and peers	.868	4

Based on the ranking orders, higher education institutions' reputation was the leading influential factor followed by the cost of education and lastly the influence of family and peers. Higher education reputation plays a huge part in the selection of the higher education platform.

5.2.1 Higher Education Institutions' Reputation

For students with a high likelihood of having employment immediately after graduation, the reputation of the private university is very significant. Due to the university's excellent reputation, the recruiter will have a good impression of the students graduating from this university because of their results. For potential students, the reputation of the institutions is one of the factors which will guarantee a job placement once they complete their preferred course. Institutions will be extra cautious to ensure these characteristics are not only in place, but also obvious to students before the final university selection is made.

Students are satisfied when the lecturers are able to provide tasks related to their course with quality lecture notes, emphasis on the objective of the course, organise various types of class activities, ensure fairness in marking examination, providing useful feedback, punctuality and delivers clear and knowledgeable lectures. Based on our data analysis, having a lecturer with a good academic qualification can be one of the factors students will consider when they select their choice of private institution.

The ranking of the university decides the position of the university by ranking order when compared to other universities. The quality of enrolled students correlates with how well a university performs in the rankings. For example, students with good academic records prefer to enrol in highly ranked institutions which are perceived to offer better education or more valued programs. Students prefer to choose a higher education institution which has a top ranking order in the national and international arena to pursue their tertiary studies.

5.2.2 Cost of Education

The findings showed that the cost of education was the second most influential factor among students' selection of private institutions in Malaysia. Students need to consider the cost of education before they decide on their selected private institutions. Cost always plays a competitive role in attracting students to enrol in an institution. Students still need to consider the cost of education even though they obtain good results in their academic achievements. Students choose institutions that predominantly have affordable cost.

Education cost can be a barrier to students who are planning to pursue their tertiary studies. Most programmes in private institutions are expensive and students need to consider their ability to pay for the fees. Education cost is not only about tuition fees but also other expenses that may be incurred when the students want to pursue higher education. Students who have family support can consider enrolling in private institutions as their parents can support them financially.

Based on our data collection for the respondents' profile, the highest household income showed that 73 respondents (36.5%) were from households with an income ranging from RM 2,001 to RM 4,000. This result showed that not all the students can afford to pay for their education fees in private institutions and students need to consider the education course before they enrol in their preferred private institution.

5.2.3 Influence of Family and Peers

Research findings showed that the influence of family and peers did not contribute to the students' decision-making. Students prefer to make their own decision when they

want to further their higher education studies. They rely on their own expectations and self-belief to choose their preferred institutions. Previously, family and peers play an important role in students' decision-making process. However, students nowadays have their own self-belief and can make their own judgement and decide what is best for their future enrolment. Data showed that the influence of family and peers was at the third ranking order out of the three variables which were selected for this research.

Family and peers may have limited knowledge about the current education level. Nowadays there are many higher education institutions in Malaysia that have their own programme contents and structures. Due to this, family and peers are unable to contribute much to the students' selection of higher education. Based on the data findings from the respondents' profile, 137 of the respondents' (68.5%) parents were SPM holders while only 63 of the respondents' (31.5%) parents had an education level of Degree and above. This data showed clearly that the students were unable to refer to their family members as their parents were unable to contribute to the student's decision-making process in choosing their preferred private institution of higher learning in Malaysia.

5.2.4 Pearson Correlation Test

Based on the Pearson correlation test, the students' selection was positively significant with the cost of education ($r=0.237$, $p=0.0001$) but not significant with university reputation ($r = 0.077$, $p = 0.2800$) and influence of family and peers ($r=-0.039$ $p = 0.582$). Table 5.2 shows the correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

Table 5.2
Correlation Between Variables

		Student Selection	Reputation	Education	Influencer
Student Selection	Pearson Correlation	1	0.077	0.237**	-0.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.280	0.001	0.582
	N	200	200	200	200

Based on the Pearson correlation data analysis, we can conclude our research questions below:

- a) How does higher education institutions' reputation influence the students' selection of private institutions?

There was no weighty relationship between higher education institutions' reputation with students' selection of private institutions.

- b) How does the cost of education influence the students' selection of private institutions?

There was a weighty relationship between the cost of education with the students' selection of private institutions.

- c) How do family and peers influence students' selection of private institutions?

There was no weighty relationship between family and peers with the students' selection of private institutions.

5.3 Implication

From this study, the decision-making process of the students' selection in choosing the higher education private institutions was analysed and the variables that students would have considered have been defined. These findings would have been useful for higher authorities in private higher education institutions to understand in detail about

the decision-making processes of students. In addition, all the necessary changes needed in their institution based on this study can be introduced and implemented.

The results from this research are useful in the promotion and recruiting of private higher education students. The marketing team can come up with new marketing plans or improvise them and increase the number of enrolments in their respective institutions.

These results can be seen as a turning stone for students to better understand what they need to consider before they choose their preferred private higher education institution. Students will have a clearer picture on the importance of each variable which will help them to make the decision.

5.4 Limitation of Study

The objective of this research was to explore the impacts of variables which influence the students' selection of higher education institutions. Due to the current implementation of the conditional movement control order, the ability to acquire data for this thesis was limited. The data obtained were from the private higher education institutions in the Klang Valley only. The result obtained was limited to the contribution of students from major parts of Malaysia and it cannot be considered as a representation of Malaysia as a whole due to the inability to include other major states such as Sabah and Sarawak.

Cost, distance and the number of institutions to be covered also showed that this research is limited. There are many private universities farther away and there is a large cost of communication and transportation to contact these universities. Only

private higher education institutions in the Klang Valley were chosen with minimal distance from one institution to another for cost-effectiveness and information collection quality. In addition, this research can be expanded by looking at other private higher education institutions in Malaysia.

Moreover, a sample size of 200 respondents was selected to contribute in the online survey. However, it was difficult to ensure a representative distribution of the Malaysian population as it requires a larger sample to carry out a statistical test in Malaysia.

5.5. Direction for Future Research

The sample size of the study may be enlarged by future researchers. Research can cover a larger geographical area, such as respondents from the east and west Malaysia. Based on these findings, the data will be useful and can be implemented for future researchers who are planning to conduct this study in other private institutions in Malaysia. In order to obtain an accurate result, researchers should come out with a proper design plan in where they can target the population for the research and the location of the target populations.

More variables should be included in upcoming studies to measure the intent of the students. The future research can include mitigating variables such as race, gender, socioeconomic factors status, aptitude or ability of students, previous academic performance and their effect on the program choice of students. This is because other than these three factors (higher education institutions reputation, cost of education and

influence of family and peers), quite a number of other variables can contribute to the students' selection of their preferred institutions

Furthermore, studies on the choice of program should be carried out in the qualitative perspective to evaluate the quality of the program based on the enrolled students' background and interest. This research can also be extended to a broader sample to monitor trends in students' choice of program.

Finally, it is possible to look at the selection criteria of foreign learners due to the large number of foreign students pursuing their higher education in Malaysia. The new growth in the educational scale of the Malaysian landscape and the upcoming forum for outstanding south-east tertiary education are determined by foreign students.

5.6 Recommendation

Higher education is a service industry where students are the main customers. The development of the education system has encouraged the development of private higher education institutions. Many stages and phases are involved in the decision to study in private institutions. Therefore, in the process of selecting a private institution and achieving the final result, many attributes are taken into consideration.

Based on the research of this study, both significant and least significant variables were recognised. As a result, private higher education institutions' authorities or management can make use of this and implement their current marketing strategies with the expectations of prospective students from these findings. For example, cost of education is considered as the main attribute that students will consider when

choosing a private higher learning institution. Private institutions may therefore discuss and come out with affordable course fees which can attract students to enrol in their preferred private institution in Malaysia.

Besides that, it is a necessity for the higher education institutions to correctly identify the factors that influence the tendency of the currently enrolled students. Higher education institutions should work on the fees of the education program with the role of price as a signal that high cost is associated with quality.

The cost of living in major cities have increased to a worrying level, thus making the process of financial management considerably difficult. Corresponding to this matter, private institutions have considerably increased the amount of tuition fees compared to the public institutions and is persistently increasing with consecutive years. Private institutions should consider setting up reasonable fees and allowing the payment process to be affordable by parents and students which will also increase the rate of enrolment in private institutions.

5.7 Conclusion

Based on the findings and the outcome of the results in this research, there are three attributes that are the main factors that influence the student's decision-making:

- a) Reputation of higher education
- b) Cost of education
- c) Influence of family and peers

Aside from equipping themselves in areas such as teaching and learning, universities should also consider improvement in other elements such as their reputation, cost of programs and promote their programs to potential students via the existing student population. Universities can no longer specialise and market themselves in one particular field and hope that students will enrol on the basis of legacy. Therefore, it is imperative that universities re-look into their marketing strategies.

All variables identified from these findings will influence the students according to their personal interest in finding the best money-valued institution. It has been explained clearly that in selecting a higher education institution, the best university is important for an individual. In addition, this research finding can also guide the Ministry of Education and institutions to get a better consideration of how the current generation of students seek, select and choose the best institutions which can provide them with good education. Referring to these findings, we can establish a proper way or guidance for the related institutions in offering a better service to students and concurrently improve their new enrolment figures.

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APPENDICES



I'm a student from University Utara Malaysia, pursuing MSc in Management. As part of my MSc. (Management) research thesis at University Utara Malaysia KL campus, I am conducting a survey to determine factors influencing students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

The purpose of this survey is to determine the factors which influence students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia which will provide a good platform for students to make their decision when they want to enroll in private institutions. Besides that, it will help the marketing department in private institutions to improve their marketing strategies and therefore increase their number of student intakes.

To ensure confidentiality, all the information provided in this survey is protected and confidential. Please do let me know if you want more details about this project or have any other doubts which I might not have addressed.

I will appreciate if you could complete following survey.

FACTORS INFLUENCING OF STUDENTS' SELECTION OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN MALAYSIA

Greetings everyone. I'm a student from Universiti Utara Malaysia based in KL Campus. This survey is meant for my research which intends to determine factors influencing of students' selection of private institutions of higher learning in Malaysia. The results obtained from your response will help the marketing department in private institutions to improve their marketing strategies and therefore increase their number of student intake. This survey is divide into two parts, the first part collects demographics information whereas the second part focuses on the independent variables of this study.

All the information provided in this survey is protected and confidential.

Name : Sivasanggiri a/p A.Nagarajah
Degree : Bachelor of Electronics Engineering (Hons) majoring in Telecommunication
Course : Master of Science (Management)
Institution : Universiti Utara Malaysia Kuala Lumpur

[Next](#)

FACTORS INFLUENCING OF STUDENTS' SELECTION OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN MALAYSIA

* Required

Rectangular Snip

Section A : Demographic Profile

This section is designed to collect respondents background. Please select the appropriate options.

Age *

- 18-20
- 21-23
- Above 24

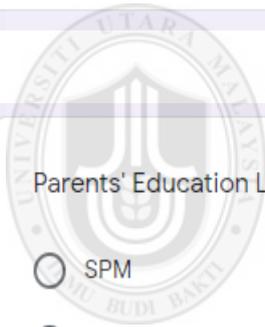
Gender

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

• Rectangular Snip

Current Education Level

- Secondary School
- Pre-University (Foundation/Diploma)
- Undergraduate (Degree)
- Postgraduate (Master/Phd)



UUM
Universiti Utara Malaysia

Parents' Education Level

- SPM
- Degree
- Master
- PHD

• Rectangular Snip

Household Income

- RM0-RM 2000
- RM 2001-RM 4000
- RM 4001-RM 6000
- Above RM 6001

FACTORS INFLUENCING OF STUDENTS' SELECTION OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN MALAYSIA

Section B : There are three main attributes and sub attributes which influence students' selection of Private Institutions of higher learning in Malaysia.

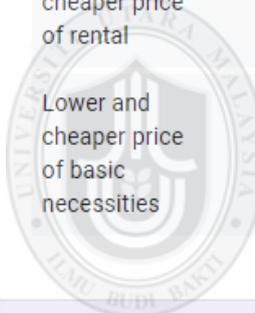
1. University reputation

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important
This institution has a good academic reputation	<input type="radio"/>				
The lecturer have good academic qualification	<input type="radio"/>				
I have heard of successful graduates from the institutions	<input type="radio"/>				
There are quality students	<input type="radio"/>				
Strong global brand name	<input type="radio"/>				
Top ranking national and international university	<input type="radio"/>				

Universiti Utara Malaysia

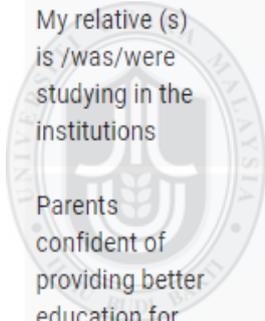
2. Cost of education

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Because the fee is comparatively affordable	<input type="radio"/>				
Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable	<input type="radio"/>				
Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods	<input type="radio"/>				
Lower and cheaper price of rental	<input type="radio"/>				
Lower and cheaper price of basic necessities	<input type="radio"/>				



3. Influence of family and peers

	Extremely Important	Very Important	Neutral	Somewhat Important	Not Important
My parent(s) prefer the institutions	<input type="radio"/>				
Someone recommended the institutions for me	<input type="radio"/>				
My friend(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions	<input type="radio"/>				
My relative (s) is /was/were studying in the institutions	<input type="radio"/>				
Parents confident of providing better education for their children's future success	<input type="radio"/>				



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1. Higher Education Reputation

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.814	6

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
This institution has a good academic reputation	9.4350	9.182	.508	.799
The lecturer have good academic qualification	9.3750	8.587	.563	.787
I have heard of successful graduates from the institutions	9.1350	8.308	.609	.777
There are quality students	9.0450	8.415	.543	.792
Strong global brand name	9.0400	7.878	.609	.778
Top ranking national and international university	9.1450	8.205	.630	.772

2. Cost of Education

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.869	5

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Because the fee is comparatively affordable	7.8200	9.736	.592	.865
Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable	7.8150	9.880	.567	.870
Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods	7.4050	7.961	.734	.832
Lower and cheaper price of rental	7.6300	8.063	.796	.814
Lower and cheaper price of basic necessities	7.5700	7.925	.794	.814

3. Influence of family and peers

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.868	4

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
My parent(s) prefer the institutions	9.0800	10.908	.586	.881
Someone recommended the institutions for me	8.8450	9.931	.755	.820
My friend(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions	8.5450	8.802	.793	.801
My relative (s) is /was/were studying in the institutions	8.4350	8.910	.760	.816

Demographic Profile

Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 18-20	98	49.0	32.0	32.0
21-23	38	19.0	19.0	51.0
24+	64	32.0	49.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Parents' Education Level

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid SPM	137	68.5	68.5	68.5
Degree	51	25.5	25.5	94.0
Master	11	5.5	5.5	99.5
PHD	1	.5	.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Current Education Level

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Secondary school	5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Pre-University (Foundation/Diploma)	68	34.0	34.0	36.5
Undergraduate (Degree)	112	56.0	56.0	92.5
Postgraduate (Master/Phd)	15	7.5	7.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Gender

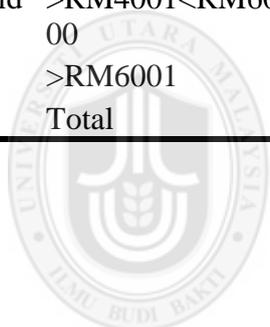
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	116	58.0	58.0	58.0
Male	84	42.0	42.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

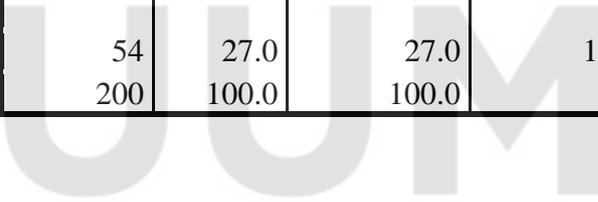
This institution has a good academic reputation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	101	50.5	50.5	50.5
Valid Very Important	78	39.0	39.0	89.5
Neutral	21	10.5	10.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Household Income

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
>RM0<RM2000	36	18.0	18.0	18.0
>RM2001<RM4000	73	36.5	36.5	54.5
Valid >RM4001<RM6000	37	18.5	18.5	73.0
>RM6001	54	27.0	27.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	




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Mean and Standard Deviation

Statistics

	This institution has a good academic reputation	The lecturer have good academic qualification	I have heard of successful graduates from the institutions	There are quality students	Strong global brand name	Top ranking national and international university
N Valid	200	200	200	200	200	200
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	1.6000	1.6600	1.9000	1.9900	1.9950	1.8900
Std. Deviation	.67250	.76638	.78938	.82663	.88821	.79439

The lecturer have good academic qualification

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Extremely Important	99	49.5	49.5	49.5
Very Important	74	37.0	37.0	86.5
Neutral	24	12.0	12.0	98.5
Somewhat Important	2	1.0	1.0	99.5
Not Important	1	.5	.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

There are quality students

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Extremely Important	57	28.5	28.5	28.5
Very Important	98	49.0	49.0	77.5
Neutral	37	18.5	18.5	96.0
Somewhat Important	6	3.0	3.0	99.0
Not Important	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Statistics

		Because the fee is comparatively affordable	Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable	Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods	Lower and cheaper price of rental	Lower and cheaper price of basic necessities
N	Valid	200	200	200	200	200
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1.7400	1.7450	2.1550	1.9300	1.9900
Std. Deviation		.77161	.76347	1.01297	.93782	.96673

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely Important	90	45.0	45.0	45.0
	Very Important	74	37.0	37.0	82.0
	Neutral	34	17.0	17.0	99.0
	Somewhat Important	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Strong global brand name

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely Important	63	31.5	31.5	31.5
	Very Important	87	43.5	43.5	75.0
	Neutral	42	21.0	21.0	96.0
	Somewhat Important	4	2.0	2.0	98.0
	Not Important	4	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0	

I have heard of successful graduates from the institutions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	69	34.5	34.5	34.5
Very Important	85	42.5	42.5	77.0
Neutral	44	22.0	22.0	99.0
Somewhat Important	1	.5	.5	99.5
Not Important	1	.5	.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Top ranking national and international university

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	66	33.0	33.0	33.0
Very Important	97	48.5	48.5	81.5
Neutral	32	16.0	16.0	97.5
Somewhat Important	3	1.5	1.5	99.0
Not Important	2	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Because the cost of the programme is considerably affordable

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely Important	86	43.0	43.0
	Very Important	83	41.5	84.5
	Neutral	27	13.5	98.0
	Somewhat Important	4	2.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0

Lower and cheaper prices of basic foods

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely Important	61	30.5	30.5
	Very Important	69	34.5	65.0
	Neutral	54	27.0	92.0
	Somewhat Important	10	5.0	97.0
	Not Important	6	3.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0

Lower and cheaper price of rental

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extremely Important	74	37.0	37.0
	Very Important	82	41.0	78.0
	Neutral	33	16.5	94.5
	Somewhat Important	6	3.0	97.5
	Not Important	5	2.5	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	100.0

Lower and cheaper price of basic necessities

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	71	35.5	35.5	35.5
Very Important	78	39.0	39.0	74.5
Neutral	38	19.0	19.0	93.5
Somewhat Important	8	4.0	4.0	97.5
Not Important	5	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Statistics

	My parent(s) prefer the institutions	Someone recommended the institutions for me	My friend(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions	My relative(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions
N	200	200	200	200
Valid	200	200	200	200
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.5550	2.7900	3.0900	3.2000
Std. Deviation	1.10593	1.10545	1.27279	1.28775

My parent(s) prefer the institutions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	35	17.5	17.5	17.5
Very Important	65	32.5	32.5	50.0
Neutral	70	35.0	35.0	85.0
Somewhat Important	14	7.0	7.0	92.0
Not Important	16	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Someone recommended the institutions for me

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	21	10.5	10.5	10.5
Very Important	62	31.0	31.0	41.5
Neutral	77	38.5	38.5	80.0
Somewhat Important	18	9.0	9.0	89.0
Not Important	22	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

My friend(s) is/was/were studying in the institutions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	19	9.5	9.5	9.5
Very Important	52	26.0	26.0	35.5
Neutral	65	32.5	32.5	68.0
Somewhat Important	20	10.0	10.0	78.0
Not Important	44	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

My relative (s) is /was/were studying in the institutions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Extremely Important	19	9.5	9.5	9.5
Very Important	43	21.5	21.5	31.0
Neutral	66	33.0	33.0	64.0
Somewhat Important	23	11.5	11.5	75.5
Not Important	49	24.5	24.5	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Correlation

		Student Selection	Reputation	Education cost	Influencer
Student Selection	Pearson Correlation	1	0.077	.237**	-0.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.280	0.001	0.582
	N	200	200	200	200
Reputation	Pearson Correlation	0.077	1	.400**	.240**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.280		0.000	0.001
	N	200	200	200	200
Education cost	Pearson Correlation	.237**	.400**	1	0.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000		0.101
	N	200	200	200	200
Influencer	Pearson Correlation	-0.039	.240**	0.116	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.582	0.001	0.101	
	N	200	200	200	200



ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.302	3	2.101	4.220	.006b
	Residual	97.578	196	0.498		
	Total	103.880	199			

Multiple Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.647	0.213		7.745	0.000
	University Reputation	-0.008	0.098	-0.006	-0.079	0.937
	Education Cost	0.246	0.075	0.247	3.271	0.001
	Influence family and peers	-0.047	0.051	-0.066	-0.932	0.353



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