

# Exploring the Factors that Influence the Hospitality and Tourism Management Students' Choice of Higher Education Institution: A Survey-Based Analysis / Philippines

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the factors influencing hospitality and tourism management student's preference of institution of higher learning in Bulacan, Philippines. In a descriptive- correlational design, the research aimed to identify and analyze key determinants to improve educational offerings and attract potential students. Data was gathered using standardized questionnaires administered to representative samples. . A survey of 353 hospitality and tourism management students using purposive sampling combines random sampling from the top 5 higher education institutions in the Philippines, published in the 2024 uniRank university ranking of 19 Central Luzon institutions of higher learning. Quantitative data was gathered through self-made questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis. The findings reveal that the cost of education, standard of education, learning resources, institutional reputation, and social influences hold significant weight in a student's decision-making process. These insights hold valuable implications for HEIs seeking to attract and retain HTM students. Additionally, enhancing scholarship offerings, upgrading facilities and improving digital presence may further increase institutional appeal. Moreover, the results can serve as benchmark for other institutions across ASEAN regions, promoting cross-border collaboration to strengthen tourism education and workforce development in Southeast Asia. Participants were fully informed about the study, assured that their responses would remain confidential, and reminded that joining was completely voluntary.

**Keywords:** Academic Reputation, Decision-Making Criteria, Higher Education Institution, Survey-Based Analysis, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Hospitality and tourism industry is an engaging and fast developing industry that is very instrumental in the economy of the world. This industry in the Philippines is particularly important in national development in that it provides employment opportunities and also it helps to foster entrepreneurship (Department of Tourism, 2023). This created a greater need of well-educated and skilled human resources in hospitality and tourism management making higher education institutions (HEIs) to be on the front line of producing the shortage in competence (Commission on Higher Education, 2022). As such as an effect of the demand, the number of HEIs providing hospitality and tourism management (HTM) programs in the province of Bulacan has increased significantly due to its strategic position, rich culture, and flourishing tourism sector (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022).

The province of Bulacan has experienced growth in the number of institutions that conduct hospitality and tourism management programs. It is attributed to the strategic location of the province, its long cultural heritage, and the booming tourism sector in the province (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022). Nevertheless, the determinants that determine the choice of higher education institutions by the students in this region have

not been fully addressed in the field. Knowledge of these factors is crucial to institutions that wish to attract and maintain students in a rapidly competitive higher learning environment (Altbach & de Wit, 2018).

A decision on the selection of a higher education institution is a complex one based on several academic, financial, personal, and social variables. Some of these key issues include academic reputation and quality of programs, tuition, campus facilities, geographic location and career opportunities to prospective students (Maringe, 2006). Moreover, it is not possible to ignore the role of family, peers, along with self-marketing of the institutions (Soutar & Turner, 2002).

The study sought the empirical examination of factors affecting the selection of the higher education institutions by Bulacan hotel and tourism management students. The identification and subsequent analysis of these factors is aimed to bring rich information to educational policymakers, administrators, and marketers to strengthen their strategies and better recruit students and satisfy them. In addition, the results can be used in the wider study of the student behavior and preference relative to the higher education in Philippines (Kotler & Fox, 1995).

To conclude, the study will fill important knowledge gap in the literature because it concentrates on one particular place, namely Bulacan in Philippines, and thoroughly investigates the aspects influencing the choice of students choosing institutions offering higher education in the field of hospitality and tourism management.

## **STUDY OBJECTIVE**

This study examined the determining factors that the student used to choose the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) among the Hospitality and Management Students. In particular, it was to address the following:

1. Identify the demographic trends that dominates the Bulacan students taking hospitality and tourism management courses as:
  - a. Age
  - b. Sex
  - c. Type of Educational Institution Last Attended
  - d. Household Income of the Family
  - e. Occupation
  - f. Geographical locations
2. Determine the factors that influence the choice of higher education institution among hospitality and tourism management students in terms of:
  - a. Academic Factors
  - b. Financial Consideration
  - c. Institutional Reputation
  - d. Social Influences
3. Determine the factors that emerge as the most significant decision influencers for HTM students when choosing a higher education institution.
4. Determine the significant relationship between the demographic characteristics of respondents and the factors that influence the choice of higher education institution

Based on the specific objectives, the following null hypotheses were developed:

## HYPOTHESES

Ho (Null Hypothesis)

Ho1. There is no significant relationship found between demographic characteristics of the students and the factors that influence the selection of higher education institution

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

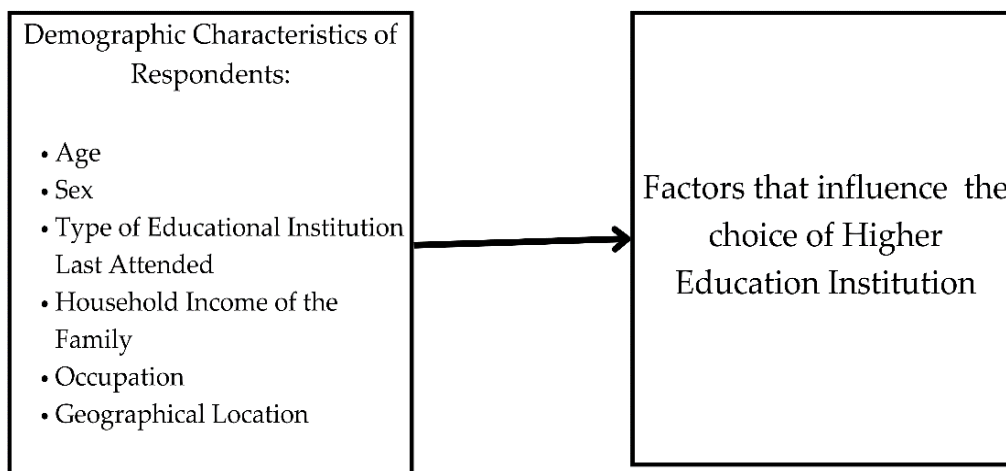
The theoretical background of the study is described as follows:

A Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), made by Icek Ajzen is a theory that will be appropriate to apply in this study. TPB assumes that the behavioral intentions motivate an individual to subsequent behavior wherein the intention is determined as a pointer of the attitude that an individual has on the behavior, the subjective norms on the performance of the behavior and the perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). This model is specifically suitable in making an outlook of how learners make a choice on institutions of higher learning. The reviews by students of different institutions, such as their academic reputation, program quality and facilities. Effect of these attitudes on the process of decision (Ajzen, 2005).

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This paper on factors that determine institution of higher learning attended by Hospitality and Tourism Management students in the province of Bulacan, Philippines, gets its conceptual framework on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). It shall produce a graphical representation of the correlations between the variables that were obtained in the TPB and other factors exposed through the literature.

Figure 1: Research Simulacrum



This decision is very important as students can make the most crucial decision related to the choice of higher education institution (HEI). This pattern depends on a whole lot of factors including academic reasons, economic calculations, academic popularities and social factors. This literature journal survey sought to examine the different factors that determine the decision of students in the Hospitality and Tourism Management course to select higher education institutions with particular attention to the region of Bulacan in the Philippines.

### Demographic Characteristics

To know what are the factors that drive the students of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) to choose which Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Bulacan, Philippines. There is much influence on age on educational decisions and younger students usually put extra emphasis on other aspects as opposed to older

students (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). Sex is also a factor which may affect the career desires, safety and social demands thus, resulting in HEI choices (Davies & Guppy, 1997). Financial issues such as the amount of tuition fees a student can cover in place of financial aid can be a strong factor in determining choice of HEI on the side of the student because of their household income (Perna, 2006). Learners who transfer to public institutions may be of varied experiences and expectations with those in the private institutions. By way of example, it is possible that our public-school students will consider affordability and access to study but private school students consider the reputation and resources offered at the HEI available (Clark, 2009). It is also central geographically. Close-distance Location of a home to an HEI can influence cost and convenient, thus having a significant impact on the decision-making process (Turley, 2009). Moreover, urban and rural students usually differ in their tastes and prerequisites in choosing an HEI, and the choice of the students is also predetermined by different aspects (Hu & Kuh, 2003).

### **Academic Factors**

The importance of academic characteristics and perceived educational programs quality as determinants in the student HEI choice. Researchers have found out that institutions with good academic reputation and good well rounded and top-quality programs in the area the student is interested in become a topic of priority amongst the students (Soutar & Turner, 2002). Maringe, 2006, established the fact that the students tend to join the institutions which are famous in the field of academic excellence and that these institutions have properly designed programs which provides the students with possibilities in the career that they have chosen.

The issue of program quality is especially relevant in its application to the sphere of Hospitality and Tourism Management, because of the applied character of this discipline. Schools that provide good training facilities, internship opportunities, and being connected with the industry usually receive more admissions (Kotler & Fox, 1995).

### **Financial Considerations**

Matters of money and cost of education, scholarships and general affordability are very important factors that influence the decision-making process of students. Along with the other factors, a study carried by Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) conducted found that the cost considerations rank highly as a determinant on which HEI to attend. The alternative of having financial aid and scholarships can play a major part in reducing the amount of financial stress involved and have it become more universally available to more students.

In Philippines, where most families are not financially well off the education cost is a key determinant. Students and their households will be drawn by those institutions that have competitive tuition expenses and high financial aid offers (Commission on Higher Education, 2022).

### **Institutional Reputation**

Whether a certain institution is prestigious and of a high quality may strongly determine the decisions made by students because in many cases, the greater its reputation, the greater career and academic opportunities. Students of HTM may find it worthwhile to select a university that has a good reputation in the hospitality and tourism sector, as it will allow them networking experience and increase the possibility of employment (Bourke, 2000). It has been found out that there are often positive relationships between high institutional reputation with improved career prospects, improved alumni networks, and improved academic facilities and therefore an institution with a high reputation is an important aspect in the decision making (Bourdieu, 1986). Institutional rankings and reputations are often used by students as an indicator of education quality and possible career advantages, which tendency is, in particular, strong in such a discipline as hospitality and tourism where relations with the industry are crucial (Espinoza, Bradshaw, & Hausman, 2002).

### **Social Influences**

The influence of family, peers, and social networks is quite strict on the choice of studying. Altbach and de Wit (2018) indicate that the expectations and suggestions of the family might be the most crucial factor

influencing the decision of students. The influence of peers also plays a major role as the students will tend to be influenced by the choices and experience of their friends (Soutar & Turner, 2002). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) emphasizes the role played by the subjective norms that can be defined as the influence of perceived social pressure to either or not address a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991). When it comes to the selection of an HEI, family, friends, and significant others can act as subjective norms and their expectations and views can be included in the subjective norms.

## **METHODS**

### **Study Design and Locale**

In this study, descriptive-correlational study design was used. The descriptive element implied the collection of data to outline the existing situation of the factors that predetermine students of Hospitality and Tourism Management to choose the institutions of higher education in Bulacan, Philippines. The correlational part was to explore the connections between the demographic data of the students and the dimensions affecting selection of higher education establishments. The research was carried in Bulacan, a province in the Philippines that has been recognized with educational establishments and expanding hospitality and tourism sector. Bulacan is an apt locality to conduct the study because there are many HEIs which have programs in HTM which means that there is a large number of people who can be used in the research.

### **Study Participants**

The researchers, who are the main clients of the study, are students, who are currently enrolled in Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) programs in the Top 5 Higher Education Institutions in Central Luzon, Philippines, at the time of publication of the study on the uniRank University Ranking site, published in 2024 among the Top 5 (uniRank, 2024). This is to include both the students of the public and the privately-owned institutions as well as those at different levels of their academic life (freshmen to seniors). Among the students, the different institutions must be represented proportionately as well as the different demographic groups in Bulacan.

### **Sample Size and Sampling**

A sample size of 353 respondents was used in the study. This is the sample size that will be selected to confirm that the study has a broad overview of the factors that determine the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) choice of Hospitality and Tourism Management (HTM) students in Bulacan, Philippines. This number is sufficient to be statistically significant and reflect on the varied view of the target audience. The mixed method used in the study was the Purposive Sampling through dint of the Snowball Method in conjunction with the Random Sampling. Quantitative method provides a strong and sample that is representative and covers both narrow and wide aspects.

### **Research Instrument**

The study employed a self-administered survey questionnaire to gather data from participants. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the influence of various factors on respondents' decisions. The scale ranges from "1 - Not Influential at all" to "4 - Highly Influential," with intermediate options providing varying degrees of influence. Structured questionnaires were distributed to collect data on the variables of interest to gain deeper insights into their decision-making processes. The investigated factors influencing Hospitality and Tourism Management students' choice of higher education institution in Bulacan, Philippines. The questionnaire was reviewed by experts in the field of education and hospitality management to ensure that it covers all relevant aspects of the study.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire. A Cronbach's alpha results from the constructs of demographic characteristics of good reliability with alpha equal to .8972,



academic factors with excellent reliability of .9024, financial consideration .8234, institutional reputation .7910, and social influence .8011, all with good alpha results, respectively. The questionnaire was reviewed and organized by the study's content. A pilot test was performed during the preliminary survey, and a statistician consulted about the scale's accuracy and situational applicability. Feedback from the pre-test was used to make the necessary adjustments to the questionnaire.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficient of Constructs

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Demographic Characteristics	0.8972	Good
Academic Factors	0.9024	Excellent
Financial Consideration	0.8234	Good
Institutional Reputation	0.791	Good
Social Influence	0.8011	Good

### Data Gathering Procedures

The questionnaire was distributed to the selected sample of students through online platforms and in-person distribution in collaboration with the participating institutions. The researcher created a pool of participants for the formal survey using the snowball sampling method, in which the researcher asked for a referral from individuals who shared the same characteristics of the research interest as the target population (Frey, 2018). Responses were collected over a predetermined period, ensuring a high response rate through follow-ups and reminders. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

The gathered information through the distributed questionnaires was recorded and tabulated about the statistical treatment method, such as arranging and summarizing data based on the number of occurrences using frequency and percentage distribution, correlation analysis using mean and standard deviation, and the chi-square to test the significant relationship of the variables presented.

### Ethical Consideration

The research proposal was reviewed and approved by an appropriate ethics review board or committee before the study began. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights.

- All data collected were kept confidential and used solely for this research. Participants' identities were disclosed, and responses were anonymized to protect their privacy.
- Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.
- Collected data were securely stored, accessible only to the research team. Digital data with password-protected, and physical data were stored in a locked cabinet.

## RESULTS

To analyze the data gathered, the following statistical treatments were used:

To test the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was used. To arrange and summarize data depending on the number of occurrences, frequency distribution, and percentage distribution were used. According to Creswell (2018), the mean was used to indicate a numerical average for a set of responses, whilst the standard deviation was used to determine how scattered the data was in comparison to the mean. For data to measure

the relationship of variables, a non- parametric test was utilized. Correlation Analysis using chi-square was used to measure and quantify the direction and strength of the linear relationship between the variables.

## DISCUSSION

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The age breakdown of hospitality and tourism management students at higher education institutions reveals a diverse student population. The majority (61.76%) are in the 18-20 age bracket, indicating a young student population fresh out of high school. However, a significant portion (35.24%) are aged 21 and above, with 23.51% in the 21- 23 age group, 10.76% in the 24-26 age group, and 3.97% aged 27 and above.

This age range suggests that the institution should employ targeted recruitment strategies to attract both traditional and non-traditional students. For the younger demographic, the institution could focus its marketing efforts on high school students and recent graduates, highlighting factors important to this age group, such as hands-on learning opportunities, experiential learning, and the institution's reputation. The institution ought to consider flexible course schedules, delivery, as well as professional growth and promotion as a way of attracting the older students.

Table 1. Percentage and frequency distribution of the respondents with regard to Age

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18-20	218	61.76
21-23	83	23.51
24-26	38	10.76
27 and above	14	3.97
TOTAL	353	100

An analysis of the sex distribution of hospitality and tourism management students in higher education institutions depicts that the student population is more dominated by the female students, 34.26% more than the male students. This disparity indicates that the institution needs to study its hiring methods and curriculum so as to make them conducive and attractive to both genders. In an attempt to recruit and retain male students, the institution ought to realize that they need to conduct specific recruitments where they emphasize the variety of careers and dynamic workplaces offered by the hospitality and tourism sectors. The curriculum must also be examined to see that the male view is put in, a case study, guest lecture and course materials in the curriculum that reflects the contribution of the men in the discipline and their experience.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the respondents in terms of Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	128	36.26
Female	225	63.74
Total	353	100%

An analysis of the pattern of the last educational institution attended by the students of hospitality and tourism management in this institution shows that there was a variety of backgrounds. Most of the students (55.81) are products of public schools with 44.19 completing their last schools in the private schools. There is a low proportion (3.97%) of the vocational or technical school background. Such difference in varied learning experiences would imply that the school needs to have a thorough orientation to make sure that every student

both those who have had previous learning experiences or not are ready to face the challenges of a hospitality and tourism management course. The orientation must include both academic and practical skills, which involve research, writing, and critical thinking ability on the academic side, and time management and study habits on the practical one

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the respondents with regard to Type of Educational Institution last Attended

Type of Educational Institution	Frequency	Percentage
Last Attended		
Public	197	55.81
Private	156	44.19
Vocational/Technical	14	3.97
TOTAL	353	100%

The social-economic background of the higher education institution hospitality and tourism management students is also diversified through the household income structure. Most of the students (51.27%) are in families with an income of Php 10,001 to 20,000 per month with 26.06% in the above bracket with the Php 10,000 or less family income monthly. The number of students (16.71 percent) whose families have a monthly income between Php 20,001 and 30,000 is a little lower, and the percentage of students whose monthly earnings of the household is 30,001 or higher is 5.95 percent.

Such income distribution level implies that the institution is compelled to provide a mixture of financial aid packages to accommodate students with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Different scholarship boxes and grants as well as work-study programs can be especially helpful to students with lower-income families as it can assist them in providing the costs of the tuition, fees and living expenses. The institution ought also to give elaborate information on financial aid opportunities as well as the procedure to be followed in obtaining them so that any student who qualifies has the information as well as making them available.

Table 4. Frequency, Percentage Distribution of the respondents in regard to household income of the family

Household Income of the Family (per month)	Frequency	Percentage
Php 10,000 and below	92	26.06
Php 10,001 - 20,000	181	51.27
Php 20,001 - 30,000	59	16.71
Php 30,001 and above	21	5.95
TOTAL	353	100%

Decomposition into the occupation status of hospitality and tourism management students at higher education institutions shows that most students (66.57) are full-time students whereas 21.25 are employed under part-time condition, 12.18 are employed on full-time basis.

This allocation indicates that the school or institution needs to have flexible study and subject- related services to suit the demands of more or less employed students and those who result in full-time learning. The needs of full-time learners are to study supports to have a broad experience of education with practice, opportunity of internship and extra-curriculum activities which make the learners more skilled and knowledgeable about hospitable management to be able to work afterward.



Table 5. Occupation distribution of the respondents for Frequency and Percentage

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Employed Full-Time	43	12.18
Employed-Part-time	75	21.25
Full-time student	235	66.57
TOTAL	353	100%

The geographical distribution of the students of hospitality and tourism management in the higher education institution indicates that most (53.82) of them are based in the city settings; 24.36 come are under the rural setting and 21.81 are located in the suburban settings. This dispersion implies that the organization ought to align its advertising and hiring processes to the diverse geographical geographies of the students. In the case of students who are based in residential areas of the cities or towns, the institution must portray that it is in a busy city or town and how they would benefit with the networking, internship, cultural exposure that accompanies the urban setting.

Table 6. Frequency Percentage Distribution of the respondents according to Geographical Location

Geographical Location	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	190	53.82
Suburban	77	21.81
Rural	86	24.36
TOTAL	353	100%

The average distribution of factors that persuade hospitality and tourism management students to choose higher education establishment shows that academic and financial factors are the most influential ones with the average scores of 3.91 and 3.76, correspondingly, these factors are ranked as most influential ones. The institutional reputation and the social influence are also regarded as influential, with the means of 3.11 and 3.23 respectively. The great importance of the academic factors indicates that students consider more the quality of the education and curriculum of the program when they select the institution. In order to attract and retain students, the school ought to consider delivering a strong and current curriculum in line with industry-based standards and with practical situations to learn out of.

The overall influence of these factors on the choice of a college or university to study at the higher educational establishment is represented by such a grand mean as 3.50 that identifies a high level of influence on the choice. This knowledge of relative significance of these points will enable the institution to establish focused methods of attracting and accommodating the students and assuring them of success in the course of hospitality and tourism management studies and beyond.

Table 7. Mean Distribution of the respondents with regard to Factors that Influence the Decision of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Students to higher education institution

Factors	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Academic	3.91	Highly Influential
Financial Consideration	3.76	Highly Influential
Institutional Reputation	3.11	Influential
Social Influence	3.23	Influential
Grand Mean	3.5	Highly Influential

The results of the statistical analysis reveal significant relationships between several demographic factors and students' choices of higher education institutions. Student age, household income, and occupation (p-value <

0.001) are all statistically significant factors influencing student choice. This suggests that age, financial background, and career aspirations play a strong role in where students decide to pursue their education. On the other hand, gender, type of previous educational institution, and geographical location do not appear to be statistically significant factors ( $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ ). This means that there is no evidence to suggest a strong connection between these factors and a student's choice of university.

Academic factors being ranked highest align with global research findings which emphasize that academic quality measured by teaching effectiveness, curriculum strength, and program accreditation remains one of the most critical determinants in student decision-making (Baliyan & Mokoena, 2024). Students generally perceive institutions with strong academic reputations as more likely to provide better career outcomes and professional development opportunities (Buckley & Lee, 2021).

Financial considerations also played a key role, underscoring the sensitivity of students, particularly in developing countries like the Philippines, to tuition fees, scholarships, and other economic factors. According to Mkulu & Paschal (2010), affordability is a major determinant of college choice, especially for students from lower-income households who often consider the cost of attendance alongside perceived value.

According to Gan et al (2022)., reputation often reflects public perceptions and trust in the institution's standing, influenced by alumni success, rankings, and industry linkages. Moreover, social influences, coming from family, peers, and counselors has been shown to subtly affect student preferences, especially among those who seek validation or advice from their immediate social environment, Nuseir & El Refae (2021).

Table 8. Significant Relationship between the Demographic Profile of the Students and Factors that Influence their choice of Higher Education Institution

Age 456.33	9	< 0.001	Reject the Ho	
Sex 1.89	3	0.595	Do not reject Ho	
Type of Educational Institution 10.71	6	0.098	Do not reject Ho	
Last Attended				
Household Income of the Family 24.49	9	0.004	Reject Ho	
Occupation	24.67	6	0	Reject Ho
Geographical Location	4.14	6	0.658	Do not reject Ho

## Data Analysis

Demographic Characteristics and the Significant Relationship from the Factors that influence the Hospitality and Tourism Management Students' Choice of Higher Education Institution

Age.  $X^2 = 456.33$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )

Age is a significant factor influencing students' choice of higher education institution. The Chi-square test results indicate a strong relationship between age groups and the factors influencing their choice. This suggests that different age groups prioritize different factors (such as academic quality, and financial considerations) when selecting an institution

Sex.  $X^2 = 1.89$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p = 0.595$ . Do not reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )

Gender does not show a significant relationship with the factors influencing students' choice of higher education institution. This implies that both male and female students prioritize similar factors when making their decisions.

### **Type of Educational Institution Last Attended.**

$X^2 = 10.71$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = 0.098$ . Do not reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) at a significance level of 0.05. The type of educational institution previously attended (public, private, vocational/technical) does not significantly influence students' choice of higher education institution. However, the p-value is close to the significance level, suggesting a borderline relationship that may warrant further investigation with a larger sample size.

### **Household Income of the Family**

$X^2 = 24.49$ ,  $df = 9$ ,  $p = 0.004$ . Reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) Household income significantly influences students' choice of higher education institution.

Students from different income brackets prioritize factors differently, with financial considerations likely playing a crucial role in decision-making.

### **Occupation**

$X^2 = 24.67$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ )

Occupation status (full-time employed, part-time employed, full-time student) significantly influences students' choice of higher education institution. This indicates that students' current employment status affects their priorities and decisions regarding higher education.

### **Geographical Location**

$X^2 = 4.14$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = 0.658$ . Do not reject the Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) Geographical location (urban, suburban, rural) does not significantly influence students' choice of higher education institution. Students from different geographic backgrounds seem to prioritize similar factors when selecting an institution.

Factors that Influence the Student's Choice of Higher Education and its favorable description according to the student's choice.

Based on the mean distribution analysis of factors influencing hospitality and tourism management students' choice of higher education institution, several key insights emerge. Academic factors, rated highly influential with a mean score of 3.91, highlight the paramount importance students place on educational quality, curriculum relevance, and the overall reputation of the academic programs offered. Financial considerations follow closely behind with a mean score of 3.76, indicating that affordability, availability of scholarships, and transparency in costs significantly influence students' decisions. Institutional reputation, with an average of 3.11 points, is also an important factor indicative of the weight of a university reputation, alumni achievement and industry reputation to the way students perceive them. There is also some social influence, though to a lesser extent, with the mean score of three point two three, which indicates effect of the recommendations by the peers and the society. These findings are combined into the grand mean of 3.50 that makes it certain that these factors have a very powerful effect on student preferences when it comes to choosing their higher education establishments in the hospitality and tourism management sector. To appeal to and recruit students, institutions can optimally increase academic programs, reinforce financial aid programs, a good reputation of the institution, and social influencers. Institutions can create an effective appeal to the market and interests of the potential students by aligning their strategies with these influential variables to realize their educational and career expectations in a competitive environment in the higher education sector. The constant review and adjustments of these strategies according to the feedback given by the students on the one hand and the trends of the market on the other is going to be the key to keeping the strategies relevant and excellent in terms of reaching out to the students and retaining them in any student recruitment and retention process.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are a few important conclusions to be made, based on the extensive demographical profile and aspects of influence on higher learning institutions of study selection by hospitality and tourism management graduates in Bulacan, Philippines. In the study, it is established that academic and monetary reasons are seen as the most determinant factor during the decision-making process by the students as they demonstrate great mean scores in the survey. There is also substantial effect of the institutional reputation and social influence, although slightly lower than that of the NPA. Regarding demographic factors, age and household income, and occupation play very important roles that demonstrate the extent to which students in various socioeconomic backgrounds have preferences that differ based on their age level, income level and type of occupation they would pursue in future.

These findings under show the relevance of institutions to design their recruitment strategy so that they can put a strong focus on these driving forces, academic excellence, financial aid, and institutional reputation. Additionally, for one to accommodate the needs of the wide variety of students, especially the ones with work together with educational requirements, it is essential to offer flexible curriculum and also strong support systems. These insights could be used by policymakers and institutional leaders to design policies that would support increasing access to financial aid, curriculum design, and other specific ways of marketing themselves to attract and retain diverse groups of students. Further studies might also be conducted elaborating on other demographic variables or regional differences in order to increase the extent of knowledge on the student decision making involved in gaining enrolment in higher education.

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## DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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