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Article

Socio-Demographic Factors as Antecedents to University Choice Process: A Case in One Private Higher Education Institution in Iloilo City

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Abstract

Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) are incessantly compelled to improve their academic profiles to attract a greater number of prospective students. Recent scholarship,however, contends that this does not singlehandedly affect university choice, thus the marketization of the higher education sector. This study was conducted to determine if socio-demographic characteristics antecedently affect the influence of university choice factors among students of a PHEI in Iloilo City. This study found out that, for institutional profile, only family income is significantly related. On the other hand, reference groups were found to be significantly related to home location, type of school last attended, and family income. The same finding was revealed for educational marketing where only sex is not significantly related. Finally, this study cautions that though universities are encouraged to further innovate their marketing strategies to gain more students, may they be reminded as well of the humanitarian functions of PHEIs and consider the less privileged groups in this process.

Keywords

private higher education, educational marketing, socio-demographic antecedents, university choice, Iloilo City

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Introduction

State-owned schools and private higher education institutions (PHEIs) compete to attract the best and brightest students, though PHEIs tend to be more flexible with their admission policies as they depend largely on the number of student enrollees to sustain their expenditures. In this case, PHEIs are incessantly compelled to improve their academic profiles and attract a greater number of prospective students (Aydin, 2015; Chapleo, et al., 2017).

PHEIs also remarked on the importance of reference groups as part of their market base (Kumawati et al., 2010; Kwang, 2019). In Western Visayas, for example, some schools provide family discounts (a percentage from the tuition) for students whose siblings are also in the same institution. They also intensify the institutional identity among their alumni to further encourage them to send their children or grandchildren to their alma mater. All year round, massive alumni gatherings are supported and publicized by these universities to show united spirit and camaraderie among their graduates.

Another perspective, however, had emerged, which dramatically revised the education system resulting to its marketization (Oberneit, 2012; Chapleo, et al., 2017). Educational marketers contend that PHEIs have become quasi-commercial organizations whereby marketing strategies formerly founded from the tenets of business environments, are now applied among PHEIs. They now increasingly use business organization models to promote their own distinct organizational, and perhaps educational cultures.

After these, several marketing strategies are now prevalently utilized. The most notable is institutional branding which includes, say, for instance, cross-comparison of school performance based on national board or licensure examination ratings and naming of flagship course(s). Accreditations also play important role in institutional branding (Gregory, 2013). National and international accreditations highlight the comparative advantage of one school over another.

Educational advertising is also widely used by PHEIs as part of their marketing strategies. In a study by Ordinario, Santis, and Fernandez (2018), they revealed that communication outlets elicited a significant relationship with students' deciding factors. Particularly, they reported a significant impact of direct advertisements, billboards, print, and social media on student's decision process of university choice. These are indeed true as we witnessed the surging web and social media marketing of PHEIs in pervasive online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

In the setting where this study is conducted, the PHEI understudy is currently competing with more than 30 other HEIs in Iloilo City. It is 1 of the 7 schools granted a university status by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) since 2004. The PHEI offers 22 programs from its five colleges though it can be said that it specializes or more known for its medical and allied health programs.

A review of 15-year enrollment records of the PHEI showed that the highest student enrollment was in Academic Year (AY) 2005-06 which listed 1,950 college students. The first 2 years of the implementation of K-12 (i.e., SY 2016-2017, 2017-2018) witnessed the most impactful decrease in student population with an average of 28%. It is alarming to note further that the trend in enrollment is decreasing at an average of 3.0% even before the implementation

of K-12 (S.Y. 2005-06 – S.Y. 2015-16). Yet this data is rather unstable given the minimum value of -5.5% (S.Y. 2015-16) and maximum value of 4.7% (S.Y. 2010-11) though it still leaves a puzzle piece worthy to be explored upon.

Reviewing further, another alarming finding revealed that the PHEI did not have enrollees any longer among its distinguished non-medical programs such as AB Mass Communication (AB MassComm), and AB English and Theater Arts (ABETA); these programs even served as its bastions for social sciences offerings where its graduates had notably earned relative success in their chosen career paths. It can be recalled that these programs enjoyed an overwhelming student population until S.Y. 2017-2018 where they listed a total of only two and three enrollees per semester. The highest enrollment for AB MassComm was between S.Y. 2006-2007 and S.Y. 2007-2008 with an average of 35 students. Meanwhile, ABETA listed the highest enrollment between S.Y. 2011-2012 and S.Y. 2012-2013 with an average of 30 students. There might be multiple factors to point out but non-enrollment at all is highly disturbing. Again, this serves as another compelling reason to further pursue the conduct of this study.

Though a relatively small school, the PHEI has withstood the test of time since its inception in 1946. It has gained patrons who earnestly believe in the capacity of the university to provide quality education. However, the unstable student population including other significant details highlighted from the abovementioned review sparks a compelling interest in how current students are influenced in their university choice. In doing such, the PHEI will be assisted to further heighten its grip on its prospective students by working on its already behold advantage (Kotler and Fox, 1995; Alves & Raposo, 2007). The findings of this study will inform the PHEI on key areas where it can further improve to ensure its market share despite the very competitive environment (Plank and Chiagouris, 1997). As such, this study envisions to strengthening efforts toward the economic sustainability of the PHEI and perhaps an expansion, if these findings are to be truly realized.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to determine if socio-demographic factors antecedently affect the university choice process. Specifically, this study aims to: (a) describe socio-demographic characteristics of students in terms of sex, home location, type of school last attended, and monthly family income; (b) determine how the different factors influence their university choice specifically in terms of the institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing; and (c) determine the relationship of socio-demographic characteristics as antecedents in the influence of institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing.

Hypothesis of the Study

The intensive theoretical and literature review provided a strong foundation for this study which was utilized to develop a feasible framework that helped ascertain the following hypothesis:

- Socio-demographic characteristics highly affect university choice as antecedents in the influence of institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study adopted the framework in the study of Ming (2010); it was however modified based on the inputs from the literature review as presented hereunder. Thus, this section first presents the theoretical models in the university choice process followed by conceptual paradigms proposed by other researchers and essentially from the findings in related studies.

There are three commonly cited models of university choice process: a) economic; b) sociological; and c) combined. According to Fernandez (2010), based on the economic model, potential students choose an HEI if they believe that enrolling in a particular university will exceed its advantages than going to other HEIs. On the other hand, students are also influenced by social and cultural factors such as socioeconomic background and academic achievements as shown by the sociological model (Perna, 2006). Lastly, students may also select HEIs considering both grounds and the combined.

Oberneit (2012) points out that a new model has emerged at the turn of the century: the marketing model; this model presupposes students as consumers and thereby is affected by internal and external factors comparably like in a business environment. Aydin (2015) enumerated internal factors to include social, cultural, personal, and psychological characteristics of an individual that influence his or her university choice process. External factors on the other hand are social, cultural, product, and price stimuli attributes of a university.

Meanwhile, in the study of Kusumawati, Yanamandram, and Perera (2010), they argued that reference groups such as friends, peers, relatives, and teachers are essential sources that influence university choice. Kwang (2019) added that the present students are likewise influential references when deciding to choose potential students. However, Shanka, Quintal, and Taylor (2005) noted that the family is a crucial element in this process. This is supported by Pimpa (2004) stating that a family's monetary situation restricts options for the academic future. This led some researchers to identify the cost of university education as another significant factor (Wagner & Fard, 2009; Briggs & Wilson, 2007). Subsequently, the availability of financial aid scholarships is substantially considered during this choice process (Rudhumbu, 2017; Ming, 2010; Kusumawati, et al., 2010).

Personal factors such as age, gender, family background, and ethnicity are also found to have a significant bearing. Alves and Raposo (2007) revealed that they had the most positive influence on university choice in Portugal.

Some studies also identify the university location as a major factor that affects student's decision process (Kim & Gasman, 2011; Yamamoto, 2006). Universities in accessible and strategic locations are preferred either for the convenience of travel or its proximity to essential establishments and institutions. Most importantly, academic factors are also major players in this equation. As pointed by Ming (2010), academic reputation is the strongest criterion in a student's selection process. He enumerated eight (8) attributes to these factors to include: staff quality, type of institution, availability of desired programs, curriculum, international reputation, quality of facilities, campus and class size, and the availability of financial aids and scholarships.

Aside from institutional characteristics, Ming (2010) also pointed out that communication and marketing strategies affect university choice decisions.

Among these strategies are advertising efforts such as campus visits, and career fairs. In addition, university representatives visiting community schools also impact prospective students. These findings are further confirmed in the study of Napompech (2011) and Noel-Levitz (2012) stating that knowledge on university offers, functions, benefits, strengths, and outcome of university's educational services help students decide on their university choice.

A unique approach was employed by Sarkane and Sloka (2015) as they try to answer the same question. Using a 10-point slider scale ranging 1 (not important) to 10 (very important), they asked respondents to rate12 factors, namely: accreditation, atmosphere, place of location, activities outside studies, state budget financing, hostel, respect of confidentiality, recommendations of relatives and friends, ratings, reputation, sport possibilities, and international possibilities. With factor analysis, they reduced them into three factors constructs namely: 1) external factors, 2) reputation, and ratings, and 3) internal factors.

Meanwhile, Rudhumbu (2017) adopted a more conventional approach by using a five-point Likert scale where he found out that the quality of staff, academic programs, educational facilities, location of the institution, and employability of the graduate 'highly influence' how students choose a university. He further reported that marketing strategies had a 'high influence' on students' decision process.

Erstwhile, a more non-conventional method was employed by Pohkrel, Tiwari, and Phuyal (2018) using a combination of ranking and Likert scale. Students ranked 11 information sources according to their influence on university choice while the Likert scale was used to determine the influence of institutional characteristics ranging from 1 (not important) to 4 (very important). They found out that recommendations from friends, family, and relatives were among the most effective medium of communication. College websites were also reported to be vital information sources. When compared, MBA students gave more importance to the 'quality of lecturers' and the 'college and program fee.' For BBA students, on the other hand, 'discounts and scholarships,' 'extra-curricular activities,' and 'sufficient playing area' were given more importance.

In summary, PHEIs seek to improve their academic reputations vis-à-vis their marketing strategies. A synergy or both is necessary to maintain a stable economic ground in the highly competitive educational market. Thus, Kotler and Fox (1995) explain that the determining factors that affect the university's selection provide a crucial input as the first process to undertake in regard to sustainability. Plank and Chiagouris (1997) share that highly significant factors may be viewed as strengths and the insufficient ones may be reasoned as chances for development, therefore, improving the school's promotional endeavors.

Corroborating the findings from the review, this study is anchored on the combined and marketing model of the university choice process. Using the combined model, socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and institutional profile are considered significant factors that influence university choice, though in this case, the former is considered antecedents to the latter. Furthermore, reference groups and promotional approaches are viewed as essential elements that affect a student's choice using the marketing model.

In the context of this study, it may be assumed that the socio-demographic characteristics, as antecedents, will highly affect how the influence of institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing. The relationship of these variables is illustrated in Figure 1.

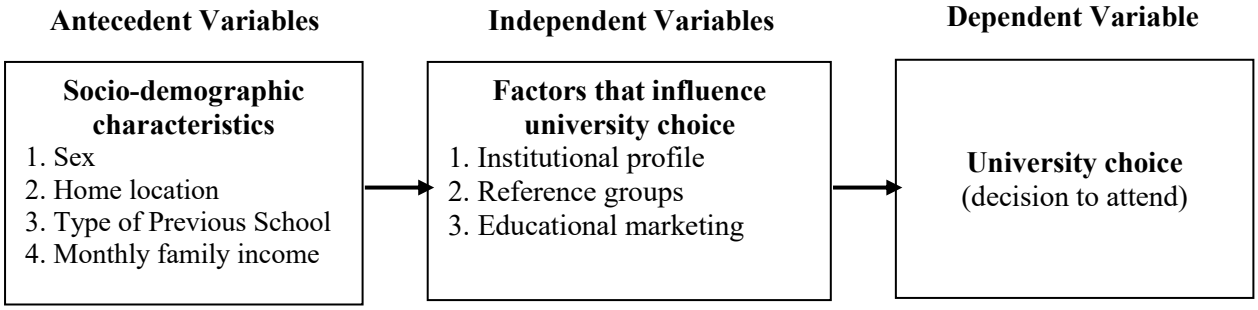


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methods

Research Design and Study Site
This is a descriptive-relational study that utilized a one-shot survey. Data were collected within April and May 2020 using an online questionnaire.

This study was conducted in a PHEI, established in 1946 by a French-based Catholic missionary congregation that arrived in the Philippines in 1904. Its precursor institution was a nursing school affiliated with the hospital which was already in place since 1911. In a little over half a decade, it was granted a university status in 2004. The PHEI is located literally at the center of the city along with one of the busiest boulevards in Iloilo City.

Respondents and Sampling Procedures
A total of 215 college students equally and randomly distributed from the five colleges of the PHEI participated in the study. Sampling size was determined following the general rule recommended by Israel (1992) which set 200 to 500 respondents for relational studies. The specific number was further determined following the suggested figure of Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins (2001, p. 48), which is at least 209 respondents for studies involving categorical data and with at least 900 population size at a 5% margin of error. The current college population is 850.

Research Instrument
The instrument consists of four parts: Part I consists of five items on socio-demographic characteristics; Part II contains six items on the influence of institutional characteristics; Part III contains six items on the influence of reference groups; and Part IV is another six questions on the influence of educational marketing. These items were carefully drafted based on the intensive literature and theoretical and literature review.

In measuring the influence of the factors identified, a slider scale was used. This method was adapted from Sarkane and Sloka (2015) though response anchors were modified from 1 (very little influence) to 5 (very high influence). The raw score was added, and the sum was categorized as low influence, moderate influence, and high influence.

Content Validity and Reliability
The researchers submitted the questionnaire to three faculty members of the Department of Education of the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education as experts in the field of educational research for content and face validation.

Afterward, the revised instrument was pilot tested on 30 preliminary students. Cronbach alpha was calculated at α=.81 which is already considered a good value from the threshold score of >.7. The reliability coefficient was as follows: institutional profile at .72; reference groups at .83; and educational marketing at .78. The students who participated in the pilot testing were excluded as respondents of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure
The researchers sought permission from the Research Center of the PHEI for the conduct of the study as well as to receive an endorsement from the different college deans. Participation was made optional though teachers were asked to encourage the participation of selected and identified students. Data were gathered with online questionnaires using Google Forms. Consent and confidentiality statements were incorporated on the first page of the questionnaire. The use of an online questionnaire was deemed advantageous with the community lockdown in place. In addition, it minimized accruing of missing values and incorrect responses.

Ethical Consideration
The study obtained approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee (RERC) for review of sound ethical considerations. Necessary comments and reminders were taken into consideration throughout the conduct of the study. Respondents were informed about the nature and purpose of the study and that their participation will be voluntary. Most importantly, informed consent was attained from the students, and confidentiality of the responses were observed at all times.

Statistical Tools and Analysis
Descriptive statistics (i.e., and frequency distribution) was calculated for all variables. The simple percentage was also used to meaningfully present the data. For the inferential statistics, the researchers first determined if the data were normally distributed. The results differently led to an alternative non-parametric test for the categorical variables, which is the chi-square. The test was used for testing the relationship among nominal to nominal, ordinal to ordinal, and nominal to ordinal data.

A competent statistician reviewed and checked the data to ensure the correctness of the analysis and interpretation of the results. The suggestions and recommendations of the latter were followed. The researchers also re-submitted the analysis for final review.

Results and Discussions

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics	Total	
	f	%
Sex		
Male	60	27.9
Female	155	72.1
Total	**215**	**100.0**
Home Location (Permanent address)		
w/in Iloilo City	140	65.1
outside Iloilo City	75	34.9
Total	**215**	**100.0**
Type of School Previously Attended (HS/SHS)		
Private	164	76.3
Public	51	23.7
Total	**215**	**100.0**
Monthly Family Income		
Below Php 20,000	14	6.5
Php 20,001 – Php 30,000	50	23.3
Php 30,001 – Php 50,000	114	53.0
Above 50,001	37	17.2
Total	**215**	**100.0**

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are grouped according to sex, home location (permanent address), type of school attended (HS/SHS), and monthly family income which are presented in the Table 1.

It was observed that the female students dominated the student population consisting of nearly three-fourths (72.1%) while male students only consisted of almost one-third (27.9%). If taken in an eye-view, this finding indeed reflects the population in the PHEI where one can initially suspect that it is a 'female' university upon the first visit. From this finding, it can be speculated that the nature of the PHEI as a Catholic university run by nuns may have an attractive value among its predominantly female student population who wishes to pursue an education in a medical and allied health program. This is consistent with the report of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 2017) saying that the medical profession had now become more feminized where women constitute a larger proportion of the health workforce. Notably, the number of male students is also not too low, though they are indeed outnumbered, which leads the researchers to speculate that other factors might also be considered than assuming that enrollment is rather gendered, at least in the case of this PHEI.

In terms of their home location based on the permanent address, there are at least 6 in 10 (61%) students who live within the city while nearly 4 (34.9%) students reside from the surrounding provinces such as Iloilo, Aklan, Capiz, and Antique or even outside the island of Panay.This finding entails that many students are only within the walking and/or driving distance from the PHEI though those who are from other towns and provinces considerably bore a non-negligible percentage. This confirms the findings of Kim and Gasman

(2011) and of Yamamoto (2006) where accessible universities in strategic locations had become a significant deciding factor.

In the case of the PHEI, being at the center of the city provide an attracting factor among its students as they can be close to essential establishments. Meanwhile, when grouped according to the previous schools they attended, the PHEI overwhelmingly constitutes students who come from private high schools which is more than three-fourths (76.3%) of the population while those from public high schools are little over one-fifth (23.7%). It can be explained in how students would prefer to continue to obtain their tertiary education in a private higher institution might be because of its distinguishing characteristics as institutions that provide more space for 'innovation, creativity, flexibility, and cultural or ideological specialization – including religious education (Acidre, 2019).

Lastly, students are also grouped according to their family income. Noticeably, more than the majority (53.0%) of the respondents declared that their families earned within the Php 30,001 to Php 50,000 bracket. There is however a minority (6.5%) of students who declared that their families earn 'below Php 20,000'. This finding indicates that the respondents come from middle-class families or above though there are interestingly some from the below brackets who would want to attend the PHEI. This finding highlights the patronization of more well-off Filipino families to the private education sector which had further become a ground for the widening social gap (Riepp, 2015).

Factors that influence preference towards the PHEI on specific items
Table 2 presents the factors that influence student preference towards the PHEI on specific items. In terms of the institutional profile, it can be observed that 'academic reputation' earned the highest mean with 4.01 which was closely followed by the 'quality of the academic staff at 3.97. The least influencing factor is the 'availability of scholarships' at 3.41, which is also the only factor with a verbal interpretation of 'low influence'. This finding can be associated with the student profile which constitutes mostly of middle-class families and upper. Meanwhile, in terms of the reference groups, the 'family' obtained the highest mean with 3.62 and the only item which gained 'high influence' which consists in the findings of Shanka et al., (2005). Interestingly, however this data is indiscriminate which is further discussed in the succeeding sections. Lastly, the most remarkable finding from the educational marketing is the influence of 'internet and web presence' with a mean score of 3.60, and the only item being 'highly influential'.

This finding is consistent with the results in the study of Ordinario et al., (2018) saying that educational marketing proved to have a significant effect on school choice. This finding may be associated with how most of the students, who come from privileged families, translate their easy accessibility to the internet if further related to the socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 2. Factors that influence preference towards the PHEI on specific items

Items	Median	Verbal Interpretation
Institutional profile	3.72	High influence
1. The location of the PHEI.		
2. The availability of academic programs	3.91	High influence

3. The academic reputation of the university such as in board ratings, university status, and accreditations.	4.01	High influence
4. The quality of academic staff such as qualification of the teaching personnel, their educational backgrounds and industry experience, and the kind treatment of non-teaching personnel.	3.97	High influence
5. The quality of educational facilities such as classroom layout, attractive buildings, well-equipped laboratories, libraries, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, etc.	3.86	High influence
6. The availability of scholarships and patronage discount grants, and other forms of matriculation aids.	3.41	Low influence
Mean = 3.81 *(High influence)*		
Reference groups		
1. Family	3.62	High influence
2. Friends	3.45	Low influence
3. Relatives	3.24	Low influence
4. Current students	3.53	Low influence
5. Alumni	3.27	Low influence
Mean = 3.42 *(Low influence)*		
Educational marketing		
1. Linkages of PHEI such as its university system network, congregation of the sisters, its affiliated hospital and its network, government and non-government partnerships, and other organizations.	3.51	Low influence
2. Educational visits conducted by PHEI representatives together with some students.	3.53	Low influence
3. Educational events of the PHEI including academic and non-academic such as university sports games, outreach activities, etc.	3.54	Low influence
4. Internet and web presence of the PHEI like social media presence, university website, web articles about the university, etc.	3.60	High influence
5. Information heard from other media sources both from print and broadcast outlets such as newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio.	3.56	Low influence
6. Participation of the PHEI to inter-school gatherings both for academic and non-academic events such as research consortiums, PRISAA, junior professional clubs, etc.	3.47	Low influence
Mean = 3.54 *(Low influence)*		

****Overall Mean = 3.59**

≥ **3.59** High influence

≤ **3.59** Low influence

Distribution of the respondents according to the influence of institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to the influence of institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing

Factors that influence preference	Total	
	f	%
Institutional profile		
Low influence	7	3.3
Moderate influence	112	52.1
High influence	96	44.7
Total	**215**	**100.0**
Reference groups		
Low influence	20	9.3
Moderate influence	62	28.8
High influence	133	61.9
Total	**215**	**100.0**
Educational marketing		
Low influence	23	10.7
Moderate influence	115	53.5
High influence	77	35.8
Total	**215**	**100.0**

Table 2 presents the component factors that influence preference toward the PHEI which constitute the institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing. The findings of this paper revealed that more than half (52.1%) of the students believe that the institutional profile only constitutes 'moderate influence' in their university choice, marginally followed by at least four out of ten (44.7%) who indicated that it 'highly influenced' them. Only a low percentage of 3.3% was considered as 'low influence'. In terms of the reference groups, at least two-thirds (61.9%) said that it 'highly influenced' their choice of the PHEI, followed by that one-third (28.8%) who indicated it to been 'moderately influenced' and the remaining one-tenth (9.3%) saying that it had a 'low influence' on them. If taken as a whole, reference groups represented the highest proportion of student respondents that indicated it with 'high influence' at 61.9%. Finally, a majority of the respondents (53.5%) indicated to have been 'moderately influenced' by the educational marketing, while 35.8% said that they were 'highly influenced', and the remaining 10.7% resulted to a 'low influence' saying that it bore them.Interestingly, this data proved that there is indeed an indiscriminate distribution of the respondents when grouped according to proportions than just looking alone at the mean. With these merits another examination if these proportions are affected by socio-demographic characteristics which is further discussed hereunder.

Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and institutional profile

Table 4 shows the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics and institutional profile Based from the findings of this study, a higher proportion of female students (47.1%) indicated to have been 'highly influenced' by the institutional profile than males (38.3%). Inversely, more male students (58.3%) agree that it only bore 'moderate influence' than female students (49.7%). When statistically tested, it generated a p-value of .26 at a .05 confidence level, which indicated there was no significant relationship between sex and the institutional profile.This means that sex is not an antecedent in how an institutional profile influences their university choice.

Table 4. Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and institutional profile

Socio-demographic characteristics	Institutional profile							
	Low Influence		Moderate Influence		High Influence		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Sex								
Male	2	3.3	35	58.3	23	38.3	**60**	**100.0**
Female	5	3.2	77	49.7	73	47.1	**155**	**100.0**
Total	**7**	**3.3**	**112**	**52.1**	**96**	**44.7**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.26 (one-tailed)				***Not significant***	
Home location (permanent address)								
w/in Iloilo City	4	2.9	74	52.9	62	44.3	**140**	**100.0**
outside Iloilo City	3	4.0	38	50.7	34	45.3	**75**	**100.0**
Total	**7**	**3.3**	**112**	**52.1**	**96**	**44.7**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.44 (one-tailed)				***Not significant***	
Type of previous school attended (HS/SHS)								
Private	4	2.4	87	53.0	73	44.5	**164**	**100.0**
Public	3	5.9	25	49.0	23	45.1	**51**	**100.0**
Total	**7**	**3.3**	**112**	**52.1**	**96**	**44.7**	**215**	
			p=.23 (one-tailed)				***Not significant***	
Monthly family income								
Below Php 20,000	0	0.0	4	28.6	10	71.4	**14**	**100.0**
Php 20,001 – Php 30,000	1	2.0	25	50.0	24	48.0	**50**	**100.0**
Php 30,001 – Php 50,000	3	2.6	59	51.8	52	45.6	**114**	**100.0**
Above 50,001	3	8.1	24	64.9	10	27.0	**37**	**100.0**
Total	**7**	**3.3**	**112**	**52.1**	**96**	**44.7**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=0.04 (one-tailed)				***Significant***	

In terms of the home location, it was observed that a higher number of respondents reported 'moderate influence' from those who live within Iloilo City at 52.9% marginally followed by those outside the city with 50.7%. When tested using inferential statistics, it generated a p-value of .44 at a .05 confidence level which indicated there is no significant relationship between home location and institutional profile. This means that home location does not affect whether one is influenced by institutional profile.

For the type of school previously attended, a higher proportion of those who come from private school indicated 'moderate influence' at 53.0% followed by those who come from public schools at 49.0%. Results of the statistical test however revealed a p-value of .23 at a .05 confidence level which is considered not significant. This entails that type of school last attended does not affect the influence of institutional profile.

Finally, the highest proportion of respondents at 71.4% who indicated to have been 'highly influenced' come from families earning below Php 20,000. Meanwhile, a bigger proportion with 64.9% was also observed from those who come from families earning above Php 50,001 indicated 'moderate influence. Statistical results indicated a p-value of .04 at a .05 confidence which is considered significant. This means that family income affects the influence of institutional profile as a university choice factor. Those who come from a lower family income bracket consider institutional profile in their university choice process.

Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and reference groups
The relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics and reference groups was also ascertained by the researchers which are presented in Table 5. This study revealed that there is a higher proportion of male students who indicated to have been 'highly influenced' by reference groups with 68.3% than the percentage of female students with only 59.4%. When inferential statistics were employed, it generated a p-value of .23 at a .05 confidence level which is not significant. This entails that there is no significant relationship between sex and the influence of reference groups in the university choice process.

Meanwhile, the home location was also related with reference groups whereby those within Iloilo City bore the highest percentage of those declaring they have been 'highly influenced' at 66.4%. They were marginally followed by those who live outside Iloilo City with 53.3%. Statistical results generated a p-value of .05 at a .05 confidence level which indicated to be significant. This means that home location is directly associated with the influence of reference groups. As such, those who live within Iloilo City are more likely to choose the PHEI when actively or passively encouraged by their families and friends among others.

Table 5. Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and reference groups

Socio-demographic characteristics	**Reference groups**							
	Low Influence		**Moderate Influence**		**High Influence**		**Total**	
	f	**%**	**F**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**F**	**%**
Sex								
Male	4	6.7	15	25.0	41	68.3	**60**	**100.0**
Female	16	10.3	47	30.3	92	59.4	**155**	**100.0**
Total	**20**	**9.3**	**62**	**28.8**	**133**	**61.9**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.23 (one-tailed)				***Not significant***	
Home location (permanent address)								
w/in Iloilo City	11	7.9	36	25.7	93	66.4	**140**	**100.0**
outside Iloilo City	9	12.0	26	34.7	40	53.3	**75**	**100.0**
Total	**20**	**9.3**	**62**	**28.8**	**133**	**61.9**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.05 (one-tailed)				***Significant***	
Type of previous school attended (HS/SHS)								
Private	14	8.5	41	25.0	109	66.5	**164**	**100.0**
Public	6	11.8	21	41.2	24	47.1	**51**	**100.0**
Total	**20**	**9.3**	**62**	**28.8**	**133**	**61.9**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.02 (one-tailed)				***Significant***	
Monthly family income								
Below Php 20,000	4	28.6	5	35.7	5	35.7	**14**	**100.0**
Php 20,001 – Php 30,000	5	10.0	15	30.0	30	60.0	**50**	**100.0**
Php 30,001 – Php 50,000	5	4.4	31	27.2	78	68.4	**114**	**100.0**
Above 50,001	6	16.2	11	29.7	20	54.1	**37**	**100.0**
Total	**20**	**9.3**	**62**	**28.8**	**133**	**61.9**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=0.02 (one-tailed)				***Significant***	

In the case of the school last attended, there are significantly more students who come from private schools who indicate that reference groups 'highly influence' them with 66.5% followed by those who come from public schools with only 47.1%. Inferential statistical results generated a p-value of .02 at a .05 confidence level which indicated to be significant. This means that those

who come from private schools are more encouraged to choose the PHEI as influenced by their reference groups.

Finally, a higher proportion of those who come from families earning Php 30,001-50,000 indicated that they were 'highly influenced' by their reference groups. Interestingly, only a minimal proportion of at least 35.7% who come from families earning below Php 20,000 indicated reference groups as a 'highly influential' factor for them. The statistical analysis generated a p-value of .02 which is significant at a.05 confidence level. This means that those from the higher income bracket were more influenced by their reference groups than those in the lower-income bracket. It can further be elicited that those in the lower-income bracket may not be necessarily associated with those in the higher ones. Thus, it can be said that educational systems certianly provide spaces wherein people regardless of income brackets may interact thus bridging the gap between the two (Walker, Pearce, Boe, & Lawson, 2019).

Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and educational marketing

This study also explored the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and educational marketing as presented in Table 6. The findings revealed that there is a higher proportion of male students who indicated that they were 'moderately influenced' by educational marketing at 58.3% than the female respondents with only 51.6%. Statistical analysis rendered a p-value of .34 at a .05 confidence level which is not significant. This means that sex does not affect the influence of educational marketing.

Meanwhile, in terms of home location, a higher proportion of those who live outside Iloilo City indicated to have been 'moderately influenced' at 60.0% as compared to those who live within the city (50.0%). When statistically tested, it generated a p-value of .05 which is significant at a .05 confidence level. This simply means that those who live farther from the PHEI are more influenced by educational marketing. It can be then assumed that distance can be implicitly associated with one's familiarity and consequently affect conceptions toward a PHEI.

For the type of school last attended, it was observed that a greater percentage of those who come from public schools indicated that they were 'moderately influenced' by educational marketing at 66.7% while those in the private schools with only 49.4%. Further inferential statistics revealed a p- value of .03 which is significant at .05 confidence. This finding suggests that the type of school has a direct relationship with educational marketing where public schools are observed to be more encouraged.

Table 6. Relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and educational marketing

Socio-demographic characteristics	**Educational marketing**							
	Low Influence		**Moderate Influence**		**High Influence**		**Total**	
	F	**%**	**F**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Sex								
Male	6	10.0	35	58.3	19	31.7	**60**	**100.0**
Female	17	11.0	80	51.6	58	37.4	**155**	**100.0**

Total	**23**	**10.7**	**115**	**53.5**	**77**	**35.8**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.34 (one-tailed)				***Not significant***	
Home location (permanent address)								
w/in Iloilo City	13	9.3	70	50.0	57	40.7	**140**	**100.0**
outside Iloilo City	10	13.3	45	60.0	20	26.7	**75**	**100.0**
Total	**23**	**10.7**	**115**	**53.5**	**77**	**35.8**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.05 (one-tailed)				***Significant***	
Type of previous school attended (HS/SHS)								
Private	17	10.4	81	49.4	66	40.2	**164**	**100.0**
Public	6	11.8	34	66.7	11	21.6	**51**	**100.0**
Total	**23**	**10.7**	**115**	**53.5**	**77**	**35.8**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=.03 (one-tailed)				***Significant***	
Monthly family income								
Below Php 20,000	4	28.6	3	21.4	7	50.0	**14**	**100.0**
Php 20,001 – Php 30,000	8	16.0	25	50.0	17	34.0	**50**	**100.0**
Php 30,001 – Php 50,000	6	5.3	63	55.3	45	39.5	**114**	**100.0**
Above 50,001	5	13.5	24	64.9	8	21.6	**37**	**100.0**
Total	**23**	**10.7**	**115**	**53.5**	**77**	**35.8**	**215**	**100.0**
			p=0.01 (one-tailed)				***Significant***	

As for the family income, the study revealed that there was a higher proportion of those who come from families earning above Php 50,001 indicating they were 'moderately influenced' at 64.9% followed by those who come from families earning Php 30,001-50,000 and Php 20,001-30,000 at 55.3% and 50.0%, respectively. The statistical analysis generated a p-value of .01 at at a .05 confidence level which indicated to be significant. This means that there is a significant relationship between family income and educational marketing suggesting that those who come from higher-earning families are more influenced by educational marketing. This finding can be associated with the research of Mihic and Culina (2006) revealing that social status and income influence susceptibility towards marketing strategies.

Conclusions

The 21st century witnessed the institutionalization of the education sector as a fundamental social system that dramatically transformed the professional arena (Zapp, 2017). Earning a college degree has become a primary requisite in entering the workforce particularly in the formal economy sector. Almost every industry, predominantly in the context of white-collar professions, requires a college diploma at a minimum. Consequently, it erupted the mushrooming of schools and more particularly of private schools that implement open-admission policy thus broadening the already competitive market. Higher education had increasingly become commoditized (Williams, 2016) rendering school choice to be an apparent, if not paramount, consideration in designing one's career path (Johnson, 2000).

In this very intensified competition, schools lure their prospective students by implementing various marketing strategies based on empirical data that come from identifying their workable advantages (Plank & Chiagouris, 1997). They devise their comprehensive marketing plans from the findings of studies that inform the characteristics of their current students and their motivations in

preferring their university over the others (Kotler & Fox, 1995; Alves & Raposo, 2007). This paper pursued the same intentions compelling the very unstable student enrollment and the alarming non-enrollment for some programs.

The findings of this study revealed that the student population is predominantly composed of female students who mostly live within a driving distance from the PHEI, have been educated from a private high school, and whose families are from middle-class and upper brackets. Meanwhile, in terms of the specific factors that influence preference towards the PHEI, this study revealed that 'academic reputation' followed by 'quality of academic staff' and 'availability of academic programs' obtained the highest means as 'highly influential' factors. Corroborating it from the enrollment records, most of the student enrollment comes from medical and allied health programs for which the PHEI is heavily known. It can be remarked that in these programs, the PHEI produced outstanding graduates who obtained 100% passing rates in licensure examinations for several years streak and some who even placed in the topnotch nationwide rankings. This is an interesting feat that the PHEI must continue to strengthen and adopt as a part of its institutional branding.

The relationship of socio-demographic characteristics with institutional profile, reference groups, and educational marketing was further tested. It was found out that, unlike the study of Alves and Raposo (2007), sex is not significantly related to all three components. It can be explained by the uneven population of the PHEI from the very beginning hence the possible turnout of such result. The case of home location was rather different. This study revealed that it is significantly related to the reference groups and educational marketing but not to the institutional profile. From this finding, it can be rationalized that this is possible because more than the majority of the respondents live within a driving distance and those who live within Iloilo City know how terrible the traffic may become during peak hours.

As for the type of school last attended, the researchers found the same pattern wherein it is related with the reference groups and educational marketing but not an institutional profile. From this, it can be induced that since the respondents already come from private high schools, they may already consider going to a private HEI for their college education though they are still not yet certain as to which private HEI they would attend. As such, they may seek their reference groups or consider educational marketing as choice factors.

Finally, a rather unique result was generated from family income where it is found to be significantly related among three components. With this finding, it can be deduced that the PHEI may target the higher income group for their marketing efforts as they tend to be more influenced by institutional profiles, reference groups, and educational marketing. The researchers would however suggest that the PHEI does not disregard altogether those who come from lower-income families. If examined closely, a greater proportion of those who come from low-income families exhibited to have been highly influenced by institutional factors than by the other two components. This means that even if they are struggling with their finances, they tend to perceive that obtaining a college degree from the PHEI will be more advantageous to them and may even increase their chance of having better opportunities in the future and perhaps a relatively successful career. This is consistent with the arguments of Raj, Friedman, Saez, Turner, and Yagan, (2017) who found out that studying in schools perceived to be exclusive to the 'elites' increases career

success among those who come from low-income families.

This study explored how different factors influenced the decision of the current students in choosing the PHEI among others and if their influences are antecedently affected by socio-demographic characteristics. Working upon a rich plethora of studies on the university choice, the researchers utilized these findings and determined if the same conceptions are too he held on the case of the PHEI under study. Helpful findings were discovered by the researchers which led to the conclusion that; indeed, certain socio-demographic characteristics affect the university choice process if taken as antecedents. These findings are essential in the further development of a comprehensive educational marketing plan which is presently nonexistent. Most significantly, the researchers suggest that the PHEI should focus on its workable advantage such as those which are mentioned herein and in other materials like tracer studies, records of student feedback, etc. Finally, the researchers would also want to remind that though the university is encouraged to further innovate its marketing strategies to attract more prospective students and maintain the sustainability of the programs, it should also not neglect its humanitarian commitments for which it had genuinely uphold as part of its founding values. Administrators should ensure that even though the school is widely known to be an elite school, it should also provide avenues for those in underprivileged groups. In the end, the PHEI was a mission school first, before it being a corporatized institution.

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