



Original Article

Preference for Higher Education Institutions Offering Business Administration Program: A Conjoint Analysis

Manolito Chosen II Ramos¹  and John Vianne Murcia^{1,2*} 

¹University of Mindanao,
Davao City, Philippines

²Jose Maria College
Foundation, Inc., Davao City,
Philippines

Correspondence:
jv_murcia@umindanao.edu.ph

Abstract

This study examined the factors influencing Grade 12 senior high school students' preferences for enrolling in Business Administration programs at higher education institutions (HEIs) in Davao Oriental, Philippines. Using a conjoint analysis methodology, data were collected from 400 students through a researcher-developed survey questionnaire. Four key attributes were identified: school reputation, faculty expertise, practical application of the course, and accessibility. Each attribute was further divided into levels (e.g., accreditation level for reputation; proportion of PhD-holding faculty; type of host training establishment; and institutional location). The results showed that school reputation was the most influential attribute (relative importance = 33.5%), with Level 3 accreditation receiving the highest utility estimate. Faculty expertise ranked second (19.9%), where students preferred programs with 50% of faculty holding PhDs. Practical application of the course (18.1%) ranked third, with partnerships with industry host training establishments (e.g., banks) being most valued. Accessibility was the least important attribute (17.7%), though students still favored institutions located within the town proper. Individual preference models revealed heterogeneity among students, while the aggregate model confirmed the overall ranking. Simulation analyses of three hypothetical HEIs indicated that an institution with the most favorable attribute profile (HEI C) captured the highest predicted market share (43.1% under maximum utility rule). These findings provide empirical evidence for HEIs to strategically enhance their accreditation standards, faculty qualifications, industry linkages, and location convenience.

Keywords

business administration; choice of higher education institution; Business Administration program; preference; conjoint analysis; Philippines



INTRODUCTION

Competition for student enrollment among higher education institutions (HEIs) has been a long-standing reality. However, in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, this competition has intensified dramatically. Nationwide data show that college dropout rates in the Philippines nearly doubled from 20% in 2019 to 41% in 2020, with rates spiking to 41% in 2021-2022 before settling at 29.4% in 2024 (BusinessWorld, 2024). A PIDS study confirms that while government funding for public universities has increased, quality disparities remain acute—particularly between institutions in Metro Manila and those in other regions—and enrollment in private institutions has fallen to its lowest level since 1945 (Aldaba et al., 2025). These realities mean that both public and private HEIs face significant challenges in maintaining relevance and competitiveness.

Public higher education institutions confront a distinctive set of constraints. Chronic underfunding and extensive governmental oversight have resulted in diminished organizational autonomy, while rigid budgeting cycles and competition from other sectors for limited public resources leave state universities and colleges (SUCs) struggling to expand capacity (Martinez-Campillo & Fernandez-Santos, 2019). In 2025, at least 168,493 qualified students were denied admission to SUCs because of physical capacity shortfalls, even after passing entrance examinations (Senate of the Philippines, 2025). The capital outlay for SUCs also decreased from ₱31 billion in 2024 to only ₱17 billion in 2025, limiting their ability to build new classrooms and laboratories (Senate of the Philippines, 2025). For their part, private HEIs depend almost entirely on tuition, miscellaneous fees, and ad-hoc sponsorships or partnerships. Their financial sustainability is thus directly tied to their ability to attract and retain students; a drop in enrollment translates immediately into reduced revenue, making continuous innovation and program customization essential (Mkulu & Paschal, 2020). A PIDS study (Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al., 2024) further warns that the free tuition provided in SUCs and local universities and colleges (LUCs) has unintentionally placed private HEIs at a disadvantage, and it recommends shifting toward a voucher system or socialized tuition model to allow students to choose the school that best fits their needs, thereby creating a more equitable and sustainable higher education system. Taken together, these institutional pressures compel HEIs to understand the preferences of their target market in granular, attribute-level detail.

Choosing a college course is one of the most consequential decisions an aspiring student makes. This decision is not merely an administrative formality; it shapes career trajectories, economic prospects, and personal fulfillment, and it entails substantial investments of time, intellectual effort, emotion, and finances (Sylaska & Mayer, 2024). A college course can profoundly influence an individual's future by equipping them with the essential knowledge and skills necessary for a successful career (Atuahene, 2021). Conversely, a mismatch between a student's major and their interests or abilities can lead to dissatisfaction, increased stress, and a higher likelihood of dropping out (Yusof et al., 2023). For Generation Z students, who have grown up in a highly digital and globally connected environment, this decision is particularly complex because their information gathering and preference formation are shaped by unique social and technological forces (Sylaska & Mayer, 2024). The selection of a career is a significant aspect of young individuals' development, associated with psychological, physical, and socio-economic factors that may have lasting effects into adulthood (Akosah-Twumasi, 2018). Despite this significance, limited research has compared the factors influencing major choice across different cultural contexts, and much of the existing literature remains focused on Western settings (Calkins & Welki, 2006; Hastings et al., 2016; Sylaska & Mayer, 2024). The present study addresses this gap by focusing on a non-Western, provincial Philippine context.

Business programs are among the most popular fields of study globally, and the Philippines is no exception. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)



reported that “Business Administration and Related Courses” had the highest enrollment of any discipline in the country, with 878,661 students enrolled across undergraduate to doctoral programs (CHED, 2020). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021) projects that employment in business and financial occupations will grow by approximately 8% over the next eight years, which helps explain the sustained student interest. More recent evidence confirms that business and administration fields continue to dominate both undergraduate and graduate enrollments in the Philippines, with graduate education being highly privatized and concentrated in business degrees (EDCOM II, 2025). A PIDS study further notes that business degrees align strongly with the digital economy and in-demand employment sectors (Nicolosora, 2024). Given this popularity, it is essential to understand the specific attributes that lead students to prefer one Business Administration program over another, so that HEIs can design offerings that are both educationally sound and market-responsive.

The primary aim of this paper is to identify the preferences of Grade 12 senior high school students in Davao Oriental regarding higher education institutions that provide a Business Administration program. Specifically, the study assesses the relative importance of four attributes—practical application of the course, accessibility, faculty expertise, and school reputation—in shaping students’ enrollment choices. The study is grounded in Random Utility Theory (Domencich & McFadden, 1975) and Rational Consumer Behavior Theory (Ben-Akiva & Lerman, 1985), which together posit that students evaluate a set of observable institutional attributes and select the alternative that maximizes their perceived utility. Conjoint analysis is employed to decompose students’ overall preferences into part-worth utilities for each attribute level, thereby revealing the implicit trade-offs that students make when choosing a program. The socio-demographic profile of the respondents is also established to ensure that the study targets the intended population. By quantifying the relative importance of each attribute, this study provides a robust empirical basis for HEIs to refine their program offerings, strategically allocate resources, and communicate more effectively with prospective students. It also offers prospective students and their families a transparent, data-driven framework for making informed educational decisions.

METHODS

Research Design. This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design using conjoint analysis to determine the relative importance of attributes influencing senior high school students’ preferences for higher education institutions (HEIs) offering a Business Administration program. Conjoint analysis is an appropriate decompositional technique when the outcome of interest is a choice among multi-attribute alternatives, as it estimates the part-worth utilities of each attribute level and computes the attribute’s relative importance in the decision-making process (Hair et al., 2019; Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2018).

Participants. Participants were 400 Grade 12 senior high school students enrolled in various public and private secondary schools across the province of Davao Oriental, Philippines. A non-probability convenience sampling strategy was adopted due to the geographic dispersion of schools and the need to achieve a sample size sufficient for conjoint analysis. According to Orme (2019), a sample of 150 to 1,200 respondents is adequate for conjoint studies, with 300 being the recommended minimum for robust quantitative analysis. The target sample of 400 exceeded this threshold, ensuring stable utility estimates.

The inclusion criteria were: (a) voluntary provision of informed consent; (b) bona fide Grade 12 student status; (c) current enrollment in a secondary school within Davao Oriental;



and (d) permanent residency within Davao Oriental province. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Data from those who withdrew were archived confidentially and excluded from analysis.

Instruments. The following phases were implemented by the study in developing the instrument:

Attribute identification. A preliminary qualitative phase was conducted to identify the salient attributes that students consider when selecting a Business Administration program. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were carried out with 15 students currently enrolled in a Business Administration program at a local HEI. Participants were asked to describe the factors that influenced their own enrollment decisions. Responses were transcribed, coded, and ranked by frequency. The four most frequently mentioned attributes were retained: (1) practical application of the course, (2) accessibility, (3) faculty expertise, and (4) school reputation.

Attribute levels. For each attribute, three to five levels were defined based on the interview data and a review of relevant literature (Agrey & Lampadan, 2014; Shamsudin et al., 2022). The final attribute-level structure was:

- **Practical application:** (a) banks as host training establishment, (b) multipurpose cooperatives as host training establishment, (c) host training establishment partners regardless of industry.
- **Accessibility:** (a) located within the town proper, (b) located outside the town proper, (c) located in another city or municipality.
- **Faculty expertise:** (a) 25% of faculty hold PhDs, (b) 50% hold PhDs, (c) 75% hold PhDs.
- **School reputation:** (a) program not accredited, (b) Level 1 accreditation, (c) Level 2 accreditation, (d) Level 3 accreditation, (e) Level 4 accreditation.

Survey construction. An orthogonal main-effects design was generated using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26). The design produced 29 plan cards (i.e., hypothetical profiles), each representing a unique combination of attribute levels. This fractional factorial design ensured that the utility of each level could be estimated independently without multicollinearity. Each plan card was presented to respondents with a rating scale from 0 (“I do not prefer this type of Business Administration program”) to 10 (“I definitely prefer this type of Business Administration program”).

The final questionnaire consisted of three sections: (a) informed consent and screening questions, (b) 29 conjoint choice tasks, and (c) socio-demographic items. The instrument was pilot-tested on 30 Grade 12 students (not part of the main sample) to check clarity, length, and comprehensibility. Minor wording adjustments were made following the pilot.

Data Collection. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (approval no. U MERC-2023-336), which classified the study as low risk. Permission was then secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Department of Education - Davao Oriental and from the principals/heads of each participating secondary school. Data collection occurred between August and December 2024. The survey was administered primarily through Google Forms; hard copies were provided for students without reliable internet access. Trained research assistants were present to explain the conjoint task and answer questions. Completion time averaged 20-25 minutes. All responses were anonymous, and identifiers (e.g., email addresses, phone numbers) were collected only for verification of



duplicate entries and were stored separately from the main dataset.

Data Analysis. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26) with the CONJOINT procedure. The analysis proceeded in three stages.

Utility estimation. Part-worth utilities (also called utility estimates) were calculated for each attribute level using ordinary least squares regression on the respondent-level preference ratings. Higher utility values indicate greater preference for that level. The constant term represents the baseline utility of a reference profile.

Relative importance. The relative importance of each attribute was computed by taking the range of utilities across its levels (i.e., maximum utility minus minimum utility), dividing that range by the sum of ranges across all four attributes, and expressing the result as a percentage. This metric reflects the weight students assign to each attribute when making a choice.

Model validation. Internal validity of the aggregate conjoint model was assessed using Pearson's r and Kendall's tau, which compare predicted preferences with observed ratings. Additionally, holdout cards (two plan cards not used in model estimation) were included to test predictive accuracy, evaluated by Kendall's tau for holdouts.

Simulations. Three hypothetical HEI profiles (A, B, and C) were constructed by combining specific attribute levels. Preference probabilities for each simulated HEI were estimated using three competing choice rules: maximum utility (first-choice), Bradley-Terry-Luce (share of preference), and logit. These simulations provide market-share predictions under different competitive scenarios.

All statistical tests were two-tailed with a significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The conjoint analysis revealed the relative importance of four attributes—school reputation, faculty expertise, practical application of the course, and accessibility—in shaping Grade 12 senior high school students' preferences for higher education institutions (HEIs) offering a Business Administration program in Davao Oriental, Philippines. The aggregate model demonstrated acceptable internal validity, with Pearson's $r = 0.554$ ($p < .05$) and Kendall's tau = 0.383 ($p < .05$), indicating a moderate positive correlation between observed and predicted preferences. The holdout-based Kendall's tau was non-significant (0.000), suggesting that the model's predictive accuracy for unseen profiles was limited, which is common in orthogonal designs with few holdout cards (Hair et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the aggregate model provides a reliable basis for interpreting attribute importance.

Table 1 presents the relative importance values and part-worth utility estimates for each attribute level. School reputation emerged as the most influential attribute, accounting for 33.5% of the total importance. This finding is consistent with the Random Utility Theory (Domencich & McFadden, 1975), which posits that observable attributes such as accreditation status contribute systematically to a student's perceived utility. Among the levels, a Business Administration program with Level 3 accreditation received the highest utility estimate ($U = 0.036$), followed by Level 4 accreditation ($U = 0.009$). In contrast, programs with no accreditation, Level 1, or Level 2 accreditation yielded negative utilities (ranging from -0.009 to -0.021). The clear preference for Level 3 over Level 4 is theoretically intriguing: it may reflect students' perception that Level 4 accreditation implies excessively stringent



Table 1. Relative Importance and Utility Estimates of Attribute Levels for a Higher Education Institution Offering a Business Administration Program (N = 400)

Attribute	Importance Value (%)	Attribute Level	Utility Estimate	SE
Practical Application of the Course	18.076	With banks as the host training establishment	.007	.015
		With multipurpose cooperatives as HTEs	-.017	.015
		With HTE partners, regardless of industry	.010	.017
Accessibility	17.681	Located within the town proper	.008	.015
		Located outside the town proper	-.006	.015
		Located in another city or municipality	-.002	.017
Faculty Expertise	19.907	25% of the faculty are PhDs	-.005	.015
		50% of the faculty are PhDs	.012	.015
		75% of the faculty are PhDs	-.007	.017
School Reputation	33.525	Program not accredited	-.009	.021
		Level 1 accreditation	-.021	.021
		Level 2 accreditation	-.015	.021
		Level 3 accreditation	.036	.021
		Level 4 accreditation	.009	.021
		(Constant)	-.481	.012

Note. HTE = host training establishment. Utilities are estimated using ordinary least squares. Higher utility values indicate stronger preference. SE = standard error.

requirements that could detract from other valued aspects (e.g., flexibility or affordability), or it may simply indicate that students are most familiar with Level 3 as a benchmark of quality. Agrey and Lampadan (2014) similarly found that institutional reputation, proxied by accreditation, is a primary determinant of university choice. Moreover, Murcia and Miralles (2017) demonstrated that students exhibit loyalty to HEIs that visibly commit to quality standards through accreditation. The present results extend these findings by quantifying the utility of each accreditation level, showing that not all accredited programs are equally preferred.

Faculty expertise ranked second, with a relative importance of 19.9%. The utility estimates revealed a non-linear pattern: students positively valued a program where 50% of faculty held doctoral degrees (U = 0.012), but expressed negative utilities for both 25% (U = -0.005) and 75% (U = -0.007) PhD proportions. This inverted-U relationship is theoretically meaningful. It suggests that students perceive a “threshold” of faculty qualification: 50% PhDs signals sufficient academic rigor without the potential drawbacks of an excessively research-oriented faculty, which might be seen as less focused on teaching or practical application. Eli and Hamou (2022) emphasized that faculty qualifications and academic reputation are critical in students’ major selection decisions. The present study refines that conclusion by showing that more is not always better; an optimal balance between research qualification and teaching engagement may exist from the student’s perspective. This finding has practical implications for HEIs: indiscriminately increasing the proportion of PhD-holders without considering



Table 2. Individual and Aggregate Utility Estimates and Importance Values for a Higher Education Institution Offering a Business Administration Program

Attribute Levels	Individual Models			Aggregate Model
	Student 38	Student 89	Student 147	
(Constant)	-.833	-.173	-.587	-.481
With banks as host training establishment	.333	.233	.033	.007
With multipurpose cooperatives as HTEs.	-.167	.033	-.067	-.017
With HTE partners regardless of industry	-.167	-.267	.033	.010
located within the town proper	-.033	-.233	-.100	.008
located outside the town proper	-.133	-.333	-.100	-.006
located in another city or municipality	.167	.567	.200	-.002
25% of the faculty are PhDs	.033	-.167	.033	-.005
50% of the faculty are PhDs	.133	-.067	-.067	.012
75% of the faculty are PhDs	-.167	.233	.033	-.007
Business Administration program not accredited	.200	.080	.040	-.009
Business Administration program Level 1	.200	-.320	-.160	-.021
Business Administration program Level 2	-.200	-.320	-.160	-.015
Business Administration program Level 3	.000	.480	.040	.036
Business Administration program Level 4	-.200	.080	.240	.009
Relative Importance				
Practical Application	33.333	19.231	11.111	18.076
Accessibility	20.000	34.615	33.333	17.681
Faculty Expertise	20.000	15.385	11.111	19.907
School Reputation	26.667	30.769	44.444	33.525
Fit Measures				
Pearson's r	0.602*	0.660*	0.425*	0.554*
Kendall's tau	0.449*	0.548*	0.423*	0.383*
Kendall's tau for holdouts	-0.775 ^{ns}	0.516 ^{ns}	0.000 ^{ns}	0.000 ^{ns}

Note. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). Significant at the .01 level.



pedagogical fit may not yield proportional returns in student preference.

The practical application of the course (relative importance = 18.1%) ranked third. Among the three levels, partnerships with host training establishments (HTEs) regardless of industry yielded the highest utility ($U = 0.010$), closely followed by banks as HTEs ($U = 0.007$). In contrast, multipurpose cooperatives as HTEs produced a negative utility ($U = -0.017$). This pattern indicates that students value diverse, industry-agnostic internship opportunities even slightly more than bank-specific placements. The preference for “any industry” partners may reflect a desire for flexibility and exposure to multiple career paths, whereas cooperatives are perceived as offering narrower or less prestigious training. Graevenitz, Harhoff, and Weber (2010) found that universities fostering real-world practices—such as compulsory entrepreneurship courses—influence student choice. Galbraith and Mondal (2020) highlighted the role of internships in enhancing career readiness, with students favoring universities that provide direct industry connections. The present study extends these findings by quantifying the utility of specific types of training partnerships, revealing that general industry partnerships are marginally more attractive than bank-specific ones, while cooperative partnerships are actively dispreferred.

Accessibility, despite ranking last, still demonstrated a non-trivial importance value of 17.7%, indicating that location matters but is less decisive than reputation or faculty quality. Students strongly preferred institutions located within the town proper ($U = 0.008$), whereas locations outside town ($U = -0.006$) or in another city/municipality ($U = -0.002$) were negatively viewed. This finding aligns with Shamsudin et al. (2022), who reported that convenience and accessibility significantly influence enrollment decisions in private universities. The near-zero utility for “located in another city or municipality” (-0.002) is interesting: it suggests that students are relatively indifferent between a distant location and one just outside town, perhaps because both entail similar commuting costs. The clear preference for town-proper locations reflects the practical constraints of students in a provincial setting, where public transportation may be limited and family-controlled mobility is common.

Beyond the aggregate model, Table 2 compares the preference structures of three individual students (randomly selected) against the aggregate model. This individual-level analysis reveals substantial heterogeneity in attribute importance. Student 38 prioritized practical application (33.3%) over school reputation (26.7%), contrasting sharply with the aggregate pattern where reputation dominated. Student 89 valued accessibility most (34.6%), followed by reputation (30.8%). Student 147 placed overwhelming importance on reputation (44.4%), with accessibility second (33.3%), and assigned negligible weight to practical application and faculty expertise (both 11.1%). These profiles illustrate that while the aggregate model provides a general trend, individual decision-making can deviate markedly. For example, Student 38’s preference for a program with Level 1 accreditation (utility = 0.200) over Level 3 or 4 demonstrates that some students prioritize other attributes (e.g., industry partnerships) above accreditation status. The positive Pearson’s r^* values for each individual (ranging from 0.425 to 0.660) indicate acceptable model fit at the individual level, though the non-significant holdout Kendall’s tau for all three individuals suggests limited predictive power for novel profiles—a common limitation of individual-level conjoint models with small numbers of choice tasks (Orme, 2019).

To translate these preference structures into actionable enrollment predictions, Table 3 presents simulation results for three hypothetical HEIs (A, B, and C) under three different



Table 3. Preference Probabilities for Three Hypothetical Higher Education Institutions Under Alternative Choice Rules

HEI	ID	Maximum Utility (%)	Bradley-Terry-Luce (%)	Logit (%)
A	2.505	28.9	32.4	31.5
B	2.528	28.1	32.7	32.1
C	2.647	43.1	34.8	36.4

Note. HEI profiles: HEI A (Level 2 accreditation, 25% PhD faculty, cooperative HTE, outside town); HEI B (Level 3 accreditation, 75% PhD faculty, bank HTE, another city); HEI C (Level 4 accreditation, 50% PhD faculty, bank HTE, town proper). HTE = host training establishment.

choice rules: maximum utility (first-choice), Bradley-Terry-Luce (BTL), and logit. The simulations assume that each HEI’s profile is composed of the attribute levels listed in the note below the table. HEI C consistently captured the highest share of preference across all three models, with maximum utility showing 43.1%, BTL 34.8%, and logit 36.4%. HEI A and HEI B had comparable shares (28-32%). The consistency across choice rules strengthens the conclusion that the specific configuration of HEI C—which combines Level 4 accreditation, 50% PhD faculty, bank partnerships, and town-proper location—is the most appealing to the target population. The logit model, which accounts for preference heterogeneity and is more realistic for market share prediction (Ben-Akiva & Lerman, 1985), gives HEI C a 36.4% probability of being chosen, nearly 5 percentage points higher than the second-best institution. This finding has direct strategic implications: HEIs seeking to maximize enrollment should prioritize obtaining Level 4 accreditation (or at least Level 3), maintaining a balanced faculty qualification profile (around 50% PhDs), securing bank or general-industry internship partnerships, and ensuring campus accessibility within the town proper.

Synthesizing these results, the conjoint analysis reveals that student preferences for a Business Administration program are multidimensional and not reducible to a single factor. School reputation exerts the strongest influence, but its effect is qualified by the specific accreditation level, with Level 3 surprisingly outranking Level 4. Faculty expertise matters, but in a curvilinear fashion that challenges the assumption that higher qualifications are always better. Practical application is important, with students valuing diverse industry partnerships over narrow, sector-specific ones. Accessibility, while least important, still shapes choices, particularly the convenience of a town-proper location. The individual-level heterogeneity reminds researchers and practitioners that aggregate preferences conceal meaningful segments of students who prioritize different attributes. Simulations provide a bridge from utilities to market predictions, offering a robust evidence base for strategic decision-making. Collectively, these findings advance the application of Random Utility Theory and Rational Consumer Behavior Theory to higher education choice, while offering actionable recommendations for HEIs in provincial contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study employed conjoint analysis to determine the relative importance of four attributes—school reputation, faculty expertise, practical application of the course, and accessibility—in shaping Grade 12 senior high school students’ preferences for higher



education institutions (HEIs) offering a Business Administration program in Davao Oriental, Philippines. The findings provide empirical evidence that school reputation, proxied by accreditation level, is the most influential attribute, accounting for approximately one-third of total decision weight. Notably, Level 3 accreditation generated the highest utility, surpassing Level 4, suggesting a non-linear relationship between accreditation status and perceived value. Faculty expertise ranked second, but with a curvilinear pattern: a faculty comprising 50% doctoral degree holders was preferred over both lower (25%) and higher (75%) proportions, indicating that students perceive an optimal balance between research qualification and teaching engagement. Practical application of the course, while third in importance, revealed that students favor flexible, industry-agnostic training partnerships over sector-specific ones (e.g., banks) and actively disfavor cooperative-based placements. Accessibility, though least important, still meaningfully influences choice, with a strong preference for institutions located within the town proper.

Individual-level preference heterogeneity was substantial: some students prioritized practical application or accessibility over reputation, underscoring that aggregate models mask distinct market segments. Simulation analyses of three hypothetical HEI profiles consistently identified one configuration (Level 4 accreditation, 50% PhD faculty, bank partnerships, and town-proper location) as capturing the largest predicted market share, ranging from 34.8% to 43.1% depending on the choice rule.

Theoretically, these results extend Random Utility Theory (Domencich & McFadden, 1975) and Rational Consumer Behavior Theory (Ben-Akiva & Lerman, 1985) to the context of higher education choice in a developing country setting. They demonstrate that students' enrollment decisions are systematically influenced by observable institutional attributes, but that the utility functions are often non-linear and context-dependent.

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Ethical Approval

The study was approved by the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (approval no. UMERC-2023-336) prior to data collection and was classified as a low-risk study.

Competing interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

Data will be made available by the corresponding author on request.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence Use

In the preparation of this research, we utilized **Claude AI** (Version 4.6) as an AI-assisted editing tool to refine language, ensure proper citation formatting in APA 7th edition style, and improve overall readability. The AI was employed solely for proofreading, grammar correction, and structural suggestions, while all academic content, analysis, and conclusions remain our original work. We take full responsibility for the research integrity and confirm that human judgment guided all critical decisions in the study's development.



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