

## Preference of Prospective Students and Students in Choosing Higher Education in Gorontalo Province

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**Abstract:** Competition of the world of education, especially universities at this time so rapidly for public and private universities. This study aims to determine the preference of prospective students and students in selecting universities in Gorontalo Province. This research uses a quantitative approach by conducting a survey to a number of prospective students who enroll in a number of universities or universities in Gorontalo. The results of research show the most considered factors by respondents (students and students) in choosing a college to continue study is the choice of study program, preferences in choosing a college is the reputation of a college and the encouragement of parents. Costs are no longer the most calculated factor in the selection of universities.

**Keywords:** Preference, Prospective students, Students, Higher education.

**INTRODUCTION**

Competition of the education world, especially universities today is so fast, both for public and private universities. With the increasing number of state and private universities, competition between universities is getting tighter. The government began to apply certain standards to improve the competence of universities [1]. From all public universities and private universities in Indonesia, there is the same in having majors / study programs. With the establishment of National Accreditation Board of Higher Education (BAN-PT), the competition among departments / study programs in a university in improving its quality will be more sharp.

This is because the BAN-PT assessment results will be a reference for prospective students in choosing Higher Education. In this case, competitive advantage needs to be achieved to maintain the existence of the organization by achieving sustainable customer value [2, 3]. Understanding consumer behavior and knowing customers is never simple. Customers may state their needs and wants, but act otherwise. In this case, it is a marketing task to fulfill and satisfy the needs and desires of customers [4, 5]. In higher education, the orientation of one customer is that students can be done within certain limits that do not affect the mission and educational goals. Therefore, Higher Education should strive to understand and understand the behavior of its consumers, including the preference of students to the factors considered in choosing a college [6, 7].

The decision-making process may begin with goal setting and then develop alternatives and ultimately determine the best option [8]. Some people may make spontaneous choices without planning, either because they are tempted by promotions, services, building facilities and others without prioritizing [9, 10]. Determine college choices of lectures requires a rational

process that is as objective as possible, because it will result in long-term and associated with great sacrifices, starting from the time, preparation, funding, and mental attitude of the student.

Higher Education should always try to always place in society as a trustworthy and quality educational institution [11]. The increase in the number of new student enrollment will be an indicator of increasing public trust in universities in the province of Gorontalo. However, if viewed from the side of quantity, in 2016, there is a decrease in the number of registrants. Registrant data for the last three years shows a downward trend in the number of interested ones.

This decrease is one indication that the method used in promoting and disseminating information about the advantages possessed by universities in Gorontalo is no longer able to attract prospective students, so that needed a new method in promoting Higher Education in Gorontalo, so more known to the public, in the hope of becoming one of the destination campuses and the primary choice of prospective students who will continue their education to a higher level.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a quantitative approach by conducting a survey that aims to collect information from a sample by inquiring through a questionnaire to a number of prospective students who enroll in a number of universities or universities in Gorontalo. Data analysis techniques in the study using statistics or percentages that reveal the results of the choice of universities to continue the study, Reasons to choose higher education and student choice program and prospective students.

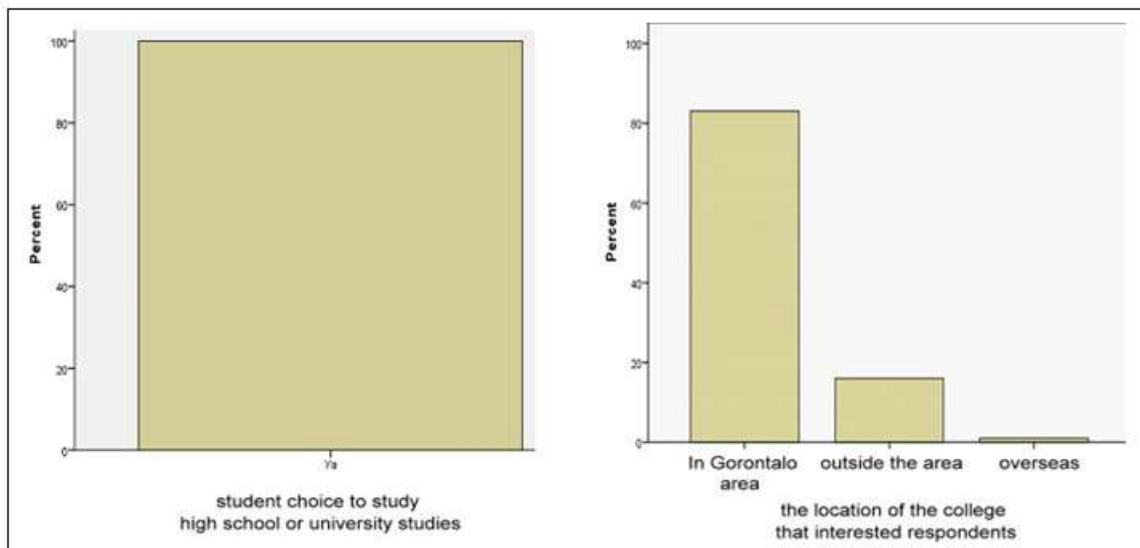
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Preference is the choices made by consumers for the desired products. The strength of consumer preferences will determine what products they are interested in having their disposable income limited to. Along with the selection of what products are

purchased, consumers will also express preferences for certain brands of products of interest. To find out what is the preference of students and prospective students in choosing a College is to do an assessment survey. The survey results are described as follows:

**Choice of Higher Education to continue study**

The explanation on the desire or enthusiasm of the students to continue their study to university is very high, it is proved by 100% of respondents stated that they will continue their study to college if they are later graduated from the school of origin. While the location of the college is the destination of the respondents, 83% chose to continue study within the province of Gorontalo, 16% chose domestic colleges outside the province of Gorontalo and 1% choose to continue their studies abroad for more detailed information can be seen in the following.



**Fig-1: Student choice and location to continue their studies**

Especially for the respondents who choose to continue their studies in universities in Gorontalo, 70% chose to continue their studies at State Universities and

the remaining 30% chose private universities. This shows that prospective students are more dominant in choosing state universities.

Table-1: Higher selection of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gorontalo State Univ.	62	62,0	62,0	62,0
Muhammadiyah Univ. Gorontalo	5	5,0	5,0	67,0
Univ. Ichsan Gorontalo	1	1,0	1,0	68,0
Gorontalo Univ.	3	3,0	3,0	71,0
Open University	1	1,0	1,0	72,0
Health Polytechnic	2	2,0	2,0	74,0
IAIN Sultan Amai	8	8,0	8,0	82,0
STITEK & STIA Bina Taruna	1	1,0	1,0	83,0
STIM Ichsan	3	3,0	3,0	86,0
Others	14	14,0	14,0	100,0
Total	100	100,0	100,0	

**Reasons for choosing a university**

The results of the survey indicate that the main factors underlying the consideration of student and student respondents are the choice of study program or faculty in Higher Education, then reputation factor of college, parents encouragement, college location, facility, friend suggestion, cost, accreditation, lecturer quality and other factors. The consideration of the choice of study program or faculty of a university to be considered the main factor is likely due to the suitability of the respondent's goals from the beginning. The choice of study programs / faculties that vary in a

university becomes its own advantage, which can attract the interest of prospective students to enter and continue their studies. In addition to the choice of study programs, the reputation of tertiary institutions is the reason that is used as an excuse to choose universities both student respondents and prospective students. Good reputation becomes a brand of its own in the eyes of respondents. Reputation is the accumulation of image images of higher education institutions over a long period of time and a wide audience. Reputation is often attached to colleges that have long standing and famous.

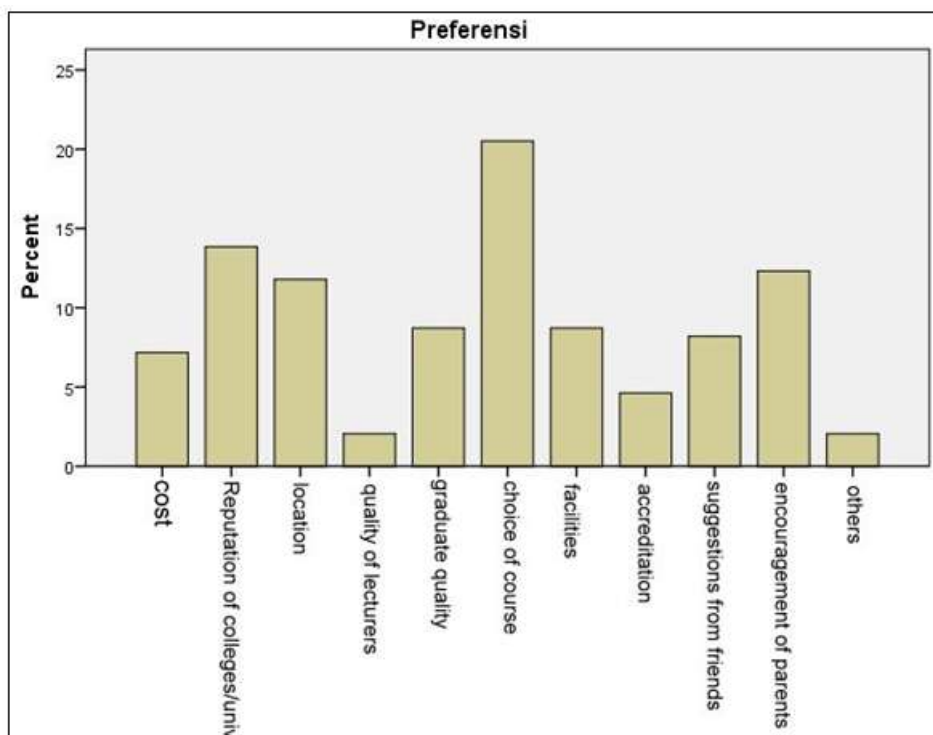


Fig-2: Preference of Respondents in choosing Higher Education

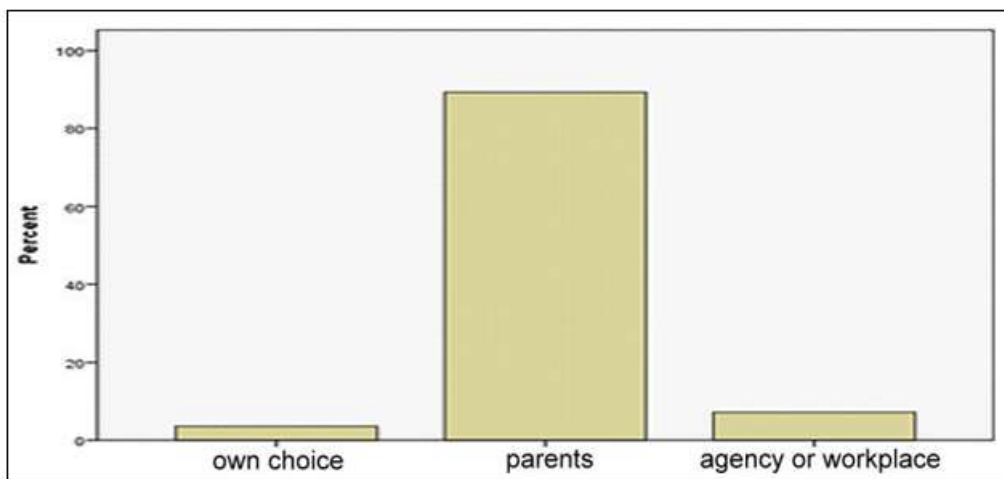
Reputation is formed by image, therefore, to build a reputation must begin by building a good image in the eyes of the public, which is expected to be able to form a good college reputation. Universities can start building images in the corridors of brand management because universities are businesses that are engaged in the service sector.

One of the uniqueness of image formation is the lack of reference roles from others, words of mouth (WOM). For universities, WOM can be the most effective promotional tool, because of its higher credibility. It is considered more objective and not ridden by certain interests. Especially if the information giver is the closest person. This is evidenced by the results of research showing that almost 9% of respondents stated that in choosing a college, they get advice from friends because universities are perceived as service companies, the proof of performance of services such as facilities, quality of teaching staff, academic and administrative services, and the quality of graduates can also affect the brand equity of a university. According to Zeithami, Bitner, and Gremler, consumers will assess the services they get based on 3 elements, namely: people, process, and physical evidence. These three elements are referred to as the evidence of service that represents services so that they are easily perceived by students.

Factor respondents consider in choosing a college is the encouragement of parents. The results showed that the percentage of respondents who make

the encouragement of parents as preferred in choosing a college of 14.2%. This is most likely caused by the majority of parents have cultivated expectations since childhood will be what they are after graduating secondary education, there are parents who obsessed for his son to become a doctor, there is a wish to his son to become an engineer, so bachelor and so forth. Most children will choose to stick with the choice of parents because they think that parents will finance everything that needs to be in college someday if he continues his studies. With a percentage of about 14.2%, it is appropriate that the college targeted parents as the target of socialization. Socialization can be done when there is a meeting between parents of students and the school.

In addition to some of the preference factors described above, the cost factors that for some people may be a major factor, in this study found that cost is no longer a major factor in consideration in choosing a college. This indicates that most people have understood their obligations if they continue to study in universities. In the national legislation regulated the obligation of each learner to 'share the cost of education' (Article 12 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on National Education System / "National Education System Law). Society is one of the elements responsible for funding education, in addition to central and local government. The Constitutional Court has decided that the education budget shall be at least 20% of the total State Revenue and Expenditure Budget.



**Fig-3: Parties who will finance the study of respondents**

Most of the respondents will continue their studies in college with the source of the cost of the parent (89.3%), the agency costs or the company of work (7.1% and own cost of 3.6% as shown in Figure 3. whereas the majority of respondents' Farmers or

Fishermen (51.7%), Entrepreneurs (17.2%), Civil Servants (13.8%), soldiers or police 3.4% and others (10.8%) with average revenues of Rp 750,000 to Rp 2,000,000 per month shown in Figures 4 and 5.

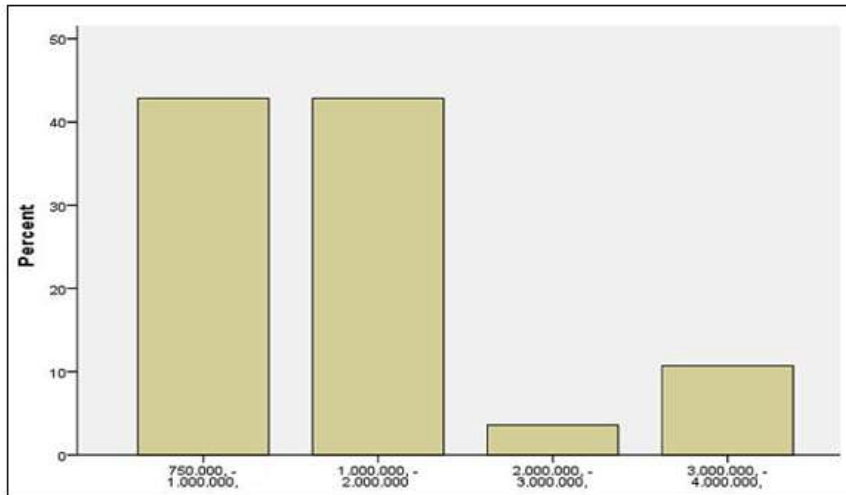


Fig-4: Amount of Income per Month of Parents of Respondents

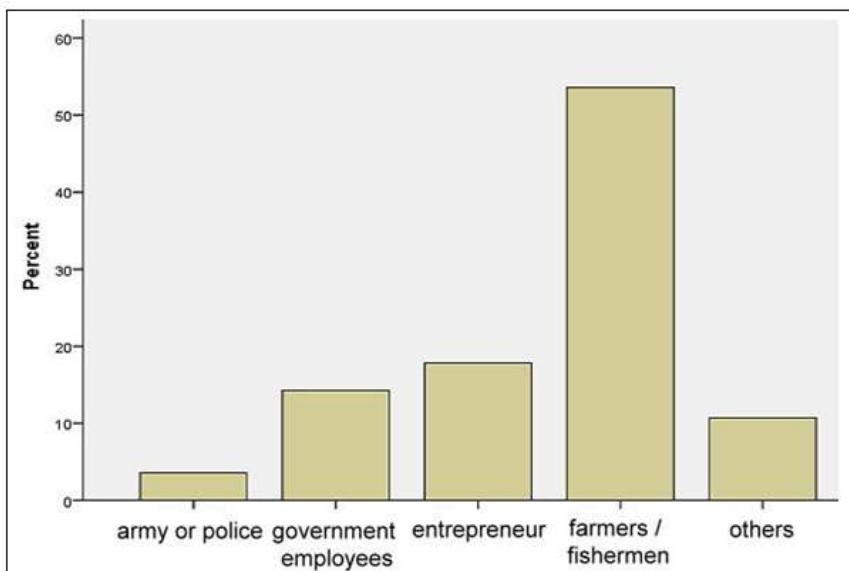


Fig-5: The work of the respondent's parents

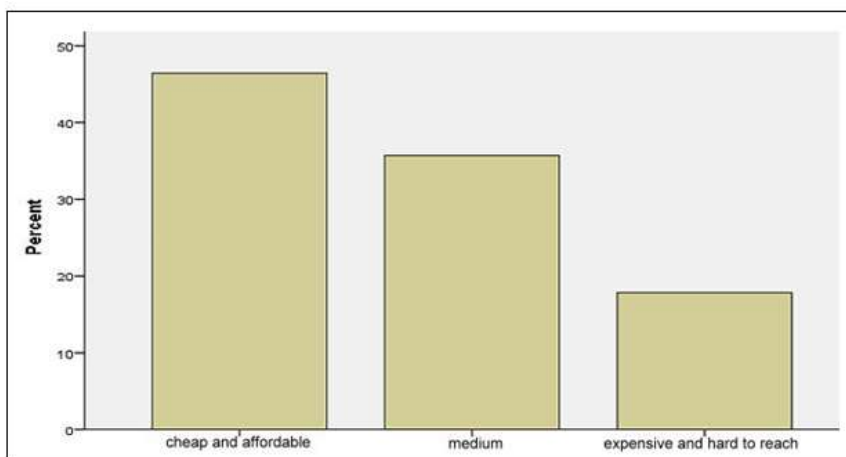


Fig-6: Respondents Response to Tuition Fee in universities

In general, respondents stated that the tuition fees available in universities, especially universities in

the province of Gorontalo are cheap and still can be reached as shown in Figure 6. where 48% of

respondents stated that college tuition fees are cheap, 35% states are, and only 17% say expensive.

**Study Program of Student and Student Selection**

The interest of high school/vocational school/vocational high school students to continue their education to tertiary level is even greater. However,

often students have difficulty in choosing the study program to be taken so that they tend to only follow parental advice or just follow along with friends. Mistakes in choosing a course may have a negative impact on student outcomes, both in the GPA grade and duration of the lecture [12].

**Table-2: Study Programs of interest by Respondents**

Study program	Percentage of Interest (%)	Study program	Percentage of Interest (%)
Administration	0,99	Nursing	13,86
Agribusiness	4,95	Public health	6,93
Nutritionists	2,97	Management	0,99
Accounting	4,95	Education Management	1,98
Health Analysis	3,96	Sports Education	1,98
Architect	1,98	Fishery	4,95
Biology	2,97	Farms	0,99
Economics	1,98	Teachers	4,95
Pharmacy	3,96	Arabic Literature	1,98
Geography	5,94	English literature	1,98
Law	6,93	Information Systems	4,95
Informatics	5,94	Technical Information	1,98
Midwifery	6,93	Civil Engineering	1,98
Medical	2,97	Radiology	0,99

The results of the study shown in Table 2. shows that the most preferred course of study by prospective students is nursing study program with percentage of 13.86%, midwifery and public health with 6.93% percentage, 5.94% informatics, agribusiness and fisheries respectively. 4.95%, and so on. The prospective student's view of choosing the study program is realized because of the things that become the preference in choosing a college is the reputation of the college and the encouragement of the parents. Parents tend to advise their children to continue their studies at universities that have been known to have advantages.

### CONCLUSION

The factors most considered by the respondents (prospective students and students) in choosing a college to continue study is the choice of study program. This is due to the suitability between the aspirations and the wishes of the respondents. Other factors that become preference in choosing a college is the reputation of college and the encouragement of parents. Parents tend to advise their children to continue their studies at universities that have been known to have advantages. The location of the college, the advice of friends, the cost, the facilities, the quality of lecturers as well as accreditation into other considerations that do not significantly affect prospective students to choose college. Costs are no longer the most calculated factor in the selection of universities. Universities need to develop a socialization strategy to increase the knowledge of prospective students in choosing a college.

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