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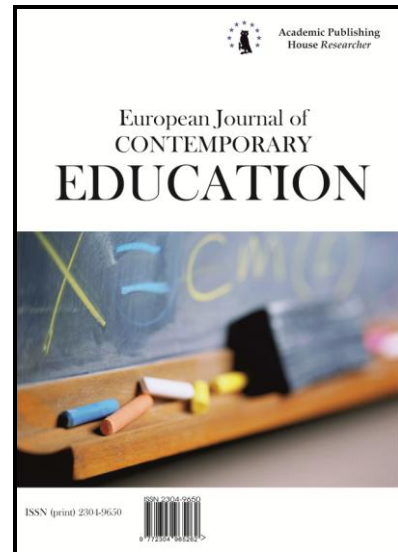
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### **Factors That Influence State or Private University Selection**

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#### **Abstract**

Selection of the university is one of the most important life decisions among young people. With a continually rising assortment of educational options, future students look for institutions that will provide them a distinctive educational knowledge that they will keep in their minds for a lifetime. Also, students usually seek an educational program that will prepare them for a successful profession and that will provide them profitable employment. A lot of different factors heavily impact the decision whether to choose state university or a private one. This paper is focused on examining those factors, such as curriculum, quality and number of the staff, facilities, equipment, language of instruction, payments and fees and many others. Data for this study were collected through surveys of 303 examinees attending both private and state universities. The topic is important since the reasons why students choose one or the other option reveals a lot on their motives as well, which is, most often, extremely important for their development, quality and success, which is both a good indicator of the present quality and can influence the future representation of the university itself and, more important, heavily affects the quality of the society in general. The results of the survey can also help these institutions understand their strengths and weaknesses develop better marketing strategies, provide better conditions to their students and develop a constructive competition between these two types of institutions.

**Keywords:** university; private; state; survey; factor; student.

### Introduction

“Vitae, non scholae discimus“\*, says a Latin proverb. Driven by this, our goal should be seeking the best knowledge source we can possibly get. Since the opening of the first private university in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SSST, 2004), there were discussions on whether private or state universities are better (from all points of view). Furthermore, since the start of implementation of Bologna educational programmes in our country and their thorough/shallow realization, these discussions were even more present.

Private university is generally described as educational institution whose funding does not come from taxpayers, but other sources, such as donors or investment. State (public) university is described as educational institution whose funding comes (partly or completely) from taxpayers.

Among the world's most famous private universities are Harvard University, Stanford, M.I.T., Columbia, Princeton University and many others. On the other hand, most famous state universities are University of California, Pennsylvania State University, Texas A&M, ... Furthermore, world's 10 best universities are all private<sup>2</sup>.

A similar ranking has been done in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well, and these data show that first two universities in our country are state universities and the third is a private university.

Even though relatively new in our country, private universities are a group of educational institutions that measures greater interest of students each year. Another issue rising is that of facilities and possibilities ratio in each of the two groups.

Taken all mentioned into consideration, an inevitable question emerges: why do we choose private / state university? What are our motives? Are we aware of the advantages and disadvantages of each? Is our investigation prior to making final decision thorough enough or shallow enough to rely on often deceiving opinion of majority? What is, in the basis, the thing we seek for? Knowledge for life, as the proverb advises, or just mere success in school? Who makes decisions? Where is our society on the liberality and independence ranking list in terms of choosing university? Who is actually the target group - future students, their families, or both? Is the target actually the media which so often creates our opinion on things we do not know enough about? If yes, does this give us the answer to the previously raised question whether we know enough on the institutions that will, surely, modify a big and important part of our lives, not only professional ones, but our personalities in general, or not? Answers to these questions would help a lot in answering the main question of this paper's topic, i.e., “What are the factors that influence state or private university selection?“.

In the following parts of this study, some basic definitions, concepts on work of both groups, research objectives as well as hypothesis of the study will be briefly explained. Methodology section will deal with the way of collecting data. Later on, data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in the last part of the paper.

### Research questions

This research aims to answer questions related to students' university type choice, among which the crucial are:

- i) What factors are students most influenced when deciding on university type choice?
- ii) What are the barriers not to choose one or the other type?
- iii) What is the connection between type of university and student satisfaction?

i) Study aims to answer this and related group of questions in order to understand students' motivation and perception of universities, as well as identify type of students enrolled into each (if any relation);

ii) Answers to these questions will help understand reasons of popularity of one or another university, which will lead to understanding of what should be improved by the universities;

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\* “Lets learn for life, not the school“

iii) Understanding connection between university type and student satisfaction will reveal if the present image of the universities is true or not and screen possible reasons.

### **Literature review**

Lately, many studies have been done on factors that influence students' choice of university. Here is a short review of the most important ones.

Hua-Li Jian, Sandnes, Frode Eika, Yo-Ping Huang and Yueh-Min Huang (2010) in their paper "Cultural factors influencing Eastern and Western engineering students' choice of university" have had a hypothesis that culture affects students' choice of university. However, the results have shown the hypothesis wrong: culture is rather neutral in this case and students are led by advice and personality differences as well.

Another article, by Demont, Ferguson and Maclean's (2001) investigates various factors that influence future students in their decision-making: high-school grades, parents' opinion, payments and many other and states that the mentioned three are crucial.

Dunnett, Moorhouse, Walsh and Barry have investigated the relationship between fees and students enrollment into universities in their paper "Choosing university: A conjoint analysis of the impact of higher fees on students applying for university in 2012" and the results are very interesting. The study has shown that "students from families where there is no history of attending university will experience more disutility from the higher fees." ("Choosing university: A conjoint analysis of the impact of higher fees on students applying for university in 2012"; abstract).

Another interesting research has been done by Alonderiene and Klimavičiene, "Insights into Lithuanian students' choice of university and study programme in management and economics" (2013.) "The empirical research revealed that when choosing a study program student's personal characteristics as well as study related factors, e.g. career possibilities, study prestige, etc., had the biggest influence. When choosing a university, university reputation and city the university is in were ranked highest. University and city infrastructure and social life were ranked lowest. Regarding the stakeholders having an impact on the decision, parents and current students were ranked highest." ("Insights into Lithuanian students' choice of university and study programme in management and economics").

In terms of ways that students make their research, there is an interesting article by Jane Schmitt, "Internet is a valuable tool for choosing the right college" (2008). The conclusion is, much like the title itself, that the internet is the most helpful tool students use during the potential university research, since it provides quick access to the information, a wide perspective on the issue and different opinions from different points of view and sources.

A distinct and very important study has been done by Moris Triventi and Paolo Trivellato. In "Does graduating from a private university make a difference? Evidence from Italy", they have concluded the following: "Private universities in Italy have distinctive institutional features: they are usually smaller than their public counterparts, are generally located in large cities, offer courses in a restricted range of fields of study, charge higher tuition fees, and hire somewhat younger professors. Yet, it is not clear whether overall they provide better learning environments and teaching quality than public institutions, since they also have a larger share of adjunct lecturers and professors. Not surprisingly, we found that students from upper-class, well educated, and affluent families who had high final marks in secondary school were more likely to attend private universities. Students in private universities were also more likely to have had experiences abroad and were less likely to work while enrolled or to graduate behind schedule. Our research sought to measure the impact of graduating from a private institution against graduating from a public institution by looking at differences in employability as well as in economic and symbolic returns. Our results shed doubt on the presumption that graduating from a private institution offered strong advantages, since graduates from private institutions had no better short-term labour market outcomes than those from public universities."

This study was very helpful for this paper as well, since it comprehensively presented all aspects that this topic can deal with, in a broader sense, from conditions in universities, students' backgrounds, financial state, through possibilities such as doing internship abroad, up to real data on finding job after graduation.

### Methodology

Data for the paper were collected using a survey, consisted of 3 parts, 37 items. The questions were created in a way that the answers can clearly reflect a variety of factors (explained further in the results section) influencing students' perception on universities and their decision on choosing them. Target group were students in Bosnia and Herzegovina, attending different universities, fields of study, different years of study as well (to reflect better whether the situation and / or students' opinion has changed or not), in different towns. Totally, 400 questionnaires were distributed. All questions were mandatory to answer in order to create clear image about attitudes of respondents. However, 322 answers were received, and 303 questionnaires were accepted as reliable. The results were analyzed by using the SPSS software. Data were analyzed by performing descriptive statistics. Results of the analysis are presented in following section.

### Findings

In this section, gender, age, national, and educational structure of the respondents is shown, as well as type of university attending.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	149	49.2	49.2	49.2
	Female	154	50.8	50.8	100.0
	Total	303	100.0	100.0	

Table 1: Gender of respondents

In this research, as a sample we used both males and females. In table 1 we can notice that there were 149 male respondents (49.2 %) and 154 female respondents (50.8 %).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-21	132	43.6	43.6	43.6
	21-23	117	38.6	38.6	82.2
	23-25	32	10.6	10.6	92.7
	25+	22	7.3	7.3	100.0
	Total	303	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: Age structure of respondents

The analysis shown there were 132 respondents aged 18–21 (43.6 %), 117 aged 21–23 (38.6 %), 32 aged 23–25 years (10.6 %) and above 25 years old there were 22 respondents (7.3 %).

		Nationality			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bosnian	157	51.8	51.8	51.8
	Turkish	74	24.4	24.4	76.2
	Other	72	23.8	23.8	100.0
	Total	303	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: National structure of respondents

The table 2 shows information about respondents' nationality. Questionnaire was distributed to students of different national backgrounds. There were 157 Bosnians (51.8 %), 74 Turkish (24,4 %) and 72 other nationality (23.8 %).

		Respondant's level of education			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undergraduate student	225	74.3	74.3	74.3
	Graduate student	78	25.7	25.7	100.0
	Total	303	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Respondant's level of education

The table shows that 225 subjects taking part in the survey are undergraduate students (74.3 %) and 78 are graduate students (25.7 %).

		Type of university			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Private university	187	61.7	61.7	61.7
	State university	116	38.3	38.3	100.0
	Total	303	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Type of university (Private/State)

Table 5 shows there were 187 respondents attending private university (61.7 %) and 116 (38.3 %) attending state university.

After the respondents' background statistics, student's priorities in affecting university choice will be shown in the following pages.

**Type of university \* Father's education level Crosstabulation**

Count		Father's education level						Total
		Primary school	High school	Higher expertise	Bachelor's degree	Master degree	Doctor degree	
Type of university	Private university	0	8	33	111	35	0	187
	State university	1	10	24	52	28	1	116
Total		1	18	57	163	63	1	303

**Table 6: Type of university\*Father's education level dependance relation**

Table 6 shows that students enrolled in private university responded their father's education level as follows: primary school 0 students, high school 8, higher expertise 33, bachelor's degree 111, master degree 35 and doctoral degree 0, respectively. Students attending state university responded primary school level 1, high school 10, higher expertise 24, bachelor's degree 52, master degree 28, doctor degree 1, respectively.

**Type of university \* CGPA in highschool Crosstabulation**

Count		CGPA in highschool				Total
		5.0	4.5-4.9	4.0-4.5	3.0-3.9	
Type of university	Private university	69	64	39	15	187
	State university	64	28	18	6	116
Total		133	92	57	21	303

**Table 7: Type of university\* CGPA in highschool relation**

Table 7 shows that in private universities, there are 69 respondents with highschool CPGA 5.0, 64 with 4.5-4.9, 39 with 4.0-4.5, 15 with 3.0-3.9, while those in state universities had CGPA 5.0 – 64 students, 4.5-4.9 – 28, 4.0-4.5 – 18, 3.0-3.9 – 6.

**Type of university \* Highschool type Crosstabulation**

Count		Highschool type			Total
		Private	State / Public	3	
Type of university	Private university	39	148	0	187
	State university	7	108	1	116
Total		46	256	1	303

**Table 8: Type of university\*type of highschool relation**

Table 8 shows that, among respondents, there were only 39 attending private university who also finished private highschool, and 148 finished state highschool. 7 respondents who finished private highschool are now attending state university, and 108 respondents who finished state highschool are attending state university as well.

**Type of university \* Household income per month Crosstabulation**

Count		Household income per month						Total
		Less than 500 KM	500-1000 KM	1000-2000 KM	2000-3000 KM	3000-4000 KM	More than 4000 KM	
Type of university	Private university	9	8	21	56	62	31	187
	State university	4	17	23	28	18	26	116
Total		13	25	44	84	80	57	303

**Table 9: Type of university\*Household income per month relation**

Table 9 shows that there are 9 students with household income less than 500 KM enrolled in private university, while with the same income in state university there were 4 respondents. Income of 500-1000 KM was encircled by 8 students in private university and 17 in state university. 1000-2000 KM was encircled by 21 private university and 23 state university students. 2000-3000 by 56 and 28 students in private and state universities, respectively. 3000-4000 KM income was marked by 62 private and 18 state university students and more than 4000 KM by 31 private university and 56 state university students.

Type of university \* Scholarship value Crosstabulation

Count		Scholarship value					Total
		the most important - eliminatory factor	very important factor	moderately important factor	factor of low importance, but taken into consideration	not important at all / no influence	
Type of university	Private university	47	43	33	16	48	187
	State university	14	12	25	42	23	116
Total		61	55	58	58	71	303

Table 10: Scholarship importance and type of university relation

Table 10 shows the relation between importance of obtaining a scholarship and choice of university. 47 students from private university marked this factor as the most important, while there were 14 from state university of the same opinion. This is a very important factor for 43 students from private universities and 12 from state universities; moderately important for 33 students from private and 25 from state university; factor of low importance for 16 students from private and 42 from state university and not important at all for 48 private university students and 23 state university students.

The following 2 tables, representing direct recognition of factors' no 1. importance level for choice of university, are of crucial importance for the study:

University	Factor											
	Parent's opinion		Teacher's advice		Advertising impact		Visit to campus		Scholarship value		Institution's reputation	
Private	56	29%	20	10%	9	4%	50	26%	48	25%	61	32%
State	38	32%	6	5%	3	2%	8	6%	10	8%	83	71%

University	Factor											
	Quality of adm. And academic services		Religious atmosphere		Student/Professor ratio		Facilities and equipment		University tradition		Failed to enroll into first choice	
Private	92	49%	1	0,5%	12	6%	42	22%	16	8%	13	6%
State	92	79%	0	0%	1	0,8%	2	1%	75	64%	0	0%

Tables 11 and 12: Factors no 1. importance level (the most important / eliminatory factor) ratio among private and state universities according to different factors

Tables 13 and 14 show the no 2 importance level for factors:

University	Factor											
	Parent's opinion		Teacher's advice		Advertising impact		Visit to campus		Scholarship value		Institution's reputation	
Private	94	50%	20	10%	130	69%	109	58%	43	23%	45	24%
State	66	56%	6	5%	23	19%	54	46%	12	10%	50	43%



University	Factor											
	Quality of adm. And academic services		Religious atmosphere		Student/Professor ratio		Facilities and equipment		University tradition		Failed to enroll into first choice	
Private	79	42%	29	15%	136	72%	117	62%	16	8%	20	10%
State	59	50%	0	0%	45	38%	40	34%	34	29%	12	10%

Table 13, 14: Important factors ratio

The following tables (15, 16, 17, 18, 19) represent the frequency and level of students' responses in terms of university entrance exam difficulty, passing an exam difficulty, getting A/B grade requirements, university reputation and satisfaction:

**Type of university \* The university exam was difficult Crosstabulation**

Count		The university exam was difficult					Total
		Completely agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Absolutely disagree	
Type of university	Private university	0	21	122	35	9	187
	State university	20	57	32	5	2	116
Total		20	78	154	40	11	303

**Type of university \* Passing exam in this university is difficult Crosstabulation**

Count		Passing exam in this university is difficult			Total
		Completely agree	Agree	Undecided	
Type of university	Private university	1	95	91	187
	State university	9	84	23	116
Total		10	179	114	303



**Type of university \* Getting A or B grades is difficult Crosstabulation**

Count		Getting A or B grades is difficult			Total
		Completely agree	Agree	Undecided	
Type of university	Private university	110	74	3	187
	State university	80	36	0	116
Total		190	110	3	303

**Type of university \* The university has good reputation Crosstabulation**

Count		The university has good reputation				Total
		Completely agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
Type of university	Private university	4	140	42	1	187
	State university	43	66	7	0	116
Total		47	206	49	1	303

**Type of university \* The university fulfilled my expectations Crosstabulation**

Count		The university fulfilled my expectations					Total
		Completely agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Absolutely disagree	
Type of university	Private university	7	131	43	6	0	187
	State university	38	57	18	0	3	116
Total		45	188	61	6	3	303

## Discussion

Among 303 respondents, 149 of which male and 154 female, there is no significant relation of gender and choice of university type. All students of Turkish nationality were students at private universities, which is a consequence and in direct relation to language of instruction. Table 7 implies that students with higher CGPA in highschool more often choose state university. This is exception only in 5.0 CGPA, where there is almost equal ratio. Household income and type of university results are rather interesting, since the percentage of students in private and state universities with income less than 500 KM is almost the same (4 and 3% respectively) among the participants. However, this unusual fact can be explained through the Table 10, where 25 % of students answered that crucial factor for enrolling in a private university was getting a scholarship and only 12% responded the same in case of state university. this ratio even increases as students mark this factor as „very important“: 22% in private universities and 10% in state universities did so. This shows that offering a scholarship is a good way of attracting students to enroll into a university and ranks high in their factors list.

In direct evaluating of factors, students of state and private universities answered almost equally in terms of parents' impact on their decision. However, teachers had greater significance for those enrolling into private universities, which shows possible higher activity of private highschools teachers as well (this must be further analysed; might be a hypothesis for some future study). Advertising impact was ranked as no 1 impact factor by 4% private universities and 2 % state universities, and no 2 significance factor by even 69 % of private and only 19 % state universities students. This shows that the media is a powerful means and that private universities generally do have better advertising. This is a recommendation for state universities to improve their advertising strategies. Visit to campus, scholarship value, student/professor ratio, facilities and equipment available are all the factors highly ranked by majority of private universities

students and rather poorly ranked by state university students, which is a clear implication that the latter do not offer enough quality equipment, facilities, scholarships and that private ones have better academic staff number per student. On the other hand, six percent students enrolled in private universities claimed their crucial factor for choosing university was failure to get enrolled in their first choice university. In addition, a significantly higher number of state university students stated that the entrance exam was difficult, which implies that the enrollment standards and requirements are more strict in state universities. This is a guideline for academic admission improvement for private state universities.

Generally, most of the students stated that passing an exam is somewhat difficult and that getting A/B grade is difficult, regardless of being a private or state university student. This should, however, be taken with reserve, due to the fact that the survey has mostly been done in the week prior to exam week, so the students' subjectiveness has surely increased.

Another interesting result has been acquired by comparing students' satisfaction with university. Only 3 % of private university students said they are completely satisfied with their university, while 32 % of those enrolled in state universities said the same. However, 70 % private university students replied they are very satisfied with university, while this percentage was less for state university students – 49 %. And in the end, none of the students from private university stated he/she is totally dissatisfied with university, while 2 % those from state university claimed so. To conclude, private universities students are generally very satisfied with their university, which can surely be improved, since there were no students that were absolutely satisfied, yet there are no dissatisfied students either. State university students are very satisfied with their university, but there are some missings that must be improved, since a number of students is completely dissatisfied.

### **Conclusion**

In Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, nowadays, there are a number of relatively newly established institutions that are, year by year, gaining more and more recognition and student number. However, some of them still cope with the lack of trust by potential students and their parents, marked as no 1 factors in impacting future students' decisions. In the same time, there are tradition-secured state institutions, which still rank higher than private ones. There are a number of factors that impact it. As stated above, crucial one is tradition, quality, trust. On the other hand, main lacks of these institutions are very old, inadequate facilities, lack of equipment and too low academic staff/student ratio. These are the things which private ones are excellent in. In the same time, these are the highlights of the study – main factors influencing students' choice of university type.

Predictions based on these results show that, in the future, private universities might take the lead, as they will gain experience, in the case that state universities do not urgently improve the above listed missings.

### **Recommendation for future research**

During the analysis of the surveys collected, some missings of the questionnaire itself were noted. Recommendation for future research is that a higher number of respondents should be obtained. They should also be more diverse (e.g. more universities, attending different faculties in those universities, higher nationality segmentation, more graduate students, ...). Also, there should be a possibility for respondents to write free answers, in order to get new responds and broaden the number of factors, which would lead to more accurate results.

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