

Factors Affecting Increase (Decrease) in Interest and Guiding Students Towards Higher Education

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Abstract: Persistent increase in number of higher education institutions along with its complications and known consequences led to studying of probable defects and providing appropriate strategies to avoid institutions suspension due to less number of applicants. This study aimed to investigate the affecting factors in increase (decrease) of interest and guiding students towards higher education which was conducted in 2012. Present field research surveyed over 180 students among candidates of university entrance examination of Islamic Azad university of Khuzestan province by multi-stage sampling procedure. Six research questions and one hypothesis regarding the purpose of the survey were designed; then, data were collected using a 20-items Self questionnaire. Evaluation of data reliability and validity were performed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (90%) and content validity respectively. Data were analyzed by three statistical tests via SPSS computing program. Research results showed six factors which affect students' interest and direction towards higher education including individual factors, parents, friends, teachers, media and university's data.

Key words: Higher education, students, Islamic Azad University

INTRODUCTION

Major characteristic of higher education in last four decades has been the rapid expansion of higher education in developing countries. Undoubtedly, as most experts in developmental programs emphasize, higher education is one of the pillars and main factors of development, and precise and principled planning or investment in this sector is necessary. Nowadays, due to global circumstances such as scientific, technology, economic and international circumstances, universities are faced with big challenges including quality, relationship with industry, the policing of higher educational system, management, international cooperating and social demands (Omidi, 2004). Recognition of these challenges helps us to prepare ourselves for achievement of development.

Due to increment of governmental and private higher education institutions around the country, there is a significant competition between them for attracting students especially for undergraduate level. This problem has endangered survival of some higher education institutions and educational fields. This competitive pressure obligates higher education institutions to consider pathology and select competitive strategy for attracting more applicants.

Several models regarding description of affecting factors on students' willingness towards studying in university have been represented. Each of these patterns describes a variety of processes through which high school students choose higher education. Conceptual approaches express university selection process and the effective factors. These patterns include three models (Hossler, 1989). Conceptual approaches in college selection process and factors leading to choosing studying at University are economic patterns, social patterns and combination patterns.

1- Economic patterns: These patterns highlight the relationship between choosing universities to continue education and earning education without joining universities. Economists are interested in the relationship between commodity (university and job characteristics) and individual choice (Jackson, 1982). In general, research shows that people choose higher education system when its joining benefits are greater than its absence (Braxton and Cooper Smith, 1985). Therefore, economic pattern emphasizes on rational decision-making process of high school students and their families and different ways which affect rate of their choices.

2- Social pattern: Social patterns are derived from scientific research achievements and its social status, and they focus on people's willing towards studying in higher educational institutes. Social patterns particularly emphasize on various individual and social factors leading to employment and student's educational spirit (Jackson, 1982). In Blau and Duncan's derivative model (1967) family, family's socio economical background and student's scientific ability were anticipated as positive factors affecting students' inclination towards

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university. Social patterns of university selection emphasize on identification of relationship between parents' encouragement factors (Sewell and Shah, 1978), influence of other significant factors and academic performance (Chapman, 1981) as indicators of enrolment in higher education.

3- Combination patterns: it has used the most powerful indicators of socio economical pattern for decision-making process, and provided a conceptual framework in order to prediction of confounding factors effect on policing (Hossler, 1985). There are various combination patterns including multi-step process of university selection with two categories of general combination patterns.

Hossler and Galher (1987) have proposed three-stage pattern which emphasizes on the passion, pursuit and choice. This pattern is "simplification" or "collapse" of other patterns'. The major difference between patterns is the description of confounding variables, attributes and kind of higher education institutions by which they encourage students to enroll.

Research Questions:

- 1- Do families have role in interest and guiding their children's towards higher education?
- 2- Dose media play role in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?
- 3- Do teachers involve in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?
- 4- Do individual factors involve in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?
- 5- Do received information on universities condition ,which are announced by each university itself, play role in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?
- 6- Do friends affect interest and guidance of students towards higher education?

Research Hypothesis:

-There is a difference between affecting factors on students' interest and guidance towards higher education.

Research History:

- Ghasem Zade (2004) investigated family's role in children's continuing or leaving education. Questions arising in this research are: to what extent family affect children education and their view of education? Can family be introduced as the children dropout factor? How effective are the educated families in their children's academic growth? Finally, results emphasize on the effective role of the family in different aspects of children's progress and success in higher education.

- In Ms.Abdi's research (2008), "investigation of effective factors on major selection of applicants allowed selecting courses in entrance examination", influencing factors on course selection among accepted applicants in governmental universities entrance exam were surveyed. Statistical analysis showed that based on volunteers range of scores into a percentage point of the average range, the most important factors influencing major selection were individual factors (45.77%), occupational factors (8.76%) and familial factors along with friend factors (50%) respectively. In a comparison between two genders, although t test results have shown significant difference in effect of occupational, familial and friend factors in educational field selection between boys and girls, there were no differences in case of individual factors.

Similarly, Variance analysis result showed differences between experimental volunteer groups in respect to effect of occupation, family and friends factors but there were no meaningful differences in individual factors.

- In Mr. Akbari's research (2004), " The effect of the secondary school system on social demand for higher education from the perspective of the accepted applicant in university Entrance Exam", believed that social demand for higher education was affected by individual factors and family characteristics (Intellectual ability, motivation and interests, influence of family and gender), Socio-cultural and environmental factors (number of people who need education, peers influence, societies literacy level, training skim, accepted beliefs and values), Economic factors (employment, governmental supporting policies, rules and regulations, income level) and educational facilities (universities acceptance capacity, facilities quality, facilities quantity). Also results show that all volunteers' opinions regarding ranking of affecting factors on social demand towards higher education were not same. The greatest influence was belonging to economical factors while the least influence caused by social factors.

- In Nasr research (2002), the most important criteria for university entrance were Interest in the field, feasibility of higher education and harmony between educational fields and academic ability while factors such as acceptance in universities and course selection based on computer advice had lowest importance.

- In Mojtahedi's research (1993), he found that the most important factor in educational fields' selection was families insist on those fields which they supposedly have better future income and social status. Therefore, in some researches founding, which were conducted in Iran, role of individual factors was bolder than other factors while in others family factor was more important.

- In Motabary's research (1992), analytical investigation of affecting factors in field selection among 249 first semester students indicated that the most effective factors on course selection were individual factors such as interest and motivation rather than social, economic, cultural, educational, institutional factors and the university

entrance exam. However, few students chose their universities fields based on acceptance in university entrance exam, and enrolled in courses which they were not interested in.

- In Ride's research (2002), first year students had been mentioned personal characteristics and decisions as their most important factor in course selection. Similarly Daily (2003) investigated the most effective factors in course selection among new college students' were personal factors such as values, knowledge and interest in field and family factors respectively. Kern (2000) mentioned that influence of parents and considering future occupation was more important than other factors in course selection.

- Role of occupation and earning more income and profession was mentioned as primarily important effect on other researches such as Davis Nolendoditho (2001) and Tatar (2003).

- The role of friends and peers in university or course selection were more highlighted than other factors in of Rates and Motzan (1980 quoted by Ride 2002) and also Halinan and Williams (1990 quoted by Davis Nolendoditho 2001) studies.

- Families influence on course selection by university applicants was more obvious than other factors in of Delmanjenkinz (1997) and Frisby et.al (2000) researches.

- On the other hand, Stanic (2004) found that in compare to girls, boys more cared about their abilities when they were choosing educational field. In other research Markuat et.al (2002) investigated some differences between boys and girls in course selection. According to the Ride's research (2002) girls' decision about course selection were affected twice more than boys' decision by parents' opinions.

Research Method:

Present field research surveyed 180 students among volunteers of Islamic Azad University entrance examination in 2011-2012 by multi-stage sampling method which was performed in Khuzestan province, Iran. Data were collected by using questionnaire containing 20 questions, and its reliability and validity were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (90%) and content validity respectively. Data analyzed using three statistical tests including Kolmogrov – Smirnov test, Friedman test and Chi-square test via SPSS computing program.

Research Findings:

Research's first question: Do families have role in interest and guiding their children's towards higher education?

Table 1: Observed distribution of frequencies percentages regarding family's role in interest and guiding children towards higher education in 2011.

Variable	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Families role	37.5% (531)	35.1% (497)	15.9% (225)	8.5% (120)	3% (42)	1415

Table 2: Statistical analysis of first question in brief.

Variable	Frequency	Mean	deviation	χ^2 test	df	Asymp.Sig
Families role	1415	3.9576	1.06754	690.155	4	0.000

Interpretation: According to the table.1 data, about 73 percent of students agreed with impact of family role in their interest and guidance towards higher education while Chi-square test (Table 2) showed significant difference ($p < .001$)

Research's second question: Dose media play role in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?

Table 3: Distribution of frequencies percentages regarding students' viewpoint about media's role in interest and guiding them to higher education in 2011.

variable	Totally agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Totally disagree	total
Media's role	26.6% (47)	40.7% (72)	19.2% (34)	9% (16)	4.5% (8)	173

Table 4: Statistical analysis of second question in brief.

Variable	Frequency	Mean	Deviation	χ^2 test	df	Asymp.Sig
Media's role	173	3.7571	1.08333	75.537	4	0.000

Interpretation: According to the table 3 information, almost 67 percent of students agreed with media role in their interest and guidance towards higher education while Chi-square test (Table 2) showed meaningful difference ($p < .001$)

Third research's question: Do teachers involve in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?

Table 5: Distribution frequencies percentages regarding students' viewpoint about teachers' role in their interest and guidance towards higher education in 2011.

Variable	Totally agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Totally disagree	total
Teachers' role	34.9% (60)	35.5% (61)	16.9% (29)	6.4% (11)	6.4% (11)	172

Table 6: Statistical analysis of third question in brief.

variable	frequency	mean	deviation	χ^2 test	df	Asymp.Sig
Teachers' role	172	3.8605	1.15635	72.302	4	0.000

Interpretation: according to table 5 about 71 percent of students are agree with teachers role in interest and their education guidance to higher education which Chi-square test (Table 6) showed that this differences is meaningful ($p < .001$)

Fourth research's question: Do individual factors involve in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?

Table 7: Observed distribution of frequencies percentages in respect to the students' viewpoint about role of individual factors in their interest and guidance towards higher education in 2011.

Variable	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree	Total
Individual factors' role	50.8% (361)	33.8% (240)	10.6% (75)	3.8% (27)	1% (7)	710

Table 8: Statistical analysis of fourth question in brief.

variable	Frequency	Mean	Deviation	χ^2 test	df	Asymp.Sig
Individual factor's role	710	4.2972	0.87618	658.479	4	0.000

Interpretation: According to the table 7 data, about 84 percent of students agreed with individual factors' role in their interests and guidance towards higher education while Chi-square test (Table 8) showed significant difference ($p < .001$)

Fifth research's question: - Do received information on universities condition, which are announced by each university itself, play role in interest and guidance of students towards higher education?

Table 9: Distribution of frequencies percentages regarding students' viewpoint about role of received information on universities condition in their interest and guidance towards higher education in 2011.

Variable	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree	Total
University's information	16.3% (58)	40.8% (145)	21.7% (77)	16.6% (59)	4.5% (16)	355

Table 10: Statistical analysis of fifth question in brief.

Variable	Frequency	Mean	Deviation	χ^2 test	df	Asymp.Sig
Universities data's role	355	3.4789	1.08741	124.648	4	0.000

Interpretation: According to the table 9 data, about 57 percent of students agreed with role of received information on universities condition in their interest and guidance towards higher education while Chi-square test (Table 10) showed meaningful differences ($p < .001$)

Sixth research's question: Do friends affect interest and guidance of students towards higher education?

Table 11: Distribution of frequencies percentages regarding students' viewpoint about role of friends in their interest and guidance towards higher education in 2011.

variable	Totally agree	agree	neutral	disagree	Totally disagree	total
Friends' role	25.4% (44)	59.5% (103)	11% (19)	3.5% (6)	0.6% (1)	173

Table 12: Statistical analysis of sixth question in brief.

Variable	Frequency	Mean	Deviation	χ^2 test	df	Asymp.Sig
Friends' role	173	4.0578	0.74483	201.075	4	0.000

Interpretation: According to the table 11 information, about 85 percent of students agreed with friends' role in their interest and guidance towards higher education while Chi-square test (Table 12) showed meaningful difference ($p < .001$).

Research Hypothesis: There is a difference between affecting factors on students' interest and guidance towards higher education.

Table 13: Ranking of effective factors on students' prospective.

Affecting factors	Parents	Individual	Universities data	Teachers	Media	Friends
Mean rank	3.46	4.70	2.98	3.30	3.11	3.46

Table 14: Statistical analysis of research hypothesis in brief.

Variable	Frequency	Friedman test	df	Asymp.Sig
Affecting factors	180	126.379	5	0.000

According to the table 13 data, with 95% confidence it could be said that there is significant difference between influence of various factors on interest and guidance students towards higher education as Friedman statistic test shows meaningful difference ($p < .001$)

Discussion and Conclusion:

Research showed that from students' viewpoint all six mentioned factors (family, friend and peers, teachers, media, collected data from higher information institutes and individual factors) affect interest and guidance students towards higher education. In addition, extend of these effects are varied based on accepted students' opinions whereas provide information on higher education by schools has the smallest effect and individual factor has the greatest effect on their interest and guidance towards higher education. To explanation and interpretation of founding following items can be mentioned:

- A factor can't exclusively affect creation of interest and guidance towards higher education but presence of all mentioned factors is necessary (Brewer and Zhao, 2010 and Bawman and Bostedo, 2009).
- individual factors like students' motivations for achieving job and income (Farjadi,1383), earning respect, marriage, new lifestyle experiment (in dormitories) and financial ability, are strong inducers to guide students towards higher education (Richardson, 2006).
- While 88% of respondents are single; obviously, they financially depend on their families. Besides, parents along with friends and peers have essential role to motivate students towards higher education. Therefore, it can be said that parents and friends as the most effective factors play essential roles in creating interests and guiding student towards higher education (Ceja2001, 2006 and. Jeynes, 2007).
- Furthermore, 65% of respondents preferred to study in their home town, for they like to be with their families and friends. Indeed, these students don't want to accept risk of unfamiliar environment while they are strongly dependent on their family's support (Turley, 2007 and Pimpa, 2005). In other word, the importance of both family and friends as a motivating factor in students' guidance towards higher education can be proved here.

Our attitude towards learning and studying skills are affected by our relationship with our surrounding and some accepted role models such as family, friend and teachers. (Ghasem Zade, 1383).

- Friends and peers encouragement and competition in education are effective factors in creation of interest and impelling students to achieve higher education (Fletcher and Tienda, 2008).
- University's volunteers continued their education under an obligation to supply their needs (Raz, 1385). It means they chose their goals based on imitation and envy of others (family, friends and relatives). In fact, they are generally in imitation stage which caused by weakness of intrinsic motivators (Passion for learning and education) and strengthened of extrinsic motivators (social aspect, money etc.). Former condition is mostly due to presence of strong factors such as friends, families and teachers especially because of dominant culture and students' age.
- Importance of mass media as a basic part of present business is obvious to everybody, besides; higher education institutes increasingly tend to benefit from media as a marketing tool to attract customers (prospective students, current parents) (Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2012). However, in our country and many other countries with similar condition (frequent demand for entering universities) mass media couldn't have significant effect on university and educational field selection process (Bbado ,2012). While the number of university's volunteers was falling recently, during last two years there were some examples of using media by executives of private higher education institutes (SMS and television advertisement).
- Teachers and university's staffs behavior's has a crucial role in formation of students' behavior and attitudes (Ghasem Zade, 1383), Therefore; their advice and guidance can induce a strong motivation to lead them to studies.
- Received information on universities condition ,which are announced by each university itself, such as university ranking, capacity, quality and quantity of available facilities and financial supports (student loans) along with other factors can influence students' interest and encourage them to continue education (Akbari, 1383).
- Due to intense rivalry between higher education institutes (especially universities, NGOs) in attracting more students, they should use more competitive strategies to sustain their survival. For example, these centers managers' should provide students with more funding (long term loan with low profit), or they can establish some university's courses with proper social and occupational future. Also, there was a considerable decline in number of failed university's applicants due to unusual increase of private and governmental higher education

institutes in recent years and decrease of young people in number (statistic center, 1390). In near future, all these discussed factors may lead to closing of some higher education centers (particularly private) with weak educational background which are located in private cities, where are far from province and capital. Therefore, it's recommended these centers' managers improve institutes' quality and decrease their dependence on educational fees through developing of industry-university collaboration and external research activities.

- Consequently, there can be further researches on students who are enough qualified to participate in university's entrance exam, but they don't because of various factors. Indeed, research should be carried out on customers who repudiate to purchase our product.

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