DETERMINANTS OF STUDENT INTEREST IN CHOOSING A STUDY PROGRAM

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The Indonesia Career Center Network (ICCN) survey in 2017 showed that 87 percent of Indonesian students chose study programs at universities that did not match their interests. One of the impacts of choosing a study program that is not in my interest is the possibility of delays in completing the education period on time and not maximizing the pursuit of the best results. Seeing these empirical conditions, this study aims to explain whether internal factors or external factors more significantly influence student interest when choosing a study program in higher education. Internal factors are represented by self-motivation, ideals, and desires. Meanwhile, external factors are represented by the image of the university, family support, and previous school support. This research was conducted at Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta with a sample of 339 students from various study programs selected at random. Data were collected using a digital questionnaire. The Likert scale became a data measuring tool and was analyzed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM). The results of the analysis show that internal factors have more influence on student interest when choosing a study program at the university level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The number of universities in Solo Raya is a challenge for prospective students to choose which colleges and study programs suit their interests. The decision-making process will begin with setting goals and then developing choices that ultimately determine the best choice. Some people will make choices spontaneously because they are tempted by services, building facilities, and promotions (Saputra & Rizal, 2019). A survey conducted by the Indonesia Career Center Network (ICCN) in 2017 showed that 87 percent of Indonesian students chose study programs at universities that did not match their interests. One of the impacts of choosing a study program that is not by interest is the possibility of delays in completing the education period on time and not being optimal in pursuing the best results.

Seeing these empirical conditions, this study aims to explain whether internal factors or external factors more significantly influence student interest when choosing a study program in higher education. Internal factors are represented by self-motivation, ideals, and desires. Meanwhile, external factors are represented by the image of the university, family support, and previous school support. This research was conducted at Duta Bangsa University, Surakarta with a sample of 339 students from various study programs selected at random. Data were collected using a digital questionnaire. The Likert scale became a data measuring tool and was analyzed using the Structural Equation Model (SEM).

Duta Bangsa University Surakarta (UDB) is a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. Currently, it has a total of 3050 students. UDB was founded in 2018 and has 4 faculties with 16 study programs. Each study program has its enthusiasts and has certain considerations in its selection. The number of study programs is the motivation for carrying out this research which seeks to explain the influence of internal factors and external factors on student interest in choosing a study program at UDB Surakarta.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The decision to continue studying at the university level is a good choice. However, it is not easy to choose a study program that suits your interests. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (2016), interest is a high-minded tendency towards something. If a person gets success in an activity, it creates a sense of pleasure in it and will strengthen interest in the activity. Conversely, a failure will eliminate interest in it (Saputra & Rizal, 2019). Student interest when choosing a study program can be influenced by two factors, namely internal factors "inside" and external factors "outside" (Anggraeni, 2016).

Internal factors can arise because of self-motivation, ideals, and desires (Suryabrata, 2008). Motivation is the result of a series of processes of activation and orientation of behavior and actions, which are aimed at realizing certain goals (Price, 2009). Self-motivation to choose a study program is an impulse that arises from a person to take or take action related to it (Sintya, 2019). The results of the study (Sintya, 2019) show that self-motivation is one of the factors that influence interest. Ideals are desires or goals to be achieved and are always in one's mind (Mulyaningtyas et al., 2007). A survey conducted by Discover Bank, America on 1000 students and their parents (500 students and 500 student parents) in 2013 showed that the main factor in choosing a study program according to students was their career goals since childhood. The Entrepreneurial Event Theory (Shapero and Sokol, 1982) states that interest is a function of perceived desirability, perceived worthiness, and propensity to act (Kurjono et al., 2019). In other words, the desire of students is one of the determining factors of interest in choosing a study program. From the explanations above, the following research hypotheses can be formed:

H1. Self-motivation, dream, and desire, together as internal factors have positive influence on the student interest in choosing study program.

Meanwhile, external factors can arise due to the influence of the university's image (Alfia et al., 2016; Harahap et al., 2020; Saputra& Rizal, 2019), family support (Purwanto, 2017; Sulistyawati et al., 2017), and previous level school support (Anggraeni, 2016). University image is the overall impression or experience felt by the public, prospective students, students, and other institutions of a university (Harahap et al., 2020). The results of the study (Harahap et al., 2020) show that the image of the university is an important factor for prospective students when choosing a study program at a university. Family support "parents" can be defined as a form of attention to their children, one of which considers in choosing a study program at a university (Sulistyawati et al., 2017). The results of the study (Sulistyawati et al., 2017) stated that parental support had a positive effect on the decision to choose a study program. Previous level school support is defined as the previous level school having special attention to lessons related to the study program that is of interest to its students, to attract students' interest in choosing a study program (Anggraeni, 2016). The results of the study (Anggraeni, 2016) show that the attention of the previous level school towards the interest of its students in a study program at a university significantly affects students' interest in choosing a study program at a university. From the explanations above, the following research hypotheses can be formed:

H2. University Image, family support, and high school support, together as external factors have positive influence on the student interest in choosing study program.

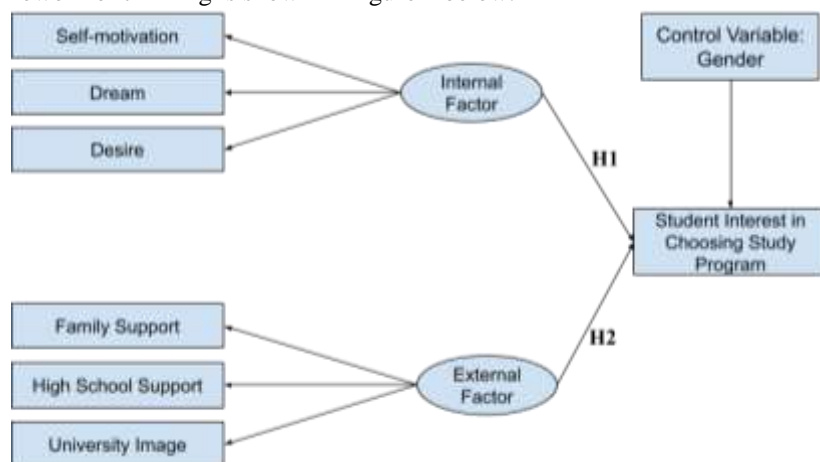The overall framework of thinking is shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

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3.   RESEARCH METHOD

This research is targeted at all students of the Duta Bangsa University class of 2020. This target was chosen because they are new students and are expected to be able to clearly remember the factors that influence their interest in choosing a study program at Duta Bangsa University. This sampling was carried out in January 2021. During that time, 339 respondents were successfully sampled. To test the proposed model, we used a digital questionnaire. Data was collected through an online questionnaire using Google Form, and the link was shared via social media, Whatsapp. Respondents were then directed to the Google Form website containing the questionnaire and filled in independently. This study uses the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis method which is implemented using data analysis software, Stata 15.

SEM is a multivariate statistical technique that is a combination of factor analysis (factor analysis) and regression analysis (path analysis). The contents of an SEM model are latent variables (unobserved variables) and manifest variables (observed variables). Latent variables can only be measured using some manifest variables. It is this manifest variable whose data must be collected through field research, surveys. Meanwhile, latent variables are further divided into two, namely: latent variables/exogenous constructs (independent variable) and latent variables/endogenous constructs (dependent variable). Two stages of the SEM process: First, validate the measurement model. Second, adjust to the structural model. The first step is completed by factor analysis (confirmatory factor analysis). The second step is completed through regression analysis (path analysis) with latent variables. In most references, a factor loading of 0.5 or more is considered to have strong enough validation to explain the latent construct (Ghozali, 2018; Hair et al., 2018) although in some other references (Ferdinand, 2000; Sharma, 1996) explains that the weakest factor loading that can be accepted is 0.4.

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4.   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Data Description

This study managed to get a sample of 339 respondents. The respondents consisted of students of the Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta batch of 2020 who came from various study programs, both male and female. The origin of respondents' study programs most dominantly came from the informatics systems study program (28.9%), management (19.5%), and nursing (18.6%). Meanwhile, the dominant gender of the respondents was women as much as 65.2%. For more details, see Figures 1 and Figures 2 below:

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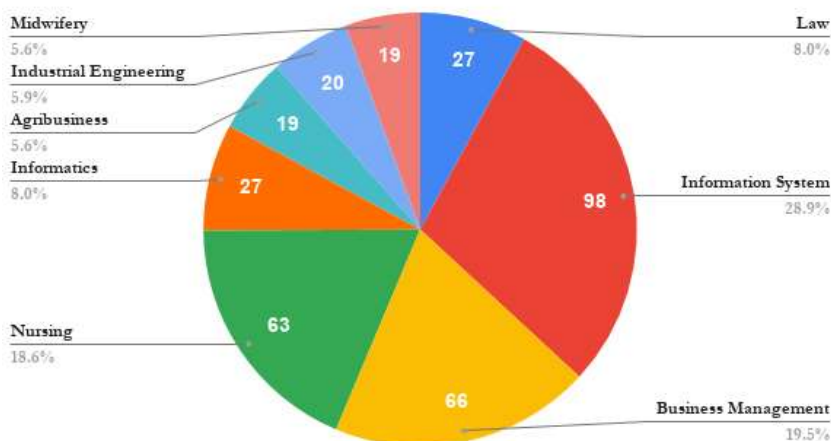
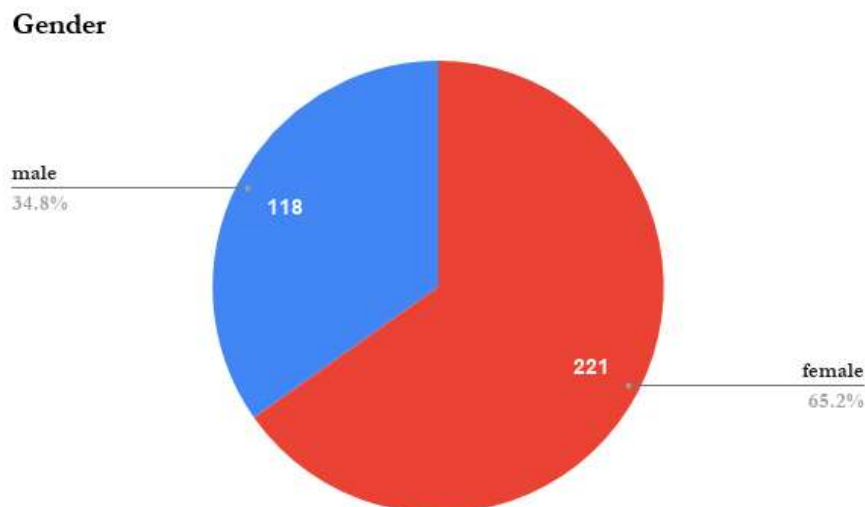**Figure 2.** Origin of Respondent Study Program

Figure 3. Respondent's Gender

3.2. Structural Relationship Test Result

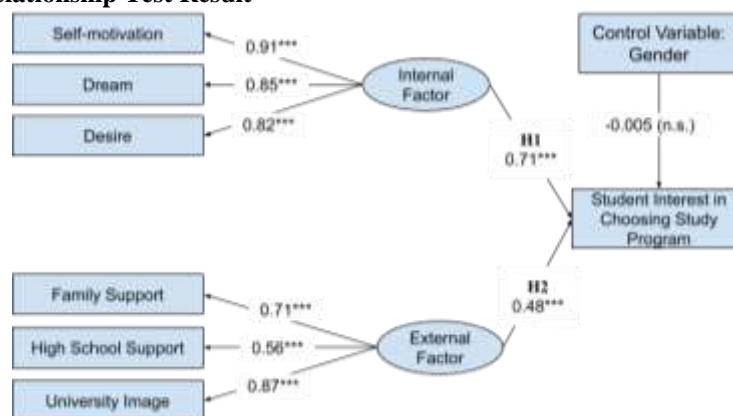**Figure 4.**Estimated Model. Notes: (n.s.) = not significant; * p <0.10; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01.

The estimation results of the conceptual model show that the latent variable of internal factors has a significant positive effect on student interest when choosing a study program, with a coefficient value of 0.71, z count = 14.71, and a significance level of p<0.01. That is, the higher the value of internal factors, the level of influence of internal factors on student interest when choosing a study program is also higher, assuming other independent variables are constant or unchanged. This internal factor is measured by three indicators, namely self-motivation, dream, and desire, all of which are valid indicators with a factor loading value > 0.5 and a significance level of p<0.01.

The self-motivation indicator has a factor loading of 0.91. That is, $0.91^2 = 0.83$ or 83% of the total value of self-motivation is forming the value of the latent variable construct of internal factors. The Dream indicator has a factor loading of 0.85. That is, $0.85^2 = 0.72$ or 72% of the total Dream value is forming the value of the latent variable construct of internal factors. The Desire indicator has a factor loading of 0.82. That is, $0.82^2 = 0.67$ or 67% of the total value of Desire is forming the value of the latent variable construct of internal factors.

The estimation results of the conceptual model also show that the latent variable of external factors has a significant positive effect on student interest when choosing a study program, with a coefficient value of 0.48, z count = 7.14, and a significance level of p<0.01. That is, the higher the value of external factors, the higher the level of influence on student interest when choosing a study program, assuming the other independent variables are constant or unchanged. This internal factor is measured by three indicators, namely family support, high-school support, and university image, all of which are valid indicators with a factor loading value > 0.5 and a significance level of p<0.01.

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The family support indicator has a factor loading of 0.71. That is, $0.71^2 = 0.504$ or 50.4% of the total value of family support is forming the value of the latent variable construct of external factors. The high-school support indicator has a factor loading of 0.56. That is, $0.56^2 = 0.31$ or 31% of the total value of high-school support is forming the value of the latent variable construct of external factors. The university image indicator has a factor loading of 0.87. That is, $0.87^2 = 0.76$ or 76% of the total university image value is forming the value of the latent variable construct of external factors.

In addition, we included the gender control variable in the estimation model. However, this variable has no significant effect on student interest when choosing a study program. This is indicated by a significance level of $p > 0.10$ (not statistically significant).

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study conclude that internal factors and external factors significantly influence the interest in choosing study programs in higher education. Based on the level of influence, the internal factors are significantly more influential than external factors. That is, in choosing a study program, the interest of prospective students is more influenced by self-motivation, ideals, and desires. Although the influence of external factors such as university image, family support, and previous level school support is smaller than internal factors, the influence is still significant. Specifically, the biggest internal factor influencing student interest in choosing a study program is self-motivation. Meanwhile, the biggest external factor influencing student interest in choosing a study program is the image of the university. There is an impression that in choosing a private university, prospective students are freer to choose a study program than choosing a public university. This is because the level of competition at private universities is lower than at public universities. In addition, gender was not a significant factor in influencing student interest in choosing a study program.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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