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# Choice of electives among management students in India: A conjoint analysis

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the attributes that influence students' selection of electives in a two-year Master of Business Administration program. The study highlighted the utility of attributes that influences the student choices of electives as they trade-off between pecuniary and non-pecuniary; long term and short-term outcomes. The study deployed a conjoint analysis using the card sort method. It was found that the perceived knowledge of the faculty and recommendation from social networks of seniors and peers were the most significant factors guiding the choice. The study found that despite being a career enhancement course, the students' motivation to learn and placement orientation of the course did not feature as important. There were no significant differences between how men and women chose electives, though the order of choices varied. The findings guide faculty members towards aligning teaching pedagogies that are engaging and focus on building connections and relationships. This must be complemented with push strategies, impression management, and class management techniques.

## 1. Introduction

Since the market liberalization in India in 1991, earning a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree has been a common career aspiration among Indian youth (Aggarwala, 2008; Parmeswaran, 2014). Nearly 300,000 Indians take the entrance exam conducted by the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and the Indian Institute of Management, annually, competing for approximately 18,000–20,000 seats in the top 100 colleges. With an MBA degree, they are likely to earn an annual starting salary of between USD 5,000 and 40,000. However, much of their initial salary depends on the reputation and ranking of the college, elective courses, the area of specialization they choose during the MBA training, and the reputation of their college with respect to that specialization (Mitra, 2011). For students who have worked after undergraduate studies, the remuneration could be hiked by up to 200% (Altonji et al., 2016). An MBA-granting Business school (B school) thus becomes a citadel for students to hone their leadership and managerial skills, which eventually improves their earning ability (Deming & Noray, 2020). Notably, most other master's qualifications may not fetch a similar improvement in career growth and salary improvement. This decision thus has a major implication for faculty members, as they can plan and design their courses to suit and align with priorities and factors that guide the

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