

# **JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN PRIVATE HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN MALAYSIA: FACTORS AFFECTING UNDERGRADUATES' CHOICE**

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## Abstract:

In the current digitally-networked era, journalism schools worldwide, especially those in developing countries are gearing towards offering courses to cater to evolving market demands and needs. In this context, there is a growing concern, especially among private higher learning institutions in Malaysia on whether to continue offering journalism or provide other courses within mass communication studies. This paper looks at private universities in Malaysia to explore on factors affecting students' choice when opting for journalism studies. The study employed quantitative research method on 300 students from five private universities that offered journalism studies. The research findings showed that 51% preferred non-journalism courses while 49% pursued journalism at degree and diploma levels. Among the strong reasons cited for students' reluctance to pursue journalism education in Malaysia were their dejection on the country's inhibitory laws on freedom of expression, fear that journalists were exposed to physical arm, and lack of language competency to meet journalistic writing skills. The study, which also looked at preferences based on gender, found that female students were less keen to take up journalism. While there are widespread research interests in journalism worldwide, this study hopes to track down important elements that discourage undergraduates, especially from those coming from a developing country like Malaysia, from taking up journalism studies. This paper aims to add its contribution to our global knowledge about students' desire to study journalism, drawing on data from the Malaysian university study. It is also hoped that, as a secondary or indirect benefit, it will help provide recommendations to formulate proper curriculum for journalism educators.

Key words: Journalism, journalism education, journalism studies, mass communication, specialization, journalism curriculum.