AN INVESTIGATION INTO FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT DECISION TO PURSUE GRADUATE BUSINESS EDUCATION

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to investigate motives influencing student decision to pursue graduate business education at Namibian business schools. In particular, it intended to determine how financial costs influence student's decisions to opt for graduate business education; to define to what extent opportunity for career advancement is a reason that affect students to choose attend graduate business education and lastly, establish to what level is student's choice of graduate business education influenced by institutional infrastructure.

The study used a quantitative approach. Questionnaires were administered to 86 Master of Business Administration (MBA) students enrolled at Namibia Business School (NBS) and Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business (HP-GSB) in the 2014 academic year. Participants were approached to partake in the survey at the end of class sessions. Questionnaires were collected immediately after completion. The study made use of frequency tables, charts and central tendency statistics such as mode, mean and median obtained from the analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The results show that overall, 62% of the students consider opportunity for career advancement as the most important reason to pursue graduate business education. Although financial costs proved to be a vital influential factor by 21%, it was established to be secondary, with institutional infrastructures ascertaining to be the least important motivator. The study also revealed that location and family commitment are reasons for pursuing postgraduate education locally. The study conclusion recommends Business Schools pay attention to career advancing aspects, accommodative payment options and conducive classroom facilities.

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Secondly, I express my heartfelt gratefulness for the guide and support from the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business (HP-GSB) staff members and members of Namibia Business School (NBS) staff for their assistance during the period of my study.

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Lastly, to all my friends, thank you for your understanding and encouragement in my many, many moments of crisis. Your friendship makes my life a wonderful experience. I cannot list all the names here, but you are always on my mind.

DEDICATION

Above all, I give thanks to the Almighty for having granted me a rewarding youthful life thus far. I dedicate my thesis work to my beloved family. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving mother, together with my grandparents, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially Megameno for being my best cheerleader.

Finally, I would like to leave the remaining space in memory of Wilhelm Namesho (1965 – 1988) and Bertholdt Lechner (1969 – 1993), two fantastic young men.

DECLARATION

I, Simon N. Namesho, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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ACRONYMS

AGSM	Australian Graduate School of Management
HP-GSB	Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NBS	Namibia Business School
PoN	Polytechnic of Namibia
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNAM	University of Namibia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page……i

Abstract……..ii

Acknowledgements……...…iii

Dedication……iv

Declaration……v

Acronyms……..……vi

List of Figures……...……vii

List of Appendices……xii

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Orientation of the Proposed Study……..…….1

1.2 Statement of the Problem……..……...2

1.3 Research questions……..…….2

1.4 Significance of the Study……..……...3

1.5 Limitation of the Study……..……..3

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2. Literature Review……..……..5

2.1 Summary……13

CHAPTER 3: Methodology and Research Design

3. Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Introduction……16

3.2 Research Design…….16

3.3 Population……...……...16

3.4 Sampling Size…….……...17

3.5 Research Instrument……...…17

3.6 Procedure…….……..17

3.7 Data Analysis…….18

3.8 Research Ethics……..18

CHAPTER 4: Data Analysis and Discussion

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction……19

4.2 Presentation……20

4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics of students……...20

4.2.2 Financial aspects……26

4.2.3 Opportunity for career advancement…….……32

4.2.4 Institutional infrastructure……..……38

4.3 Discussions……47

4.3.1 Demographic characteristics of students……...47

4.3.2 Financial aspects……49

4.3.3 Opportunity for career advancement…….50

4.3.4 Institutional infrastructure…….52

CHAPTER 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction……56

5.2 Summary of major findings……..…….57

5.3 Discussions of findings……..……57

5.4 Conclusion…….59

5.5 Recommendations……..60

5.6 Directions for future research……61

References……..…….**.....**…….....62

Appendix..…….....68

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Gender of students…….20

Figure 2: Age category of students……21

Figure 3: Nationality of students……...22

Figure 4: Student current region of resident……..23

Figure 5: Student home language……..24

Figure 6: Student's industry of employment…….26

Figure 7: Fees Comparison analysis by students……...26

Figure 8: Financing of graduate business education…….27

Figure 9: If graduate education is self-funded, how.....28

Figure 10: Rating of payment options offered……28

Figure 11: Rating of pricing……29

Figure 12: Rating of money spent on graduate business education……30

Figure 13: Rating of course fees……..31

Figure 14: Student employment status……32

Figure 15: Rating of remaining competitive in one's profession……33

Figure 16: Rating of deriving personal satisfaction from an MBA…….34

Figure 17: Rating of getting a better pay…….35

Figure 18: Rating of getting promoted……36

Figure 19: Rating of a change of career path……..37

Figure 20: Student's undergraduate education attended…….38

Figure 21: HP-GSB student's undergraduate education attended……...39

Figure 22: NBS student's undergraduate education attended…….40

Figure 23: Rating for importance of course modules……..41

Figure 24: Rating for importance of a university prestige……..41

Figure 25: Rating for the importance of parking bays……42

Figure 26: Rating for the importance of classroom facilities……..43

Figure 27: Rating for importance of the lecturing personnel……..44

Figure 28: Rating for importance of the mode of delivery……..44

Figure 29: Rating for importance of location of the graduate business school…...…45

Figure 30: Rating for importance of a reputation of a graduate school of business…46

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire……68

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation of the study

Educational attainment is one of the primary goals of our society, and as such, has been the subject of a voluminous body of research. Universities, colleges and the graduate schools within them act as agents of stratification within the higher education system and the society at large (Stoeker, 1991). Attending either graduate or undergraduate school may result in different levels of status attainment, thus decisions regarding study at these levels are pivotal in the process. Particularly, decisions that affect educational planning, such as whether to attend, when to attend, and in what field, may then be considered critical pointers in this process.

To attend or not attend business education, at the graduate level, is a significant question, although paltry empirical research has been done in this area in Namibia.

Many students and organisations believe that a course in graduate business education provides exposure and learning of managerial skills that are needed in current ever changing business environment. Although there is a high rate of interest in graduate business education in most career fields, field of study introduces unique factors in the decision to attend graduate school (Gropper & Fitzpatrick, 1959; Malaney & Isaac, 1988). Thus, those factors that lead to pursue graduate business education vary as well as the graduate student background characteristics, as does the function of graduate school within the particular field.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There is an upsurge in the number of students pursuing graduate business education. This is evident by the number of students enrolling or wishing to enrol for graduate business education as their preferred choice of study. Similarly in Namibia the number of students pursuing a MBA course has been increasing. This can be evidenced on the number of students who are pursuing MBA and the number of specialisations that are being offered to the market (National Council of Higher Education, 2011 and Namibia Business School Strategic Plan, 2011-15).

The MBA course, by virtue of being an open course, graduate business education attracts students with diverse backgrounds like education, medicine, engineering, agriculture among others. In light of this, this study sought to examine what are the aspects that stimulate students to decide to pursue graduate business education. While existing literature reveals a number of traits, the study was aimed to inquire the traits for current and prospective students in the context of Namibia.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that may be influential in the process of making the decision to attend graduate business education.

1.3 Research questions

In light of the problem statement above, the research questions were as follows:

1. How do financial costs influence students of graduate business education decisions to opt for graduate business education?

2. To what extent is opportunity for career advancement a factor that influences students to choose to attend graduate business education?
3. To what level is student's choice of graduate business education influenced by institutional infrastructure?

1.4 Significance of the study

The business environment is constantly changing and so are the needs of employers for business graduates who can understand and operate effectively in such changing business environments (Temtime & Mmereki, 2010). Firstly, empirical review of literature revealed substantive information in the USA, Europe, Australia, and paltry in Botswana, Kenya and South Africa, but scanty published literature exists in Namibia on this topic. Secondly, since this study is the first of its kind in the higher education context of Namibia, it is expected to serve as an important addition to existing literature and knowledge, and a stepping stone for further studies on the topic. Lastly, business schools in Namibia stand to benefit upon understanding the influential factors students base their decisions on, when deciding for graduate business education.

1.5 Limitations & delimitations of the study

The study had several delimitations related to the constructs, context and theoretical perspectives of the study.

At the outset, the study considered three independent variables; namely: financial factors, opportunity for career advancement and institutional infrastructure, in order to

examine how these variables exert their influence on the decision process for current and prospective graduate business education students. All interpretations were limited to business administration students. Secondly, the study was only carried out on current or prospective students of business schools at public higher education institutions, namely Namibia Business School (NBS) at the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business (HP-GSB) at the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN), leaving out other business schools were the same problem might be prevalent.

Lastly, the study's literature review was primarily limited to literature from the discipline of higher education, including literature on management education, management development, career development and education development. Literature from related disciplines such as academic research in business and social sciences, quality education assurance and management studies were only consulted in passing.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review section examines recent (or historically significant) research studies, company data, or industry reports that act as a basis for the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define literature review as a careful examination of a body of literature pointing toward the answer to the research question. Marshall and Rossman (1998) state that literature reviewed typically includes scholarly journals, scholarly books, authoritative databases and primary sources. Sometimes it includes newspapers, magazines, other books, films and audio and video tapes, and other secondary sources.

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that may be influential in the process of making the decision to attend graduate business education. The review of literature was guided by research objectives coined to address the following dimensions: financial resource availability, opportunity for career advancement and infrastructure of institution as factors.

The motives for undertaking study for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree are widely documented. A survey by The Aspen Institute (2008) showed that self-improvement, career development, enhancing business skills, having a positive impact on society are most important to MBA graduates immediately after they receive their degrees. Other reasons such as networking opportunities, experiencing a foreign culture (for overseas

students) and increased professional and personal effectiveness are also proposed (Australian Graduate School of Management [AGSM], 2011; Bolton, 2005).

Students in the programme are usually in their late twenties with experience across small, medium and large organisations, and come from diverse professional backgrounds such as ‘engineering, automotive, law, marketing, banking, defence, tourism management consulting, entrepreneurship and other specialties’ (AGSM, 2011). Also, some advice given to people who are undecided on the career they want to pursue, or those who want to change careers, is that they would find the broader-based MBA a better option for them (Master Informatie Centrum, 2011). In terms of the type of student who would pursue this degree, Lees (1991) argues that an MBA student is almost invariably highly motivated, ambitious, bright, unafraid of risk and willing to work hard.

In a study by Kallio (1995), on factors influencing the college choice decisions of graduate student, indicate that a student’s choice can be a multistage process. That is, selecting a graduate school to attend is a multistage decision process affected by a variety of factors involving the student's characteristics, information gathering, college actions, and college/programme characteristics. It further reveals that the relative importance of some factors will differ for younger and older students due to the effects of life stage development, particularly as they relate to marriage, family and work considerations.

Publications that provide further introduction to this topic include Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) and Paulsen (1990). These and other overviews of the literature describe the evolution of various conceptual models of the choice process beginning with Kotler's (1976) simple decision model and moving toward more complex and integrative

models such as those developed by Litten, Sullivan, and Brodigan (1983) and Hossler and Gallagher (1987). In general, these models suggest that the decision process consists of a number of stages or phases in which various individual and organisational factors interact to produce outcomes that influence the next stage or phase.

Malaney (1987) cites the desire to learn more about a specialty, personal satisfaction, improved job prospects and an advanced degree needed for advancement within a chosen field as the reasons why students pursue graduate education. Similar findings are described in a study by Gagnon and Cocolas (1988). This was acknowledged by Olson and King (1985), also, as cited by Kallio (1995), who noted that these findings are consistent with some of the typical differences between graduate students and undergraduates in terms of life stage. The importance of spouse and work-related considerations among graduate students reflect "early adulthood" tasks identified in the adult development literature such as deciding on a life partner, starting a family and managing a home, starting and developing an occupation. The influence of a spouse or partner has also been found as one of the reasons to pursue graduate education.

Demand for employees with higher education qualifications by employers contributes to the flux of students wanting to pursue higher education. The business community's increased demand for managers who have acquired managerial skills has led to an explosion in a demand for graduate courses in management (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). The conventional wisdom is that individuals with an MBA generally perform better in managerial positions than those who do not have an MBA degree (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). Obtaining a degree appears to be a fool-proof investment for a solid career advancement in

the corporate world, and as a result, the reputation of a MBA degree has soared over the last decade.

At the same time, trying to catch up with the increasing demand for graduate management education, academic institutions have been setting up new MBA programmes. For instance, while there was only one accredited MBA curricula in Greece offered by the Athens University of Economics and Business in the early 1990s, there are now various MBA programmes across the country (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000).

According to Blackburn (2011), considerations such as course flexibility, application of information technology in teaching and the overall standard of teaching, were expected to be influential in student choice for graduate. However, James (2000) argues that these factors were of low importance and many prospective students based their decisions on limited information, reputation and word of mouth. He concluded that a surprisingly high proportion of university (undergraduate) applicants are not in a good position to judge the quality and suitability of courses, compared to applicants at postgraduate level.

Liesch (2001), Mulligan (2010) and Hansen (2011) concur that a prominent motivator to enrol at a specific business school is its reputation of the university. In a study by Liesch (2001) of the University of Queensland MBA students, found that the three most important factors in students deciding to attend University of Queensland were the reputation of University of Queensland, the reputation of the Business School and the availability of multiple delivery modes. Recent graduates and current students in the survey both rated the same three factors as the most important.

In a comparative study in Kenya and India by Nyaribo, Prakash and Edward (2012) on motivators for choosing a management course revealed that increasingly both business and academicians have to understand the influencers of student alternatives to pursue management courses. Nyaribo, Prakash and Edward (2012) further concede that; skills, competencies and abilities were the most important determinants in a student choice bracket and that amongst the parents, the father has the greatest influence in career choice amongst Indian management students. The corporate identity of the institutions and the manner in which the education is imparted is equally an important motivator for choice of the course. In Kenya the admission criteria to MBA differs from institution to institution. Some institutions admit students after their first degree; others consider the students Graduate Point Average (GPA), while others consider working executives to their programmes depending on number of work experience.

In today's world one could question if, 'it is not just having an MBA degree that is important, but where the degree is from that matters more'. It seems only a handful of prospective students research MBA programmes as closely as they should and that most students tend to only look at a school that is closer to them, affordable and of which they have heard positive reports.

The manner in which students choose their MBA programme also has consequences for business schools. Postgraduate programmes, such as the MBA, are significant revenue earners for universities and so there is competition amongst universities to attract students. Knowledge of the factors which students consider important will enable the schools to better target their marketing.

There are numerous universities in various countries offering the MBA programme. The choice among the universities is a difficult decision. There are a multitude of factors to be considered including the prestige of the university (locally and internationally), the reputation of the business school, the various learning modes provided, how recognized the school is, research and publications, the flexibility of the programme and the costs involved.

In a study by Ethington and Smart (1986), findings reveal that integrating successfully a student into the social and academic arrangements of the undergraduate institution directly and indirectly enhances the likelihood that the student will persist in the educational process, not only to degree completion, but continuing into graduate education. This was also acknowledged by Kiley and Austin (2000), when they noted that a majority of students (52 per cent) undertook their postgraduate study in the same department as their undergraduate degree. This familiarity with the department may result in students not searching too widely for other study options. Kiley and Austin (2000) concluded that a surprisingly high proportion of university applicants (undergraduate) are not in a good position to judge the quality and suitability of courses. As a result, selecting a MBA programme necessitates moving to at least a new department, if not a different university, and so may be expected to increase the range of options investigated.

A MBA programme is explicitly aimed to add value to graduate students giving them business-related knowledge and managerial skills. Empirical studies seem to lend support for this contention. In the USA, Boyatzis and Renio (1989) have showed that MBA degrees added significantly to graduates managerial competencies in the areas of information analysis, quantitative analysis and implementation of projects. In another study done in the UK, Baruch and Leeming (2001), provide an assessment of the impact of a MBA from a

leading UK management school on the skills and career paths of its graduates. The results of the study support the contention that MBA studies lead to increased self-confidence, managerial skills, employability and improve career advancement.

Both Gropper and Fitzpatrick (1959), as cited in Ethington and Smart (1986), found extrinsic issues that affect a student's decision to attend graduate education programme such as cost of the programme will have inverse relationship to attend graduate school or not. It appears to be a particularly important concern for students in the arts and sciences (Baird, 1976). All students finance their education either through loans, parental support, or employment and it is this global cost factor that influences the decision to attend (Stoeker, 1991). Institutional factors such as location, size, and program quality are thought to dominate the decision of which school to attend, rather than whether or not to attend.

Postgraduate management education is a topic of continuing interest and concern to both providers (the business schools) and recipients (students and employers). The debate over the effectiveness and appropriateness of current methods of management education and MBA degrees in particular, is carried on in the business press, amongst business academics and practising managers (Ainsworth & Marley, 1995).

A significant stimulus to this debate was the landmark American study by Porter and McKibbin (1998) which explored corporate and business school views of MBA programmes and their graduates. It is noteworthy that MBA courses, their design and content, and comparisons between courses are a subject of many articles in the business press, to a much greater extent than courses in other fields of study. International business magazines, such as Business Week, US News and World Report and a Economist, feature

annual surveys of MBA courses. Discussion of MBA courses in the business press tends to be critical of them for emphasising theoretical and analytical content at the expense of people management skills. For example, an article in the Economist by Rukeyser (1991), approvingly quotes the American Graduate Management Admission Council accusing "business schools of concentrating on the building of elegant, abstract models" rather than forming managers who understand "the messy, concrete reality of international business".

There is pressure on providers of MBA and MBA-type management education to review, refine and adapt their curricula and teaching methods. Ainsworth and Marley (1995) recognises that graduates' views cannot be allowed to determine the content or structure of the course. Their views on content may be biased by memories of particularly good or bad teaching of subjects. Graduates views are accorded value as coming from informed contributors to the discussion about the form and content of MBA courses. In a subsequent review of the course design they were taken into account, along with the views of academic staff, business and industry and management educators from outside the university. These inputs were influenced by factors such as the growing competition for good students and fees, the professional ambitions of business academics to respond positively to the MBA debate and developments in the business environment (Ainsworth & Marley, 1995). The MBA is, therefore, seen as a significant factor in career development and change. In a study by Ainsworth and Marley (1995), many students saw a Master's degree qualification as an important factor in salary progression. Thus, higher percentage of students seeing it important in winning promotion and increased responsibilities, while majority saw it as important in producing increased levels of personal satisfaction also.

2.1 Summary

During the 1980s a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree was regarded as one of the key routes to career success. A popular conception amongst people is that an MBA degree makes one fast track career success in the form of improved salary and climbing the career ladder (Baruch & Peiperl, 2000). There were few universities that offered Business Administration courses. This led institutions to start investing in the development of infrastructures such a classrooms, parking bays and lecturing personnel as well as development of MBA programme content. The pioneering universities emerged in 1980s when the MBA degree was most sought for by students and employers. Most of the pioneering schools adapted the MBA programme influenced by the Harvard and Cambridge universities (Nyaribo, Prakash & Edward, 2012). Similarly in Namibia the number of students pursuing a MBA course has been increasing. This can be evidenced on the number of students who are pursuing MBA and the number of specialisations that are being offered to the market (National Council of Higher Education, 2011 and Namibia Business School Strategic Plan, 2011-15).

The reasons for undertaking study toward a MBA are widely documented in the United States of America (USA) and the European countries, but then again paltry in Africa and non in Namibia. A recent survey showed that self-improvement, career development, enhancing business skills, having a positive impact on society are most important to MBAs immediately after they receive their degrees (The Aspen Institute, 2008). Other reasons such as networking opportunities, experiencing a foreign culture (for overseas students) and increased professional and personal effectiveness are also proposed (Australian Graduate School of Management [AGSM], 2011). Students in the programme are usually in their late

twenties with experience across small, medium and large organisations, and come from diverse professional backgrounds such as engineering, automotive, law, marketing, banking, defence, tourism management consulting, entrepreneurship and other specialties (AGSM, 2011).

There are numerous universities in various countries offering the MBA programme. The choice among the universities is a difficult decision. There are a multitude of factors to be considered including the prestige of the university (locally and internationally), the reputation of the business school, the various learning modes provided, how recognised the school is, research and publications, the flexibility of the programme and the financial worries involved.

An examination of the concept of service value in business education led LeBlanc and Nguyen (1999) to identify the factors that impact students' evaluation of choosing a programme as including; relationship between price and quality, the knowledge to be acquired, the economic utility of a business degree, image of the institution as well as social and emotional value. It was further noted that male students are more inclined to focus on social value during service consumption and female students are more critical of price/quality relationship as it relates to value.

Studies by Chiu (1999), Hay Group (2005) and Agarwal (2008) present divergent views on what motivates student in different continents with the main reason for the divergence cited as the difference in level of economic development of the countries in which the studies were conducted. In the same context there is also a difference in terms of business environment. In Asia, more specifically Hong Kong (Beck and Williams, 1989), found out

that student's prime motivation to pursue MBA degree course was job performance and the second most important reason was career development. Similar results were reflected by Luker, Bowers, & Powers (1989) in a study in America where the following five reasons for pursuing MBA education were cited: attaining career objectives, getting a promotion, remaining competitive, getting better pay and having personal satisfaction. Likewise, reasons given for remaining at the same university were satisfaction with university, family ties and financial considerations. It is worth noting that a majority of students surveyed (52 per cent) undertook their postgraduate study in the same department as their undergraduate degree (Kiley & Austin, 2000).

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research design, population, sampling strategy, instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis approach are outlined.

3.2 Research design

The study used quantitative research approach. The study has been conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire to collect data. Secondary data were attained through enquiry of relevant official records, for example statistics of registered students as well as alumni records kept at the Namibia Business School (NBS) and Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business (HP-GSB). Such reviews provided information such as whether the students were already employed at the time they enrolled in the programme or have obtained employment after programme completion or attain promotion after programme completion.

3.3 Population

The population of the study were NBS and HP-GSB students who registered for the 2014 academic year. The study populated from MBA students only and no other business graduate education level programmes. The population was 88 MBA students from NBS and 38 from HP-GSB, adding to 126 MBA students.

3.4 Sample size

The study made use of a probability sampling. NBS offers two MBA specialties namely Management Strategy and Finance, while the HP-GSB offers two MBA specialties. These are an MBA in International Business as well as Leadership and Change Management. Subsequently, the four specialised MBA groups formed four stratas or four groups. A simple random sampling was used to select 30 participants from each stratum – that is, 30 students from the MBA Management Strategy and 30 students from MBA Finance. However, at the HP-GSB in 2014 only 38 students were registered, as a result, all were considered for the study. As a result, the sample size added up to a total of 98 students, or just about 78% of the population.

3.5 Research instrument

The research instrument used to gather information for the study comprised of a questionnaire that was distributed to MBA students. Questionnaire included both closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions used Likert type scale to facilitate quantitative analysis. A pilot study was administered to a group of 5 individuals within the population to ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

3.6 Procedure

The data were collected in person from 86 MBA students at NBS and HP-GSB. NBS participants were approached during the 2014 academic year registration period to partake in the survey. Students from HP-GSB were approached when they attended a block

class session, to complete the questionnaire. Six (6) students at NBS did not return the questionnaire, while also six (6) students from HP-GSB were absent for a block class session during which the survey was conducted. Thus, 98 – (6 + 6) = 86 students, actual sample size.

3.7 Data analysis

Given that the study collected quantitative data, the records obtained from the MBA students were analysed after the data were grouped in particular analytical indications such as gender, age and employment status, for nominal data. Furthermore, a full analysis was carried out to extract possible meaning from the ordinal data gathered in the research. Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and descriptive statistics. The study made use of frequency tables, charts and central tendency statistics such as mode, mean and median obtained from the analysis using the SPSS.

3.8 Research ethics

Appropriate research ethics were followed at all stages in the process of research. The researcher outlined to the students what the research is about, the importance of the study and got their consent for participation. Students were given information relating to purpose of the study; benefits of the study and length of time the participant is expected to take to fill-out the questionnaire. Students were also informed that they can withdraw at any stage of survey. It was stipulated in the survey that information so given by the students would remain confidential in order to ensure anonymity. Accordingly, the ideas borrowed from other scholars have been appropriately acknowledged.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the data analysis and findings of the study. The chapter begins by presenting the demographic characteristics of the students. This is followed by the presentation of the views of the students on postgraduate education financing, deliberation on career advancement opportunities and lastly views on the importance of attributes pertaining to institutional infrastructure.

The findings in the demographic presentations are discussed in numbers and/or in percentages, to allow for better comprehension. The remainder of the presentation was discussed in percentage. The population of the study was 126 MBA students who were registered for the 2014 academic year at NBS and HP-GSB. The sample size of the study was 98 students, which is 78% of the population. An 88% response rate was achieved, that is, 86 students partook in the study – six (6) students from NBS did not return the questionnaire, while six (6) students from HP-GSB were absent when the survey was conducted. Thus, 98 – (6 + 6) = 86 students, actual sample size.

4.2 Presentation of data

4.2.1 Demographic characteristics of students

The researcher included the gender of the students in order to establish the composition of sexes pursuing graduate business education in general and to be specific from the two (2) respective institutions of higher education. Overall, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, males constituted fifty-two (52) per cent of the students surveyed and forty-eight (48) per cent females.

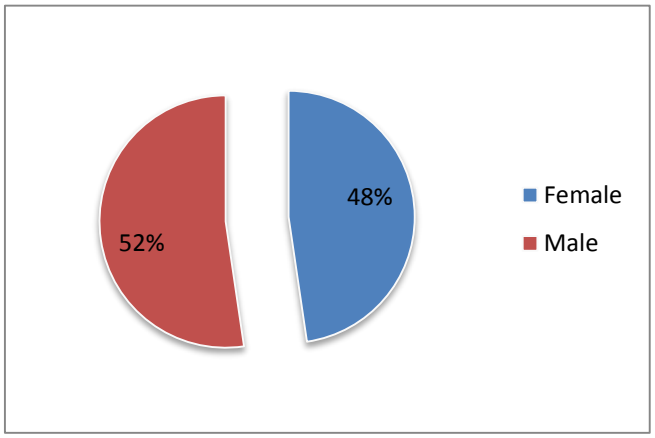
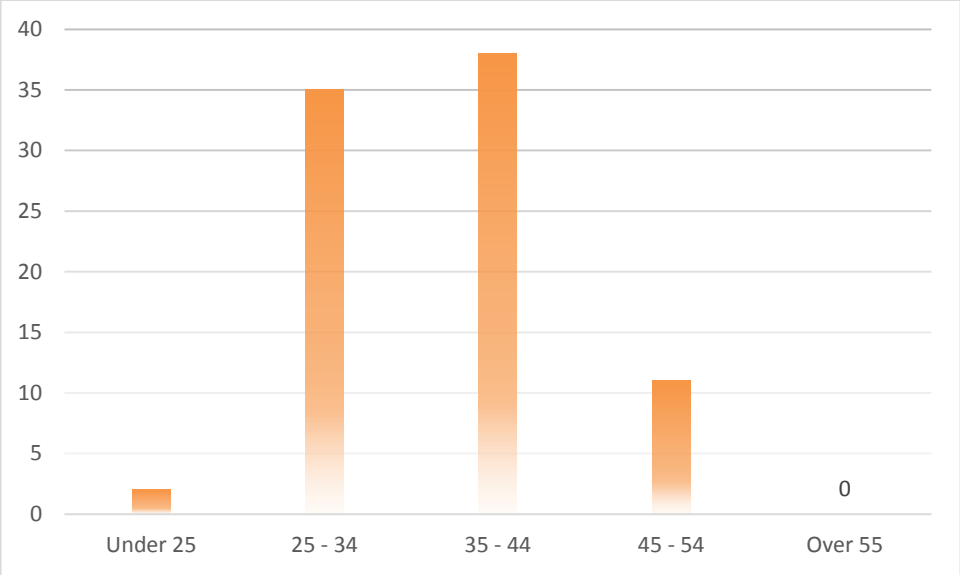


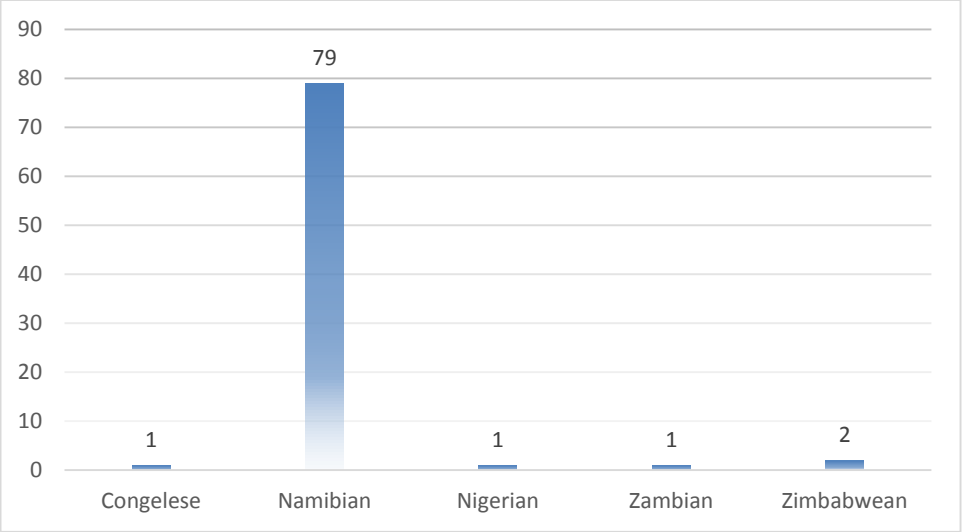
Figure 1: Gender of students N = 86



N = 86

Figure 2: Age category of students

The age of the students was analysed. The findings, as depicted in Figure 2 above, shows that 44%, that is 38 students, were between the age category of 35 to 44 years, which embodied the highest age category in the study, followed by the grouping of 25 – 34 years and 45 – 54 years, with 38 (41%) and 11 (13%) students, respectively. The age category under 25 years was the second lowest represented in the study, with 2 (2%) students, and with no students in the age category of over 55 years.



N = 86

Figure 3: Nationality of students

The nationality of the students was analysed to in order to establish from which country they originate. As shown in Figure 3 above, over 90% of the students in the survey are of Namibian nationality. Excluding Namibia, students from the SADC region represent five per cent (5%), which is 2 and 1 student from Zimbabwe and Zambia, respectively. Among the students, Nigeria and Congo were both represented by one (1) student each.

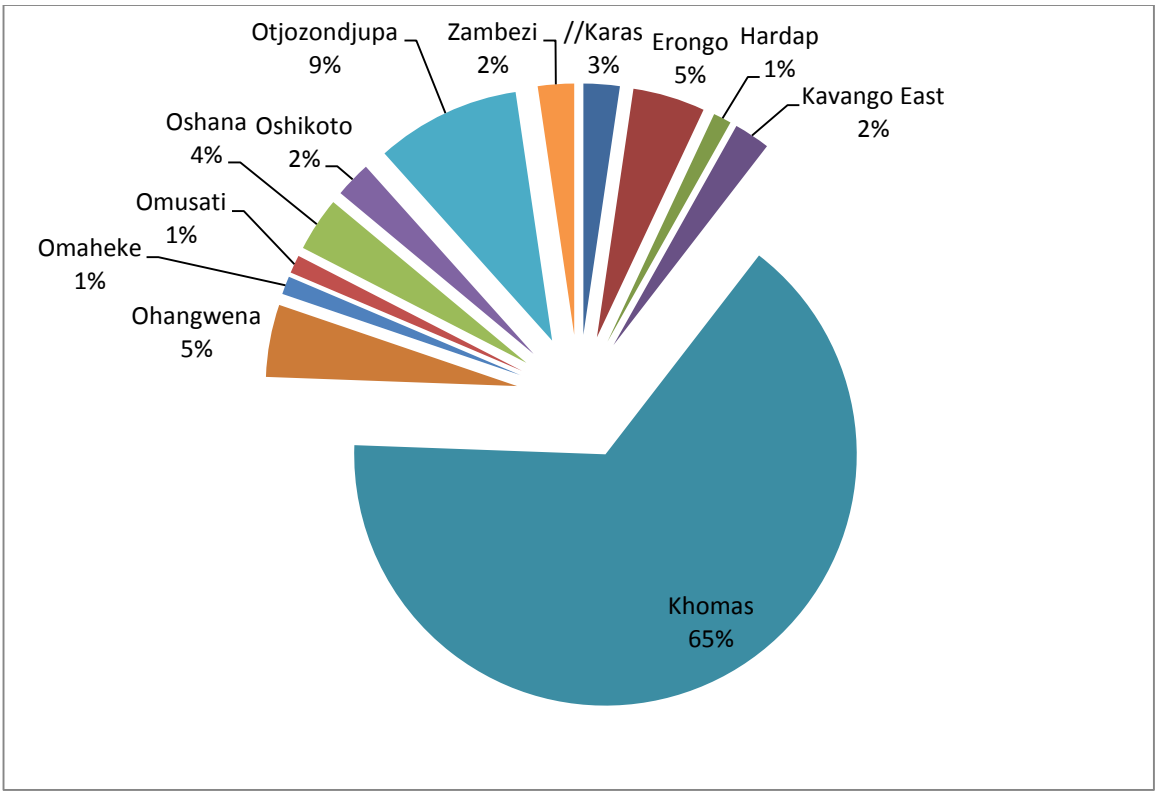


Figure 4: Student current region of residence N = 86

As illustrated in Figure 4 above, the student's current region of resident was established in order to know from which regions students reside as they attend their graduate schooling. More than half of the students reside in the Khomas region, having a regional representation of 65% of the students surveyed. The second highest regional representation is being from the Otjozondjupa region, at nine per cent (9%). The Erongo and Ohangwena regions are being embodied by a five per cent (5%) regional representation. Oshana and //Karas region are represented by a four per cent (4%) and three per cent (3%), respectively. Regions with the lowest representation of students in the survey are from Kavango East, Oshikoto and Zambezi at two per cent 2% all, as well as the Hardap, Omaheke and Omusati regions at one per cent (1%) each. There was no regional representation of students from the Kavango West and Kunene regions.

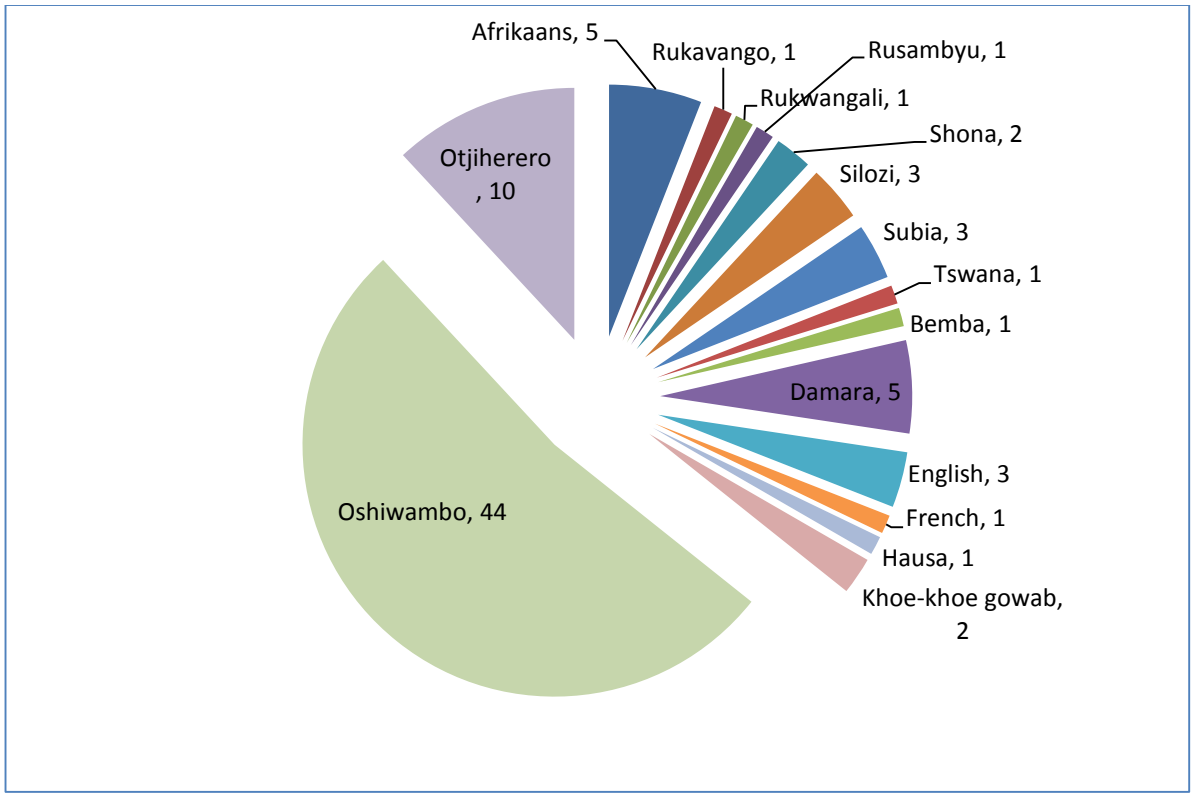


Figure 5: Student home language

N = 86

The language that the students frequently converse in at home was analysed to establish the common language of communication, besides English the official language. As depicted in Figure 5 above, of the surveyed students, 44 have Oshiwambo as their home language, which is the highest representation in the survey, followed by 10 students that are of Otjiherero speaking. Students that spoke Afrikaans and Damara/Nama were 5 in the study. The home languages of English, Silozi and Subia had 3 students representation in the study. The second lowest home language representation of 2 students each is from Khoe-khoe gowab and Shona. The subsequent home languages had only one (1) student representation in the study: Bemba, French, Hausa, Rukavango, Rukwangali, Rusambyu and Tswana.

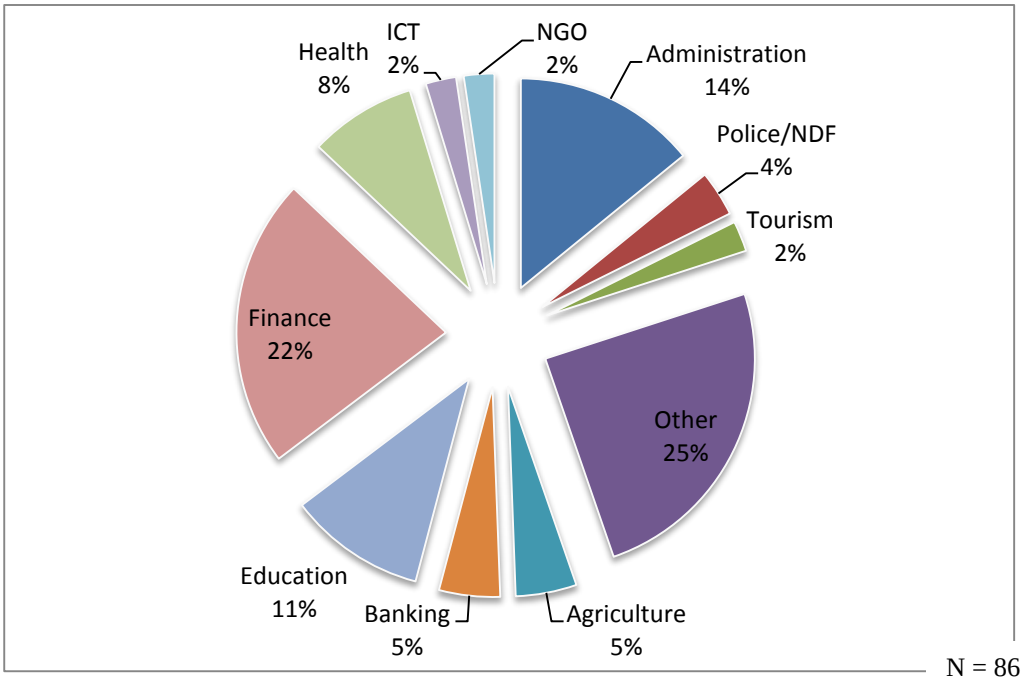
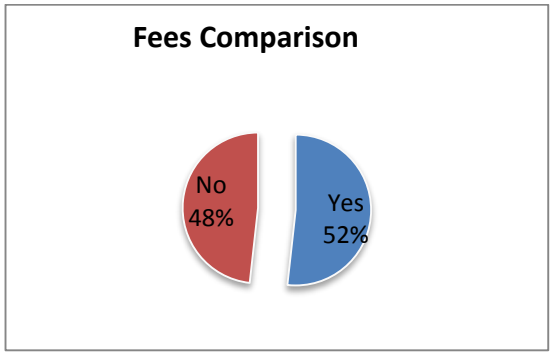


Figure 6: Student's industry of employment

The study also seeks to establish the various sectors (industry) where students are employed, if they happen to be working. As illustrated in Figure 6 above, 27% of the students are employed in the Banking and Finance sector, altogether. A 14% of the students are involved in a work of an administrative nature. Students employed in the Education and Health consists of 11% and 8%, respectively. Of the students surveyed those that are employed in the Information Communication Technology (ICT), Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and the Tourism sector comprises of 2%. Students surveyed that worked in the Agriculture and Police/NDF sectors consisted of 5% and 4%, respectively. Students that were surveyed but could not categorise the nature of in which industry they were employed, were then classified as Other, which comprised of 25% students.

4.2.2 Financial aspects

The purpose of this section on the survey was to determine the student's view on financial aspects pertaining postgraduate education.



N = 85

Figure 7: Fees comparison analysis by students

Students were asked whether they have done a fees comparison analysis on business school, before they enrolled. As depicted in Figure 7 above, a 52% of the students surveyed confirmed that they have carried out a fees comparison analysis of Business Schools, before they enrolled at the institutions they ended up pursing their MBA programme. Students that seem not to have done a fees comparison analysis before enrolment consisted of 48%. That is, the confirmed students compared fees among Business Schools available to them, before the opted to join either the HP-GSB or NBS eventually.

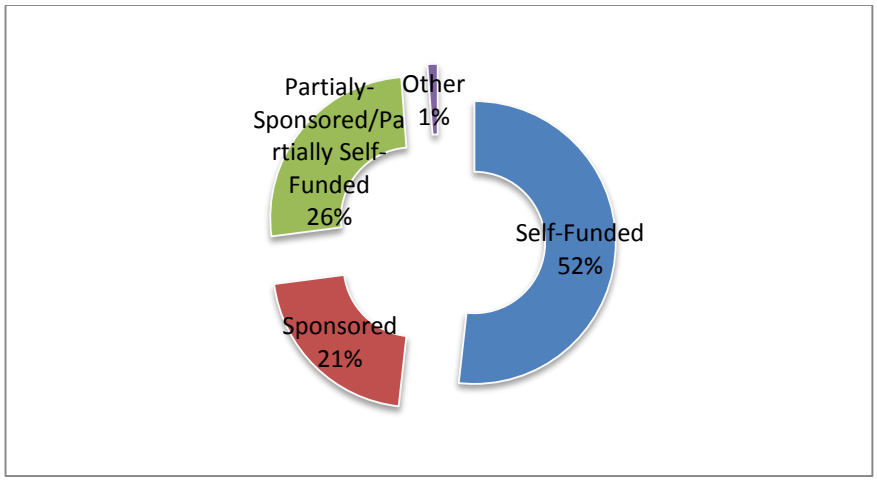
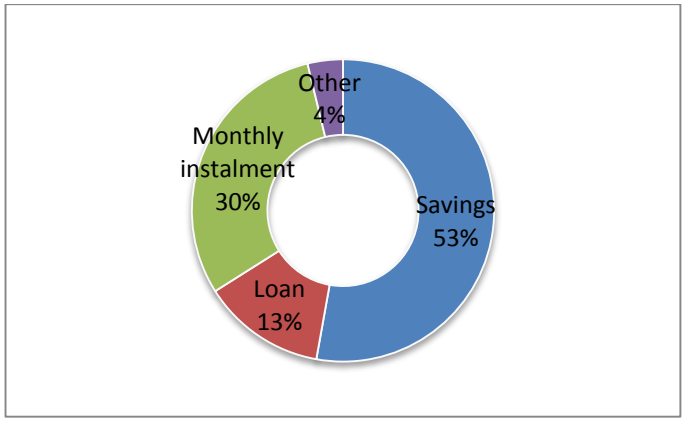


Figure 8: Financing of graduate business education N = 85

The students were asked to indicate how they financed their graduate business education. Figure 8 above reveals that, over half of the surveyed students, that are 52%, have their graduate business education self-funded. A further 26% of the students finance their graduate business education by means of being partially sponsored and partially self-funding. Students that have their education fully sponsored consisted of 21%. Only one (1) per cent of the surveyed students indicated to have their financing of their graduate business education being from *Other* sources.

To give more clarity on the above, students that have indicated to have funded their graduate business education by themselves were asked to specify further how they funded their schooling. Thus, as represented in Figure 9 below, students that specified to have their graduate business education as self-funded, 53% of those self-funding came about from the student's savings. A further 30% revealed that they committed to a monthly instalment to finance their graduate education. An added 13% resolved to obtain a loan as a means to pay for their graduate business education. A 4% of the students, although self-funded, have

funded their graduate education by other means other than from savings, monthly instalments or loan.



N = 53

Figure 9: If graduate education is self-funded, how

The next set of questions present the extents to which student agree with each statement.

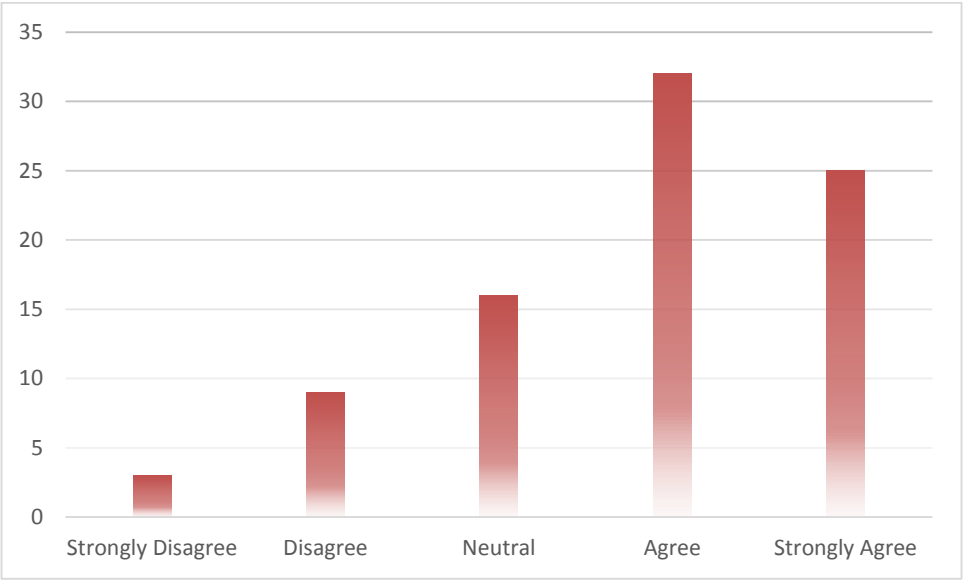


Figure 10: Rating of payment options offered

N = 85

The students were asked to what extent they agree that payment options offered to settle their account are reasonable. Figure 10 above, outlines the extent to which students identify that the payment options they have to settle their accounts are satisfactory. A 37% of the students tend to agree to the payment options to being reasonable, with an additional 29% strongly agreeing to the choices. However, 11% disagreed with the fee selections offered, with 4% strongly disagreeing. A 19% of the students remained neutral on the choices of payment offered by institutions of higher education.

It appears that students believe that attending graduate business education in Namibia is reasonably priced compared to going outside the country. This is illustrated in Figure 11 below, as it shows that 34% strongly agree, with a further 29% agreeing to the fees comparison in favour of attending graduate business education in Namibia. On the other hand, a 17% of the students appear to be neutral to the price comparison, with 12% and 6% disagreeing and strongly disagreeing, respectively, to the price assessment.

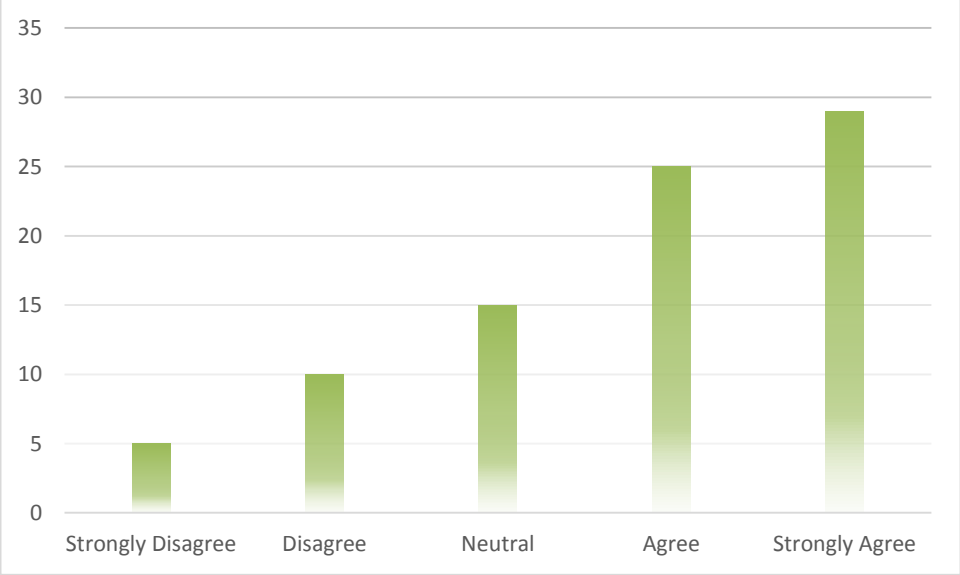


Figure 11: Rating of pricing N = 84

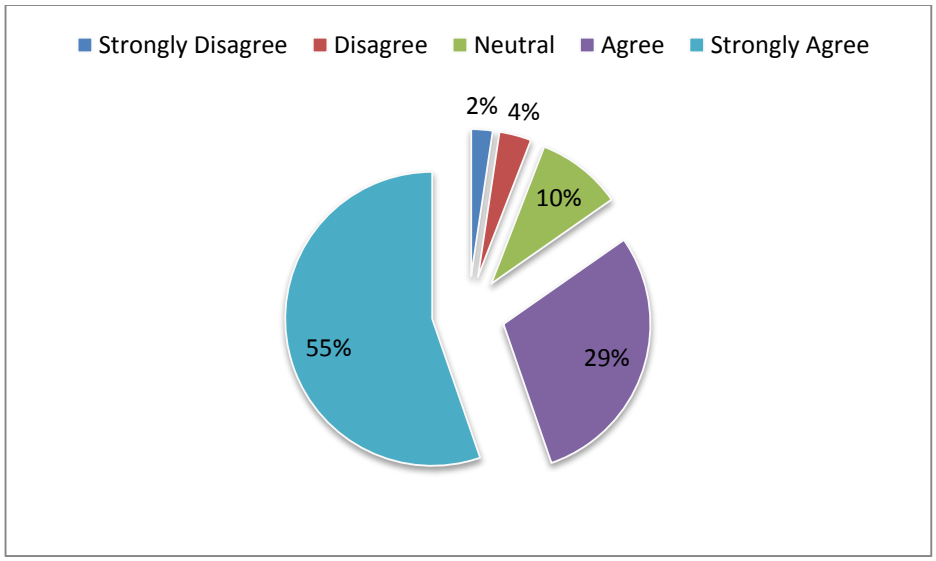


Figure 12: Rating of money spent on graduate business N = 85

Students that join the MBA programme have confidence in that money spent on their graduate business education is money well spent. As demonstrated in Figure 12 above, 55% of the students strongly have confidence in their money being well spent on an MBA programme, with an extra 29% agreeing further. Only 2% and 4% tend to strongly disagree and disagree, respectively, on the notion that investment on their graduate business education is money well spent. A 10% of the students tend to be neutral on the matter.

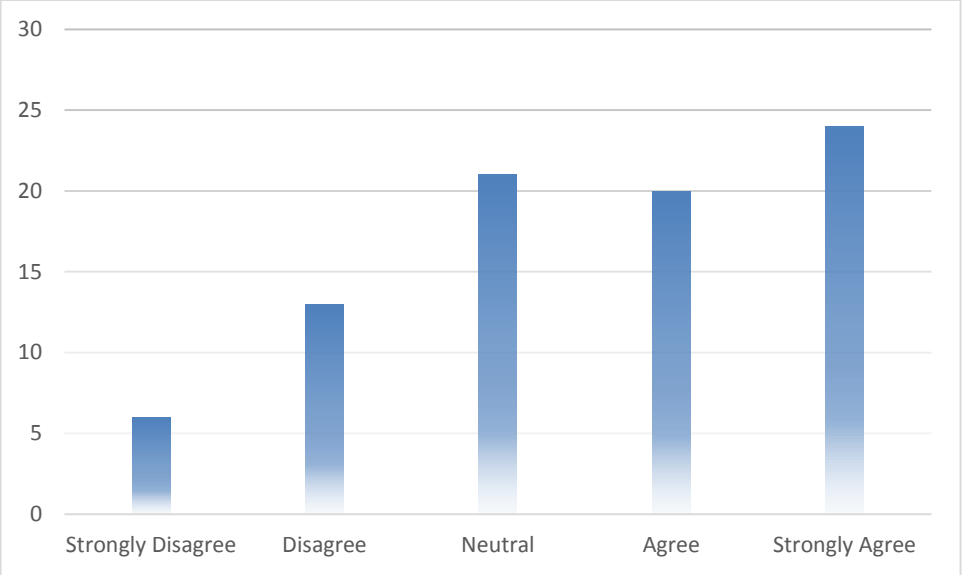


Figure 13: Rating of course fees

N = 84

Students were asked to indicate to what extent they agree that attending graduate business education in Namibia is reasonably priced compared to going outside. Course fees in Namibia give the impression to be affordable compared to other Business Schools outside the country, although – as illustrated in Figure 13 above – 24% of the students stand neutral on the comparison. Only 28% sturdily agree on the contrast, with a 23% agreeing further. A 15% of the students tend to disagree on the impression and by way of a further 7% indicated to be in strong disagreement.

4.2.3 Opportunity for career advancement

The purpose of this section on the survey was to establish the student's understanding on aspects that promote growth and expansion in one's career.

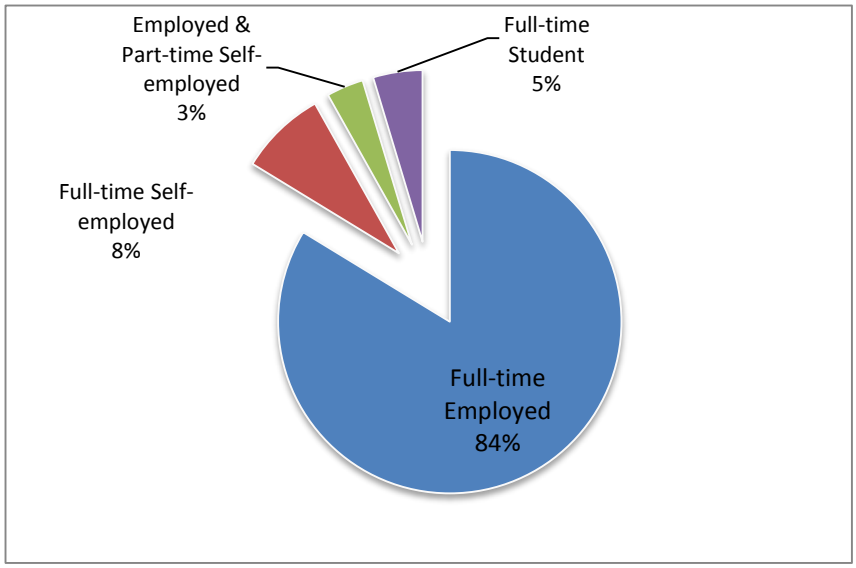
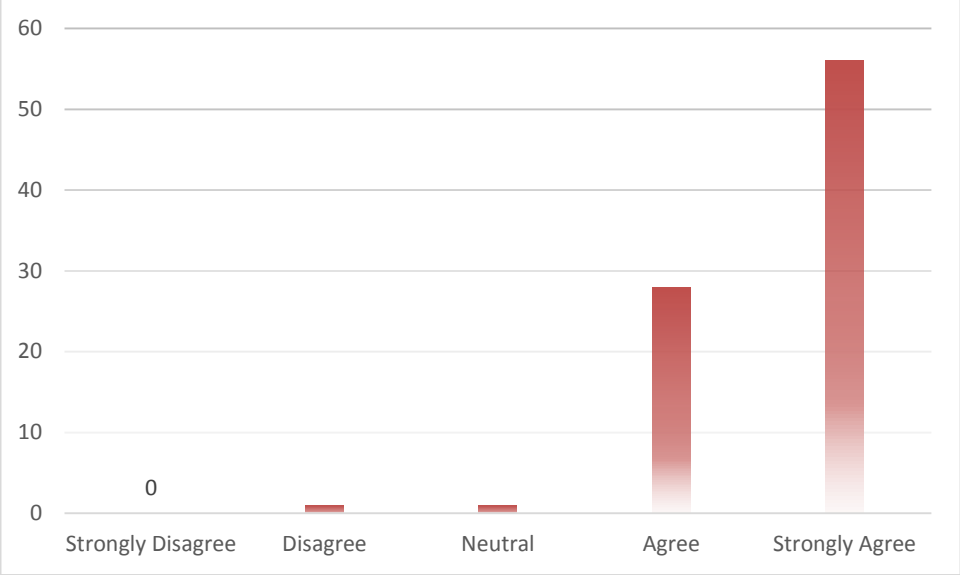


Figure 14: Student employment N = 86

The students were asked whether they were currently full-time employed, engaged in some form of employment or if they were full-time students. Figure 14 above shows, of the students surveyed, eighty four (84) per cent are full-time employed people at a firm or institution. In addition, eight (8) per cent are full-time self-employed, while those that are at the same time employed at a firm or institution whilst also self-employed represent three (3) per cent. Only five (5) per cent of the surveyed students at HP-GSB and NBS are full-time students, that is, they are not employed as they pursued their MBA programme.

The subsequent set of questions present the extent to which a student agree with each statement.



N = 86

Figure 15: Rating of remaining competitive in one's profession

When asked whether attending graduate business education helps them remain competitive in their profession, as demonstrated in Figure 15 above, majority of the students, of over 90%, believe that attending graduate business education helps them remain competitive. That is, a 65% of the students sturdily agree on the notion, with a 33% agreeing further. In both cases, students that remained neutral and in disagreement, were only one (1) per cent. No student strongly disagreed with the stand point.

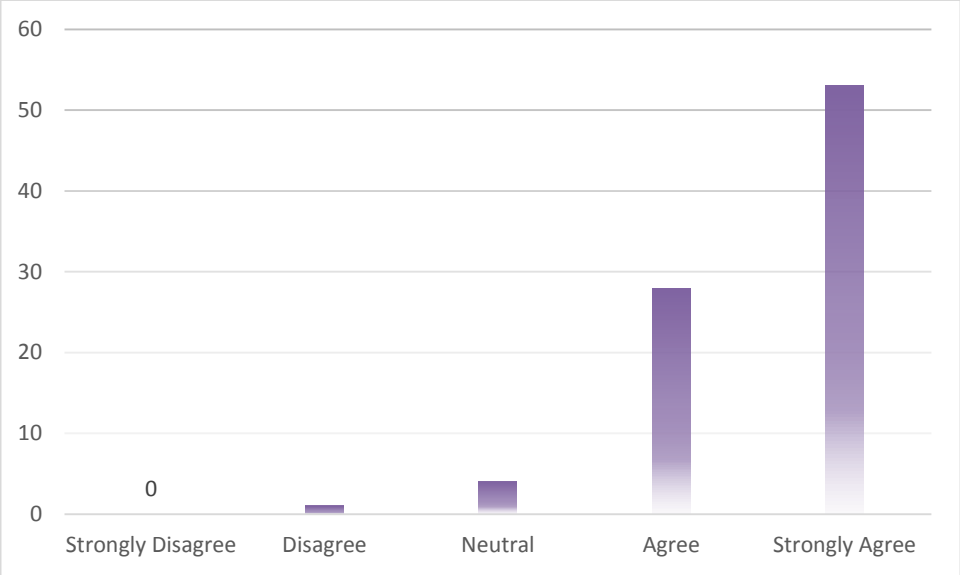


Figure 16: Rating of experiences as an MBA student N = 86

Students were also asked to rate their student life experience as an MBA student. As shown in Figure 16 above, students indicated that highly of their experience as an MBA student. No student felt strongly to disagree and only one (1) per cent seemed to disagree, with another five (5) per cent that remained neutral on their experience as being an MBA student. A 62% of the students appear strongly to approve on their experience as being an MBA student, with an extra 33% agreeing further.

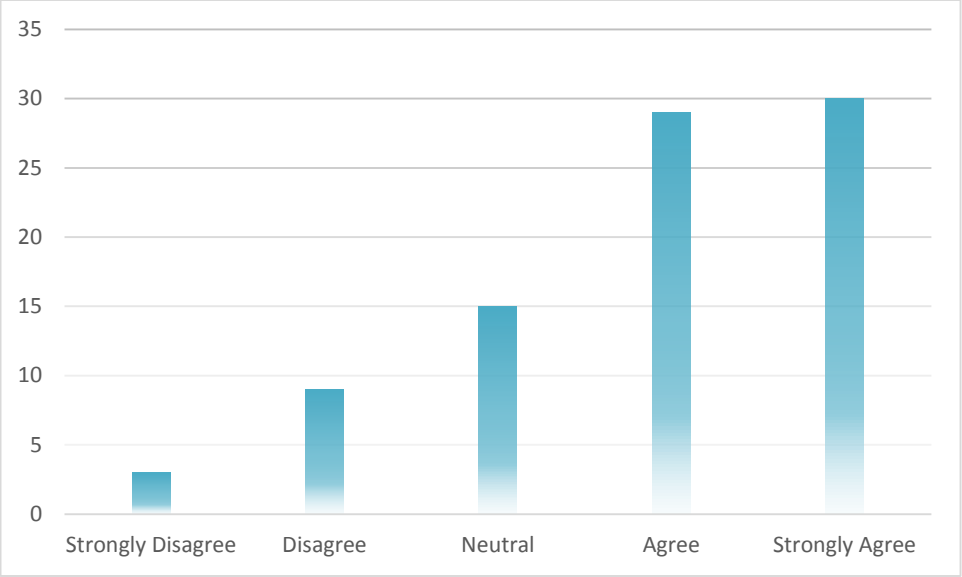


Figure 17: Rating of getting a better pay

N = 86

Students were asked to what extent they agree that the possibility of going to get a better pay is one of the reasons for doing their Master's degree. As depicted in Figure 17 above, a 35% of the students strongly indicated that going to receive an improved income is one of their aims of enrolling for a Master's programme, with a further 34% agreeing to be the motive. However, 17% of the students appear to be disinterested in receiving a better pay after their Master's programme as a motivation. An 11% and 4% appear to disagree and strongly disagree, respectively, on getting a better pay as being the motive for an MBA qualification.

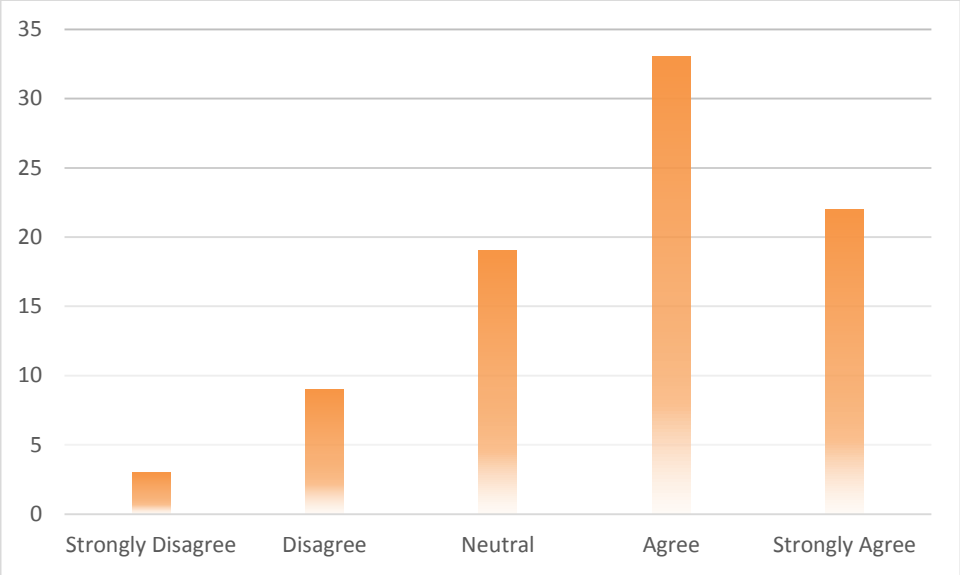


Figure 18: Rating of getting promoted N = 86

Furthermore, students were asked to what extent they approve that the possibility of going to get a promotion at work is one of the reasons for doing their Master's programme. It appears that the possibility of going to get a promotion at work is one of the reasons some of the students are registered for a Master's programme. Figure 18 above reveals that, a 38% of the students agree to be motived by a promotion at work as a reason for doing a Master's programme, with an additional 26% sturdily agreeing to the aim. Other students, 22% tend to be impartial on the likability of a promotion at work after completion of the Master's programme. An 11% of the students do not seem to agree with the likelihood of a promotion at work as a motive for completing a Master's programme, with an addition of 4% who strongly disagree on that being the motive.

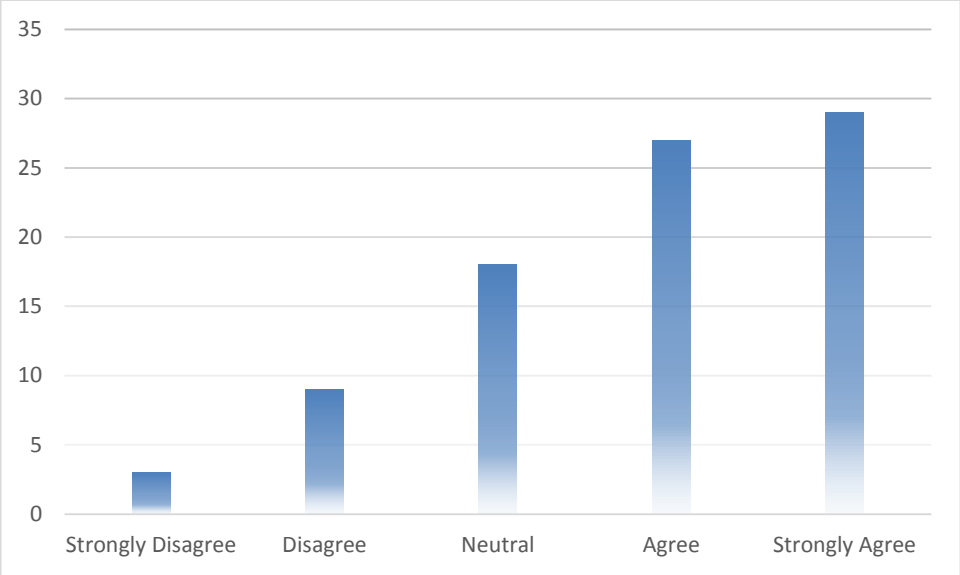
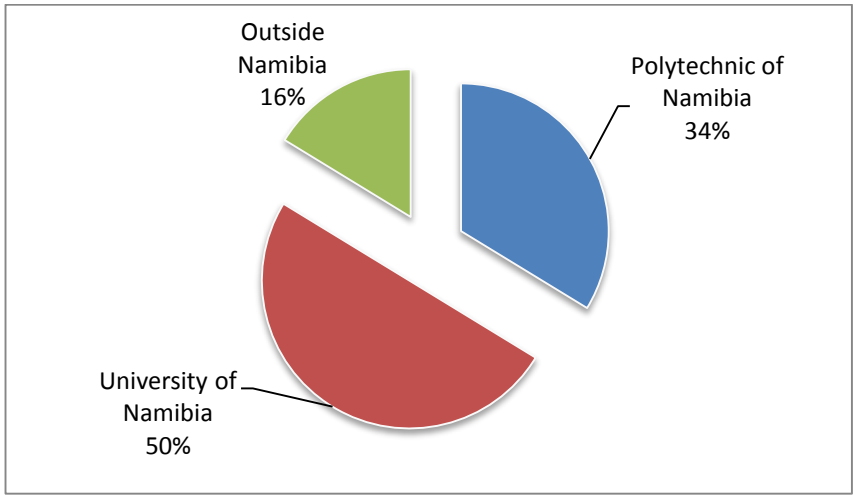


Figure 19: Rating of a change of career path N = 86

The students were asked to what extent they agree that enrolling for graduate business education helps them change career path – this motive appears to be of reverence among the students. As displayed in Figure 19 above, 34% of the students indicate to strongly confirm that graduate business education will help them change their career path, with a further 31% agreeing to the likable target. A 4% strongly disagreed with the ambition, with an 11% disagreeing further. Some students, 21% stayed neutral on the standpoint.

4.2.4 Institutional infrastructure

The purpose of this section on the survey was to establish the student's view on the importance of various aspects when it comes to an institution's infrastructure.



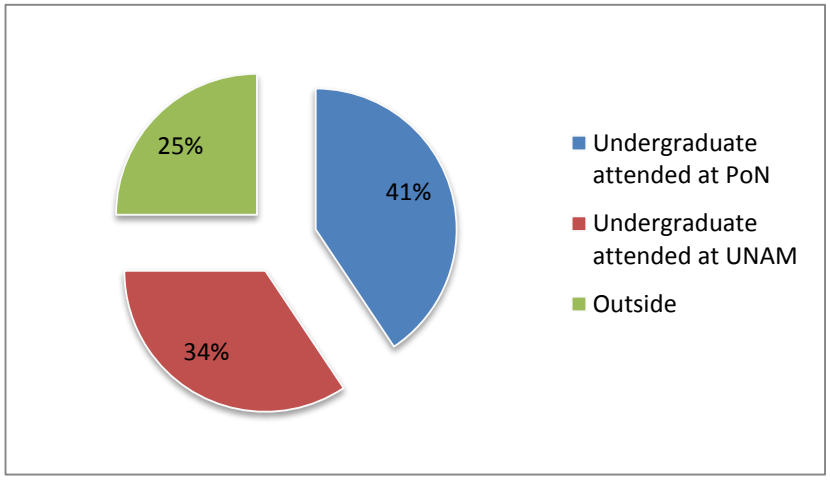
N = 86

Figure 20: Student's undergraduate education attended

Students were asked at which institution of higher education they attended their undergraduate schooling. As shown in Figure 20 above, over 80% of the students have attended their undergraduate education in Namibia, that is, either from the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN) or the University of Namibia (UNAM). None of the students enrolled at HP-GSB or NBS have attended their undergraduate education from the International University of Management (IUM), in Namibia. Precisely 50% of the students surveyed attended their undergraduate education at UNAM, regardless at which business school they registered for their Master's programme. The other half consisted of 34% students from PoN and the remaining 16% obtained their undergraduate qualification outside Namibia.

It would be of further precision to dissect the composition presented in Figure 20 above, into figures that expresses to the respective business schools in discussion, pertaining to the respondent's undergraduate education attended.

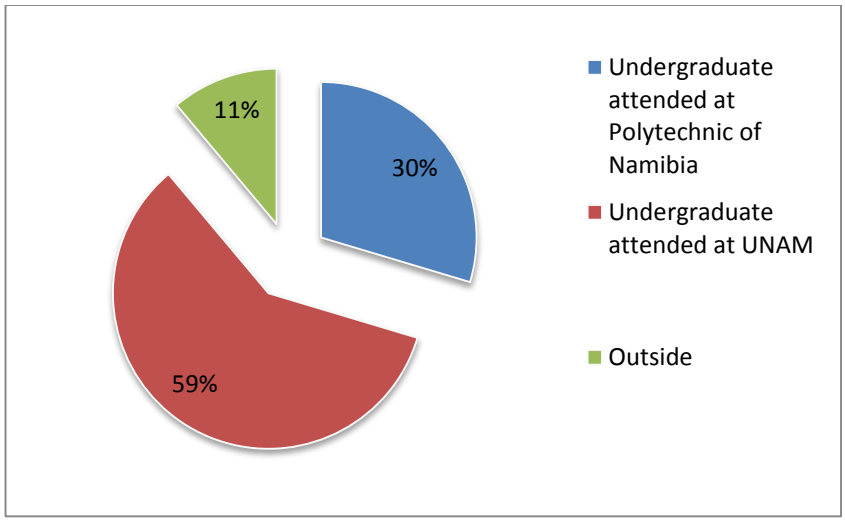
As displayed in Figure 21 below, majority of the HP-GSB students surveyed appear to have received their undergraduate education from the Polytechnic of Namibia. That is, 41% of the students enrolled at HP-GSB have attended their undergraduate schooling at PoN, whilst 34% schooled at UNAM, with the remaining 25% attending undergraduate education outside the country.



N = 86

Figure 21: HP-GSB student's undergraduate education attended

A similar pattern is observable from the students registered at Namibia Business School. As Figure 22 below presents, 59% of students registered for the Master's programme at NBS have completed their undergraduate schooling at UNAM. Only 30% of the surveyed students at NBS hail as scholars from the Polytechnic of Namibia, with the remainder of 11% having done their undergraduate education abroad.



N = 86

Figure 22: NBS student's undergraduate education attended

In the following presentations, students were asked to indicate how each factor in discussion is important in their decision to pursue graduate business education in Namibia.

Students were asked to indicate the level of importance course modules are to them. It looks as if, as presented in Figure 23 below, majority of the students find course modules of high importance in their decision making process towards pursuing graduate business education. Such that, a 65% of the respondent point out that course modules are very important to their decision making guidance, with a further 29% seeing them as important. This indication in excess of 80% overshadows those that have indicated course modules to be of moderate importance, that are only 4.7% and a 1.2% seeing it unimportant. No respondent felt course modules were of little importance.

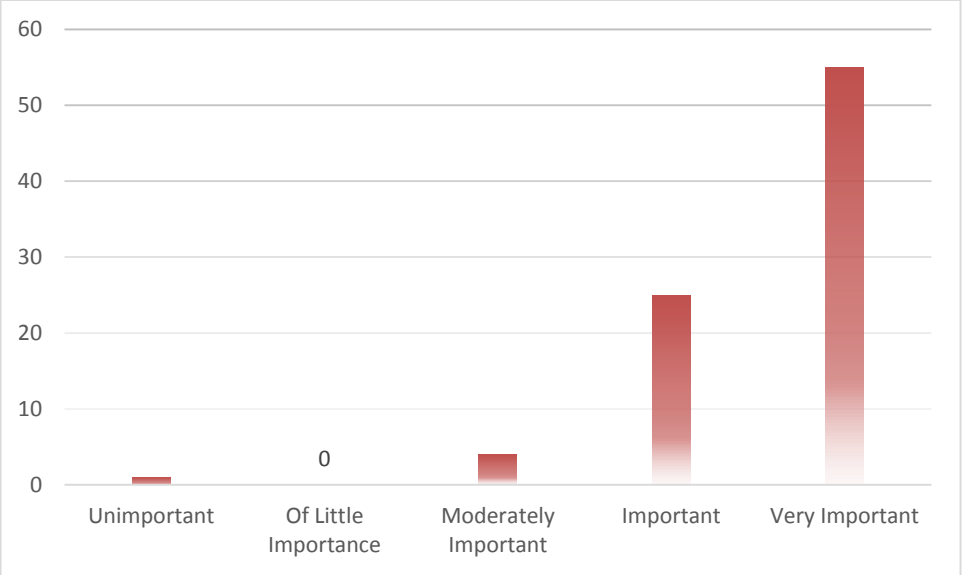


Figure 23: Rating for importance of course modules N = 85

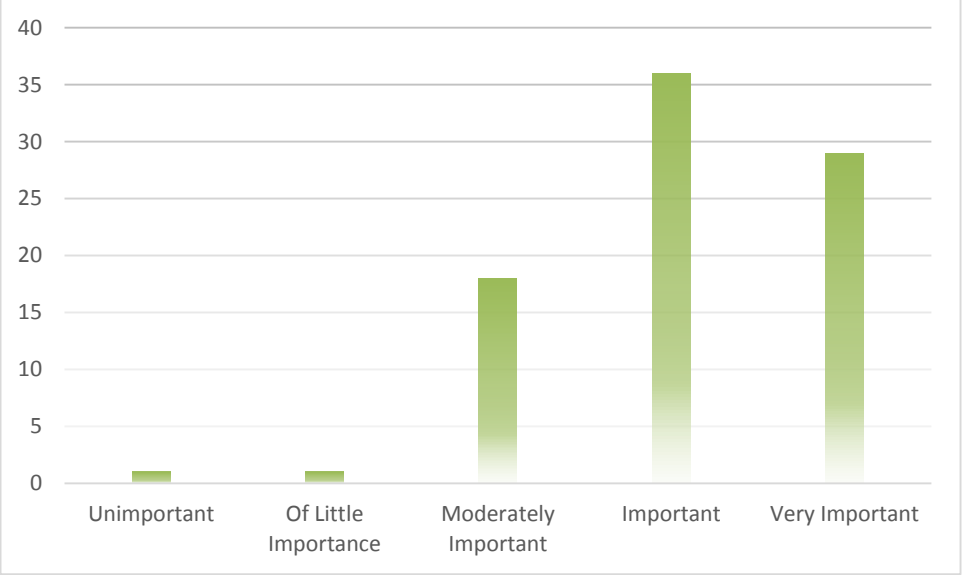


Figure 24: Rating for importance of a university prestige N = 85

The students were asked how important the prestige of the university they are attending is to them. Although only 34% of the students, as illustrated in Figure 24 above, indicated that a university's prestige is very important to their decision making, 42% did

indicate that it is important to them, with a further 21% indicating it to be moderately important. A 1.2% of the students consider it unimportant and also 1.2% of the students deem it of little importance to them.

The availability of car parking bays at a business school does not seem to be an essential aspect when students decide to pursue graduate business schooling. In Figure 25 below, a 19% of the students consider car parking bays as unimportant in their decision making process, with a further 17% indicating it being of little importance to them. In addition, majority of the students in this question, that is 29%, pointed out it to be of moderate importance. A 14% found it very important, with an additional 21% finding it important.

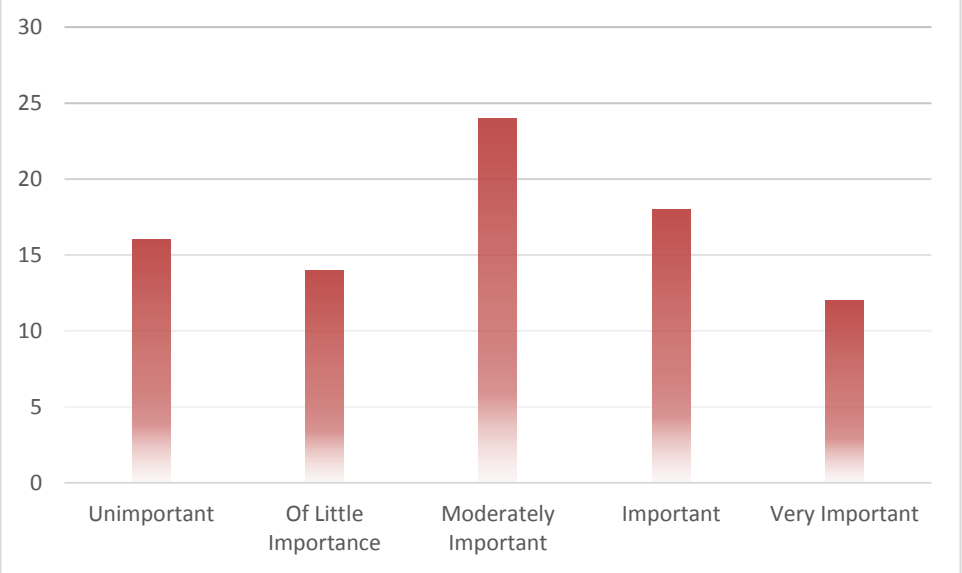


Figure 25: Rating for the importance of parking bays N = 84

Classroom facilities in the study look as if they were of importance to student's desire when deciding to undertake graduate business education. As displayed in Figure 26 below, 38% students consider classroom facilities as very important, while 31% see it important – with a further 20% perceiving it to be moderately important. However, there are students that perceive little importance and no importance in the state of classroom facilities, consisting of 6%, respectively.

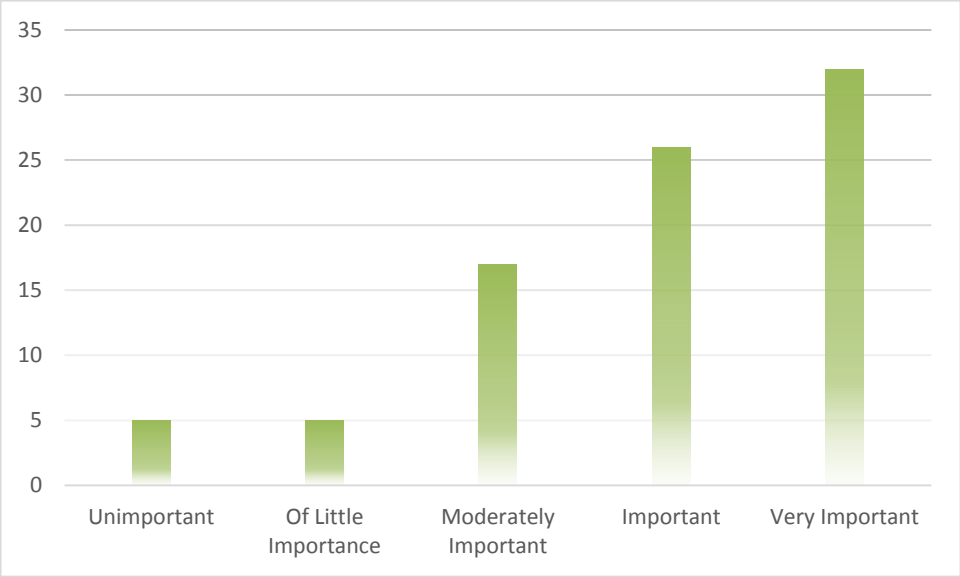


Figure 26: Rating for the importance of classroom facilities

N = 85

Students were asked to indicate how significant lecturing personnel are to them. As demonstrated in Figure 27 below, over 90% of the students consider knowledgeable lecturing personnel important. That is, 68% consider them as very important and a further 25% consider them as important. A 5% of the students gave the impression that lecturing staff are of moderate importance, with an additional 2% indicating them not important. No students specified lecturing personnel to be of little importance.

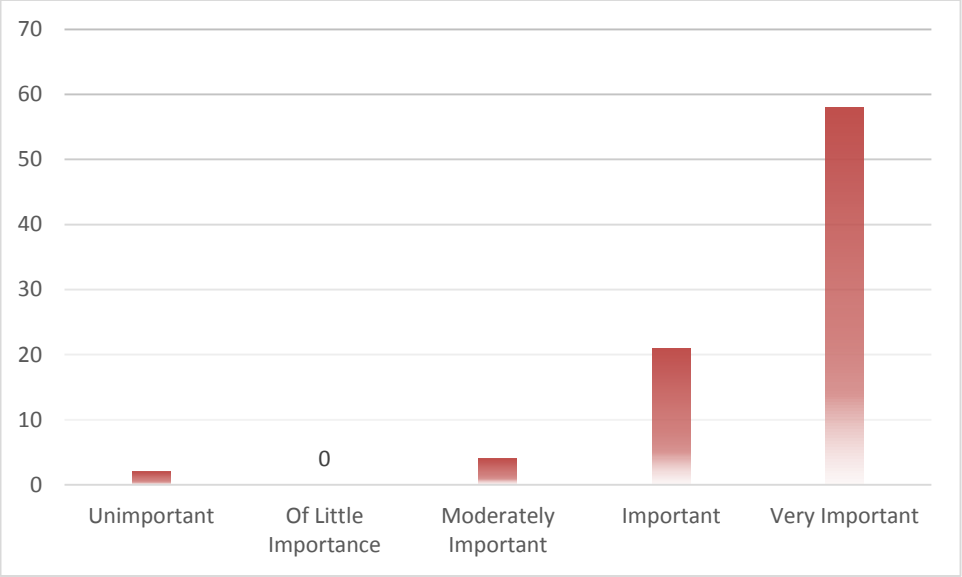


Figure 27: Rating for importance of the lecturing personnel N = 85

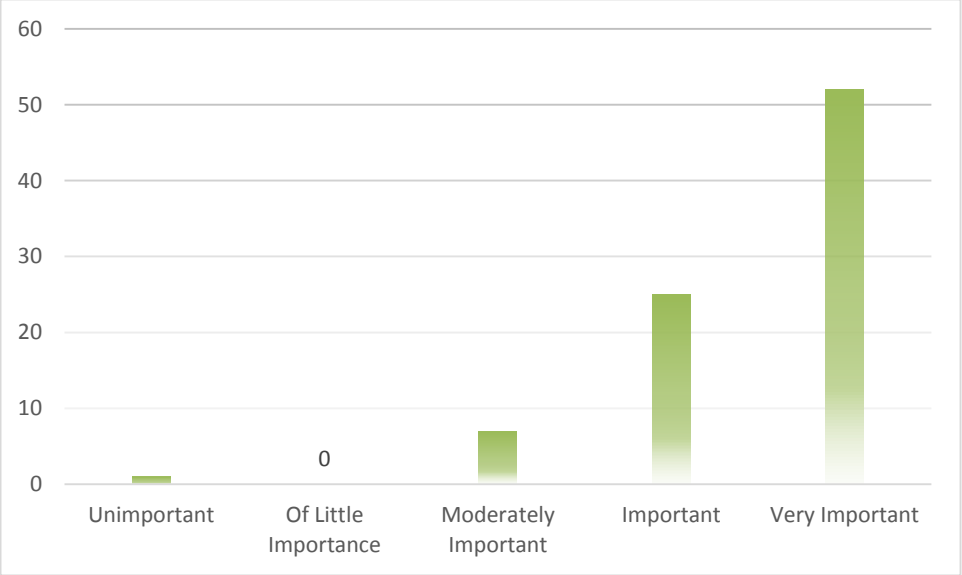
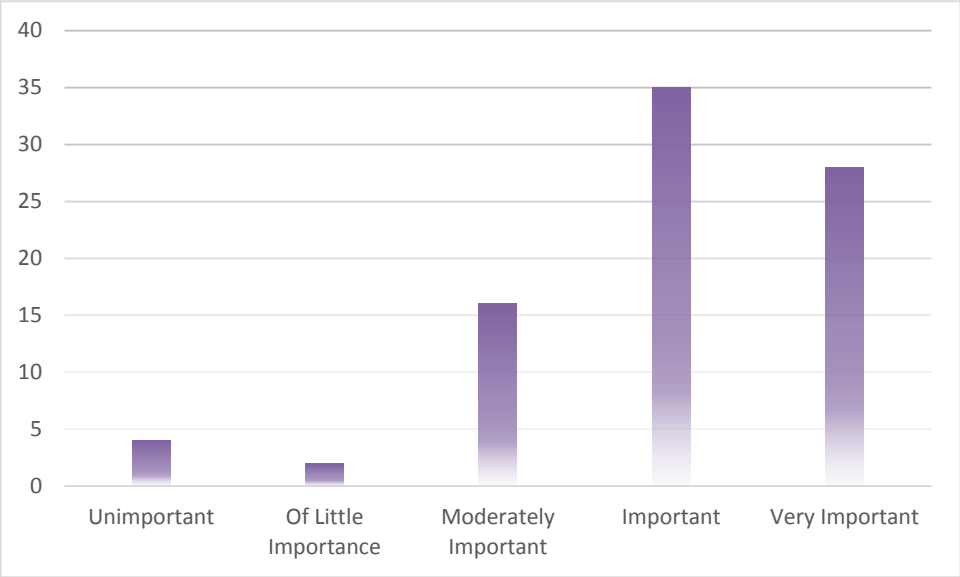


Figure 28: Rating for importance of the mode of delivery N = 85

Students were also asked to indicate how important the mode of delivery of the programme on offer is to them. As depicted in Figure 28 above, over 80% students gave the

impression that the way a programme is delivered is very important to them. That is, 61% of the students specify that a mode of delivery is very important to their motive to enrol at a graduate business school, with a further 29% considering it important. An 8% of the students regard it as of modest importance and an added one (1) per cent regarding it as unimportant. No student looked a mode of delivery as of little importance.



N = 85

Figure 29: Rating for importance of location of the graduate business school

The location of graduate business school appears to be an essential factor to ones decision to enrol for graduate business schooling. Figure 29 above shows that, 33% of the students find the location of the graduate business school very important and by means of an additional 41% seeing it important. An 18% of the students perceive it to be moderately important. A 2% and 5% of the students consider the location to be of little importance and unimportant, respectively.

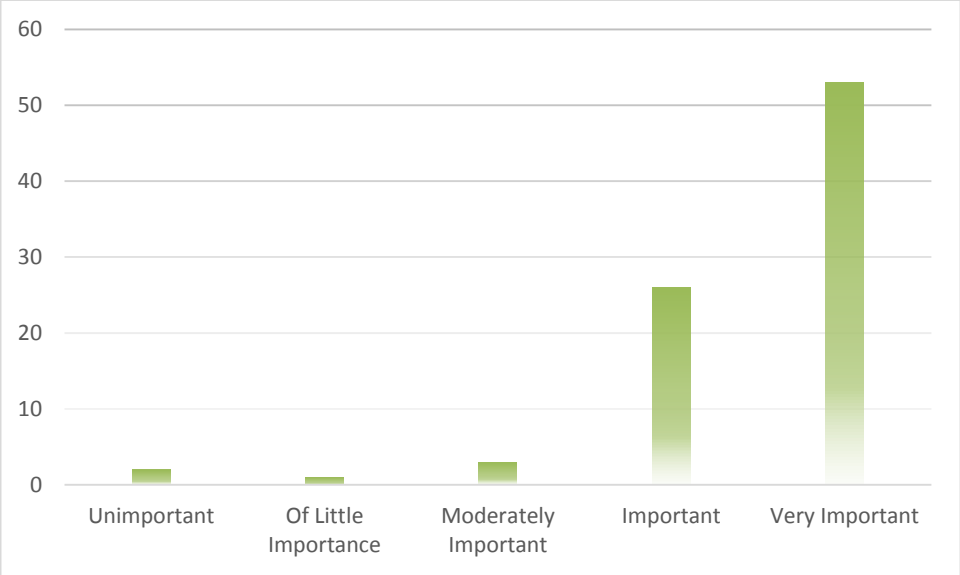


Figure 30: Rating for importance of reputation of a graduate school of business

Students were asked how important the reputation of the graduate business school they enrol at is to them. A positive reputation of a graduate school of business is considered of great importance among the students. As depicted in Figure 30 above, a 90% of the students indicated that a business school's reputation is important. That is, 62% perceive a business school's reputation very important, with an addition of 31% considering it important. Only 4% identify reputation to be moderately important. A one (1) per cent and 2% indicate that it is of little importance and unimportant to them, respectively.

4.3 DISCUSSION

4.3.1 Demographic characteristics of students

It was important to analyse the background characteristics of the different students of the study; that is, students at the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business (HP-GSB) and students at the Namibia Business School (NBS). Their characteristics have a slight effect on the study's findings relating to the research questions.

A study by Stoeker (1991), reveals that the relative importance of some factors will differ for younger and older students due to the effects of life stage development, particularly as they relate to marriage, family and work considerations. The researcher included the gender of the students in order to establish the composition of sexes pursuing graduate business education in general and to be specific from the two (2) respective institutions of higher education. Overall, males constituted fifty-two (52) per cent of the students surveyed and forty-eight (48) per cent females. In the study, the HP-GSB has a gender composition of 44% females and 56% males, whilst the NBS has an equal gender representation of 50% male and female students.

The age of the students was also analysed. The findings revealed that majority of the students at the two institutions of higher education were between the age categories of 35 – 44 and 25 – 34 years, that is 44% and 41%, respectively. In one of the study's findings, one of the reasons that students decide to return to pursue graduate business school is to remain competitive in their profession. This motivation could explain the high representation of these age categories. Besides, according to the 2011 Namibia Population

and Housing Census, these age groups are considered to be actively looking for work or are currently employed. Consequently, it would be these age groups that would have interest in an MBA programme as well.

Student's nationalities were also established. Seventy nine students or 92% of the students at both institutions of higher education are from Namibia. Excluding Namibia, students from the SADC region represent five per cent (5%), which is 2 and 1 student from Zimbabwe and Zambia, respectively. Amongst the students surveyed, Nigeria and Congo were both represented by one (1) student each. There was no student representation from outside the African continent.

The study also revealed the region in Namibia in which the students are currently residing. More than half of the students reside in the Khomas region, having a regional representation of 65% of the students surveyed. The second highest regional representation is being from Otjozondjupa region, at nine per cent (9%). The Erongo and Ohangwena regions are being embodied by a five per cent (5%) regional representation. Oshana and //Karas region are represented by a four per cent (4%) and three per cent (3%), respectively. Regions with the lowest representation of students in the survey are from Kavango East, Oshikoto and Zambezi at two per cent 2% all, as well as the Hardap, Omaheke and Omusati regions at one per cent (1%) each. There was no regional representation of students from the Kavango West and Kunene regions.

The high student representation from the Khomas region can be attributed to the circumstance that both Business Schools are located in the Khomas region. This could also owe to the fact that Khomas region hosts the country's capital city, Windhoek where

especially majority of the students are already residing for various other reasons. Besides, according to the 2011 Namibia Population and Housing Census, the most populated region is the Khomas region.

4.3.2 Financial aspects

This section of the survey referred to the student's financing characteristics of their postgraduate education. Some set of influences on the decision to attend graduate school are elements extrinsic to the student. Perhaps the paramount extrinsic issue is related to cost and the receiving of financial support. This finding was as well revealed in a study by both Gropper and Fitzpatrick (1959), as cited in Ethington and Smart (1986), that cost concern is a critical factor for students to consider before pursuing graduate education. All students, however, must finance their education either through loans, spouse/parental support, or employment and it is this global cost factor that influences the decision to attend (Stoeker, 1991).

The study reveals that over half of the students compared fees of the business schools, before they applied for admission at their institution of preference. The study also discloses that, students are of the view that course fees in Namibia are affordable compared to Business Schools outside the country. Over half of the students self-funded their graduate business education. Of further interest is the fact that of the self-funded students, majority funded their studies with savings, followed by means of monthly instalments plans and lastly by way of a loan.

In addition, the study reveals that, students agree with the payment option(s) offered to settle their accounts as being reasonable. This outcome is expected because; 41% of the

students have their graduate education financed for by sponsorship. Secondly, students that are self-funded paid their accounts from savings. This could lead to one being content with whatever payment option is available.

The study further reveals that students believe that attending graduate business education in Namibia is reasonably priced compared to going abroad. This is also evidently from the high number of Namibian students enrolled at the two institutions, in relation to the low number of international students on the MBA courses. As stated earlier, over half of the students indicated that they have done a fees comparison analysis of business school, before they seek admission.

The study revealed that, students indicated that money spent on their graduate business education is money well spent. The high confidence in the indication that money spent on ones graduate education programme is money well spent may owe its importance to point that students that enrol for a MBA programme already have set aside savings that are dedicated to financing their graduate business education. This demonstrates the level of priority graduate business education holds with the students.

4.3.3 Opportunity for career advancement

This section of the surveyed discusses the activities that promote growth and expansion in one's career.

Generally, it is assumed that majority of MBA students are working people. For instance, in Asia, more specifically in Hong Kong (Beck & Williams, 1989), found out that student’s prime motivation to pursue an MBA degree was to acquire knowledge and the

second reason was career advancement. This presumption is also perceived in this study, as over 80% of the students are currently employed, with only 5% being full-time students during their MBA programme.

The study reveals that students believe that attending graduate business education helps them remain competitive in their profession. This popular perspective can be connected to the point that 84% of the students are already employed professionals. Therefore, it would make sense that the collective outcome on remaining competitive in one's profession is widely held. The study further reveals that, students have a positive experience during their MBA studies. These findings are consistent with a study by Malaney (1987), who cites the following as common reasons why students pursue graduate education: the desire to learn more about a specialty, personal satisfaction, improved job prospects and needing an advanced degree for advancement within a chosen field. Similar findings are also described in a study by Gagnon and Cocolas (1988).

In addition, the study reveals that one of the reasons for students doing their Master's programme is the possibility of going to get a better pay, and going to get a promotion at work. Similar results were reflected by Luker, Bowers, & Powers (1989) in a study in America where the following five reasons for pursuing MBA education were cited: attaining career objectives, getting a promotion, remaining competitive, getting better pay and having personal satisfaction. Students in the study also revealed that one of the reasons why they enrol for graduate business education is to help them to change career paths.

4.3.4 Institutional infrastructure

This section of the survey referred to the arrangement of infrastructure set-up at the respective institution of higher education in the study.

The study reveals that, over 80% of the students have attended their undergraduate education in Namibia. That is, either from the Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN) or the University of Namibia (UNAM). None of the students enrolled at HP-GSB or NBS have attended their undergraduate education from the International University of Management (IUM).

The study also reveals that, 50% of the students surveyed attended their undergraduate education at UNAM, irrespective at which business school they registered for their postgraduate education. The other half consisted of 34% students from PoN and the remaining 16% obtained their undergraduate qualification outside Namibia. This results show that every second person enrolled at the two respective institutions of higher education is a graduate from UNAM.

In addition, the study revealed that majority of the HP-GSB students surveyed had completed their undergraduate education from the Polytechnic of Namibia. A similar trend is observable from the students registered at NBS. That is, over half of the students registered for the Master's programme at NBS have completed their undergraduate education at UNAM. As a result, these findings indicate that an undergraduate student is likely to pursue postgraduate education at an institution of higher education from where they have done their undergraduate schooling. Nonetheless, as revealed in the study, it might not

always be the case, as some have completed their undergraduate schooling from outside the country.

In the following discussions, students were asked to indicate to what extent each factor is important in their decision making to pursue graduate business education in Namibia.

There are numerous universities in various countries offering the MBA programme. The choice among these universities is a difficult decision. In a study by Ethington and Smart (1986), they argued that there are a multitude of factors to be considered including the prestige of the university (locally and internationally), the reputation of the business school, the various learning modes provided, how recognized the school is, research and publications, the flexibility of the programme and the costs involved.

This study reveals that majority of the students perceive course content to be of high importance in their decision making process towards pursuing graduate business education. This is evident from that, a 65% of the respondents point out that course modules are very important to their decision making guidance. Furthermore, not only is the course content of high importance, the study further reveals that the mode of delivery of the course is also very important to the student's motive to enrol at a certain graduate school of business.

The study reveals that parking bays at the premises of a graduate school of business are not very important to them. This is possibly the case since when applying for graduate school, whether the school has parking space or not, that would not influence the end result of knowledgeably obtaining ones Master's degree.

The study, however, reveals that students perceive classroom facilities important. In general, an MBA qualification is taken in high regard among peers and by employers. Therefore, it is justifiable when classroom facilities such as furniture, projectors, lighting and writing/notice boards are to be regarded important in one's decision to enrol at a certain graduate school of business or not. In addition, business schools mostly make a distinct mention of their exceptional facilities when publicising their MBA programmes to prospective students, showing the significance of outstanding facilities at a graduate school.

The study further reveals that, students perceive lecturing personnel very important. Informed and experienced lecturing personnel at a graduate school of business appear very important to students when deciding to join a business school. These findings are similar to the outcomes from a study by Malaney (1987), who cited obtaining a Master's programme as a need to advance ones knowledge within a chosen field. Therefore, it would be of meaning if this knowledge in the field is impacted by resourceful personnel. Experienced lecturing staffs underwrite to the reputation of an institution, as well as enhance the perception of quality of the offered MBA programme.

The study reveals that the location of a graduate business school is important. The location of a graduate business school could be important for various reasons to students. Namely, close proximity to the central business district for access to the heart of business sectors as well as for accommodation conveniences, as not all students currently reside region where the institutions of higher education are based. The location also has a link to flexibility of access to information centres or public library.

The study reveals that students perceive the reputation of a business graduate school very important. A confident standing of a business school tend to have a positive spin-off effect to aspects such as programme perceived quality, an apparent encouraging service offered by the school as well as a thought of resourceful lecturing staff component. Moreover, a reputable graduate school tend to accrue goodwill that can be leveraged in the business sector, from a student's perspective as well as from potential employer's standpoint. Reputable business schools also have a habit to attract motivated, ambitious, bright, unafraid of risk and willing to work hard student recruits.

Further to that, the study reveals that the prestige of the university with which a graduate school of business is associated, is very important. Traditionally, a graduate school of business is linked to a university or an institution of higher education and rather on rare occasions, a stand-alone institution. This is also the case with HP-GSB which is associated to the Polytechnic of Namibia, similarly to the NBS which is linked to the University of Namibia.

The majority of students at the respective business schools have attended undergraduate schooling at the separate universities at which the business schools are associated to. Thus, one would have developed a certain favourable inclination towards their former university. Given also that, one has obtained an undergraduate certification from the undergraduate university, which normally comes with an assured pedigree, they are considered to regard their undergraduate institution as of prestige and, even though not from the previous department or faculty, any other certification that might come from it in the future.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the study. Perhaps it would be suitable to begin where the study started; the purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that are influential in the process of making the decision to attend graduate business education.

A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the sampled students to get insight on the understanding of factors that influence them in the process of making a decision to attend graduate business education. The questionnaires were analysed independently. Also, the literature review provided a scope through which the study could be best understood. In this case, attention was paid to understand how financial costs influence student's decisions to opt for graduate business education, to what extent opportunity for career advancement is a factor to student's decision as well as determine to what level is student's choice of graduate business education influenced by institutional infrastructure. Lastly, a description and analysis of every finding was presented according to the order of the research questions.

5.2 Summary of major findings

Students in Namibia before they apply for admission at a graduate business school tend to look at certain factors prior making the final decision to enrol at particular institution of higher learning.

In the study, it was found that financial costs do influence student's decision to pursue graduate education in Namibia. For instance, students tend to get themselves informed of the financial implications at different graduate centres, before tendering applications for admission. It also emerged that, the opportunity to advance one's professional career is high motive to the reason why students attend graduate business education. Based on the findings of the study, an institution's infrastructure set-up contributes to a student's choice of which graduate business school to attend.

5.3 Discussion of findings

The overall objective of the study was to understand the factors that contribute to a student's decision to pursue graduate business education in Namibia. It appears that financial cost is one of the key aspects that implicate student's ultimate decisions. This is evident in the study as students happen to specifically set aside savings to finance their postgraduate schooling. Some students go to the extent of obtaining a loan to fund their MBA programme. Further findings indicate that students believe that graduate education in Namibia is reasonably priced compared to other business schools in Southern Africa. They also consider financial investment made on graduate business education is money well spent.

These findings are similar to the conclusions drawn from the literature that, all students must finance their education either through loans, spouse/parental support, sponsorship or employment and it is this global cost factor that influences the decision to attend graduate business education.

From the literature reviewed, student's prime motivation to pursue an MBA programme was job performance and the second most reason was career development. This conclusion also emerged as a major factor to student's decision to pursue an MBA programme in Namibia. From the study, students pointed out that enrolling for an MBA course helps them remain competitive in their profession. Furthermore, students reason that the possibility of going to get a better pay and or a promotion at work is why they enrol for a postgraduate programme. It was also found that students believe that enrolling for a graduate programme helps them change career paths with less difficulty.

These findings are consistent with a study by Malaney (1987), who cites the following as common reasons why students pursue graduate education: the desire to learn more about a specialty, personal satisfaction, improved job prospects and an advanced degree needed for advancement within a chosen field.

The set-up of an institution's infrastructure emerged as a factor that contributes to a student's decision to pursue an MBA programme at a graduate centre, although not as a major contributor. An aspect such as parking space for students did not appear very important to student's decision to enrol for graduate education. It was found, however, that course modules and lecture personnel are important to student's ambition to enrol at a graduate centre. Further findings show that classroom facilities and the mode of delivery

are very important to students. It also emerged from the study that students do consider the prestige of the university, with which a business school is associated to, as well as the reputation of the business school itself play an important role in a student's decision to pursue graduate education at that particular graduate school.

In the literature review, similar findings were observed in studies which examined the process by which students arrive in graduate school and revealed that, there are a multitude of factors, including the prestige of the university (locally and internationally), the reputation of the business school, the various learning modes provided, how recognized the school is, research and publications, the flexibility at the programme and the costs involved.

5.4 Conclusion

All in all, the results show that students do place relevance to particular factors that have potential to influence their decision to pursue graduate business education in Namibia. These factors surround the student's financial aspect on funding their graduate education. Above all, it also came out that students perceive the opportunity to advance their career as the most factor to influence their decision to attend graduate business education. Particularly, students reason as to remaining competitive in their profession, improve the possibility of going to get a better pay and or a promotion at work. The study's finding indicated that the set-up of an institution infrastructure has relevance to the student's choice of which graduate centre to seek admission. Students place special importance to course modules, classroom facilities, lecturing personnel, mode of delivery and the reputation of the business school.

Of the three factors, opportunity for career advancement, financial aspects and institutional infrastructure appear to have the greatest influence on student decisions, in that order.

5.5 Recommendations

a) The study revealed that majority of students on an MBA programme, at the HP-GSB and the NBS, completed their undergraduate education from the Polytechnic of Namibia and the University of Namibia, respectively. This implies that building relationship with present students, their relatives and especially the alumni is critical in attracting future students.

b) Most of the institutions of higher learning in Namibia are new in comparison to business schools in the Southern Africa, hence the strength of institutional infrastructure is an important consideration as a motivator for the students. Students also consider course modules important. To increase the recruit of more international students at a business school, emphasis should be placed on the suitability of such MBA programme modules globally, in terms of enhanced employability and improved competency at the workplace. Likewise with lecturing personnel; by way of profiling the business school's lecturing personnel, it elevates the perceived quality of the graduate school's MBA programme.

c) The need and desire of students to factor into their decisions the possibility of a promotion at work and the ability to change career paths is a key finding of this study. The most common institutional practice is to let students fend for themselves in solving the

dilemmas that can arise in this area. However, attention paid to assisting students in these aspects could pay dividends for graduate schools in future recruiting of particular individuals. For a variety of practical reasons, such services would probably have to be offered through or coordinated by a central administrative office located in the graduate school or alternatively outsource to a respectable human resource practitioner.

d) Finally, financing emerged as an important factor influencing the student's choice to pursue an MBA programme. The importance of the financial aspect suggests that greater investments, in any or all aspects of offering assistance to obtain funding to pursue postgraduate education, might improve a business school's ability to recruit students, locally and internationally.

5.6 Directions for future research

The research could be furthered on the following areas. One area in particular that merits further study is the effect of the mode of delivery and location of the business schools on decisions. It is also important that future studies be based on larger samples of students drawn from a broad range of programmes and institutions of higher education.

The current study was conducted in Namibia; other studies could be conducted on a comparative study in the SADC region that is on a country to country basis or between institutions of higher education from different Southern African countries. Many institutions of higher education are moving on to telematics block sessions and live streaming of class sessions, which could have different motivators for the students who might consider enrolling for a graduate education course. Studies could be conducted in that area also, as this could be beneficial to the students as well as institutions.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

Topic: An investigation into factors influencing student decision to pursue graduate business education in Namibia

Dear Mr/Ms,

Thank you in advance for taking your time to partake in this survey.

I am Simon Namesho, a student at Namibia Business School (NBS) at the University of Namibia (UNAM). I am pursuing a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) with a speciality in Management Strategy. This survey is being conducted to write a thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master`s degree. Please be cognizant that your participation in the survey is voluntary.

This survey will take you less than 10 minutes to complete.

No personal identification is required in this survey. Please be assured that your response will be held anonymous. The results will be used for research purposes and only be published as well as presented in aggregate. This questionnaire consists of four (4) sections. Your accurate and specific response is important to the success of this survey.

Thank you.

I am attending my MBA at:

Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business	
Namibia Business School	

Please answer the following questions by X crossing the relevant Block or writing down your answer in the space provided.

Section A – Background information

This section of the questionnaire refers to background or demographic information. Although I am aware of the sensitivity of the questions in this section may be, the information will allow the researcher to compare groups of respondents. Once again I assure you that your response will remain anonymous.

1. Please indicate your gender:

Female	
Male	

2. Please select the age group to which you belong:

Under 25	
25 – 34	
35 – 44	
45 – 55	
Over 55	

3. Please indicate your home language: _____

4. Please select the region you **currently** reside in:

Erongo		Ohangwena	
Hardap		Omaheke	
!Karas		Omusati	
Kavango East		Oshana	
Kavango West		Oshikoto	
Khomas		Otjozondjupa	
Kunene		Zambezi	

5. Please indicate your nationality:_____

6. What is your current sector/industry of employment/enterprising?

a) Administration	
b) Agriculture	
c) Banking	
d) Education	
e) Finance	
f) Health	
g) Information & Communication Technology (ICT)	
h) Mining	
i) Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)	
j) Police/Defence Force Services	
k) Tourism	
l) Other:_____*(specify)*	

7. Please select the monthly income group to which you belong:

{N$}

Less than 5 000	
5 000 – 9 999	
10 000 – 14 999	
15 000 – 19 999	
20 000 – 24 999	
25 000 – 29 999	
30 000 – 34 999	
35 000 – 39 999	
40 000+	

8. Please indicate your first degree obtained :_____

Section B – Financial Aspects

This section of the questionnaire refers to the financial aspects pertaining to your postgraduate education.

9. How are you financing your graduate business education?

a) Self-funded	
b) Sponsored	
c) Partially-sponsored, partially self-funded	
d) Other:_____ *(specify)*	

10. If your response to *Q. 9* above is *(a) Self-funded*, is it by means of?

a) Savings	
b) Loan	
c) Monthly instalment	
d) Other:_____ *(specify)*	

11. Did you do a fees comparison analysis of Business Schools, before enrolment?

Yes [ ] **No** [ ]

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:

1. = Strongly Disagree
2. = Disagree
3. = Neutral
4. = Agree
5. = Strongly Agree

{Choose One}

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. Payment option(s) offered to settle my account are reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Attending graduate business education in Namibia is reasonably priced compared to going outside.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Money spent on my graduate business education is money well spent.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Course fees in Namibia are affordable compared to other Business Schools outside the country.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C – Opportunity for Career Advancement

This section of the questionnaire refers to the activities that promote growth and expansion in one's career.

16. Are you currently *(select only one)*:

a) Full-time Employed	
b) Full-time Self-Employed	
c) Employed & Part-time Self-Employed	
d) Full-time Student *(not working at the moment)*	
e) Other:_____*(specify)*	

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:

1. = Strongly Disagree

2. = Disagree
3. = Neutral
4. = Agree
5. = Strongly Agree

{Choose One}

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
17. Attending graduate business education helps me remain competitive in my profession.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I derive personal satisfaction from joining a Master's degree qualification.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The possibility of going to get a better pay is one of the reasons for doing my Master's degree.	1	2	3	4	5
20. The possibility of going to get a promotion at work is one of the reasons for doing my Master's degree.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Enrolling for graduate business education helps me change career path.	1	2	3	4	5

Section D – Institutional Infrastructure

This section of the questionnaire refers to the set-up of arrangements at your respective institution.

22. Where did you attend your undergraduate education level?

a) International University of Management (IUM)	
b) Polytechnic of Namibia (PoN)	
c) University of Namibia (UNAM)	
d) Outside Namibia	

For the following questions, please indicate how important each of the following factors is in your decision to pursue graduate business education in Namibia:

Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:

1. = Unimportant
2. = Of Little Importance
3. = Moderately Important
4. = Important
5. = Very Important

{Choose One}

	Unimportant	Of Little Importance	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
23. Course Modules	1	2	3	4	5
24. Prestige of the University	1	2	3	4	5
25. Parking Bays	1	2	3	4	5
26. Classroom Facilities	1	2	3	4	5
27. Lecturing Personnel	1	2	3	4	5
28. Mode of Delivery of the Course	1	2	3	4	5
29. Location of the Graduate Business School	1	2	3	4	5
30. Reputation of the Graduate Business School	1	2	3	4	5

31. Among these three (3) factors; *financial cost, opportunity for career advancement and institutional infrastructure*, please rank in order of importance to you from 1 to 3:

Institutional Infrastructure	

Financial Cost	
Opportunity for Career Advancement	

32. Apart from these three (3) factors; *financial cost, opportunity for career advancement and institutional infrastructure,* what other factors influenced your decision to pursue graduate business education in Namibia? Rank in order of importance.

i. _____
ii. _____
iii. _____

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey.