



## Information-Seeking Behavior Of Students In Choosing Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu

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**Abstract.** Bengkulu as their university of choice. The problem addressed in this research is how students search for and utilize information before deciding to enroll in a particular university. The aim of this study is to understand the process, sources, and utilization of information used by students when selecting Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving six new students from different study programs. The data were analyzed descriptively to identify patterns of information needs, information search, and information use. The results show that students experience uncertainty when choosing a university, which encourages them to seek information about campus facilities, tuition fees, study programs, student activities, and career prospects. Students obtain information from both informal sources such as family, friends, and alumni, and formal sources such as social media and official university promotional media. The information is compared across sources before being used as the basis for decision-making. In conclusion, information-seeking behavior helps students reduce uncertainty and strengthen their confidence in selecting Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu as their university.

**Keywords:** *Information-Seeking Behavior, Students, Decision-Making, Higher Education, Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu.*

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a strategic role in developing qualified human resources who are capable of adapting to social, economic, and technological changes. Universities function not only as institutions for knowledge development but also as places where individuals develop critical thinking skills, professional competence, and social responsibility. Through higher education, students are expected to gain academic knowledge, practical skills, and personal development that will support their future careers. Therefore, choosing a university becomes an important decision for prospective students because it can influence their academic journey as well as their long-term career prospects (Abdurrahman et al., 2023). The decision to choose a university is not a simple process. Prospective students must consider many factors before deciding where to pursue their higher education. Academic quality, available study programs, tuition fees, campus facilities, institutional reputation, and career opportunities after graduation are among the main aspects that students usually evaluate. In addition, personal interests, family support, and social environment also influence students' decisions in selecting a university (Perna, 2006). Because of these considerations, students often require various types of information to ensure that their chosen institution matches their academic goals and personal expectations.

In the digital era, the development of information technology has significantly changed the way people search for and obtain information. The availability of internet access, social media platforms, and digital communication tools has made information easier to access and distribute. Students increasingly rely on online sources such as university websites, social media accounts, digital brochures, and online forums to obtain information related to higher education institutions (Nurfadillah & Ardiansah, 2021). These technological developments have expanded students' opportunities to explore different universities and compare available options before making a final decision.

In addition to digital media, interpersonal communication also plays an important role in the information search process. Information obtained from friends, family members, teachers, and alumni often provides more practical and personal insights about campus life and academic experiences. Such sources are frequently considered more trustworthy because they are based on real experiences rather than promotional materials. Consequently, students usually combine information obtained from both formal and informal sources in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the universities they are considering. The increasing competition among higher education institutions, particularly private universities, has also influenced how information is distributed and accessed. Universities actively promote their programs and facilities through various communication channels to attract prospective students. As a result, students are exposed to a large amount of information about different universities, which requires them to evaluate the credibility and relevance of the information they receive (Hermawan et al., 2023). This situation encourages students to become more selective and critical when searching for information related to higher education.

In the regional context, Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu (UNIVED) is one of the private universities that plays an important role in providing access to higher education for the community in Bengkulu Province and surrounding areas. The university offers various study programs in different academic fields and continues to develop its academic facilities and learning environment. Information about Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu is disseminated through multiple channels, including official websites, social media platforms, promotional materials, educational events, and recommendations from alumni or current students (Sakila & Purwaningtyas, 2024).

Despite the availability of various information sources, students may still experience uncertainty when selecting a university. The large amount of available information can sometimes create confusion or difficulty in determining which information is most relevant or reliable. As a result, students need to actively search, evaluate, and interpret information in order to make informed decisions about their educational choices. From a theoretical perspective, the process of searching for information can be explained through the concept of information-seeking behavior. Information-seeking behavior refers to the activities individuals perform to identify, search for, evaluate, and use information in order to satisfy their information needs (Case & Given, 2016). One of the most widely used frameworks to explain this behavior is the Information-Seeking Behavior theory proposed by Wilson (1981). According to this theory, individuals begin searching for information when they experience a gap between the knowledge they possess and the information they need. The process generally involves several stages, including recognizing the need for information, searching for information from different sources, and using the information obtained to support decision-making.

In the context of higher education selection, students may experience information needs related to study programs, campus facilities, tuition fees, academic environment, and career prospects. These needs encourage them to search for information through various channels such as digital media, interpersonal communication, and institutional publications. The information collected is then evaluated and compared before being used to make a final decision regarding the choice of university.

Although many studies have examined university selection and educational decision-making, research specifically focusing on students' information-seeking behavior in choosing Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu remains limited. Most previous studies focus on institutional promotion strategies or general factors influencing university choice rather than exploring the perspective of students as active information seekers. Therefore, examining how students search for and utilize information before selecting Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu can provide valuable insights into the decision-making process of prospective students.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the information-seeking behavior of students regarding Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu as their university of choice. The study focuses on understanding how students identify their information needs, what sources of information they use, and how they utilize the information obtained in making decisions about their higher education. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a better understanding of student information behavior and provide useful insights for universities in improving their communication strategies and information services for prospective students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of Literature Review**

A literature review is an essential component of academic research because it provides the theoretical foundation for a study. The main purpose of a literature review is to examine previous studies related to a specific research topic in order to understand the development of knowledge in that field. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), a literature review is an activity of "looking again" at what other researchers have done concerning a particular issue. By reviewing previous studies, researchers can identify research trends, theoretical frameworks, and findings that are relevant to the current study. Furthermore, a literature review serves as a background for research and provides justification for conducting a new study. Perry et al. (2003) explain that a literature review helps researchers develop research objectives and hypotheses by examining existing theories and empirical findings. In this way, the literature review connects previous knowledge with the new research being conducted.

### **The Importance of Literature Review in Research**

A literature review is not simply a summary of previous research findings. Instead, it requires researchers to critically analyze, reorganize, and synthesize the ideas of other scholars. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that researchers must evaluate existing studies in order to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and contributions. Through this process, researchers can identify similarities, differences, and gaps in the literature. In academic writing, a literature review also demonstrates the researcher's understanding of the research topic. It shows that the researcher has examined relevant theories and previous studies before conducting the research. As a result, the literature review helps position the current study within the broader context of existing knowledge.

### **Critical Evaluation of Previous Research**

One important aspect of a literature review is critical evaluation. Researchers should not simply accept previous findings without questioning them. Academic research requires critical inquiry, which means that researchers must analyze the arguments, methods, and conclusions presented in previous studies. Critical evaluation involves examining whether the findings of previous research are valid, consistent, and applicable to different contexts. Researchers should also identify contradictions or inconsistencies among previous studies and attempt to explain why such differences occur. In addition, it is important to consider the limitations of previous research when interpreting their results. By critically evaluating existing literature, researchers

can develop a clearer understanding of what is already known and what still needs to be investigated.

### **Identifying Research Gaps**

Another important purpose of a literature review is to identify gaps in existing research. Researchers must carefully analyze recent literature in order to determine which aspects of a topic have not been sufficiently explored. Research gaps may include unanswered questions, inconsistent findings, methodological limitations, or a lack of studies in certain contexts. Identifying these gaps is crucial because it provides the motivation for conducting new research. By addressing these gaps, researchers can contribute to the development of knowledge and provide new insights related to the research topic.

### **Challenges in Conducting a Literature Review**

Compiling a literature review involves several challenges. The first challenge is finding appropriate literature that is relevant to the research topic. Researchers must search for reliable sources such as academic journals, books, conference papers, and other scholarly publications. The second challenge is managing the large amount of information collected from different sources. Researchers must organize and categorize the information in order to identify key themes and relationships among different studies.

The final challenge is presenting the literature review in a clear and logical manner. Researchers must synthesize information from multiple sources and present it in a structured way that is easy for readers to understand. A well-written literature review should provide a coherent narrative that links previous studies to the objectives of the current research.

### **METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research approach to examine students' information-seeking behavior in choosing Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu as their university of choice. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and decision-making processes. The research was conducted at Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu, a private higher education institution located in Bengkulu Province. The target population consisted of new students who had recently experienced the process of searching for information before deciding to enroll at the university. The units of analysis in this research were individual students who had gone through the stages of identifying information needs, searching for information, and utilizing information when selecting a university. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. This method was applied to select participants who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The respondents were first-year students in their second semester, ensuring that they had recently experienced the process of seeking information about universities. Six students from different study programs were selected as informants, including students from the Communication Studies Program, the Computer Education Program, and the Physical Education, Health, and Recreation Program. The diversity of academic backgrounds among the respondents was intended to provide broader perspectives on the information-seeking behavior of students with different academic interests and information needs.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews served as the primary data collection method because they allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in detail. Semi-structured interview guidelines were used to ensure that the discussions remained focused on the research objectives while still allowing flexibility for participants to express their experiences freely. Through these interviews, participants were asked about their information needs, the sources of information they used, and how the

information influenced their decision to choose Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu. Observation was also conducted to examine how information related to the university was presented and accessed within the campus environment. This included observing campus facilities, information boards, and promotional materials available to students. In addition, documentation was used to support the findings obtained from interviews and observations. The documents reviewed included university brochures, promotional posters, social media content, and information published on the official university website.

The measurement framework used in this study was based on the concept of information-seeking behavior. The analysis focused on three main components: information need, information search, and information use. Information need refers to the stage in which students recognize the need to obtain information related to universities, study programs, facilities, tuition fees, and career prospects before making educational decisions. Information search refers to the process in which students actively seek information from various sources, including both formal sources such as official university websites and promotional media, and informal sources such as friends, family members, and alumni. Information use refers to the stage in which students evaluate and utilize the information they have obtained in order to make decisions about selecting a university. By examining these three components, the study aims to understand how students identify their information needs, search for relevant information, and utilize the information obtained in deciding to pursue higher education at Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu.

## **RESULTS**

The results of this study are based on data collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving six new students of Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu from different study programs. The analysis focuses on three main components of information-seeking behavior: information need, information search, and information use. These components describe how students recognize their need for information, search for relevant sources, and utilize the information obtained before making decisions about their higher education. The first finding relates to students' information needs. The results indicate that students experienced uncertainty when choosing a university and study program. This uncertainty encouraged them to search for information related to various aspects of the university, such as tuition fees, campus facilities, available study programs, student activities, and career prospects after graduation. Each student had different priorities depending on their academic interests and expectations regarding campus life. Students from communication studies tended to focus on organizational activities and campus social environment, while students from computer education and physical education programs emphasized practical facilities and learning infrastructure.

The second finding concerns the information search process. Students obtained information from both informal and formal sources. Informal sources included family members, friends, alumni, and personal networks, which were considered trustworthy because they were based on real experiences. Formal sources included official university websites, social media platforms, and promotional materials such as brochures and posters. Students often compared information from different sources to ensure the credibility and relevance of the information they received. The final finding relates to information use, which refers to how students evaluated and applied the information they had obtained in making their final decisions. The results show that students did not simply accept information from a single source but tended to compare and verify information before making their decisions. Information that was clear, practical, and directly related to their academic needs was considered the most influential factor in strengthening their confidence when choosing Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu. To provide a clearer description of the research participants, the respondent profile is presented in Table 1

**Table 1. Respondent Profile**

No	Respondent Name	Age	Study Program	Semester
1	Vera Amanda	18	Communication Studies	2
2	Elan Draberdi	19	Computer Education	2
3	Tiara Apriliani	17	Physical Education, Health and Recreation	2
4	Rendi Verdianto	20	Physical Education, Health and Recreation	2
5	Fuji Mutiara	19	Communication Studies	2
6	Monica Desi Deria	18	Computer Education	2

Furthermore, the main information needs identified during the interviews are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. Students' Main Information Needs**

Information Category	Description of Information Needed
Tuition Fees	Information about tuition costs and payment systems
Study Programs	Available majors and curriculum structure
Campus Facilities	Laboratories, classrooms, sports facilities, and learning infrastructure
Student Activities	Student organizations and extracurricular activities
Career Prospects	Job opportunities and career paths after graduation

Overall, the findings indicate that students actively engage in information-seeking behavior when selecting a university as part of their educational decision-making process. This process generally begins with the recognition of an information need, which arises when students perceive a gap between the information they currently possess and the information required to make an informed choice regarding higher education. At this stage, students often experience uncertainty related to various aspects of university selection, including academic programs, tuition fees, campus facilities, learning environments, and potential career opportunities. Such uncertainty encourages students to seek additional information that can help clarify available alternatives and reduce ambiguity in their decision-making process. Following the recognition of information needs, students proceed to the information search stage, during which they actively explore multiple sources of information. The results show that students utilize both formal and informal sources in their search for relevant information. Informal sources, such as family members, friends, alumni, and personal networks, provide experiential knowledge and personal perspectives regarding campus life and academic experiences. These sources are often perceived as credible because they are based on direct experience. In contrast, formal sources including official university websites, social media platforms, brochures, and other institutional publications offer structured and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, institutional facilities, and admission procedures. Students frequently integrate these different sources in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the university.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that students tend to compare information obtained from various sources before making a final decision. This comparison process enables them to evaluate the consistency, credibility, and relevance of the information they receive. By critically examining information from multiple channels, students attempt to ensure that their decision is based on reliable and accurate knowledge rather than on a single source of information. The final stage of the process involves the utilization of information, where students interpret and apply the information they have gathered in order to support their decision regarding university selection. At this stage, students prioritize information that is clear, relevant, and aligned with their academic interests and future aspirations. Information related to academic quality, campus

facilities, and career prospects tends to play a particularly significant role in shaping students' confidence in their choice.

In general, the results demonstrate that the integration of formal and informal information sources plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty and strengthening students' confidence in their university selection. The availability of accessible and reliable information allows students to make more informed and rational decisions regarding their higher education. In the context of this study, the information obtained through various channels ultimately contributed to reinforcing students' confidence in choosing Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu as their preferred higher education institution.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study demonstrate that students' behavior in selecting a university follows a structured process of information-seeking behavior. This process begins with the recognition of information needs, followed by information searching activities, and finally the utilization of information in decision-making. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of information-seeking behavior, which suggests that individuals actively seek information when they perceive a gap between the knowledge they possess and the information required to make an informed decision. The results show that students initially experience uncertainty when choosing a university, particularly regarding aspects such as study programs, tuition fees, campus facilities, learning environments, and career prospects. This uncertainty acts as a motivating factor that encourages students to search for additional information. Such findings support the argument that information needs often emerge when individuals encounter situations that require them to reduce uncertainty before making important decisions. In the context of higher education selection, students attempt to obtain sufficient information to ensure that their chosen university aligns with their academic interests and future aspirations.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that students rely on a combination of formal and informal information sources during the information search stage. Informal sources such as family members, friends, and alumni provide experiential knowledge and personal insights that help students visualize campus life and academic experiences. These sources are often perceived as credible because they are based on direct personal experience. On the other hand, formal sources including university websites, social media platforms, and promotional materials provide structured and institutional information related to academic programs, facilities, and admission procedures. The integration of these sources enables students to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the university. Another important finding is that students tend to compare information obtained from multiple sources before making their final decision. This behavior reflects a critical evaluation process in which students assess the credibility, consistency, and relevance of the information they receive. By verifying information through different channels, students attempt to minimize the risk of making incorrect decisions. This indicates that students do not passively receive information but actively evaluate it before applying it to their decision-making process.

The final stage identified in this study is the utilization of information, where students interpret and apply the information they have gathered to support their university selection decisions. At this stage, students prioritize information that is relevant to their academic goals and personal interests. Information related to academic quality, campus facilities, and career prospects tends to play a particularly significant role in strengthening students' confidence in their decisions. This suggests that the availability of clear, accessible, and reliable information is essential in supporting students' educational decision-making processes. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of information accessibility and credibility in influencing students' decisions when selecting a university. Universities that provide accurate, well-structured, and easily accessible information through both digital platforms and interpersonal communication

channels are more likely to support prospective students in making informed decisions. Therefore, higher education institutions should continuously improve their information dissemination strategies in order to meet the information needs of prospective students and enhance their institutional visibility and credibility.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined students' information-seeking behavior in choosing Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu as their university of choice. The findings indicate that students actively engage in a structured process of information-seeking that involves three main stages: recognizing information needs, searching for information, and utilizing the information obtained in decision-making. The emergence of information needs is primarily driven by students' uncertainty regarding various aspects of higher education, including academic programs, tuition fees, campus facilities, and future career opportunities.

During the information search stage, students rely on a combination of formal and informal information sources. Informal sources such as family members, friends, and alumni provide experiential insights, while formal sources including official university websites, social media platforms, and promotional materials offer structured institutional information. Students often compare information from multiple sources in order to evaluate its credibility and relevance before making their final decision.

The study also reveals that the utilization of information plays a significant role in strengthening students' confidence in their university selection. Information that is clear, accessible, and relevant to students' academic interests is particularly influential in supporting their decision-making process. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of providing accurate, structured, and easily accessible information to assist prospective students in making informed decisions regarding their higher education. Therefore, universities should enhance their information communication strategies to ensure that prospective students can obtain reliable and comprehensive information when selecting a university.

## **LIMITATION**

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the number of participants involved in this research was relatively small, consisting of only six students from different study programs. Although the qualitative approach allows for an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, the limited sample size may restrict the generalizability of the findings to a broader population of students.

Second, the study focused only on students from Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu who had already chosen the university as their place of study. As a result, the perspectives of prospective students who considered other universities or decided not to enroll at Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu were not included.

Including such perspectives might provide a more comprehensive understanding of the university selection process. Third, the research relied primarily on self-reported data obtained through interviews. Although interviews allow researchers to explore participants' experiences in detail, the data may still be influenced by participants' subjective perceptions and personal interpretations.

Future research could address these limitations by involving a larger and more diverse sample of participants, including students from different universities or educational contexts. In addition, further studies may also incorporate quantitative methods or mixed-method approaches to provide broader and more generalizable insights into students' information-seeking behavior in selecting higher education institutions.

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