DETERMINANTS IN CHOOSING THE ADMINISTRATION COURSE: A STUDY AT UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO AMAZONAS

FATORES DETERMINANTES NA ESCOLHA DO CURSO DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO: UM ESTUDO NA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO AMAZONAS

FACTORES DETERMINANTES EN LA ELECCIÓN DEL CURSO DE ADMINISTRACIÓN: UN ESTUDIO EN LA UNIVERSIDADE FERAL DO AMAZONAS

ABSTRACT

Purpose: We aim to investigate the factors influencing business students' career/course choices at the Universidade Federal do Amazonas (UFAM).

Methodology: The study employs a set of structural regressions to analyze data from 512 students, examining the real motivations behind their course choices.

Findings: The results reveal that internal factors, such as personal interests, growth opportunities, work environment, and career expectations, as well as sociodemographic factors, are determinants in choosing the Business course. Contrary to empirical findings, external, interpersonal, and institutional factors did not show statistical significance.

Originality: The study's originality lies in its combination of different course-choice perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of student motivations in the Amazon region. The findings can empower educational policymakers and support program administrators with the knowledge to improve the career guidance and professional development of students in the region.

Keywords: Internal factors. Sociodemographic factors. Career decision. Student motivation

Jonas Fernando Petry
Ph.D
Universidade Federal do Amazonas - Brazil
jonasfernandopetry@gmail.com

Antonio Diego Rodrigues Marques de Oliveira
Bachelor
Universidade Federal do Amazonas – Brazil
rodriguesdiego430@gmail.com

Antônio Giovanni Figliuolo Uchôa
Ph.D
Universidade Federal do Amazonas – Brazil
uchoag@yahoo.com.br

Ana Flávia de Moraes Moraes
Ph.D.
Universidade Federal do Amazonas – Brazil
anaflaviademoraesmoraes@gmail.com

RESUMO

Objetivo: investigar os fatores que influenciam as escolhas de carreira/curso de Administração da Universidade Federal do Amazonas – UFAM.

Metodologia: O estudo utiliza um conjunto de regressões estruturais para analisar dados de 512 estudantes, examinando as motivações reais por trás da escolha do curso.

Resultados: Os resultados revelam que fatores internos, como interesses pessoais, oportunidades de crescimento, ambiente de trabalho e expectativas de carreira, além de fatores sociodemográficos, são determinantes na escolha do curso de Administração. Ao contrário dos achados empíricos, fatores externos, interpessoais e institucionais não mostraram significância estatística.

Originalidade: A originalidade do estudo reside na combinação de diferentes perspectivas para analisar a escolha do curso, proporcionando uma compreensão abrangente das motivações dos estudantes na região amazônica. Os achados podem informar políticas educacionais e programas de apoio específicos para melhorar a orientação de carreira e o desenvolvimento profissional dos estudantes na região.

Palavras-chave: Fatores internos; Fatores sociodemográficos; Decisão de carreira; Motivação dos estudantes.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Investigar los factores que influyen en las elecciones de carrera/curso de Administración en la Universidad Federal de Amazonas – UFAM.

Metodología: El estudio utiliza un conjunto de regresiones estructurales para analizar datos de 512 estudiantes, examinando las motivaciones reales detrás de la elección del curso.

Resultados: Los resultados revelan que factores internos, como intereses personales, oportunidades de crecimiento, ambiente de trabajo y expectativas de carrera, además de factores sociodemográficos, son determinantes en la elección del curso de Administración. Contrariamente a los hallazgos empíricos, factores externos, interpersonales e institucionales no mostraron significan-

cia estadística.

Originalidad: La originalidad del estudio reside en la combinación de diferentes perspectivas para analizar la elección del curso, proporcionando una comprensión integral de las motivaciones de los estudiantes en la región amazónica. Los hallazgos pueden informar políticas educativas y programas de apoyo específicos para mejorar la orientación y el desarrollo profesionales de los estudiantes en la región.

Palabras clave: Factores internos. Factores sociodemográficos. Decisión de carrera. Motivación de los estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

Choosing a higher education course is one of the most critical decisions young people face, directly influencing their future careers and quality of life (Pandey et al., 2023; Willner et al., 2015). Studies indicate that this decision can be affected by personal, socioeconomic, and institutional factors (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2019; Jadidian & Duffy, 2012; Zhou et al., 2013). Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 1996) suggests that internal and external factors influence career decisions. However, these factors have yet to be widely studied in the specific context of the Amazon, a region with unique cultural and economic characteristics such as [specific characteristics]. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring how UFAM students make course decisions.

Previous research on university course/career choice has identified many factors. According to Hatane et al. (2021), the learning environment affects course choice for Jadidian and Duffy (2012) through personal characteristics. In contrast, Zhou et al. (2013) and Merugu and Thangeda (2021) believe that course choice is related to professional prospects. Additionally, previous research has identified various factors influencing course selection, including internal factors (Özbilgin et al., 2005; Pandey et al., 2022; Purohit et al., 2021), external factors (Agarwala, 2008; Jordaan, 2009; Özbilgin et al., 2005), institutional factors (Jordaan, 2009; Lizote & Verdinelli, 2014), and sociodemographic factors (Agarwala,

2008; Jordaan, 2009). Are also relevant. Despite the substantial research and the topic's growing importance, the motivations for choosing a course/career still need to be better understood.

Given this reality, the following research question arises: What are the main internal and external factors influencing students' choice of the Administration course at the Universidade Federal do (UFAM)? Thus, this study aims to analyze the factors that affect the choice of the Administration course at UFAM. Unlike previous studies that focused on broader contexts, our research focuses on a detailed analysis of the motivations of students from Amazonas, including [specific aspects]. This fills a critical gap identified by recent studies (Merugu & Thangeda, 2021; Panakaje et al., 2024; Pandey et al., 2023; Purohit et al., 2021).

To achieve our research objective, we adopted a comprehensive quantitative approach. We surveyed 512 UFAM Administration students to gain a detailed understanding of their motivations. This approach allows for a thorough analysis of the influencing factors. Using a quantitative approach and structural regressions is particularly suitable for this study, as it enables a detailed examination of the relationships between multiple variables and the identification of key factors in course choice.

Our findings have significant practical implications, offering insights into student motivations in a region with unique characteristics. These insights can be applied to other areas with similar cultural and economic contexts. Social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 1996) suggests that internal factors, such as personal interests and growth opportunities, and external factors, such as financial benefit expectations and family influences, play a significant role in course choice. Recent studies underscore the importance of adaptability and concern for career maintenance as key motivators for choosing courses like Administration (Panakaje et al., 2024; Pandey et al., 2023), which offer a broad managerial view and practical applicability (Jackson & Meek, 2020; Kyriakopoulos et al., 2020; Panakaje et al., 2024; Shoss, 2017).

The results revealed that internal factors, such as personal interests and growth opportunities, determine course choice. On the other hand, external factors, such as financial benefit expectations and family influences, proved less significant than expected.

This article is structured as follows: section 2 discusses the relevant literature, section 3 describes the methodology used, section 4 presents the results, section 5 discusses the findings and their implications, and section 6 concludes with final considerations and suggestions for future research.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CAREER CHOICE AND THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY

The literature on course/career choice theories needs to be more cohesive, drawing from various fields and rooted in broader behavioral sciences, but not necessarily competing with each other (Daud et al., 2022; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Various theoretical approaches are suitable for explaining different types of behavior on a continuum ranging from broad to specific (Landy & Becker, 1987). Thus, the sociological approach focuses on context and social structure (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). The psychological approach is interested in personal and psychological issues in decision-making and social well-being (Felton et al., 1995; Karlsson & Noela, 2022). The new concept of careers, which we emphasize for its interdisciplinary nature, recognizes the complexity and diversity of careers. However, the literature continues to investigate the career as a relationship that an individual may or may not have with an organization (Yao et al., 2020). This study uniquely focuses on the employment/career perspective at the individual level of university students, making it particularly relevant and engaging for our readers (Alboliteeh et al., 2022; Atangongo et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2022; Forrier & Sels, 2003).

Internal Factors

From the perspective of the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), the choice of a higher education course is related to career choice (Agarwala, 2008; Atangongo et al., 2024). It is a lifelong decision-making process (Ayodele, 2019). For a course choice to occur, alternatives for courses/careers must be available, and an individual preference among course options (Özbilgin et al., 2005). Course choice will determine the role pattern the individual will play in society, making career choice one of the most critical processes in individuals' lives (Fayadh et al., 2017). Therefore, the choice of course is related to an individual's motivation, direction, arousal, breadth, and persistence of behavior (Kanfer, 1990; Nesje & Wiers-Jenssen, 2023). In other words, belief, attitude, intention, and behavior are related to the choice (Hatane et al., 2021).

External Factors

From the perspective of the theory of planned behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitudes influence behavioral intention. Subjective norms relate to a person's perception of social pressure to engage or not engage in certain behaviors. Perceived behavioral control refers to the perceived ease or difficulty of engaging in the behavior. Attitude reflects belief and benefit (Hatane et al., 2021). Thus, motivation is associated with various course/career decisions and behaviors. We define *motivation* as a set of individual characteristics and decisions related to the course/career, along with associated behaviors that reflect a person's career identity and perceptions of factors that affect their career outlook. Perception is related to the quality of evidence (Tranfield et al., 2003). Therefore, we should understand course choice motivation regarding the relationships between individual characteristics, course/career behavior decisions, and situational conditions (London, 1983). For example, external factors such as the job market and the state of the economy, along with individual factors like education, family background, and attitudes, significantly influence career choices (Agarwala, 2008; Nesje & Wiers-Jenssen, 2023). According to Agarwala (2008) and Atangongo et al. (2024),

course choice considers sociocultural factors, individual factors, personal values, cultural values, significant relationships, and structural characteristics. The quality of higher education is also an essential component of course choice (Demissie et al., 2021; Nauffal & Skulte-Ouaiss, 2018).

Interpersonal Factors

Despite the popularity of the administration degree, many students need to learn what they wish to achieve (Carneiro et al., 2023). In administration, in particular, students view their careers as personal and social endeavors, whereas scholars prefer to study success and career fulfillment as desired subjective outcomes (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007; Nesje & Wiers-Jenssen, 2023). Studies by Atangongo et al. (2024) and Wen et al. (2018) show that students' career intentions positively correlate with their attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and prior work experience. Osei et al. (2023) and Owusu et al. (2018) Found that university students value intrinsic worth and employability prospects more than prestige and desired working conditions. According to Merugu and Thangeda (2021), the motivation for choosing an administration course lies in advancing to higher levels within the organizational structure. A study of accounting students by Hatane et al. (2021) indicated positive attitudes toward enhancing their knowledge. Students recognize that the learning environment, including educators and peers, significantly impacts their career choices. They suggest improvements and updates in the ideal learning environment, such as enhancing teachers' capabilities, providing better teaching materials, and creating a supportive social environment.

Institutional Factors

Social cognitive career theory (Lent & Brown, 1996, 2019) Aims to focus on goal and outcome expectations that affect interest in higher education, satisfaction, and well-being. Course choice from the learning environment perspective involves all facilities and activities related to learning. Hatane et al. (2021) observed that ambition, established goals, and individual interests can shape course choices. According to Özbilgin et al. (2005), two conditions are necessary for choosing a course/career: (i) the availability of alternative career options and (ii) an individual/ personal preference among career options. The dualism in career choice decisions presented by Özbilgin et al. (2005) Refers to the centrality of individual agency in career choice (seeking control, certainty, and predictability). Individual agency includes dispositions, human capital, attitudes, and personality, which influence career choice. The second decision focuses on the resources or difficulties embedded in the individual's career context. This consideration relates to opportunity structures and constraints that facilitate and limit career choice. Considering various influences brings us to the social cognitive conception, where social variables do not act alone in course choice. Instead, these variables are affected and work in conjunction with other essential qualities of the student's context, such as the sociocultural environment, the opportunity structure that permeates the career, and the individual's gender (Agarwala, 2008; Atangongo et al., 2024; Lent & Brown, 1996; Özbilgin et al., 2005).

Sociodemographic Factors

In recent decades, business students have witnessed changes in new work relationships and new types of careers (Atangongo et al., 2024; Baruch & Vardi, 2016). Additionally, transformations in work, economy, society, and technology have resulted in dramatic changes in employment (Maggiori et al., 2017). With the COVID-19 outbreak and the country's economic deterioration, university students have experienced increased uncertainty and precariousness. The current scenario has forced young students to work and re-

think their career plans. The slowdown imposed by the coronavirus may add to the student's difficulties. The pandemic has triggered fear, uncertainty, and anxiety regarding the future of post-pandemic students (Parola, 2020).

There is growing pressure on educational institutions to better prepare students for future work, with increasing attention to whether and how business curricula align with labor market demands (Adah & Ekweani, 2024; Jackson & Meek, 2020). According to Hanson et al. (2017), universities influence the moral development of business students, potentially maximizing environmental artifacts and student-university relationships to develop students as moral and practical agents in universities, businesses, and society. In this sense, universities are essential in creating knowledge and career outcomes for graduates (Baruch et al., 2020; Donald et al., 2024). Graduation is the fundamental stage for students to start planning their careers (Atangongo et al., 2024; Fan, 2016). Universities must guide students in promoting career development (Park & Park, 2020). Hence, career choice dramatically impacts the quality of the educational institution (Nauffal & Skulte-Ouaiss, 2018). Therefore, educational institutions seek ways to improve their students' employability through teaching and learning interventions embedded in the curriculum and encouraging students to engage in extracurricular activities to prepare them for future work better (Jackson & Meek, 2020). Employability is the likelihood of getting a job or the ability to remain employed upon graduation (Lo Presti et al., 2022; Nauffal & Skulte-Ouaiss, 2018).

Hypotheses

Different theories consider internal factors (personal interests, growth opportunities, work environment, among others), external factors (employment benefits, market factors, and location), interpersonal factors (family members, teachers, educators, friends, and acquaintances, social factors), institutional factors (related to the organization, education, and degree program), and finally, sociodemographic factors (gender and socioeconomic status). As explained in the literature review above, we developed the following hypotheses to test:

H1: Internal factors, such as personal interests and motivation, are positively related to students' choice of Business Administration courses.

H2: External factors, such as the labor market and economy, are positively related to students' choice of Business Administration courses.

H3: Interpersonal factors, including influences from family members, teachers, and friends, are positively related to students' choice of Business Administration courses.

H4: Institutional factors, such as the quality of education and the learning environment, are positively associated with students' choice of Business Administration courses.

H5: Sociodemographic factors, including gender and socioeconomic status, are positively related to students' choice of Business Administration courses.

The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model
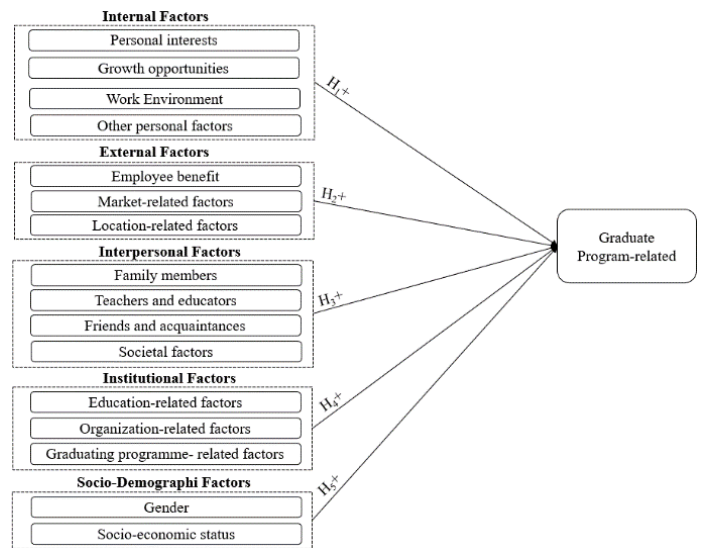
METHODOLOGY

According to the objectives, we classified the research as an exploratory, descriptive, and causal case study with a quantitative approach. We developed a survey based on previous studies (see Table 1) to test the hypotheses of this research. We used the survey to collect sample information, ensuring the inclusivity of our study by sending the research instrument by email to all students enrolled in the Business Administration course at the Federal University of Amazonas in March 2021 and concluding at the end of May of the same year.

Method

The quantitative research used a survey to collect data from the participants. We structured the research instrument in two parts. The first part covered predictor variables based on five dimensions, with questions formulated on a seven-point Likert scale, where one indicates "strongly disagree" and seven indicates "strongly agree." The second part of the instrument included the dependent variable, followed by demographic questions about the respondents.

Table 1 describes the independent and dependent variables used in the study.

Table 1
Predictor and Dependent Variables

Independent/Predictor Variables		
Factors/Dimension	**Description**	**Adapted from:**
Internal Factors	**Personal interests:** These are related to individual aspects of the student's life, growth, personal development opportunities, the desire to develop their ideas, and the freedom to make decisions in their profession, which act as determinants in choosing their degree.	Özbilgin et al., 2005; Purohit et al., 2021.
	Growth opportunities These are related to career choice, training, internship opportunities, and learning opportunities at work. These are factors that can provide personal and professional growth.	Agarwala, 2008; Özbilgin et al., 2005; Purohit et al., 2021.
	Work environment Students' perceptions based on available information about the work environment, such as a calm work environment, challenging and exciting work, autonomy, flexible work, and job security, play a critical role in graduates' job choices.	Omar et al., 2015; Purohit et al., 2021.
	Other personal factors Sharing the same beliefs and having good contact with different stakeholders.	Purohit et al., 2021.
External Factors	**Employee benefits** The belief that financial remuneration is the most influential factor in course selection.	Agarwala, 2008; Özbilgin et al., 2005.
	Market-related factors Job opportunities and employment conditions.	Agarwala, 2008; Jordaan, 2009; Özbilgin et al., 2005.
	Location-related factors Location can play a critical role in course selection.	Thampoe, 2016.
Fatores Interpessoais	**Family members** Family ties and commitments can influence the choice of an undergraduate course.	Jordaan, 2009; Özbilgin et al., 2005.
	Teachers and educators Influence in the choice of the course and career decision of graduates.	Agarwala, 2008.
	Friends and acquaintances Influence of friends and acquaintances on choosing higher education courses.	Agarwala, 2008.
	Social factors Expectations about status, a self-view of being a professional in the field.	Thampoe, 2016.
Institutional Factors	**Organization-related factors** Expectation of working in an established and respected organization.	Lightbody et al., 1997).
	Education-related factors Refer to higher education acting as a facilitator in job choice.	Jordaan, 2009.
	Degree program-related factors Include the availability of internship training as an essential criterion in job choice.	Gokuladas, 2010.
Sociodemographic Factors	**Gender** The choice of undergraduate course can depend on gender.	Agarwala, 2008; Gokuladas, 2010; Jordaan, 2009.
	Socioeconomic status The economic and financial class of the student and their family can be related to the course choice.	Agarwala, 2008; Özbilgin et al., 2005.
Dependent Variable		
Factors/Dimension	**Description**	**Adapted from:**
Course Choice	The extent to which factors influence course choice.	Agarwala, 2008.

Source: Own elaboration.

Sample Characteristics

The study population included all students enrolled in the business administration course at the Universidade Federal do Amazonas (Faculty of Social Studies in the capital Manaus and two units in the interior of the State of Amazonas, Benjamin Constant and Parintins). The institution provided a list of 3,000 email addresses of enrolled students. The choice of a public and federal university was due to its social and strategic role in society's formation (Faria & Walger, 2020). The business administration course significantly contributes to the economic development of the State of Amazonas.

We sent 3,000 emails to students with a survey link on the Google Forms platform. Data collection occurred between March and May 2021, characterizing the study as cross-sectional. The sampling was purposive and non-probabilistic, meaning the elements did not have an associated probability of being chosen as sample subjects. We expect that a specific target group can provide the sought information (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). To determine the minimum sample size, we used Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table (3,000 emails, minimum sample size 379) and the sample size Calculator (2011) (recommended minimum sample size of 341). With a 5% margin of error, a 99% confidence level, and a 50% response distribution, the sample size consisted of 512 (n=512) participants. The sample demographics included 287 females and 225 males. Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 66. Of the students, 391 were from the capital, Manaus, 67 were from the Parintins unit, and 54 were from Benjamin Constant. Additionally, 57.5% of the students had enrolled in the course for more than two years, and 42.6% were in the initial years of the course.

EVALUATION OF THE MEASUREMENT MODEL

We conducted our statistical analyses using the Smart-PLS-SEM software (Ringle et al., 2022). The main objective of PLS-SEM is to maximize the amount of variance explained in the endogenous constructs (internal, external, interpersonal, institutional, and sociodemographic factors) of the structural model, facilitating the understanding of model relationships (course choice) (Hair, 2021; Hwang et al., 2020). We evaluated the reflective measurement models using standard evaluation criteria at the variable level, which robustly supports the reliability and validity of the measures (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019). The data presented in Table 2 show that the Composite Reliability is > 0.70 and < 0.90, rho_A is > 0.70, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is > 0.50, indicating that, on average, the construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2

Variable Level

Fornell-Larcker Criterion Discriminant Validity (n= 512)	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. External Factors	**0,814**						
2. Graduate Program	0,565	**0,709**					
3. Institutional Factors	0,619	0,497	**0,827**				
4. Internal Factors	0,728	0,655	0,584	**0,831**			
5. Interpersonal Factors	0,545	0,449	0,618	0,538	**0,741**		
6. Socio-Demographi	0,566	0,630	0,546	0,601	0,537	**0,727**	
Cronbach's Alpha	0,741	0,859	0,773	0,851	0,761	0,559	
rho_A	0,760	0,864	0,810	0,862	0,985	0,594	>0,70
Composite Reliability	0,854	0,890	0,866	0,899	0,828	0,768	>0,70
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0,662	0,503	0,684	0,691	0,550	0,528	>0,50

Note 1: Values on the diagonal are the square root of the AVE. They have discriminant validity as they are more significant than the correlations between LV (values outside the diagonal).

Note 2: All correlations are significant at 1%.

We assessed the item-level discriminant validity using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), which analyzed the indicator correlations between constructs to measure different pheno- mena and the indicator correlations within the same construct (Henseler et al., 2015). The item- -level convergent and discriminant validity, pre- sented in Table 3, shows estimated correlations between all construct pairs below the cutoff point of 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001), supporting the model's validity. With n=512 observations, we used the standard Bootstrap corrected and accelerated (BCa) option. The model executed Bootstrapping with 5,000 samples, using the no sign change op- tion to test the significance of lower-order cons- truct weights based on the 99% BCa confidence interval (Chin et al., 2020; Hair et al., 2017). The results (see Table 3) indicate that all lower-order construct weights were significant (p<0.001).

Table 3
Convergent and Discriminant Validity at the Item Level

Discriminant Validity Cros Loadings	External Factors	Graduate Program	Institutional Factors	Internal Factors	Interpersonal Factors	Socio-Demographi
Employee	**0,877**	0,518	0,441	0,649	0,421	0,439
Market-relat.	**0,843**	0,450	0,530	0,579	0,378	0,511
Location-relat.	**0,712**	0,403	0,562	0,544	0,552	0,439
GCHOQ12	0,399	**0,787**	0,339	0,460	0,337	0,525
GCHOQ13	0,582	**0,742**	0,411	0,553	0,415	0,491
GCHOQ8	0,431	**0,730**	0,400	0,452	0,332	0,484
GCHOQ2	0,340	**0,709**	0,383	0,466	0,331	0,416
GCHOQ11	0,242	**0,694**	0,253	0,385	0,197	0,407
GCHOQ14	0,543	**0,693**	0,437	0,507	0,362	0,493
GCHOQ3	0,281	**0,673**	0,302	0,442	0,260	0,405
GCHOQ1	0,287	**0,634**	0,244	0,417	0,262	0,303
Education	0,484	0,493	**0,874**	0,523	0,531	0,442
Graduating	0,520	0,401	**0,839**	0,489	0,484	0,483
Organization	0,564	0,309	**0,765**	0,428	0,530	0,443
Growth opport.	0,657	0,619	0,513	**0,879**	0,469	0,545
Work Envir.	0,616	0,515	0,511	**0,831**	0,456	0,454
Personal Inst.	0,510	0,569	0,406	**0,822**	0,435	0,523
Other Pers.	0,651	0,452	0,527	**0,791**	0,431	0,465
Sicietal	0,549	0,517	0,613	0,584	**0,877**	0,568
Family Memb.	0,397	0,255	0,387	0,339	**0,762**	0,358
Friends	0,251	0,190	0,346	0,209	**0,676**	0,273
Teachers	0,277	0,146	0,372	0,266	**0,625**	0,196
SESTQ2	0,428	0,570	0,432	0,535	0,495	**0,825**
SESTQ4	0,510	0,418	0,438	0,395	0,283	**0,690**
SESTQ5	0,292	0,350	0,316	0,350	0,370	**0,653**

Note 1: All correlations are significant at 1%.
Note 2: All heterotrait-monotrait HTMT values are below 0.90 (Gold et al., 2001); the rectangles show the lower and upper limits of the 95% BCa corrected and accelerated confidence intervals.

We used the MICOM procedure for mul- tigroup analysis, establishing measurement in- variance to ensure that the composite scores did not differ significantly between groups, not interfering with the results and conclusions (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2016). The sociode- mographic construct includes a binary variable: 1 for male (n=225) and 2 for female (n=287). We adopted the MICOM procedure to ensure that the estimates of specific models for different groups did not result from distinct content and meanings of the latent variables between groups. When conducting multigroup comparisons, we adopted a three-step procedure to assess mea- surement invariance: (i) configural invariance - identical model indicators in all groups; (ii) compositional invariance - permutation test on correlations and indicator weights; (iii) equality of composite mean values and variances (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2016). The compositional invariance permutation test is based on the ran- dom assignment of observations to groups, test-

ing the null hypothesis that c is equal to 1. Table 4 shows the results of Step 2: compositional invariance, assuming compositional invariance. The results of the third step, the equality of composite mean values and variances, are presented in Table 5, allowing comparison between groups. The

multigroup analysis in Table 6 provided no evidence of structural differences between groups, concluding that there are no differences between men and women when analyzed in groups.

Table 4
Step 2: compositional invariance

		Correlation Permutation		Permutation p-Values
	Original Correlation	Mean	5,00%	
External Factors	**0,995**	0,998	0,995	**0,054**
Graduate Program	**0,997**	0,999	0,997	**0,120**
Institutional Factors	**0,999**	0,998	0,995	**0,552**
Internal Factors	**1,000**	0,999	0,998	**0,722**
Interpersonal Factors	**0,999**	0,994	0,981	**0,910**
Socio-Demographi	**0,998**	0,996	0,988	**0,609**

Nota: se o valor *c* exceder o quantil de 5%, assumimos invariância composicional – valores mais próximos de 1

Table 5
Step 3: equality of composite mean values and variances

	Mean - Original Difference (Female - Male)	Mean - Permutation Mean Difference (Female - Male)	2,50 %	97,50 %	Permutation p-Values	Variance - Original Difference (Female - Male)	Variance - Permutation Mean Difference (Female - Male)	2,50%	97,50%	Permutation p-Values
External Factors	**0,075**	0,000	-0,179	0,180	**0,400**	**-0,173**	-0,001	-0,258	0,244	**0,190**
Graduate Program	**-0,047**	0,001	-0,185	0,175	**0,604**	**0,124**	0,003	-0,259	0,286	**0,356**
Institutional Factors	**0,006**	-0,001	-0,187	0,167	**0,940**	**-0,092**	-0,004	-0,231	0,216	**0,433**
Internal Factors	**0,028**	-0,002	-0,187	0,174	**0,725**	**-0,031**	0,004	-0,269	0,292	**0,844**
Interpersonal Factors	**-0,109**	-0,003	-0,191	0,175	**0,234**	**-0,130**	-0,004	-0,220	0,218	**0,232**
Socio-Demographi	**-0,099**	-0,001	-0,182	0,176	**0,269**	**-0,027**	-0,003	-0,229	0,231	**0,821**

Table 6
Multigroup Analysis

|	Path Coefficients Original (Female)	Path Coefficients Original (Male)	Path Coefficients Original Difference (Female - Male)	Path Coefficients Permutation Mean Difference (Female - Male)	2,50%	97,50%	Permutation p-Values
External Factors -> Graduate Program	0,100	0,070	0,030	-0,003	-0,229	0,201	0,787
Institutional Factors -> Graduate Program	0,048	0,050	-0,003	-0,002	-0,214	0,187	0,978
Internal Factors -> Graduate Program	0,360	0,363	-0,003	0,003	-0,213	0,226	0,983
Interpersonal Factors -> Graduate Program	-0,003	-0,004	0,001	0,000	-0,152	0,152	0,989
Socio-Demographi -> Graduate Program	0,325	0,367	-0,042	-0,003	-0,178	0,163	0,628

Having completed the measurement model validation, we analyzed the structural model (SEM) to show how the latent variables relate to each other (Hair et al., 2017). We followed four steps: (i) multicollinearity among constructs was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with all measures below five; (ii) path coefficients were determined based on the size and statistical significance of the coefficients (bootstrapping with 5,000 replications and two-tailed test) (Hair et al., 2017); (iii) the coefficient of determination R^2 - the percentage of variance explained; and (iv) the effect size coefficient (f^2) to indicate the impact of an independent variable on the dependent variable based on the omitted variable procedure (Hair et al., 2017), using Cohen's (1988) classification (f^2=0.02 small effect, f^2=0.15 medium effect, and f^2=0.35 significant effect).

The bootstrapping results for the model in Figure 2, presented in Table 7, indicate that only two path coefficients are statistically significant for the relationships (p-value <0.01): Internal Factors -> Graduate Program (β = 0.367) and Sociodemographic -> Graduate Program (β = 0.34). The coefficients for External Factors -> Graduate Program (β = 0.075; p-value = 0.182), Institutional Factors -> Graduate Program (β = 0.054; p-value = 0.274), and Interpersonal Factors -> Graduate Program (β = -0.005; p-value = 0.905) were not significant. The model's collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) was <3.0. The amount of variance in the constructs represented by the coefficient of determination (R^2 = 0.517) indicates the combined effects of the exogenous latent variables on the endogenous latent variable.

Table 7
Structural Model

Relações Estruturais	hypotheses	VIF	F²	Coeficidente Estrutural	Erro Padrão	T Statistics	P Values	R Square Adjusted
External Factors -> Graduate Program	H(+)	2,504	0,005	0,075	0,056	1,334	0,182	
Institutional Factors -> Graduate Program	H(+)	2,083	0,003	0,054	0,049	1,094	0,274	
Internal Factors -> Graduate Program	**H**(+)	2,488	0,113	0,367	0,056	6,569	0,000	0,517
Interpersonal Factors -> Graduate Program	H(+)	1,857	0,000	-0,005	0,039	0,119	0,905	
Socio-Demographi -> Graduate Program	**H**(+)	1,830	0,132	0,340	0,043	7,853	0,000	

Figure 2
SEM Path Coefficient
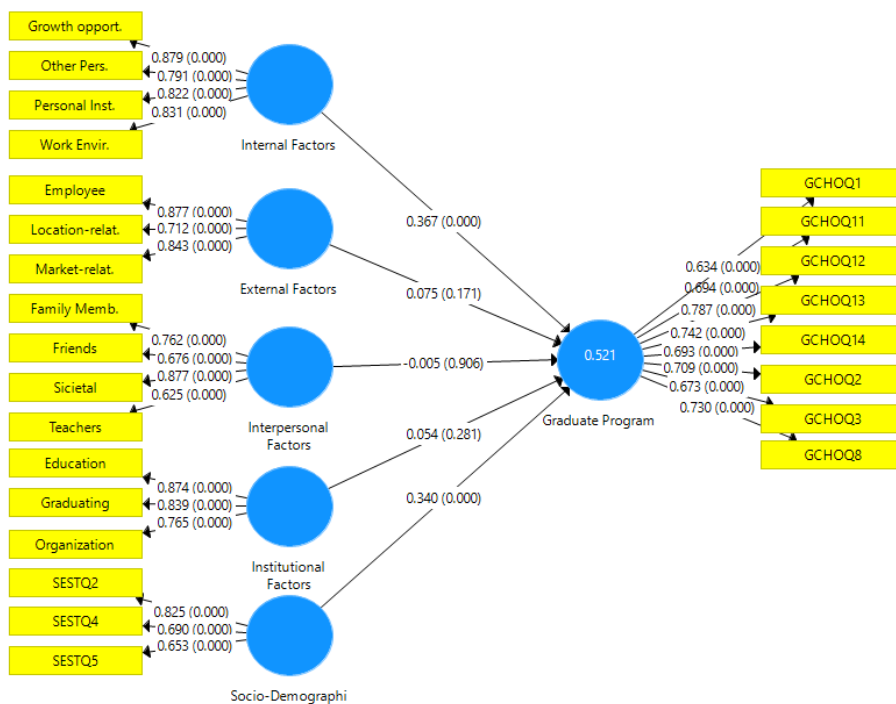
DISCUSSION

The data analysis revealed various insights into the factors influencing UFAM students' choice of administration course. Below, we discuss the results according to the formulated hypotheses and compare these findings with existing literature.

Internal Factors

The dimension Internal Factors -> Graduate Program ($\beta = 0.367$; p-value < 0.01) significantly influenced the results, confirming hypothesis H1. This result aligns with several studies showing that motivation and considerations for choosing a degree or career relate to a multitude of factors, generally distinguished between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to work values (Gokuladas, 2010; Kyriakopoulos et al., 2020; Özbilgin et al., 2005; Purohit et al., 2021). In engineering courses, for example, intrinsic reasons influence male students more, while extrinsic reasons influence female students more (Gokuladas, 2010).

The results show that students consider personal interests, growth opportunities, and work environment as determinants in choosing their courses. Notably, the multigroup analysis for internal factors did not show a significant difference between genders (see Table 6), corroborating Merugu and Thangeda's (2021) findings on the influence of gender in course choice. In a study with accounting students, Ng et al. (2017) found evidence that intrinsic motivation and professional exposure are decisive factors in career choice, while extrinsic motivation has less impact than intrinsic factors.

A study conducted in Ghana with university students found that they value intrinsic value and employability/financial prospects more than factors such as prestige and desired working conditions (Owusu et al., 2018). These findings suggest that internal factors are central to choosing the Administration course. Recent studies, such as Nesje and Wiers-Jenssen (2023), also corroborate the importance of internal factors in career choice, reinforcing the relevance of personal motivations and growth opportunities.

External Factors

The relationship External Factors -> Graduate Program ($\beta = 0.075$; p-value = 0.182) was not statistically significant, rejecting hypothesis H2. This result contradicts previous studies suggesting that external factors, such as job benefits expectations, market conditions, and location, significantly influence course choice (Agarwala, 2008; Özbilgin et al., 2005). These findings may indicate that external factors are not as determinant as internal ones in the specific context of Amazonas. However, it is essential to consider that recent studies, such as Atangongo et al. (2024), suggest that the impact of external factors can vary significantly depending on regional and economic contexts.

Interpersonal Factors

The relationship between Interpersonal Factors -> Graduate Program ($\beta = -0.005$; p-value = 0.905) was also insignificant, rejecting hypothesis H3. The existing literature emphasizes the importance of interpersonal dimensions in course choice. It highlights the influence of family members, teachers, friends, and social factors (Agarwala, 2008; Jordaan, 2009; Özbilgin et al., 2005; Thampoe, 2016). However, our results indicate that these factors may have an inverse or non-significant effect in the studied context. This finding differs from Mudhovozi and Chireshe's (2012) results reported the influence of parents, high school teachers, and friends on university course choice.

Institutional Factors

The relationship between Institutional Factors -> Graduate Program ($\beta = 0.054$; p-value = 0.274) was insignificant, rejecting hypothesis H4. Previous studies highlight the importance of institutional factors, such as organizational expectations, university reputation, qualification opportunities, and degree programs, in course choice (Gokuladas, 2010; Jordaan, 2009; Lightbody et al., 1997). The lack of significance may suggest that, for UFAM students, these factors are not decisive in choosing the Administration course. Recent investigations, such as those by Alboliteeh et al. (2022) and Donald et al. (2024), point out that the

perception of institutional quality can vary widely based on geographical location and cultural context.

Sociodemographic Factors

The relationship between sociodemographics -> Graduate Program (β = 0.34; p-value < 0.01) was statistically significant, confirming hypothesis H5. Sociodemographic factors, such as gender and socioeconomic status, influence course/career choice, as recognized in the literature (Al-Bahrani et al., 2020). Netchaeva et al. (2022) reveal that the lack of financial resources significantly hinders students' career aspirations, leading women to prefer careers in the social sciences. Abrahams et al. (2015) show that sources of financial support and anticipated benefits influence students' course/career choices, promoting personal growth and development.

Boaventura et al. (2018) comment that many young people seek higher education out of necessity due to the increasing demand for professional qualifications in the job market. Al-Amin and Islam (2024), Grant (2017), and Lizote and Verdinelli (2014) add that young people expect and plan their future considering the possibility of attending university.

Sociodemographic results also reflect concerns about uncertainty and the complexity of rapid changes. Possessing generic skills is no longer sufficient to maintain a career throughout life (Monteiro Jr et al., 2022; Monteiro et al., 2021). New professional demands encourage continuous development and the acquisition of new skills (Troesch & Bauer, 2020). Shoss (2017) suggests that many professionals with university degrees seek new degrees to ensure career maintenance, facing technological, economic, and political changes. The search for new information, professional retraining, and greater participation in the market reflects the concern with career-associated adaptability (Kyriakopoulos et al., 2020).

Merugu e Thangeda's (2021) research highlights that administration education offers a broad managerial perspective, essential for graduates in different fields. Thus, a new degree in administration can positively contribute to career success and satisfaction.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study comprehensively analyzed the factors influencing students' choice of the Administration course at the Universidade Federal do Amazonas (UFAM). University education in administration plays a crucial role in qualifying professionals to meet business environment demands and contribute to the development of the State of Amazonas.

The results revealed that internal factors, such as personal interests, growth opportunities, work environment, and sociodemographic factors related to family socioeconomic status and career expectations, are predominant in the Administration course. These findings highlight the importance of intrinsic motivations and students' socioeconomic conditions, aligning with social cognitive career theory (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 1996) and recent studies like Merugu and Thangeda (2021) and Pandey et al. (2023). The analysis shows that internal and sociodemographic factors play an essential role, although some traditionally considered influential factors in course choice are not significant in the studied context.

Conversely, external, interpersonal, and institutional factors did not show statistical significance. This result challenges findings from previous studies (Agarwala, 2008; Özbilgin et al., 2005) and suggests that, in the specific context of Amazonas, these factors may have less impact on students' decisions. Additionally, multigroup analysis indicated no significant difference between men and women in choosing the Administration course, corroborating findings from studies such as Merugu and Thangeda (2021).

The results indicate that internal factors are predominant in choosing the Administration course at UFAM, while external, interpersonal, and institutional factors did not show statistical significance. The relevance of sociodemographic factors underscores the need for educational policies that consider these variables.

The study's limitations include the cross-sectional nature of the data, which does not allow for causal inferences. Future research could explore longitudinal methods to assess changes in student motivations over time. Furthermore, a detailed analysis of how external and interperso-

nal factors might influence different subgroups within the sample could provide additional insights.

This study contributes to understanding the motivations of UFAM Administration students, highlighting the importance of internal and sociodemographic factors. Our findings have practical implications for formulating educational policies and support programs that address the specific needs of students in the Amazon region.

For future research, we recommend using a longitudinal approach to capture the dynamics of student motivations over time. Additionally, expanding the study to include other regions of Brazil could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the choice of the Administration course in different cultural and economic contexts.

The limitations that affected this research allowed for better contextualization of the study's findings. The sample consists solely of students from UFAM's Administration course. Consequently, we cannot generalize the research results to other courses at the institution. We did not conduct a longitudinal approach.

The research limitations suggest some insights into paths for future research. First, researchers must identify how much the educational institution allows for developing graduate competencies and employability. Second, investigating the role of stakeholders in higher education (teachers, students, and businesses) will help understand and improve graduates' knowledge, employability, and skills. Finally, conducting a longitudinal study with students at the beginning of their undergraduate studies, at graduation, and when entering the job market is crucial to clarify the academic factors influencing career success.

The study's practical and conceptual implications reinforce the need to evaluate the quality of the Administration course in light of graduates' employability. Graduates' ability to secure employment by applying the knowledge and skills acquired during the course summarizes the quality of UFAM's Administration course. Aligning course quality with market objectives and requirements is increasingly necessary for improvement.

Finally, we acknowledge that we did not explicitly analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in this article. The coronavirus pandemic likely exacerbated disparities between the quality of universities and higher education courses in the country. Factors influencing career choices and the profile of Administration students post-pandemic are a fruitful path for future research, as is the need to understand the increasingly digitized world and new ways of working and studying that transcend borders. In contrast, teachers and students remain at home. To conclude, the connection between university courses (undergraduate and stricto sensu graduate) and their respective fields of operation will become more aligned, providing more practical and market-oriented training.

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