



## FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' DECISION IN CHOOSING UNIVERSITIES: BUILD BRIGHT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Narith Por<sup>1</sup>, Chanminea Say<sup>2</sup>, Socheat Mov<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Build Bright University, Cambodia

<sup>3</sup>The University of Cambodia, Cambodia

Email: narithpor18@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, saychanminea2023@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>,

movsocheat074@gmail.com<sup>3</sup>

**Abstract:** This research assesses the factors influencing students' decision-making when choosing a university. The study proposes eight factors, such as parental or guardian influence, high school teacher recommendations, graduate quality, colleague recommendations, location, school fees, learning environment, and university reputation, on students' university choices. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing both secondary and primary data. A total of 330 students were sampled for this study. The data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics for data summarization and inferential statistics for analysis. Descriptive tools such as frequency analysis were used to examine the distribution of responses, while regression analysis was conducted to test the predictive power of the factors. The findings of this study indicate that factors such as parental or guardian influence, high school teacher recommendations, graduate quality, colleague recommendations, location, school fees, learning environment, and university reputation are all significant considerations in students' decision-making process when choosing a university. These factors play an influential role in shaping students' preferences and choices. The results show that these factors significantly impact students' university choices. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the importance of these factors in the decision-making process. Understanding the influence of these factors can assist universities in developing targeted strategies to attract and meet the needs of prospective students. By recognizing the significance of parental involvement, fostering positive relationships with high school teachers, showcasing successful graduates, promoting positive word-of-mouth recommendations, providing a conducive learning environment, and building a solid reputation, universities can enhance their appeal and effectively compete in the higher education market. Further research in this area can explore additional factors and delve deeper into the mechanisms influencing students' decision-making when choosing a university.

**Keywords:** Factors, Students' Decision, University, Build Bright

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang secara signifikan mempengaruhi proses pengambilan keputusan mahasiswa ketika memilih universitas. Penelitian tersebut mengusulkan delapan faktor seperti pengaruh orang tua/wali, rekomendasi guru sekolah menengah, kualitas lulusan, rekomendasi rekan kerja, lokasi, biaya sekolah, lingkungan belajar, dan reputasi universitas terhadap pilihan universitas siswa. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kuantitatif, yang memanfaatkan data sekunder dan primer. Sebanyak 330 siswa dijadikan sampel untuk penelitian ini. Data dianalisis menggunakan SPSS, menggunakan statistik deskriptif untuk peringkasan data dan statistik inferensial untuk analisis. Alat deskriptif seperti analisis frekuensi digunakan untuk menguji distribusi tanggapan, sedangkan analisis regresi dilakukan untuk menguji kekuatan prediksi faktor-faktor tersebut. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa faktor-faktor seperti pengaruh orang tua/wali, rekomendasi guru sekolah menengah, kualitas lulusan, rekomendasi rekan kerja, lokasi, biaya sekolah, lingkungan belajar, dan reputasi universitas merupakan pertimbangan penting dalam proses pengambilan keputusan siswa ketika memilih sebuah universitas. Faktor-faktor ini memainkan peran yang berpengaruh dalam membentuk preferensi untuk pilihan siswa. Hasilnya adalah bahwa faktor-faktor ini mempunyai dampak yang signifikan terhadap pilihan universitas mahasiswa. Studi ini berkontribusi terhadap literatur yang ada dengan memberikan bukti empiris tentang pentingnya faktor-faktor tersebut dalam proses pengambilan keputusan. Memahami pengaruh faktor-faktor ini dapat membantu universitas dalam mengembangkan strategi yang ditargetkan untuk menarik dan memenuhi kebutuhan calon mahasiswa. Dengan menyadari pentingnya keterlibatan orang tua, membina hubungan positif dengan guru sekolah menengah, menampilkan lulusan yang sukses, mempromosikan rekomendasi positif dari mulut ke mulut, menyediakan lingkungan belajar yang kondusif, dan membangun reputasi yang kuat, universitas dapat meningkatkan daya tariknya dan bersaing secara efektif dalam bidang pendidikan. Penelitian lebih lanjut dalam bidang ini dapat mengeksplorasi faktor-

faktor tambahan dan menggali lebih dalam mekanisme spesifik yang mempengaruhi proses pengambilan keputusan siswa ketika memilih sebuah universitas.

**Kata Kunci:** Faktor, Keputusan Mahasiswa, Universitas, *Build Bright*

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## INTRODUCTION

Cambodia's education system has significantly improved recently (MoEYS, 2014). In 2019, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport conducted a study that revealed that Cambodia experienced a notable rise in its net enrollment rate for primary education. The rate reached an impressive 97.7%, demonstrating a substantial improvement from previous years. This increase in enrollment can be attributed to various factors, including government initiatives to promote access to education and improvements in infrastructure (MoEYS, 2019). The government has also made efforts to enhance the country's education quality. In 2014, the MoEYS launched the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2014–2018, which aimed to improve the overall education system through various initiatives, including curriculum reform, teacher training, and infrastructure development (MoEYS, 2014). These efforts have contributed to reducing the gender gap in education, with the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for primary education in Cambodia now close to 1, indicating a nearly equal enrollment rate for both boys and girls (UNESCO, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented significant challenges and disruptions to university student registration in Cambodia. The closure of educational institutions and the implementation of remote learning measures have impacted enrollment. As a result, there has been a decline in the number of registered university students compared to previous years (UNICEF Cambodia, 2022). The trend of student registration at Build Bright University in Stung Treng has shown a different pattern. According to data from 2021 and 2022, there was a significant increase in the total number of students, reaching 199 and 201, respectively, with both male and female students contributing to the growth that indicates the resilience and adaptability of the university in attracting and accommodating students during the pandemic. It also highlights the importance of the institution's efforts in implementing effective measures to ensure student enrollment and support their educational journey amidst the ongoing crisis (Build Bright University, 2023).

One study has been conducted in Cambodia focusing on factors in choosing a university. Some gaps in the research were identified. The sample size was limited to only 100 students. The study was conducted at only one university, Phnom Penh, and targeted only bachelor students (Nimol, Soaphorn, & Channiroth, 2019). To fill the gaps of the study, the discrepancy in trends between national education and BBU has sparked interest among researchers to explore the influencing factors that drive students to choose a university, specifically focusing on why students select Build Bright University as their

preferred institution for building knowledge and skills. This research assesses the factors influencing students' decision-making when choosing a university.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

To understand and identify the factors influencing students' choice of universities, the authors conduct a theoretical and empirical review as below:

### **Theoretical Review**

Three theories were employed in this research in order to conceptualize it. The theories include The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Social Learning Theory (SLT), and Institutional Theory (IT).

#### **The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggests that an individual's behavior is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). It can be applied to understand the factors influencing students' choices of universities by examining their attitudes towards BBU, the influence of social norms (such as parental influence or teacher recommendations), and their perceived control over their choice.

#### **Social Learning Theory (SLT)**

Social Learning Theory (SLT) highlights the significance of individuals' interactions with others in their peer groups, including neighbors, churches, school teachers, the law, and authority figures. It also recognizes the impact of "virtual groups" formed through mass media, the internet, cell phones, and similar platforms (Akers & Jennings, 2015). The theory can be used to analyze the influence of peers' and colleagues' recommendations on students' choices of universities and the impact of social media and other communication channels in shaping students' awareness and decision-making.

#### **Institutional Theory (IT)**

Institutional Theory (IT) focuses on how organizations and institutions shape individual behavior and decision-making (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). It can be applied to analyze the influence of BBU's reputation, program quality, and educational services on students' choices and the impact of external factors such as location and fees.

### **Empirical Review**

Some studies have been conducted to identify the key determinants that shape students' decision-making processes in choosing universities.

#### **University Reputation**

Academic reputation is a significant factor in students' decision-making when choosing a university. The research conducted at Somali National University confirms that the image and reputation of universities are significant factors influencing students' university selection (Nor, 2018). Institutional reputation also influences the choice of a university among Romanian students (Maniu & Maniu, 2014). A study in Malaysia suggested a significant relationship between university reputation and college choice (Connie, Senathirajah, Subramanian, Ranom, & Osman, 2022). The High School Longitudinal Study 2012 further confirms that academic reputation is essential to university choice (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Additionally, the study on Factors Influencing Students' Choice of a Federal University in Nigeria found that

university reputation was a significant factor, along with personal interest, parental influence, university ranking, and fees (Adeyanju, Mogaji, Olusola, & Oyinlola, 2020).

### **Quality of Academic Program**

The program's or graduate's quality significantly influences students' decision-making when choosing a university. Several studies have found that factors such as the range of programs available, the reputation of specific departments or majors, and the flexibility to customize their course of study are essential considerations for students, and the influence of academic quality on students' decisions in choosing universities has been confirmed in studies conducted at Somali University (Nor, 2018) and among first-year university students (Ilgan, Ataman, Uğurlu, & Yurdunkulu, 2018). The research among Romanian students evidenced that employment opportunities also affect university choice (Maniu & Maniu, 2014). Additionally, a study in Malaysia found a significant relationship between program and college choice (Connie et al., 2022), and another study showed that academic program choice was a contributing factor in students selecting a specific university (Songan et al., 2010). Finally, the High School Longitudinal Study 2012 found that academic quality was rated a significant factor in university choice (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

### **The Location of The University**

The empirical review of research suggests that the university's location is an essential factor in students' decision-making process when choosing a university. Studies have found that students consider proximity to home, climate, safety, and cultural attractions when making decisions. The research conducted at Somali University has confirmed the influence of location on students' decision for university selection (Nor, 2018). The study with postgraduate students at a private university in South-West Nigeria found that the university's physical location was essential for easy transportation access and security (Adefulu, Farinloye, & Mogaji, 2020). The university's location also influences the choice of a university among Romanian students (Maniu & Maniu, 2014). Additionally, a study in Malaysia has suggested a significant relationship between location and college choice (Connie et al., 2022).

### **Financial Considerations and Affordability**

Financial considerations and affordability are crucial for many students when selecting a university. Research has consistently shown that tuition, availability of scholarships, financial aid packages, and the overall cost of living in the university's location significantly impact students' choices (Rudhumbu, Tirumalai, & Kumari, 2017). Cost also influences the choice of a university among Romanian students (Maniu & Maniu, 2014). Additionally, a study conducted in Malaysia suggests a significant relationship between pricing and college choice (Connie et al., 2022).

### **Service and Facility**

Student support services and campus facilities have been found to influence university choice. Research has shown that students value support services such as career counseling, academic advising, and access to internships or job placement services (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). The study conducted at Somali University found that facilities play a role in influencing students' choices of universities (Nor, 2018). Similarly, the educational offer has been found to influence the choice of a university

among Romanian students (Maniu & Maniu, 2014). Furthermore, a study conducted in Malaysia suggests a significant relationship between education, campus facilities, and college choice (Connie et al., 2022).

### **The Influence of Social and Personal Factors**

The influence of social and personal factors cannot be overlooked. Studying with the Departments of Architecture, Building Technology, and Estate Management students of Covenant University in Ota Ogan State, Nigeria, has highlighted the impact of peer recommendations, family influence, and personal aspirations on students' university program choices (Ajibola and Oluwunmi, 2017). Students often seek advice from friends, family members, or mentors who have attended or know about specific universities. The research with students at Somali University found that friends and parents have influenced the study decision of university selection (Nor, 2018).

### **Learning Environment**

The learning environment has been found to influence students' university selection. The study conducted at Somali University found that the learning environment played a role in influencing students' choices of universities (Nor, 2018). Similarly, the learning environment has been found to lead to the choice of a university among Romanian students (Maniu & Maniu, 2014). The study in Malaysia also suggests a significant relationship between campus facilities and college choice, which can contribute to the overall learning environment (Maniu & Maniu, 2014).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

A quantitative method was applied to design a research study exploring the factors influencing university choice. Quantitative research encompasses various types, including survey design, correlational design, casual comparative design, and experimental design, each with distinct characteristics (Keo, Yoeurn, Prom, Chin, & Em, 2022). The research study utilized a questionnaire to collect quantitative data on various factors influencing university choice, including academic reputation, financial considerations, student support services, campus facilities, learning environment, and the quality of graduates. Developing the questionnaires and materials involved three steps: drafting the questionnaires, testing the questionnaires, and making adjustments to ensure the questionnaires are valid and reliable (Por, 2019). The questionnaire included Likert scale items ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating a strongly disagree statement and 5 indicating a strongly agree statement.

### **Research Procedure:**

To conduct a research study on the factors influencing university choice, follow a procedure that includes defining research objectives, conducting a literature review, determining the research design, selecting participants, collecting data, analyzing data using statistics, interpreting findings, drawing conclusions, and providing recommendations.

### Research Participants

The research participants in this study were selected from Stung Treng Campus, Build Bright University. Three hundred thirty students were easily accessible and available for the researcher to gather data.

### Research Population and Sampling

The population of this research consisted of 741 students (Build Bright University, 2023). In total, 330 students were selected using a convenience approach. The author delivered 330 questionnaires to students in class, and then all the questionnaires were returned to the author.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis involved descriptive and inferential analysis (Bahri, Situmorang, & Darwin, 2022). In this research, two types of SPSS tools were used to analyze the data: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics tools include mean, frequency, and correlation, while inferential statistics include regression.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### Demographic Data

There was a slightly higher representation of female respondents (62.4%) than male respondents (37.6%). The majority of participants were within the age range of 20–24 years old (58.8%), followed by 15–19 years old (22.4%). The majority of the respondents' origins were from Krung Stung Treng (44.8%), followed by Thalaborivath (13.3%) and Sesan (10.3%). A significant proportion (89.4%) of participants held a bachelor's degree, while a smaller proportion (10.6%) had a master's degree.

Table 1. Demographic data of respondents

Demographics	Classification	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sex	Male	124	37.6	37.6	37.6
	Female	206	62.4	62.4	100.0
	Total	330	100.0	100.0	
Age of Respondents	15-19 years old	74	22.4	22.4	22.4
	20-24	194	58.8	58.8	81.2
	25-29	36	10.9	10.9	92.1
	30-34	10	3.0	3.0	95.2
	35-39	11	3.3	3.3	98.5
	40-44	5	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	330	100.0	100.0	
Origin	Krung Stung Treng	148	44.8	44.8	44.8
	Siem Bok	22	6.7	6.7	51.5
	Sesan	34	10.3	10.3	61.8
	Thalaborivath	44	13.3	13.3	75.2
	Borey O' Savy,	17	5.2	5.2	80.3
	Siem Pang	20	6.1	6.1	86.4

	Others	45	13.6	13.6	100.0
	Total	330	100.0	100.0	
Education	Bachelor	295	89.4	89.4	89.4
Degree of	Master	35	10.6	10.6	100.0
Respondents	Total	330	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author, 2023

### Factors Influencing Students' Decisions in Choosing Universities

The correlation Table 2 below reveals the relationships between various predictors (PAR, HST, GRA, COL, LOC, FEE, ENV, and REP) and the outcome variable: Students' Decision in Choosing Universities (SDU). Each correlation coefficient provided valuable insights into the strength and direction of the association between predictors and SDU. The findings indicated that parental influence, high school teachers, quality of graduates, colleague recommendation, location, school fee, learning environment, and reputation significantly correlate with students' decisions in choosing universities. The observed correlations are statistically significant, denoted by a high significance level ( $p < 0.001$ ), reinforcing the reliability of these relationships.

Table 2. Correlation between factors and student decision

Correlations										
		PAR	HST	GRA	COL	LOC	FEE	ENV	REP	SDU
PAR	Pearson Correlation	1	.248**	.290**	.092	.235**	.282**	.220**	.206**	.535**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.094	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
HST	Pearson Correlation	.248**	1	.140*	.334**	.088	.235**	.207**	.166**	.492**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.011	.000	.111	.000	.000	.003	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
GRA	Pearson Correlation	.290**	.140*	1	.154**	.359**	.419**	.372**	.469**	.639**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.011		.005	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
COL	Pearson Correlation	.092	.334**	.154**	1	.167**	.293**	.273**	.205**	.493**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.094	.000	.005		.002	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
LOC	Pearson Correlation	.235**	.088	.359**	.167**	1	.426**	.475**	.511**	.606**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.111	.000	.002		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
FEE	Pearson Correlation	.282**	.235**	.419**	.293**	.426**	1	.530**	.471**	.707**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
ENV	Pearson Correlation	.220**	.207**	.372**	.273**	.475**	.530**	1	.654**	.727**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
REP	Pearson Correlation	.206**	.166**	.469**	.205**	.511**	.471**	.654**	1	.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.003	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
SDU	Pearson Correlation	.535**	.492**	.639**	.493**	.606**	.707**	.727**	.721**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

This study utilized a model summary to assess the association between all independent and dependent variables and evaluate the relationship's magnitude.

Table 3. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.985 <sup>a</sup>	.970	.969	1.317	.970	1286.352	8	321	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), REP, HST, PAR, COL, GRA, LOC, FEE, ENV									
b. Dependent Variable: SDU									

Table 4 on zero-order correlation analysis examined the relationships between independent variables (Parents/Guardians, High School Teachers, Quality of Graduates, Colleagues, Location, School Fee, Learning Environment, and University Reputation) and the dependent variable, Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU).

Parents/Guardians and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between parents or guardians and students' decisions about choosing a university (SDU) is 0.535. It indicated a moderately positive correlation between the influence of parents or guardians and students' decisions about choosing a university. A higher influence from parents or guardians is associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

High School Teachers and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between High School Teachers and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU) is 0.492\*\*. It suggested a moderately positive correlation between the influence of high school teachers and students' decisions about choosing a university. A higher influence of high school teachers is associated with a higher likelihood of students' decisions to choose a particular university.

Quality of Graduates and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between Quality of Graduates and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU) is 0.639\*\*. It indicated a moderately positive correlation between the quality of graduates and students' decisions about choosing a university. A higher perception of the quality of graduates is associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

Colleagues and Students' Decisions in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between colleagues and students' decision to choose university (SDU) is 0.493\*\*. It suggested a moderately positive correlation between the influence of colleagues and students' decisions about choosing a university. A higher influence from colleagues is associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

Location and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between Location and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU) is 0.606\*\*. It indicated a moderately positive correlation between the influence of



location and students' decisions about choosing a university. A more favorable location is associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

School Fee and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between school fees and students' decision to choose a university (SDU) is 0.707\*\*. It suggested a strong positive correlation between the influence of school fees and students' decisions about choosing a university. A lower school fee is associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

Learning Environment and Students' Decisions in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between the learning environment and students' decision to choose a university (SDU) is 0.727\*\*. It indicated a strong positive correlation between the influence of the learning environment and students' decision to choose a university. A more favorable learning environment is associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

University Reputation and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU): The zero-order correlation coefficient between University Reputation and Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU) is 0.721\*\*. It suggested a strong positive correlation between the influence of university reputation and students' decision to choose a university. A better university reputation is associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

In summary, based on the zero-order correlation analysis, all independent variables (Parents/Guardians, High School Teachers, Quality of Graduates, Colleagues, Location, School Fee, Learning Environment, and University Reputation) show positive correlations with the dependent variable, Students' Decision in Choosing University (SDU). It indicates that higher values or positive perceptions of these factors are associated with a higher likelihood of students choosing a particular university.

Table 4. Zero order correlation analysis

Coefficients							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Zero-order Correlation
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.814	.400		7.037	.000	
	PAR	1.106	.050	.232	21.921	.000	.535**
	HST	1.030	.053	.209	19.536	.000	.492**
	GRA	1.501	.082	.212	18.321	.000	.639**
	COL	.993	.054	.195	18.244	.000	.493**
	LOC	.982	.080	.147	12.306	.000	.606**
	FEE	.980	.068	.179	14.370	.000	.707**
	ENV	1.358	.095	.199	14.316	.000	.727**
	REP	1.478	.099	.210	14.941	.000	.721**

a. Dependent Variable: SDU

## Discussion

The findings of this research have confirmed that eight factors significantly impact students' decision-making processes when choosing universities. These factors included parents, high school teachers, graduates, university location, school fees, learning environment, and university reputation. These findings were consistent with previous studies that have explored the various factors influencing students' decisions in selecting universities.

**Parents:** Parents could influence students' decision to choose a university. This research finding was aligned with some studies. Ajbola et al. (2017) found that parents' guidance played a crucial role in shaping students' decisions and preferences for universities. Parental influence plays a significant role in students' decision-making when choosing a university. The study conducted in Bangladesh found that factors such as the students' mothers and family members had an influential role in their choice of university (Islam & Shoron, 2020). Similarly, the study in Malaysia highlighted that family influence was significantly associated with students' decisions to pursue higher education (Jalaluddin, Megan, & Fang, 2019). Furthermore, the study in Vietnam identified that the advice of relatives was one of the critical factors affecting high school students' decisions on choosing universities (Do & Le, 2020).

**High school teachers:** the impact of high school teachers on students' university choices has also been highlighted in previous studies. The findings of this research agreed with another study that demonstrated that positive relationships with teachers and their recommendations influenced students' perceptions and preferences for specific universities (Do & Le, 2020). The education officers have also affected students' selection of universities (Maniu & Maniu, 2014).

**Quality graduates:** The findings of this research emphasize the significance of the quality of graduates in shaping students' university choices. This finding was consistent with studies done with high school students' college and university choice decisions in Qatar, which found that the quality of education influenced students' perceptions and choices of universities (Mustafa, Sellami, Assaad, Elmaghraby, & Al-qassass, 2018). The outcomes and benefits of the study have also affected students' choice of university (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015).

**School/university location:** This study also found that the university's location was one factor that could influence students' decisions in choosing universities. Other researchers supported this research finding. The research carried out among students from seven private institutions in Dhaka, Bangladesh, has confirmed that the location of a school or university could influence students' choices (Emon, Abtahi, & Jhuma, 2023). The study conducted in Bangladesh identified the university's location as one of the influential factors in university choice (Islam & Shoron, 2020). Similarly, the study in Vietnam also highlighted the perception of location as a vital factor affecting high school students' decisions on choosing universities (Do & Le, 2020).

**School fee:** The school fee also predicts students' choice of university. Another study supported this finding. The study has emphasized the impact of school fees on students' decision-making processes (Harahap, Amanah, Gunarto, & Purwanto, 2021). The results of the study conducted in Bangladesh indicate that the cost of tuition and the

availability of scholarships are influential factors in students' university choice processes (Islam & Shoron, 2020). Similarly, the study conducted in Malaysia found that financial considerations, including school costs and scholarships, significantly influenced students' decisions to pursue higher education (Jalaluddin et al., 2019).

Additionally, the content analysis conducted in another study revealed that the program's cost was rated as an important factor in students' decision-making process (Sundarrajh & Zulkfili, 2019). These findings suggest that the financial aspect, including the cost of the program and the availability of scholarships, plays a significant role in students' decisions when choosing universities. In contrast, one study has proven that tuition fees do not have a very high influence on students' decision-making in choosing a university at Botho University in Botswana (Rudhumbu et al., 2017).

**Learning environment:** The results of this research have proven that learning environments are also correlated with students' choice of universities. This research finding agreed with another study that highlighted the influence of location and the physical environment of universities on students' choices (Emon et al., 2023). The study conducted in Vietnam found that the perception of facilities and resources was one of the critical factors affecting high school students' decisions when choosing universities (Do & Le, 2020). The students chose CAGRIC based on several factors, including easy access to learning facilities (Akyina, 2019). It suggests that students consider the quality and adequacy of facilities, such as libraries, laboratories, and study spaces, when making their university choices.

**University reputation:** the university's reputation could affect students' decision to choose universities. Similarly, the findings of another study emphasized the impact of school fees and the reputation of universities on students' decision-making processes (Harahap et al., 2021). The study conducted in Bangladesh found that the university's reputation was one of the main influencing factors for students in their university choice process (Islam & Shoron, 2020). Similarly, the study in Vietnam identified university reputation as one of the critical factors affecting high school students' decisions about choosing universities (Do & Le, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

This research aims to assess eight factors influencing students' decision-making in choosing a university. It was concluded that the five factors - parental involvement, high school teachers, quality of graduates, colleague recommendations, location, school fee, learning environment, and reputation - have influenced students' decision-making in choosing universities. This study contributes to the existing literature on students' decision-making processes when choosing a university. The study provides empirical evidence of the relationships between these factors and students' decisions in choosing universities. It helps to expand our understanding of the critical determinants that shape students' choices. The findings of this study could help universities enhance and promote these aspects to attract prospective students. This study can help researchers understand the underlying mechanisms through which these factors influence decisions.

The limitations of this study are identified as sample representativeness and scope of factors. First, this study has limitations in terms of sample representativeness. The

sample could be limited to certain geographical locations or specific demographic characteristics, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focuses on specific factors identified in the literature. The analysis did not include some factors, including socioeconomic status, cultural background, personal values, or prior knowledge and experiences. The study's findings have several implications for various stakeholders involved in the higher education sector. Universities can use this information to inform their marketing and recruitment strategies. Parents and guardians can leverage this knowledge to engage actively with their children during the university selection process. High school teachers can use this information to guide and recommend university choices to their students. Policymakers can use this information to develop policies and initiatives that support and enhance the identified influential factors. This knowledge can help students make choices that are more likely to lead to a fulfilling and successful university experience. Researchers can explore the underlying mechanisms through which these factors influence decisions and investigate how contextual variables, such as cultural differences or socioeconomic backgrounds, interact with the identified factors.

Some recommendations can be made: universities should establish strong relationships with high schools and actively engage with teachers and counselors. Universities should prioritize creating a positive and conducive learning environment for students. Universities should focus on building and maintaining a solid reputation. Universities should review their fee structures to ensure they are affordable and flexible. Offering scholarships, grants, and financial aid programs can make education more accessible to a broader range of students. Future studies can explore additional factors that may influence decisions, such as cultural differences or socioeconomic backgrounds, which could influence the decision-making process in choosing universities. The study on the relationship between parents' influence and students' choices should be done with parents in order to validate this research finding.

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