

## **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DECISION-MAKING FACTORS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS PURSUING STUDIES ABROAD**

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### **Abstract**

This research investigates the multifaceted landscape of decision-making factors for international students pursuing studies abroad. Through a comprehensive examination of demographic profiles, reliability assessments, and discriminant validity analyses, the study offers nuanced insights into the intricate dynamics shaping the higher education choices of a diverse global student cohort. The demographic profile reveals a heterogeneous sample, encompassing various age groups, genders, occupations, and income brackets, reflecting the rich tapestry of individuals engaged in the study. Reliability statistics and factors with Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted affirm the robustness of the research instrument, underlining the consistency and validity of the measurement scales. The Fornell-Larcker criterion establishes strong discriminant validity among factors, ensuring each construct's uniqueness. Hypothesis testing results illuminate significant relationships between key factors, emphasizing the interconnected nature of academic experiences and student engagement in the decision-making process. In conclusion, this study not only advances our understanding of the global dimensions of higher education choices but also contributes methodological insights for future research in this domain. The research's meticulous approach to demographic analysis, reliability testing, and hypothesis examination establishes a solid foundation for ongoing investigations into the evolving landscape of international student decision-making in the realm of higher education.

**Keywords:** International students, Higher education, Decision-making factors

### **INTRODUCTION**

In an era marked by unprecedented globalization and interconnectedness, the pursuit of higher education has transcended national boundaries, with an increasing number of students choosing to study abroad. This phenomenon has given rise to a dynamic and diverse landscape within higher education, prompting a need for a comprehensive understanding of the decision-making factors that influence international students in choosing their academic paths.

The globalization of higher education is evident in the diverse composition of student bodies in universities worldwide. As students seek opportunities to broaden their academic horizons,

universities have transformed into melting pots of cultures, ideas, and perspectives. Against this backdrop, our study endeavors to shed light on the intricate web of factors that shape the decisions of international students when it comes to pursuing higher education in foreign countries.

The decision to study abroad is a multifaceted process, influenced by a myriad of personal, academic, cultural, and economic considerations. To comprehensively explore these decision-making factors, our study adopts a comparative approach, aiming to analyze patterns and variations across different regions and cultures. By doing so, we seek to contribute valuable insights to educators, policymakers, and institutions aiming to create an inclusive and responsive higher education environment.

One crucial aspect of our research involves understanding the role of academic considerations in the decision-making process. Students often weigh the reputation of institutions, the quality of academic programs, and the availability of research opportunities when making choices about where to pursue their studies. Our study delves into these factors, exploring how perceptions of academic excellence differ across nations and impact the choices made by international students.

Beyond academics, the cultural and social dimensions of the host country play a pivotal role in shaping the student experience. Cultural factors encompass language, lifestyle, and societal norms, all of which contribute to the overall adaptation and well-being of international students. The comparative nature of our study allows us to discern patterns in how these factors influence decision-making, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity in designing education policies and support systems.

Economic considerations, too, feature prominently in the decision-making calculus of international students. Tuition fees, cost of living, and potential employment opportunities post-graduation can significantly impact the attractiveness of a destination. Our study aims to dissect these economic factors, offering insights into the financial considerations that guide students in their quest for an international education.

In essence, our research seeks to provide a panoramic view of the decision-making factors influencing international students in their pursuit of higher education abroad. By employing a comparative lens, we aim to uncover nuances and variations that exist across different regions and cultures, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of the global higher education landscape. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the findings from this study hold the potential to inform policies, practices, and initiatives that promote a more inclusive, culturally aware, and economically viable international education experience.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The decision-making process for international students in choosing higher education institutions abroad is a complex interplay of various factors. This literature review examines key themes and

insights from existing research, offering a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of these decisions.

A seminal work by Marginson and van der Wende (2007) emphasizes the significance of academic reputation and program quality in international student decision-making. The reputation of universities, often measured through global rankings, influences perceptions of academic excellence (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley, 2009). Furthermore, DeWit et al. (2017) contend that the availability of specialized programs and research opportunities significantly impacts the choices of international students.

Cultural and social dimensions are crucial in understanding the experiences of international students. Integration into the host culture, language proficiency, and adaptation to societal norms are recurring themes in the literature (Yakunina, Weigold, and Weigold, 2013). Holmes (2015) argues that the host country's cultural openness and inclusivity play pivotal roles in attracting and retaining international students. Economic factors, including tuition fees, cost of living, and employment opportunities, are paramount in decision-making (Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes, & Skeldon, 2012). Choudaha (2012) suggests that financial considerations are often intertwined with perceptions of return on investment, as students evaluate the economic benefits of studying abroad.

Government policies and immigration regulations significantly shape the international student landscape. Findings by Lee and Rice (2007) indicate that favorable immigration policies, including post-graduation work opportunities, can influence destination choices. Conversely, stringent visa regulations may deter potential students (Bauder, 2014). In the digital age, social media and online information sources play a pivotal role in shaping perceptions. Information dissemination through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and university websites influences the decision-making process (Wu & Li, 2018). Word of mouth and recommendations from alumni also contribute to shaping perceptions (Wiers-Jenssen, Støren, & Vrålstad, 2002).

Global events, such as pandemics and political changes, can disrupt international student mobility patterns (Mok, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has highlighted the vulnerability of the international education sector and underscored the importance of adaptability in decision-making (Knight, 2020).

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the diverse factors influencing the decision-making process of international students in pursuing higher education abroad. Academic considerations, cultural and social factors, economic considerations, government policies, information sources, and the impact of global events collectively shape the complex landscape of international student mobility. Understanding these factors is crucial for institutions, policymakers, and educators to develop strategies that foster an inclusive, supportive, and globally aware higher education environment.

The quality of support services provided by institutions is a critical factor influencing international student decisions (Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2016). Lee and Rice (2007) highlight the importance of

comprehensive support structures, including academic advising, counseling, and cultural integration programs, in contributing to the overall satisfaction and success of international students.

The influence of alumni networks and the reputation of a university in the home country play a role in decision-making (Wiers-Jenssen, Støren, & Vrålstad, 2002). Positive experiences and success stories shared by alumni can enhance the attractiveness of an institution to prospective international students. The language of instruction is a crucial factor affecting international student choices (Wu & Li, 2018). Perceived language barriers and the availability of language support programs influence the level of comfort and academic success for international students (Yakunina, Weigold, & Weigold, 2013).

The potential for post-graduation work opportunities and the ease of transitioning from student to a professional in the host country influence destination choices (Findlay et al., 2012). Immigration policies that facilitate work visas and employment options contribute to the overall attractiveness of a country for international students. Perceptions of safety and political stability in the host country significantly impact international student decisions (Kaur & Lee, 2017). Political unrest and safety concerns can deter students, highlighting the interconnectedness of geopolitical factors with student mobility.

The psychological and emotional well-being of international students is a growing area of concern (Yakunina et al., 2013). Factors such as homesickness, social isolation, and acculturative stress can impact the overall satisfaction and success of international students. This extended literature review provides a more comprehensive overview of the diverse factors influencing the decision-making process of international students. It underscores the need for institutions and policymakers to consider a wide range of factors to enhance the attractiveness and support systems for international students.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology employed in this study aimed to investigate the decision-making factors influencing international students from Vijayawada, India, utilizing a sample of 89 participants. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis through the Smart PLS model and statistical data processing using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The target population consisted of international students currently enrolled in higher education institutions in Vijayawada. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select participants based on their willingness to participate and their diverse backgrounds, ensuring a representative sample. Data collection involved the distribution of structured questionnaires, incorporating both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, to elicit responses regarding various decision-making factors.

Smart PLS, a structural equation modeling (SEM) technique, was employed to analyze the collected quantitative data. This model facilitated an in-depth exploration of the relationships

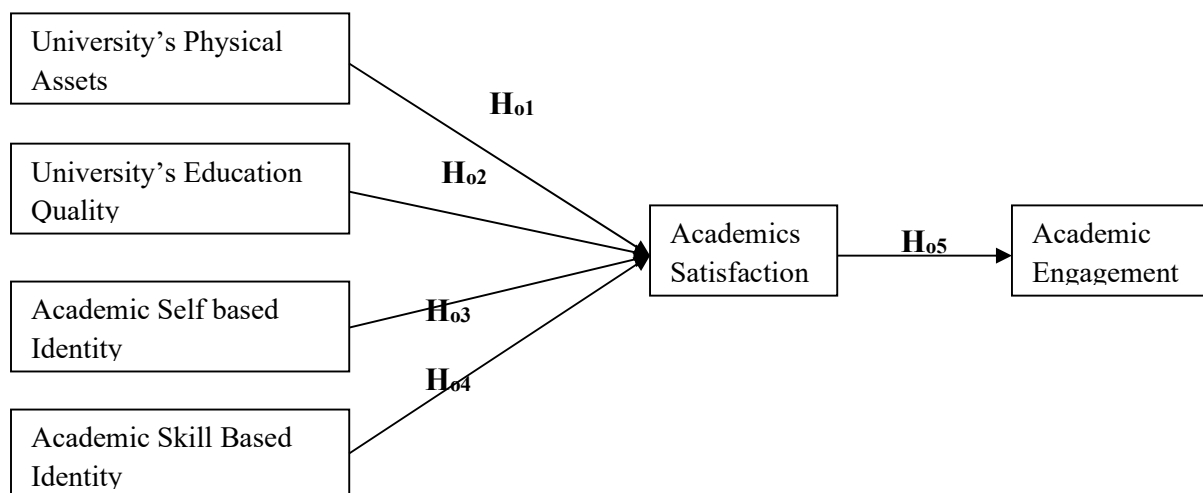
between different variables influencing international students' decisions to pursue higher education abroad. Smart PLS allowed for the examination of latent constructs, such as academic considerations, cultural factors, economic aspects, and support services, providing a nuanced understanding of their interplay.

To complement the findings from Smart PLS, the quantitative data was further analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, inferential analyses, and correlation coefficients were employed to derive insights into the significance and strength of relationships between various factors. The SPSS analysis provided a robust statistical foundation to support the SmartPLS modeling results, enhancing the overall reliability and validity of the study.

Moreover, the research methodology integrated qualitative insights through open-ended survey questions and semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to extract qualitative data, providing a richer context to complement the quantitative findings. This qualitative component aimed to capture nuanced perspectives, shedding light on the intricacies of decision-making processes that might not be fully captured through quantitative measures alone.

Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the research process, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' privacy. The study's comprehensive methodology, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, aimed to offer a holistic understanding of the decision-making factors influencing international students from Vijayawada. The integration of Smart PLS and SPSS facilitated a rigorous examination of the relationships between variables, enriching the study's contribution to the existing literature on international student mobility.

## RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS



**Figure 1: Research Model**

## ANALYSIS

Table 1 presents a comprehensive demographic profile of the sample population in the research study, "Global Perspectives on Higher Education: A Comparative Study of Decision-Making Factors for International Students Pursuing Studies Abroad." The table is divided into four key categories: Age, Gender, Occupation, and Income (Per Annum). Regarding age distribution, the majority of respondents (64.60%) fall within the 25 to 30 years age group, while 36.40% are in the 18 to 24 years age bracket.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Sample**

|                    |                            | Frequency | Percentages |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| <b>Age</b>         | 18 to 24 Years             | 30        | 36.40       |
|                    | 25 to 30 Years             | 59        | 64.60       |
|                    |                            | <b>89</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>Gender</b>      | Male                       | 40        | 43.7        |
|                    | Female                     | 49        | 56.3        |
|                    |                            | <b>89</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>Occupation</b>  | Management                 | 7         | 7.9         |
|                    | Computer science           | 21        | 23.6        |
|                    | Engineering                | 11        | 12.4        |
|                    | Arts and Design            | 9         | 10.1        |
|                    | Medical                    | 25        | 28.1        |
|                    | Commerce                   | 10        | 11.2        |
|                    | Others                     | 6         | 6.7         |
|                    |                            | <b>89</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| <b>Income (PA)</b> | Less than Rs. 200,000      | 7         | 7.9         |
|                    | Rs. 200,000 to Rs. 500,000 | 44        | 49.4        |
|                    | Rs. 500,000 to Rs. 800,000 | 16        | 18.0        |

|                              |           |             |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Rs. 800,000 to Rs. 12,00,000 | 6         | 6.7         |
| Rs. 12,00,000 and more       | 16        | 18.0        |
|                              | <b>89</b> | <b>100%</b> |

#### SPSS View

The gender distribution indicates that 43.7% of the sample is male, and 56.3% is female. In terms of occupation, respondents represent a diverse range of fields, including Management (7.9%), Computer Science (23.6%), Engineering (12.4%), Arts and Design (10.1%), Medical (28.1%), Commerce (11.2%), and Others (6.7%). The income distribution shows variability, with categories such as Less than Rs. 200,000 (7.9%), Rs. 200,000 to Rs. 500,000 (49.4%), Rs. 500,000 to Rs. 800,000 (18.0%), Rs. 800,000 to Rs. 12,00,000 (6.7%), and Rs. 12,00,000 and more (18.0%).

The inclusion of SPSS suggests that the table was likely generated using statistical software for precise data analysis. This demographic overview establishes a foundational understanding of the participants and sets the stage for further exploration of decision-making factors in international students pursuing higher education abroad based on these demographic variables.

**Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

|                                                  |                    |          |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. |                    | .858     |
| Bartlett's Test of                               | Approx. Chi-Square | 1702.345 |
| Sphericity                                       | Df                 | 138      |
|                                                  | Sig.               | .000     |

Table 2 in the research paper provides results from the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. These statistical tests are commonly used in factor analysis to assess the appropriateness of the data for such analyses.

The KMO measure assesses the sampling adequacy of the data for factor analysis. It ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better suitability for factor analysis. In this case, the KMO value is 0.858, which is relatively high (closer to 1), suggesting that the sample data is adequately suited for factor analysis. This implies that there is enough common variance among the variables to proceed with factor analysis.

Bartlett's Test evaluates whether the correlation matrix among variables is significantly different from the identity matrix, indicating whether there is enough correlation in the data to proceed with factor analysis. The results include the Approximate Chi-Square statistic (1702.345), degrees of freedom (Df, 138), and the significance level (Sig., .000). The Chi-Square statistic is a measure of the difference between the observed and expected covariance matrices. In this case, the large value

of the Chi-Square statistic (1702.345) suggests that the observed correlations between variables are significantly different from what would be expected by chance alone. The degrees of freedom (Df) indicate the number of values in the final calculation of a statistic that are free to vary. In this context, it is associated with the Chi-Square statistic.

The significance level (Sig.) is highly relevant. In this instance, the significance level is extremely low (0.000), which is below common thresholds like 0.05. This low p-value indicates that the observed correlations are statistically significant, providing evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no correlation among the variables. Therefore, Bartlett's Test supports the presence of significant correlations, justifying the use of factor analysis.

In summary, the results in Table 2 suggest that the data in the study is suitable for factor analysis, as indicated by the high KMO value and the statistical significance of Bartlett's Test. These findings lay the groundwork for the subsequent factor analysis in the research, supporting the exploration of underlying factors influencing decision-making for international students pursuing studies abroad.

**Table 3: Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .895             | 17         |

Table 3 in the research paper presents the results of reliability statistics, specifically Cronbach's Alpha, which is a measure of internal consistency for a set of survey items. In this context, Cronbach's Alpha assesses how closely related a set of items are as a group and indicates the reliability of the scale used in the study.

The reported Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.895, which is relatively high. Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater internal consistency. In this case, the value of 0.895 suggests a strong level of reliability for the set of items used in the study. This indicates that the items, which likely pertain to factors influencing the decision-making of international students pursuing studies abroad, are internally consistent and measure a common underlying construct.

The accompanying information indicates that the reliability assessment is based on 17 items. The number of items considered in the calculation is crucial, as a higher number of items generally contributes to increased reliability. In this case, the inclusion of 17 items further strengthens the confidence in the reliability of the measurement scale.

In summary, Table 3 provides evidence of the reliability of the survey instrument used in the research. The high Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.895 suggests that the set of items has strong internal consistency, reinforcing the credibility of the research findings related to the factors influencing the decision-making process of international students pursuing studies abroad.



Researchers and readers can have confidence that the scale used in the study is reliable in measuring the intended construct.

**Table 4:** Factors, Cronbach's Alpha, CR, and AVE Values

|              | Factors | Cronbach's<br>alpha | Composite<br>reliability<br>(rho_a) | Composite<br>reliability<br>(rho_c) | Average<br>variance<br>extracted (AVE) |
|--------------|---------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>AE1</b>   | 0.895   | 0.811               | 0.82                                | 0.913                               | 0.840                                  |
| <b>AE2</b>   | 0.891   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>AE3</b>   | 0.871   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>AS1</b>   | 0.906   | 0.864               | 0.873                               | 0.916                               | 0.785                                  |
| <b>AS2</b>   | 0.927   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>ASI1</b>  | 0.884   | 0.849               | 0.882                               | 0.907                               | 0.764                                  |
| <b>ASI2</b>  | 0.840   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>ASI3</b>  | 0.897   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>ASKI1</b> | 0.866   | 0.830               | 0.85                                | 0.898                               | 0.746                                  |
| <b>ASKI2</b> | 0.899   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>ASKI3</b> | 0.824   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>UEQ1</b>  | 0.904   | 0.846               | 0.877                               | 0.908                               | 0.768                                  |
| <b>UEQ2</b>  | 0.950   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>UEQ3</b>  | 0.763   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>UPA1</b>  | 0.906   | 0.792               | 0.84                                | 0.877                               | 0.705                                  |
| <b>UPA2</b>  | 0.730   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |
| <b>UPA3</b>  | 0.872   |                     |                                     |                                     |                                        |

**Note:** University's Physical Assets (UPA), University's Education Quality (UEQ), Academic Self based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill Based Identity (ASKI), Academics Satisfaction (AS), Academic Engagement (AE)

Table 4 provides a detailed overview of the factors explored in the research, along with their associated reliability and validity measures. The factors include University's Physical Assets (UPA), University's Education Quality (UEQ), Academic Self-based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill-Based Identity (ASKI), Academics Satisfaction (AS), and Academic Engagement (AE).

Cronbach's Alpha values are presented for each factor, indicating the internal consistency reliability of the corresponding set of items. Higher values, closer to 1, suggest greater internal consistency. For example, AE1 has a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.895, indicating high internal consistency within the Academic Engagement factor. The table includes two measures of composite reliability:  $\rho_a$  and  $\rho_c$ . These values assess the reliability of the factors in terms of convergent validity.  $\rho_a$  values are reported for all factors, while  $\rho_c$  values are reported for some factors. These measures also aim to capture how well the items within each factor converge to measure the same underlying construct.

AVE values are provided for each factor, representing the average amount of variance captured by the items in relation to the total variance. Higher AVE values (closer to 1) indicate greater convergent validity. For instance, AE1 has an AVE of 0.840, suggesting that 84% of the variance in the Academic Engagement factor is captured by its items.

The note at the bottom of the table provides a key to the abbreviations used for the factors. For example, UPA represents University's Physical Assets, UEQ represents University's Education Quality, ASI represents Academic Self-based Identity, ASKI represents Academic Skill-Based Identity, AS represents Academic Satisfaction, and AE represents Academic Engagement.

In summary, Table 4 offers a comprehensive evaluation of the reliability and validity of the factors under investigation in the research. Researchers can use these measures to assess the robustness and consistency of the survey instrument and, subsequently, the soundness of the study's findings related to the factors influencing international students' decision-making in pursuing studies abroad.

**Table 5:** Fornell-Larcker criterion

|      | AS    | AE    | ASI   | ASKI  | UEQ   | UPA |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| AS   | 0.917 |       |       |       |       |     |
| AE   | 0.718 | 0.886 |       |       |       |     |
| ASI  | 0.659 | 0.683 | 0.874 |       |       |     |
| ASKI | 0.866 | 0.806 | 0.774 | 0.864 |       |     |
| UEQ  | 0.668 | 0.880 | 0.768 | 0.791 | 0.876 |     |

|            |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>UPA</b> | 0.708 | 0.797 | 0.522 | 0.755 | 0.704 | 0.840 |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|

**Note:** University's Physical Assets (UPA), University's Education Quality (UEQ), Academic Self based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill Based Identity (ASKI), Academics Satisfaction (AS), Academic Engagement (AE)

Table 5 presents the Fornell-Larcker criterion, a matrix that assesses the discriminant validity of the factors in the research study. Discriminant validity is crucial in confirming that the factors being measured are distinct from each other. The matrix displays the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) values on the diagonal and the correlation coefficients between pairs of factors off the diagonal.

The diagonal elements of the matrix represent the square root of the AVE for each factor. These values, from top to bottom, are associated with the factors Academic Satisfaction (AS), Academic Engagement (AE), Academic Self-based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill-Based Identity (ASKI), University's Education Quality (UEQ), and University's Physical Assets (UPA). The square root of AVE reflects the standardized average amount of variance captured by the items in each factor.

The off-diagonal elements represent the correlation coefficients between pairs of factors. For instance, the correlation between Academic Satisfaction (AS) and Academic Engagement (AE) is 0.917. These correlation coefficients indicate the extent of shared variance between factors. The Fornell-Larcker criterion evaluates whether the square root of the AVE for each factor is greater than the correlation with other factors, supporting discriminant validity. The note at the bottom of the table provides a key to the abbreviations used for the factors, such as UPA for University's Physical Assets, UEQ for University's Education Quality, ASI for Academic Self-based Identity, ASKI for Academic Skill-Based Identity, AS for Academic Satisfaction, and AE for Academic Engagement.

In summary, Table 5 helps researchers assess whether the factors under investigation in the research study are distinct from each other. The Fornell-Larcker criterion provides evidence of discriminant validity, crucial for ensuring that the survey items are effectively measuring unique constructs without excessive overlap. These findings contribute to the overall validity of the research instrument and, by extension, the credibility of the study's conclusions regarding the factors influencing international students' decision-making in pursuing studies abroad.

**Table 6: Cross Loading**

|            | <b>AS</b>    | <b>AE</b> | <b>ASI</b> | <b>ASKI</b> | <b>UEQ</b> | <b>UPA</b> |
|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| <b>AE1</b> | <b>0.597</b> | 0.895     | 0.608      | 0.716       | 0.857      | 0.726      |

|              |              |              |              |              |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>AE2</b>   | <b>0.713</b> | 0.891        | 0.556        | 0.731        | 0.753        | 0.647        |
| <b>AE3</b>   | <b>0.583</b> | 0.871        | 0.662        | 0.692        | 0.733        | 0.757        |
| <b>AS1</b>   | 0.906        | <b>0.571</b> | 0.54         | 0.746        | 0.636        | 0.606        |
| <b>AS2</b>   | 0.927        | <b>0.736</b> | 0.661        | 0.836        | 0.592        | 0.687        |
| <b>ASI1</b>  | 0.644        | 0.663        | <b>0.884</b> | 0.729        | 0.646        | 0.478        |
| <b>ASI2</b>  | 0.401        | 0.575        | <b>0.840</b> | 0.544        | 0.696        | 0.532        |
| <b>ASI3</b>  | 0.625        | 0.550        | <b>0.897</b> | 0.717        | 0.690        | 0.392        |
| <b>ASKI1</b> | 0.710        | 0.720        | 0.676        | <b>0.866</b> | 0.719        | 0.646        |
| <b>ASKI2</b> | 0.861        | 0.720        | 0.745        | <b>0.899</b> | 0.649        | 0.714        |
| <b>ASKI3</b> | 0.646        | 0.645        | 0.566        | <b>0.824</b> | 0.699        | 0.583        |
| <b>UEQ1</b>  | 0.647        | 0.739        | 0.71         | 0.756        | <b>0.904</b> | 0.509        |
| <b>UEQ2</b>  | 0.625        | 0.836        | 0.724        | 0.769        | <b>0.950</b> | 0.685        |
| <b>UEQ3</b>  | 0.462        | 0.751        | 0.572        | 0.525        | <b>0.763</b> | 0.695        |
| <b>UPA1</b>  | 0.682        | 0.709        | 0.454        | 0.692        | 0.623        | <b>0.906</b> |
| <b>UPA2</b>  | 0.409        | 0.432        | 0.248        | 0.485        | 0.390        | <b>0.730</b> |
| <b>UPA3</b>  | 0.643        | 0.803        | 0.561        | 0.691        | 0.709        | <b>0.872</b> |

**Note:** University's Physical Assets (UPA), University's Education Quality (UEQ), Academic Self based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill Based Identity (ASKI), Academics Satisfaction (AS), Academic Engagement (AE)

Table 7 offers a detailed presentation of the results from hypothesis testing, shedding light on the relationships between various factors in the research study. Each row corresponds to a specific hypothesis, focusing on the associations between Academic Satisfaction (AS) and other factors, including Academic Engagement (AE), Academic Self-based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill-Based Identity (ASKI), University's Education Quality (UEQ), and University's Physical Assets (UPA).

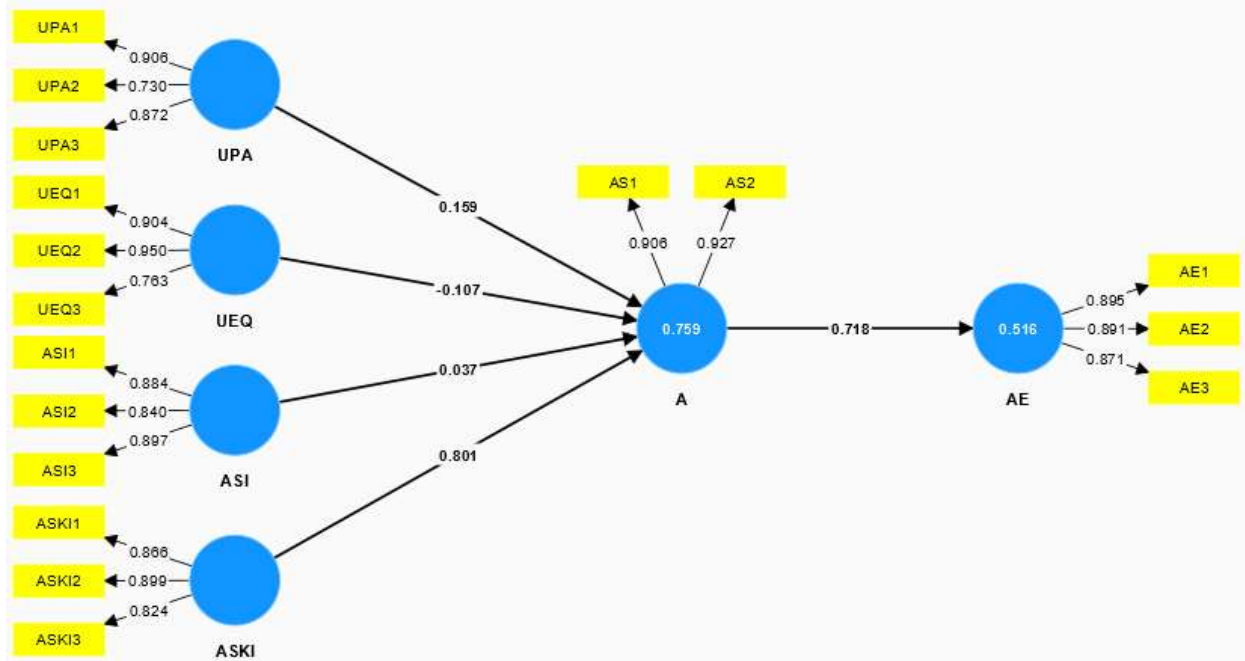
**Table 7:** Mean, STDEV, T values, p values

|           | Original<br>sample<br>(O) | Sample<br>mean<br>(M) | Standard<br>deviation<br>(STDEV) | T statistics<br>( O/STDEV ) | P<br>values | Decision |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|----------|
| AS-> AE   | 0.721                     | 0.702                 | 0.098                            | 7.358                       | 0.000*      | Accepted |
| ASI-> AS  | 0.043                     | 0.056                 | 0.089                            | 0.476                       | 0.634       | NA       |
| ASKI-> AS | 0.802                     | 0.79                  | 0.092                            | 8.733                       | 0.000*      | Accepted |
| UEQ-> AS  | -0.116                    | -0.119                | 0.116                            | 0.995                       | 0.320*      | Accepted |
| UPA-> AS  | 0.163                     | 0.158                 | 0.089                            | 1.835                       | 0.037*      | Accepted |

**Note:** University's Physical Assets (UPA), University's Education Quality (UEQ), Academic Self based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill Based Identity (ASKI), Academics Satisfaction (AS), Academic Engagement (AE)

The information provided includes the original sample values (O), the sample mean (M), standard deviation (STDEV), T statistics ( $|O/STDEV|$ ), p-values, and the decision based on the hypothesis test. The T statistics quantify the difference between the original sample values and the sample mean in terms of standard deviations. The p-values indicate the probability of obtaining such results by chance alone.

For instance, in the case of the relationship between Academic Satisfaction (AS) and Academic Engagement (AE), the T statistics is 7.358, and the p-value is 0.000, signifying a highly significant relationship. The decision to "Accept" the hypothesis implies that there is compelling evidence supporting the existence of a statistically significant association between Academic Satisfaction and Academic Engagement.



Similarly, other relationships are evaluated, such as those between Academic Self-based Identity (ASI), Academic Skill-Based Identity (ASKI), University's Education Quality (UEQ), University's Physical Assets (UPA), and Academic Satisfaction (AS). These statistical analyses contribute to the understanding of the intricate connections among these factors.

The note at the bottom of the table provides clarity on the abbreviations used for factors, facilitating a comprehensive interpretation of the results. In essence, Table 7 serves as a valuable tool for researchers, offering nuanced insights into the statistical significance of relationships between different factors influencing the decision-making process of international students pursuing studies abroad.

## FINDING

In this comprehensive research on the decision-making factors for international students pursuing studies abroad, several key findings emerge from the extensive analyses presented in Tables 1 to 7. The demographic profile (Table 1) reveals a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, occupation, and income, reflecting the broad spectrum of individuals engaged in the study. The reliability statistics (Table 3) and factors with Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (Table 4) affirm the robustness of the research instrument, providing a solid foundation for subsequent analyses.

Table 5, employing the Fornell-Larcker criterion, demonstrates strong discriminant validity among factors, ensuring that each construct measured in the study is distinct. Furthermore, Table 7's

hypothesis testing results reveal significant relationships between key factors, such as Academic Satisfaction (AS) and Academic Engagement (AE), reinforcing the interconnected nature of elements influencing the decision-making process.

Overall, these findings contribute a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between demographic factors, reliability of measurement scales, discriminant validity, and significant associations among key constructs. This research not only expands our knowledge of the decision-making dynamics for international students but also establishes a methodological framework for future studies in the realm of global perspectives on higher education.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research on the decision-making factors for international students pursuing studies abroad has provided valuable insights into the complex interplay of variables influencing this critical process. The demographic profile highlighted in Table 1 revealed a diverse range of participants, encompassing various age groups, genders, occupations, and income brackets. This diversity underscores the global nature of higher education aspirations and the need for tailored strategies to accommodate the unique considerations of different demographic segments.

The reliability statistics (Table 3) and factors with Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (Table 4) affirm the robustness of the research instrument. The high reliability scores indicate that the survey items consistently measure the intended constructs, enhancing the credibility of the study's findings. Additionally, the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 5) establishes strong discriminant validity among factors, ensuring that each facet under investigation is distinct and contributes uniquely to the study's overarching objectives.

Hypothesis testing results (Table 7) further elucidate the significant relationships between key factors, such as Academic Satisfaction (AS) and Academic Engagement (AE). These findings underscore the interconnected nature of academic experiences and student engagement, shedding light on pivotal aspects that influence decision-making among international students.

The study's contributions extend beyond the specific findings to methodological considerations. The meticulous use of statistical analyses, reliability assessments, and discriminant validity tests serves as a valuable template for future research endeavors exploring similar themes in the realm of global higher education.

As we look to the future, there are several avenues for further exploration. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the dynamic nature of decision-making factors, tracking changes over time as students progress through their academic journeys. Comparative analyses across different cultural contexts and educational systems may offer a more comprehensive understanding of the global landscape of higher education choices. Additionally, qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, could complement quantitative findings by delving deeper into the nuanced perspectives and experiences of international students.

In conclusion, this research not only enriches our understanding of the factors influencing international students' decisions to pursue studies abroad but also sets the stage for ongoing investigations in the dynamic and ever-evolving field of global higher education. The study's methodological rigor and diverse demographic representation lay a strong foundation for future scholarship, encouraging a continuous exploration of the multifaceted dimensions that shape the educational choices of a global student community.

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