

Manuscript ID:
TIJCMBLIR-2026-030403

Volume: 3

Issue: 4

Month: August

Year: 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-9191

Submitted: 10 July 2026

Revised: 25 July 2026

Accepted: 08 Aug. 2026

Published: 31 Aug. 2026

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Gnanasubramaniam
Gnanachandran
Email:
gnanachandran@esn.ac.lk

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22844818

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22844818>



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work noncommercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Factors Influencing Students' Selection of the University of Jaffna for Higher Education

Dr. Gnanasubramaniam Gnanachandran

Abstract

This study examines factors influencing students' selection of the University of Jaffna for higher education. A structured questionnaire measured perceptions of academic reputation, financial consideration, cultural compatibility, and programme availability. Data were analysed using Cronbach's alpha, descriptive statistics, Likert-scale analysis, the Friedman test, and correlation analysis. Academic reputation was the most influential factor, followed by cultural compatibility, whereas financial consideration had the least influence. The Friedman test confirmed significant differences among the four factors. Academic reputation was positively associated with cultural compatibility; financial consideration showed significant relationships with cultural compatibility and programme availability. The findings suggest that students prioritise academic quality and a culturally supportive environment over financial concerns. The University should strengthen teaching quality, promote cultural engagement, improve programme awareness, and communicate financial support.

Keywords: Academic Reputation, Cultural Compatibility, Financial Consideration, Program Availability, University Choice, Jaffna University

Background of the Study

Higher education plays a central role in shaping the intellectual, social, and professional development of individuals, with the choice of university profoundly affecting their future opportunities. As Sri Lanka continues to modernize and diversify its higher education sector, students now face an increasingly complex decision-making process, influenced by multiple factors such as academic quality, financial considerations, program offerings, and campus environment. Jaffna University, established in 1974, serves as a vital educational institution for students in the Northern Province, providing access to diverse academic programs in arts, science, law, and social sciences. The university is particularly influential in a region where socio-political challenges and limited access to higher education have historically hindered opportunities. Beyond its academic offerings, Jaffna University's strong cultural ties to the local Tamil community, its commitment to inclusivity, and its role in post-war rebuilding efforts have made it a beacon of hope and a first-choice institution for many students. In recent years, however, university selection has become a multifaceted process, with factors like university reputation, infrastructure, faculty qualifications, and post-graduation employment opportunities taking on increasing importance. Jaffna University's unique position in the Northern Province offers distinct advantages for local students, primarily due to its proximity and cultural alignment. However, in today's competitive educational landscape, students' decisions are not solely based on geographical factors. Academic reputation, the availability of specialized programs, quality of teaching, and infrastructure also play crucial roles in shaping students' choices. Financial considerations, including tuition costs and the availability of scholarships, further influence decision-making, as many students consider affordability when selecting an institution. Additionally, the alignment of a university's values with students' personal goals and aspirations is increasingly becoming a critical determinant.

Despite these observations, empirical research on the specific factors that drive students to choose Jaffna University remains sparse. The decision-making process is often underexplored, particularly in the context of regional influences and unique socio-cultural factors in the Northern Province. By investigating these factors, this study aims to provide a detailed understanding of what drives students to prioritize Jaffna University over other potential options, including institutions in Colombo or Kandy. Selecting the appropriate university is a multifaceted decision for students across Sri Lanka, but it is particularly complex for those in the Northern Province, where regional disparities in access to higher education persist.

How to Cite this Article:

Gnanachandran, G. (2026). Factors Influencing Students' Selection of the University of Jaffna for Higher Education. *The International Journal of Commerce Management and Business Law in International Research*, 3(4), 17–26. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22844818>

Jaffna University plays a central role in providing higher education opportunities to students in this region, yet there remains a significant gap in empirical research regarding the specific factors that influence students' choice of this institution. Factors such as academic reputation, proximity to home, program offerings, campus life, and financial aid all contribute to the decision-making process, but their relative importance remains largely unexplored. While the local appeal of Jaffna University is well recognized, with students often drawn to its proximity and cultural relevance, understanding the full range of factors at play—both internal and external—is critical to improving the university's recruitment strategies and aligning its academic offerings with student expectations. This study seeks to fill this gap by identifying and analyzing the key determinants that shape students' decisions to attend Jaffna University, with implications for the university's strategic development and broader educational policy in Sri Lanka.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the demographic profile of students at Jaffna University.
2. To assess the perceptions and importance of key factors (Academic Reputation, Financial Consideration, Cultural Compatibility, and Program Availability) influencing students' university choice.

To examine differences, variability, and relationships among the key factors influencing students' selection

Literature Review

The literature review examines the key factors influencing students' choice of university, with a focus on Jaffna University as the preferred institution for higher education. Previous studies have identified various academic, financial, social, and personal considerations that shape students' decision-making processes. This review aims to explore the significance of factors such as academic reputation, financial considerations, proximity to home, cultural compatibility, and program availability in the context of Jaffna University. By synthesizing existing research, this review provides a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact to influence students' choices, offering valuable insights for future research and institutional strategies.

1. Academic Reputation

The academic reputation of a university is often regarded as one of the most influential factors in students' decision-making. Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of university reputation in attracting students. According to Maringe (2006), a strong academic reputation is a key driver for students, as it is associated with quality education, faculty expertise, and improved career prospects. Similarly, Wiese et al. (2010) emphasized that students tend to prefer institutions with established reputations for academic excellence, as this often leads to better job opportunities post-graduation. In the case of Jaffna University, its academic standing in

Sri Lanka and its reputation for quality education in specific disciplines likely influence students from the Northern Province in their decision to enroll.

2. Financial Considerations

Financial considerations are another critical factor in the university selection process. The cost of tuition, availability of financial aid, and the potential return on investment in terms of future earnings are major concerns for students and their families. According to Moogan and Baron (2003), financial factors significantly impact students' decisions, especially for those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Financial support in the form of scholarships or affordable tuition fees often determines whether students can pursue higher education. For Jaffna University, which offers relatively affordable education compared to universities in other parts of Sri Lanka, financial considerations such as scholarship availability or low tuition fees could play a significant role in students' choices, particularly for those from economically disadvantaged families (Gunawardena, 2017).

3. Cultural Compatibility

Cultural compatibility has been recognized as a key factor influencing students' decision-making, particularly in contexts where students feel more comfortable in an environment that reflects their cultural background. According to Ashleigh and Janell (2010), students are often drawn to universities that align with their personal values, beliefs, and social norms. In Sri Lanka, where cultural identity plays a significant role, Jaffna University's strong cultural ties to the Tamil community and its emphasis on cultural inclusivity may make it a more attractive choice for students from the Northern Province. The university's focus on fostering a supportive academic and social environment, which respects the local Tamil culture, is likely to resonate with students seeking a sense of belonging (Fernando & Samarasinghe, 2021).

4. Program Availability

The availability of specific academic programs is another crucial factor in the university selection process. Students typically choose institutions based on whether they offer programs that align with their academic interests and career aspirations. Maringe (2006) suggested that students prioritize institutions that offer specialized programs in their fields of interest. For Jaffna University, the diversity of undergraduate and postgraduate programs, particularly in arts, law, and social sciences, makes it an attractive option for students from the Northern Province who may not have access to similar programs in other parts of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the university's focus on addressing the educational needs of marginalized communities in the post-war era enhances its appeal, particularly for students seeking programs that align with both personal and professional development. The literature on factors influencing university choice underscores the complex decision-making process that students face when selecting higher education institutions. Academic

reputation, financial considerations, proximity to home, cultural compatibility, and program availability all play significant roles in shaping students' choices. Jaffna University, with its strong academic reputation, affordable education, cultural relevance, and diverse program offerings, stands out as a key option for students in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Understanding how these factors influence students' decisions can provide valuable insights for the university's strategic planning, recruitment efforts, and future development. The following research will aim to explore and further validate these factors, focusing on students' preferences and their perceptions of Jaffna University as a preferred destination for higher education.

5. Research Gap

Despite extensive research on factors influencing students' university choices, several gaps remain in understanding the specific decision-making processes of students at Jaffna University. While previous studies highlight the importance of academic reputation, financial support, and location, there is limited research on how these factors uniquely apply to Jaffna University, particularly given its location in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Research on the rural-urban divide in Sri Lanka, as highlighted by Gamage et al. (2016) and Mendis (2012), suggests that students from rural areas prioritize proximity to home and affordability. However, the extent to which these factors influence students' choice of Jaffna University, compared to other Sri Lankan institutions, remains underexplored. Additionally, the role of family and peer networks, teaching quality, and the socio-cultural environment at Jaffna University are areas that warrant further investigation. Understanding how these specific local factors affect students' decision-making would offer valuable insights for university recruitment strategies. Moreover, while studies have examined general factors such as financial costs, scholarships, and teaching quality in university selection, there is a lack of research focused on how digital media and online platforms influence prospective students' choices regarding Jaffna University. In today's digital age, students increasingly rely on online resources for information gathering, yet the influence of university websites, social media, and virtual campus tours on students' perceptions of Jaffna University has not been sufficiently addressed. Additionally, the role of campus life, including extracurricular activities and the social environment, in shaping students' decisions remains unexplored. Comparative studies between Jaffna University and other institutions in Sri Lanka could further elucidate unique factors that make Jaffna University an attractive choice for students, providing the university with a clearer understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement in recruitment and retention efforts.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative approach to examine the factors influencing students' choice of the University of Jaffna for higher education. A

descriptive cross-sectional design will be used to identify patterns and relationships in students' perceptions without manipulating any variables. The population consists of all students enrolled at the University of Jaffna. A stratified random sample of 150 students will be selected from different academic disciplines, including humanities, science, and engineering, and from the Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim communities. This approach will ensure adequate representation of important student groups. Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire. It will gather demographic information, such as gender, ethnicity, parental education, academic stream, location, and socio-economic background. It will also include Likert-scale statements measuring academic reputation, financial considerations, cultural compatibility, programme availability, proximity to home, and career prospects. Students' perceptions of the university's contribution to their academic, personal, and professional development will also be assessed. The study focuses on academic reputation, financial considerations, cultural compatibility, and programme availability as the main factors influencing university choice. Demographic characteristics will be treated as background variables. The study assumes that academic reputation, affordability and scholarships, proximity to home, cultural compatibility, and the availability of preferred programmes are significantly associated with students' decision to select the University of Jaffna.

The questionnaire's validity will be supported by ensuring that its items cover the key factors identified in previous studies. Reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency of the items. A value of 0.70 or above will be considered acceptable. Data will be analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations will summarise student characteristics and perceptions. The Friedman test will compare the relative importance of the main factors. Correlation analysis will examine relationships among scale-based variables, while chi-square tests will assess associations between demographic characteristics and students' perceptions. The analysis will identify relationships, but it will not establish causality. Participation will be voluntary and based on informed consent. Participants will be informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time. All responses will be kept confidential, anonymised, and reported only in aggregate form. The study is limited by its sample size, self-reported responses, and focus on a single university. Therefore, the findings may not be fully generalisable to other institutions or regions. Nevertheless, the study is expected to identify the factors that most strongly influence students' choice of the University of Jaffna and to provide recommendations for improving recruitment, programme development, financial support, and student services.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Introduction

The analysis section aims to evaluate the primary factors influencing students' choice of Jaffna University for higher education. Survey responses from 150 students were analyzed across five dimensions: academic reputation, financial considerations, proximity to home, cultural compatibility, and program availability. Each factor was measured using multiple Likert-scale items to capture students' perceptions and priorities. The

findings provide insights into which aspects hold the greatest weight in shaping their university selection decisions.

2. Demographic profile of the students

The demographic profile of respondents was assessed using key background variables. These included gender, parental education level, and whether the student is the first in their family to attend university. In addition, the Advanced Level (A/L) stream studied was also considered to capture educational orientation.

Table 1.1. Demographic profile of the students

No	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
1	Gender		
	Male	78	52
	Female	72	48
3	Parental Education		
	Primary	50	33
	Secondary	42	28
	Tertiary	58	39
5	First person in family University		
	Yes	72	42
	No	78	58
6	A/L stream		
	Science	24	16
	Maths	27	18
	Technology	28	19
	Commerce	43	29
	Arts	28	19

The demographic profile shows a balanced gender distribution with 52% male and 48% female students. In terms of parental education, the largest group had parents with tertiary education (39%), followed by primary (33%) and secondary (28%). A majority (58%) reported that they were *not the first in their family* to attend university, while 42% were first-generation entrants. Regarding Advanced Level (A/L) streams, the highest proportion of students came from Commerce (29%), followed by Technology (19%), Arts (19%), Mathematics (18%), and Science (16%).

This indicates that Jaffna University attracts a diverse student body across disciplines and family backgrounds.

3. Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted to ensure the consistency and stability of the measurement scales used in the study. Cronbach's Alpha was applied as the primary test to assess internal reliability. A higher value of Alpha indicates greater reliability of the constructs measured.

Table 1.2. Reliability analysis of the Likert scale responses

Factors	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Academic Reputation	4	0.907
Financial Consideration	4	0.801
Cultural Compatibility	4	0.844
Program Availability	4	0.767
All Factors	16	0.804

The reliability analysis confirmed that the questionnaire was a consistent measure of factors influencing students' choice of the University of Jaffna. Academic reputation showed excellent reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .907), while cultural compatibility (.844), financial considerations (.801), and programme availability (.767) showed good to acceptable reliability. The overall reliability of all 16 items was also good ($\alpha = .804$). These results indicate that the questionnaire reliably measured students' views on academic quality, financial support, cultural

fit, and available programmes; however, the programme-availability items could be refined in future studies to improve consistency.

4. Likert scale responses for key Statements influencing students' decision to choose Jaffna University for higher education

Likert scale responses were analysed to evaluate students' perceptions across four key factors influencing university choice. These factors included Academic Reputation, Financial Consideration, Cultural Compatibility, and Program Availability.

Each factor was measured using four statements to capture a comprehensive understanding of respondents' opinions.

Table 1.3 Likert scale responses for Academic Reputations

	Academic Reputation	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Tot.
01	"The academic reputation of Jaffna University influenced my decision to choose it."	6 (4)	13 (9)	54 (36)	28 (19)	49 (33)	150 (100)
02	"I considered Jaffna University's reputation for academic excellence before making my decision."	4 (3)	13 (9)	35 (23)	31 (21)	67 (45)	
03	"The quality of education offered by Jaffna University played a significant role in my decision."	7 (5)	18 (12)	29 (19)	39 (26)	57 (38)	
04	"The university's academic ranking and prestige influenced my choice."	10 (7)	20 (13)	34 (23)	26 (17)	60 (40)	

Note: percent is given in bracket.

The results show that academic reputation influenced many students' choice of the University of Jaffna. Positive responses ranged from 52% to 66% across the four statements, with the university's reputation for academic excellence receiving the strongest support (66%). The quality of education was also important to 64% of respondents, while 57%

considered academic ranking and prestige and 52% reported that the university's overall reputation influenced their decision. Although some students were neutral or disagreed, the findings indicate that academic reputation, educational quality, and institutional prestige were important factors in university selection.

Table 4.4 Likert scale responses for Financial Consideration

	Financial Consideration	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Tot.
01	"The cost of tuition was an important factor in my decision to choose Jaffna University."	63 (42)	46 (31)	31 (21)	9 (6)	1 (7)	150 (100)
02	"The availability of scholarships and financial aid influenced my choice to attend Jaffna University."	50 (33)	47 (31)	29 (19)	14 (9)	10 (7)	
03	"I considered the affordability of Jaffna University when making my decision."	68 (45)	40 (27)	27 (18)	12 (8)	3 (2)	
04	"Financial support options at Jaffna University made it easier for me to decide to attend."	51 (34)	42 (28)	31 (21)	19 (13)	7 (5)	

Note: percent is given in bracket.

When asked whether the cost of tuition was an important factor in their decision to choose Jaffna University, 42% strongly disagreed and 31% disagreed, making it clear that for the majority of students, tuition costs were not a major consideration. Only a small percentage, 6% agreed and 7% strongly agreed, while 21% remained neutral. Tuition affordability did not appear to be a critical concern for most students in selecting Jaffna University.

Regarding the availability of scholarships and financial aid, 33% strongly disagreed and 31% disagreed, totaling 64% of respondents who did not view these as influencing their choice. About 19% remained neutral, while only 16% expressed agreement. Although scholarships and financial aid exist, they were not perceived as a decisive factor by most students, possibly due to limited awareness, eligibility, or accessibility.

In considering the affordability of Jaffna University, 45% strongly disagreed and 27% disagreed, with a combined 72% indicating that affordability did not influence their decision. Only 10% agreed or strongly agreed, while 18% were neutral. The results suggest that students generally perceive Jaffna University as affordable, making cost considerations less influential in their decision-making.

On the matter of financial support options, 34% strongly disagreed and 28% disagreed, showing that 62% of students did not find these options significant in their decision to attend. About 21% were neutral, and 18% agreed or strongly agreed. Although financial support mechanisms are available, they did not play a major role in influencing students' decisions, indicating they may be underutilized or not widely impactful.

Table 1.5 Likert scale responses for Cultural Compatibility

	Cultural Compatibility	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Tot.
01	"The cultural environment at Jaffna University aligned with my personal values."	20 (13)	25 (17)	37 (25)	48 (32)	20 (13)	150 (100)
02	"Jaffna University's focus on local traditions and culture influenced my decision."	11 (7)	25 (17)	30 (20)	29 (19)	55 (37)	
03	"I felt that Jaffna University's campus culture would make me feel more at home."	5 (3)	21 (14)	35 (23)	36 (24)	53 (35)	
04	"The university's strong connection to the local community influenced my choice."	10 (7)	29 (19)	34 (23)	27 (18)	50 (33)	

Note: percent is given in bracket.

The findings show that cultural compatibility influenced many students' choice of the University of Jaffna. Positive responses ranged from 45% to 59% across the four statements. Students most strongly agreed that the campus culture made them feel at home (59%) and that the university valued local traditions and culture (56%). In addition, 51% valued the university's connection with the local community,

while 45% felt that its cultural environment aligned with their personal values.

Although cultural compatibility was important for many respondents, a considerable proportion remained neutral or disagreed. Disagreement ranged from 17% for campus culture to 30% for alignment with personal values. Overall, the findings suggest that the university's local culture, welcoming environment, and community connection were important influences, but students' experiences of cultural fit varied.

Table 1.6 Likert scale responses for Program Availability

	Program Availability	SDA	DA	N	A	SA	Tot.
01	"The availability of my preferred academic program was a key factor in choosing Jaffna University."	16 (11)	25 (17)	47 (31)	42 (28)	20 (13)	150 (100)
02	"Jaffna University offered the academic programs that best matched my career goals."	14 (9)	24 (16)	52 (35)	33 (22)	27 (18)	
03	"The variety of courses available at Jaffna University influenced my decision to attend."	15 (10)	32 (21)	43 (29)	34 (23)	26 (17)	
04	"The academic programs at Jaffna University were a deciding factor in my choice."	34 (23)	42 (28)	35 (23)	25 (17)	14 (9)	

Note: percent is given in bracket.

The findings show mixed views on programme availability as a factor in choosing the University of Jaffna. About 41% of students considered the availability of their preferred programme important, while 40% believed that the university's programmes matched their career goals. Course variety also received 40% positive responses. However, many students were neutral or disagreed, suggesting that programme-related preferences differed among respondents.

Academic programmes were not the main deciding factor for many students: only 26% agreed that they directly influenced their choice, while 51% disagreed. This indicates that, although preferred programmes, career alignment, and course variety were important

for some students, other factors played a stronger role in their decision to choose the University of Jaffna.

5. Mean and Standard deviation for key Statements influencing students' decision to choose Jaffna University for higher education

The mean and standard deviation were calculated to identify the central tendency and variability of key statements influencing students' decision to choose Jaffna University for higher education. The mean values highlight the overall level of agreement with each factor, while the standard deviation indicates the consistency of responses among students. This analysis provides deeper insight into the relative importance and perception of different influencing factors.

Table 1.7
Mean and Standard deviation for key Statements influencing students' decision to choose Jaffna University for higher education

			Mean	SD
1	Academic Reputation	"The academic reputation of Jaffna University influenced my decision to choose it."	3.67	1.138
2		"I considered Jaffna University's reputation for academic excellence before making my decision."	3.96	1.129
3		"The quality of education offered by Jaffna University played a significant role in my decision."	3.81	1.202
4		"The university's academic ranking and prestige influenced my choice."	3.71	1.298
5	Financial Consideration	"The cost of tuition was an important factor in my decision to choose Jaffna University."	1.93	.963
6		"The availability of scholarships and financial aid influenced my choice to attend Jaffna University."	2.25	1.204
7		"I considered the affordability of Jaffna University when making my decision."	1.95	1.067
8		"Financial support options at Jaffna University made it easier for me to decide to attend."	2.26	1.190
9	Cultural Compatibility	"The cultural environment at Jaffna University aligned with my personal values."	3.15	1.241
10		"Jaffna University's focus on local traditions and culture influenced my decision."	3.61	1.325
11		"I felt that Jaffna University's campus culture would make me feel more at home."	3.74	1.178
12		"The university's strong connection to the local community influenced my choice."	3.52	1.309
13	Program Availability	"The availability of my preferred academic program was a key factor in choosing Jaffna University."	3.17	1.178
14		"Jaffna University offered the academic programs that best matched my career goals."	3.23	1.195
15		"The variety of courses available at Jaffna University influenced my decision to attend."	3.16	1.232
16		"The academic programs at Jaffna University were a deciding factor in my choice."	2.62	1.262

Academic Reputation

The results show that academic reputation was the most influential factor in students' decision-making. The highest mean was recorded for "*I considered Jaffna University's reputation for academic excellence before making my decision*" ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 1.129$), followed by "*The quality of education offered*" ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.202$) and "*The university's academic ranking and prestige*" ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.298$). Similarly, the general perception of reputation ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.138$) scored highly. These consistently high means (ranging 3.67–3.96) with moderate standard deviations confirm that students view academic excellence and prestige as strong motivators for choosing Jaffna University.

Financial Consideration

Financial aspects were the least influential among the four factors. The lowest mean overall was recorded for "*The cost of tuition was an important factor*" ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 0.963$), followed by "*Affordability*" ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.067$). Similarly, statements on "*Scholarships and financial aid*" ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.204$) and "*Financial support options*" ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.190$) also showed low agreement. These results suggest that financial considerations were not

decisive in influencing student choices, possibly due to the perception that Jaffna University is already relatively affordable.

Cultural Compatibility

Cultural-related factors showed moderate influence. The highest mean was observed for "*Campus culture made me feel more at home*" ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.178$), followed by "*Focus on local traditions and culture*" ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.325$) and "*Connection to the local community*" ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.309$). The statement "*Cultural environment aligned with personal values*" scored lower ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.241$). Overall, cultural compatibility appears to have played an important but secondary role compared to academic reputation.

Program Availability

Program-related factors showed mixed responses. "*Programs matched my career goals*" ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.195$), "*Availability of preferred academic program*" ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.178$), and "*Variety of courses*" ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.232$) indicate moderate agreement. However, "*Academic programs were a deciding factor*" recorded a relatively low mean ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.262$), suggesting that while program

availability was somewhat influential, it was not perceived as the most decisive criterion.

6. Mean and Standard deviations for key factors influencing students' decision to choose Jaffna University for higher education

Table 1.8.

Mean and Standard deviations for key factors influencing students' decision to choose Jaffna University for higher education

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic Reputation	11.7067	2.93680
Financial Consideration	11.4733	2.50288
Cultural Compatibility	11.9133	2.67209
Program Availability	12.2733	2.86824

The findings show that programme availability, cultural compatibility, academic reputation, and financial considerations all influenced students' choice of the University of Jaffna. Programme availability was the strongest factor ($M = 12.27$, $SD = 2.87$), indicating that students prioritised preferred courses and academic opportunities. Cultural compatibility ($M = 11.91$, $SD = 2.67$) and academic

The mean and standard deviation were calculated to examine the relative importance and consistency of key factors influencing students' decision to choose Jaffna University for higher education. This analysis helps identify which factors were most and least influential in students' university selection.

reputation ($M = 11.71$, $SD = 2.94$) were also important, reflecting students' concern for cultural belonging and educational quality. Financial considerations had the lowest mean score ($M = 11.47$, $SD = 2.50$), but affordability, tuition costs, and scholarships still influenced decisions. Overall, programme availability was the main driver of university choice.

7. Friedman Test on Differences Among Factors Affecting Students' Choice of Jaffna University

Table 1.9 Friedman Test for Differences in Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Jaffna University

Factors	Mean	Chi-Square	DF	P-Value
Academic Reputation	3.24	187.079	3	0.000
Financial Consideration	1.37			
Cultural Compatibility	2.92			
Program Availability	2.46			

Table 4.9 shows significant differences in the importance students assigned to the factors influencing their choice of the University of Jaffna, $\chi^2(3) = 187.079$, $p < .001$. Academic reputation was the most influential factor (mean rank = 3.24), followed by cultural compatibility (2.92), programme availability (2.46), and financial consideration (1.37). These findings indicate that students give greater priority to academic reputation and cultural fit than to financial factors and programme availability. The Friedman Test confirms statistically significant differences in the perceived importance of the factors, highlighting that academic reputation and cultural

compatibility are the primary drivers of students' university choice.

8. Correlation Test for checking relationships among the factors

The correlation test was conducted to examine the relationships among the key factors influencing students' choice of Jaffna University. This analysis helps determine the strength and direction of associations between Academic Reputation, Financial Consideration, Cultural Compatibility, and Program Availability. Understanding these relationships provides insight into how these factors may interact in shaping students' decision-making.

Table 1.10: Correlation Matrix of Factors Influencing Students' Choice of Jaffna University

Factors	Academic Reputation	Financial Consideration	Cultural Compatibility	Program Availability
Academic Reputation	1	0.112 (0.171)	0.453(0.000)	0.152 (0.64)
Financial Consideration		1	0.387(0.00)	0.242 (0.003)
Cultural Compatibility			1	0.152 (0.64)
Program Availability				1

Correlation analysis showed that academic reputation was moderately and positively associated with cultural compatibility ($r = .453$, $p < .001$), while financial consideration was positively related to cultural compatibility ($r = .387$, $p < .001$) and programme availability ($r = .242$, $p = .003$). In contrast, the relationships between academic reputation and financial consideration, academic reputation and programme availability, and cultural compatibility and programme availability were weak and not statistically significant. Overall, academic reputation

and cultural compatibility were the most closely related factors, whereas financial and programme-related factors were relatively independent in students' decision-making.

9. Hypothesis of the study

The Friedman test examined whether students differed in the importance they assigned to academic reputation, financial consideration, cultural compatibility, and programme availability. The null hypothesis stated that there was no significant

difference among these factors. As the result was significant, $\chi^2(3) = 187.079$, $p < .001$, the null hypothesis was rejected. Academic reputation had the highest mean rank (3.24), followed by cultural compatibility (2.92), programme availability (2.46), and financial consideration (1.37). Therefore, academic and cultural factors were more important than financial considerations in students' choice of the University of Jaffna. The relationship between academic reputation and financial consideration was very weak and not statistically significant ($r = .112$, $p = .171$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This result indicates that students' views of the university's academic reputation were not meaningfully related to their financial considerations. Academic reputation and cultural compatibility had a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship ($r = .453$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. Students who placed greater importance on the university's academic reputation also tended to value its cultural compatibility. The relationship between academic reputation and programme availability was weak and not statistically significant ($r = .152$, $p = .064$). Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This suggests that students' assessment of academic reputation was largely independent of their views on available programmes. Financial consideration was positively and significantly related to cultural compatibility ($r = .387$, $p < .001$) and programme availability ($r = .242$, $p = .003$). The null hypotheses were rejected in both cases. Students who considered affordability and financial support also tended to consider cultural suitability and the availability of academic programmes. Cultural compatibility and programme availability showed a weak, non-significant relationship ($r = .152$, $p = .064$); therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected. Overall, the findings show that academic reputation and cultural compatibility were the most closely related factors, while financial consideration had smaller but significant links with cultural compatibility and programme availability.

Conclusion

The study found that academic reputation and cultural compatibility were the main factors influencing students' choice of the University of Jaffna, while financial considerations and programme availability had comparatively less influence. The reliability, descriptive, Friedman-test, and correlation results confirmed that students prioritised academic quality and a culturally supportive environment. Academic reputation and cultural compatibility were closely related, whereas financial and programme-related factors were relatively independent.

1. Recommendations and Future Research

The university should strengthen teaching quality, research, faculty development, cultural engagement, and community connections. It should also improve communication about available programmes, career opportunities, scholarships, and financial aid. Future studies may examine additional

factors such as campus facilities, faculty reputation, extracurricular activities, and career placement, using comparative, longitudinal, or qualitative approaches to gain deeper insight into student decision-making.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported and contributed to the successful completion of this study on "Factors Influencing Students' Selection of the University of Jaffna for Higher Education." First and foremost, I am deeply thankful to the students of the University of Jaffna who participated in the study and provided valuable information through the structured questionnaire. Their cooperation and willingness to share their perceptions made this research possible.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References:

1. Ashleigh, T., & Janell, L. (2010). The role of communication sources in students' university decision-making process. *Journal of Higher Education*, 15(2), 120–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057311003724592>
2. Babad, E. Y., & Taybe, M. (2003). The role of teaching style in students' academic success. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(2), 249–263.
3. Beach, L. R., & Mitchell, T. R. (1987). Image theory: An alternative to prospect theory. In *Decision making and problem solving* (pp. 71–92). Academic Press.
4. Curran, C. R., & Rosen, M. E. (2006). The influence of teachers on student subject choices. *Educational Psychology Review*, 18(4), 97–110.
5. Feldman, R. S. (1990). *Attitudes and perceptions: A cognitive approach to decision-making*. Wiley.
6. Fernando, S., & Samarasinghe, A. (2021). Cultural inclusivity and university choice: The case of Jaffna University. *Journal of Educational Development*, 28(4), 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jedudev.2021.03.004>
7. Gamage, A., et al. (2016). Determinants of university choice in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lankan Journal of Education*, 8(1), 15–23.
8. Gunawardena, D. (2017). Financial considerations and university choice in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 19(1), 77–91. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25253810>
9. Gunawardena, S. (2017). Factors influencing university choices in Sri Lanka. *Higher Education Review*, 22(2), 37–44.
10. Maringe, F. (2006). University and course choice: Implications for positioning and marketing higher education. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 19(4), 349–369. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09513550610666041>

11. Matusovich, H. M., et al. (2010). Understanding personal goals in educational decision-making. *Journal of Higher Education*, 81(2), 205–223.
12. Mendis, M. (2012). Proximity and preference: Factors influencing the choice of higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. *South Asian Education Journal*, 16(2), 91–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20790714.2012.1265942>
13. Moogan, Y. J., & Baron, S. (2003). An analysis of student choice in the UK higher education market. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 25(1), 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080032000043802>
14. Von Mizener, M., & William, S. (2011). Academic performance and university choice. *Higher Education Studies*, 18(3), 299–312.
15. Vrontis, D., et al. (2007). Factors affecting student decisions: A cross-national comparison. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(6), 450–467.
16. Wiese, M., Pieters, R., & Dijkstra, M. (2010). The role of teaching quality in students' decision-making process: A longitudinal study. *Educational Research Journal*, 34(2), 112–125. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654310040195>
17. Wilhelm, P. (2004). Teacher impact on student subject preference. *Educational Psychology Review*, 9(3), 47–55.