

**MOTIVATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION OF  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TOWARDS INDIA AS A STUDY  
DESTINATION**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, hereby declared that the presented work in the thesis entitled “MOTIVATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TOWARDS INDIA AS A STUDY DESTINATION” in fulfilment of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Pooja Khanna, working as Associate Professor, in the Mittal School of Business of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgements have been made whenever work described here has been based on findings of other investigator. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



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## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled “MOTIVATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TOWARDS INDIA AS A STUDY DESTINATION ” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the Mittal School of Business, is a research work carried out by Tarun Bhatara, 41800760, is bonafide record of his/her original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the key factors influencing international students' decision to choose India as their study destination, addressing a significant gap in existing academic research. It aims to identify the primary motivations driving these choices and empirically test a conceptual framework that examines the relationships between motivations, student experiences, perceived value, and overall satisfaction. A particular focus is placed on the role of acculturation as a moderating factor in shaping these experiences.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis. Qualitative insights were gathered through in-depth interviews with 50 international students currently studying in India or considering it as a destination. These interviews explored students' personal motivations, experiences, and perceptions of studying in India. Quantitative data were collected through surveys from a diverse sample of 1,000 international students enrolled in various Indian universities. This approach ensured a representative and balanced examination of international students' perspectives.

Findings from factor analysis identified three primary motivational dimensions: academic quality and reputation, financial considerations, and socio-cultural factors. The affordability of education and availability of scholarships were the most influential financial motivators, while career value was a major academic consideration.

A comparative analysis based on geographical background revealed significant differences in student motivations. Students from neighbouring countries prioritized cultural familiarity and proximity, while those from non-Asian regions were more influenced by India's academic offerings and affordability. Further, the study highlighted variations in students' emphasis on academic reputation, financial accessibility, socio-cultural environment, career prospects, and institutional structures such as immigration policies and administrative processes. These regional distinctions confirm that motivations vary significantly by students' country of origin.

The study also investigated the impact of student experiences, university reputation, and economic costs on the perceived value of studying in India. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze these relationships. Results demonstrated that

student experiences, university reputation, and financial considerations significantly shape students' perceived value of studying in India. Acculturation played a moderating role in the relationship between student experiences and perceived value, highlighting the importance of cultural adaptation in shaping overall perceptions.

The study examined the relationship between perceived value and student satisfaction, revealing a strong positive correlation. Students who perceived their education in India as offering a favourable cost-benefit ratio reported higher levels of satisfaction. Moreover, the mediating role of perceived value between motivational factors and satisfaction was confirmed, emphasizing its significance in shaping international students' overall experience.

The Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) further reinforced the critical role of perceived value in influencing student satisfaction, with perceived value exhibiting the highest importance score. Experience emerged as a high-performing construct, indicating that international students perceive their academic and social experiences in India positively. While its importance score is moderate, institutions should maintain these standards while also focusing on constructs with higher importance but relatively lower performance, such as university reputation. University reputation, with a moderate importance score but a slightly lower performance, highlights the need for strengthening institutional branding and global academic partnerships.

Acculturation, recording the lowest importance score and exhibited the lowest performance, indicating substantial room for improvement in cultural adaptation support. While it has a minimal impact on overall satisfaction, universities should assess whether cultural integration programs, language assistance, and peer support initiatives can improve international student adaptation and well-being.

Beyond the statistical analysis, qualitative findings provided deeper insights into students' lived experiences. While many students praised the affordability and academic rigor of Indian universities, challenges such as limited post-study work opportunities, visa restrictions, and safety concerns particularly among female students were identified as barriers to a more positive student experience. The study underscores the need for targeted institutional policies and government interventions to address these challenges and improve India's appeal as a global education hub.

The study also found that despite concerns about global recognition of Indian degrees, particularly in Western markets, many international students value India's growing reputation in specialized fields such as engineering and technology. Strengthening international collaborations, enhancing institutional rankings, and improving career placement services could further elevate India's position as a preferred education destination.

Overall, this research provides valuable insights for policymakers, universities, and other stakeholders seeking to enhance India's attractiveness as a higher education destination. The findings highlight the importance of understanding regional differences in student motivations, improving institutional reputation, offering financial incentives, and creating a supportive cultural environment for international students. The study presents strategic recommendations for higher education institutions and government authorities, advocating for targeted interventions to attract and retain a diverse and globally competitive international student population.

### **Research Objectives**

To explore the motivational factors of international students in selecting India as a study destination.

To compare the motivations of international students selecting India as a study destination based on the students' place of origin.

To examine the impact of international students' experience, university reputation, and economic cost on the perceived value of India as an education destination.

To examine the moderating effect of acculturation between perceived value and experience of international students in India.

To analyze the impact of value perceived by international students studying in India on their satisfaction.

### **Research Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1:** The motivations driving international students to select India differ significantly based on their geographical origins.

This hypothesis seeks to determine whether the factors motivating students from

different regions to choose India vary and whether recruitment strategies need to be tailored to address these differences.

**Hypothesis 2a:** International students' experiences significantly affect their perceived value of India as a study destination.

This hypothesis evaluates the relationship between students' on-the-ground experiences and how they perceive the overall value of studying in India, potentially offering insights for improving institutional practices and student services.

**Hypothesis 2b:** The reputation of Indian universities significantly impacts the perceived value of India as a study destination.

This hypothesis examines how factors like academic prestige and global rankings of institutions influence international students' perceptions regarding the value of obtaining an education in India.

**Hypothesis 2c:** The economic cost of studying in India significantly impacts the perceived value of India as a study destination.

This hypothesis examines whether financial factors, including tuition fees and living costs, influence how international students perceive the value of studying in India, reflecting the broader role of economic considerations in educational choices.

**Hypothesis 2d:** The quality of education in Indian institutions significantly impacts the experience of international students in India.

This hypothesis examines how academic standards, faculty competence, and curriculum relevance shape international students' overall experiences during their studies in India.

**Hypothesis 2e:** Administrative support in Indian institutions significantly impacts the experience of international students in India.

This hypothesis evaluates how institutional services such as visa assistance, onboarding processes, and responsiveness influence international students' experiences in India.

**Hypothesis 2f:** The socio-cultural environment in India significantly impacts the experience of international students.

This hypothesis investigates how cultural diversity, local attitudes, social integration, and language influence the everyday experiences of international students in India.

**Hypothesis 2g:** The infrastructure of Indian institutions significantly impacts the experience of international students in India.

This hypothesis explores how facilities such as classrooms, libraries, internet access, and hostels contribute to shaping the academic and social experiences of international students in India.

**Hypothesis 3:** Acculturation moderates the relationship between international students' experiences and their perceived value of India as an educational destination.

This hypothesis examines how students' cultural adaptation to India affects the relationship between their experiences and their assessment of India's value as a study location.

**Hypothesis 4:** The perceived value of India as an educational destination plays a crucial role in influencing the satisfaction levels of international students.

This hypothesis investigates whether students who perceive a higher value in their education in India also report higher levels of satisfaction, suggesting that perceived value may be a key determinant of student satisfaction.

Through the testing of these hypotheses and the application of an empirical framework, this research provides significant contributions to the field of international education. By highlighting key motivational drivers, regional variations, and institutional factors affecting student satisfaction, the study offers practical recommendations for strengthening India's position as a competitive global education destination. The insights gained emphasize the need for improved financial support, enhanced university reputation, and stronger cultural integration mechanisms to attract and retain international students.



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## ABBREVIATION INDEX

| Sl. No. | Abbreviation | Full Form                                 |
|---------|--------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1       | AC           | Acculturation                             |
| 2       | AICTE        | All India Council for Technical Education |
| 3       | AIM          | Atal Innovation Mission                   |
| 4       | AISHE        | All India Survey on Higher Education      |
| 5       | AMU          | Aligarh Muslim University                 |
| 6       | ANOVA        | Analysis of Variance                      |
| 7       | AS           | Administrative Support                    |
| 8       | ASEAN        | Association of Southeast Asian Nations    |
| 9       | C            | Cultural Integration                      |
| 10      | COVID-19     | Coronavirus Disease 2019                  |
| 11      | DASA         | Direct Admission of Students Abroad       |
| 12      | Df           | Degrees of Freedom                        |
| 13      | Dr.          | Doctor                                    |
| 14      | EC           | Economic Considerations                   |
| 15      | EFA          | Exploratory Factor Analysis               |
| 16      | EQ           | Education Quality                         |
| 17      | E-VBAB       | E-Vidya Bharti and E-Arogya Bharti        |
| 18      | EX           | Experience                                |
| 19      | GDP          | Gross Domestic Product                    |
| 20      | GER          | Gross Enrolment Ratio                     |
| 21      | GIAN         | Global Initiative of Academic Networks    |
| 22      | ICCR         | Indian Council for Cultural Relations     |
| 23      | IIM          | Indian Institute of Management            |
| 24      | IISc         | Indian Institute of Science               |
| 25      | IIT          | Indian Institute of Technology            |
| 26      | IN           | Infrastructure                            |



|    |         |                                                        |
|----|---------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 27 | IOE     | Institution of Eminence                                |
| 28 | IPMA    | Importance-Performance Map Analysis                    |
| 29 | JNU     | Jawaharlal Nehru University                            |
| 30 | KMO     | Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy        |
| 31 | LPU     | Lovely Professional University                         |
| 32 | MERUs   | Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities  |
| 33 | MIT     | Massachusetts Institute of Technology                  |
| 34 | Mr.     | Mister                                                 |
| 35 | NBA     | National Board of Accreditation                        |
| 36 | NEAT    | National Education Alliance for Technology             |
| 37 | NEP     | New Education Policy                                   |
| 38 | NIRF    | National Institutional Ranking Framework               |
| 39 | NIT     | National Institutes of Technology                      |
| 40 | NRI     | Non-Resident Indian                                    |
| 41 | OECD    | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| 42 | PBD     | Pravasi Bharatiya Divas                                |
| 43 | PCA     | Principal Component Analysis                           |
| 44 | PGP     | Post Graduate Program                                  |
| 45 | Ph.D.   | Doctor of Philosophy                                   |
| 46 | PIO     | Person of Indian Origin                                |
| 47 | PLS-SEM | Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling    |
| 48 | PPP     | Public-Private Partnership                             |
| 49 | PV      | Perceived Value                                        |
| 50 | p-value | Probability Value                                      |
| 51 | QS      | Quacquarelli Symonds                                   |

|    |          |                                                             |
|----|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 52 | SA       | Satisfaction                                                |
| 53 | SD       | Standard Deviation                                          |
| 54 | SDGs     | Sustainable Development Goals                               |
| 55 | SE       | Standard Error                                              |
| 56 | SEM      | Structural Equation Modelling                               |
| 57 | SEO      | Search Engine Optimization                                  |
| 58 | SII      | Study in India                                              |
| 59 | SPARC    | Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration |
| 60 | SPSS     | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences                 |
| 61 | STEM     | Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics           |
| 62 | S-Visa   | Student Visa                                                |
| 63 | SWAYAM   | Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds      |
| 64 | T        | T-Statistic                                                 |
| 65 | TISS     | Tata Institute of Social Sciences                           |
| 66 | t-test   | Independent Samples t-test                                  |
| 67 | UGC      | University Grants Commission                                |
| 68 | UR       | University Reputation                                       |
| 69 | USD      | United States Dollar                                        |
| 70 | $\chi^2$ | Chi-square                                                  |

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

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### **1.1 Chapter Outline**

The higher education sector in India is undergoing significant transformation, with a growing focus on internationalization. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, alongside various government initiatives, seeks to boost the global appeal and competitiveness of India's education system, positioning the country as a more desirable destination for international students. However, despite these efforts, the country continues to face challenges, including visa complexities, cultural adaptation, and the limited global recognition of Indian degrees, which hinder the growth of inbound student mobility.

This study explores the key elements shaping India's higher education landscape and its attempt to get international students. It starts by exploring the historical growth of Indian higher education, role of governing authorities, and the impact of NEP 2020. Comparisons are made between India and other popular study destinations to highlight where India stands in the global education market. The study then delves into the strategies for internationalization, including policies, collaborative programs, and barriers to success, followed by an analysis of major government initiatives like Study in India (SII) along with the ranking agency NIRF.

Further sections address inbound international student trends, focusing on the evolving patterns from 2000 to 2024 and the distribution of international students across states and academic programs.

### **1.2 Tertiary Education in India**

India's higher education system ranks among the largest and most varied globally, serving as a key driver of socio-economic advancement. Over the years, the sector has expanded considerably, both in terms of institutional numbers and student enrollment, supporting India's vision of establishing itself as a global knowledge center. However, the rapid expansion has also brought challenges, such as maintaining quality standards, ensuring equitable access, and modernizing outdated curricula. As India strives to integrate technology, adapt to global trends, and meet the global goals for sustainability, the tertiary education sector stands at a crossroads of transformation.

### **1.2.1 Expansion and Development of the Higher Education Sector in India**

India's higher education sector has witnessed significant expansion since gaining independence. Initially characterized by a limited number of prominent universities, the sector has gradually grown in both scale and quality. The creation of institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and numerous central and state universities underscores the nation's commitment to advancing academic standards. As reported in the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2022, India hosts over 1,100 universities and 42,000 colleges, accommodating a student body of more than 38 million (Ministry of Education, 2022). This expansion has broadened access to higher education for diverse socio-economic groups, positioning India among the largest education systems globally. Nevertheless, challenges persist, such as quality inconsistencies, inadequate infrastructure, and uneven access to education across regions.

### **1.2.2 Major Regulatory Bodies Overseeing Indian Higher Education**

India's higher education system is overseen by a complex framework of regulatory bodies that set standards, enforce quality assurance, and implement policy reforms. The University Grants Commission (UGC) serves as the principal authority, responsible for maintaining academic standards, allocating funds, and officially recognizing higher education institutions (UGC, 2021). Additionally, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) regulates technical education institutions, while the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) focuses on quality assurance within technical programs. In recent years, the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) has also become influential, ranking institutions based on metrics such as research output, teaching quality, and social impact, thereby providing a structured evaluation of higher education institutions in India (UGC, 2021).

### **1.2.3 India's 2020 New Education Policy (NEP)**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 starts a new chapter in the education system of India, emphasizing holistic, multi-disciplinary, and inclusive approaches to learning. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is expected to increase to 50% with this NEP by at least 2035, up from 27% (Government of India, 2020). One important reform in higher education is the restructuring of the undergraduate program into

flexible, multi-exit degree pathways, enabling students to earn certificates, diplomas, or full degrees based on their years of study. The policy also envisions the creation of "multidisciplinary education and research universities" (MERUs), modeled after world-class institutions and emphasizing cutting-edge research, global collaboration, and community engagement (Government of India, 2020).

#### **1.2.4 Issues and Prospects in the Indian Higher Education System**

Disparities in standards between elite institutions and lesser-known colleges, outdated curricula, insufficient funding for research, and inadequate faculty training are major concerns (Aithal & Aithal, 2021). Furthermore, the rigid separation between disciplines often hampers interdisciplinary learning and innovation. Nonetheless, there are substantial opportunities. The government's push towards digital education, skill development, and research promotion through initiatives like the National Education Alliance for Technology (NEAT) and the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) represents a positive direction for the sector (Pravin & Prakash, 2015). These initiatives aim to bridge skill gaps, foster innovation, and enhance the employability of graduates, positioning India as a global hub for knowledge production.

#### **1.2.5 Impact of Technology on Indian Higher Education**

Technology has become a transformative element in Indian higher education, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic hastened the shift towards digital learning. Online platforms, hybrid learning approaches, and virtual classrooms are now fundamental to educational delivery across the country. Programs such as the National Digital Library, SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), and e-PG Pathshala provide students with extensive access to various courses and learning materials (Mishra, 2021). Additionally, government initiatives promoting artificial intelligence (AI), data analytics, and machine learning in education are reshaping interactions between students and educators. By integrating technology, higher education in India not only improves accessibility but also enables personalized, adaptive learning experiences tailored to the diverse needs of students.

### **1.2.6 Integration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with Higher Education in India**

India's higher education sector is increasingly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 4, which focuses on providing inclusive and equitable quality education for everyone. Many universities and colleges are integrating sustainability into their curricula, research, and community engagement efforts (Zhou et al., 2019). Notable institutions like the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) are at the forefront, emphasizing sustainability and social responsibility in academic initiatives. Additionally, programs such as Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, which aims to mobilize higher education institutions for rural development, illustrate how higher education aligns with broader national sustainable development objectives (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). This sector is well-positioned to address critical issues in India, from reducing poverty to promoting environmental sustainability.

### **1.3 Comparative Analysis of India's Higher Education and Other Global Study Destinations**

India's ambition to position itself as a global hub for higher education faces intense competition from traditional and emerging study destinations. India is far behind another big sender China in terms of international student attraction, academic rankings, research output, and global reputation. Here, we conducted a contrast with other prominent study destinations and explored elements such as infrastructure, education quality, global rankings, affordability, and employability. This analysis highlights India's strengths and identifies areas where improvements can be made to enhance its global competitiveness.

#### **1.3.1 Key Metrics for Comparison**

To facilitate a clear understanding of how India compares with other major study destinations, the following key metrics have been examined:

- Number of International Students
- Quality of Education (Global University Rankings)
- Research Output and Innovation
- Affordability and Cost of Living
- Employability and Industry Partnerships

- Government Initiatives for Internationalization

Table 1.1: Comparison of India with other major study destinations (UNESCO, 2023; QS Top Universities, 2023; U.S. Department of State, 2023)

| Country   | International Students (2023) | Top 200 Universities (QS Rankings 2023) | Research Output (Publications) | Average Tuition (USD per year) | Cost of Living (USD per month) |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| India     | 50,000                        | 3                                       | Moderate                       | 1,000 – 3,000                  | 300 – 600                      |
| USA       | 1,000,000                     | 30                                      | High                           | 20,000 – 50,000                | 1,200 – 2,500                  |
| UK        | 600,000                       | 18                                      | High                           | 15,000 – 35,000                | 1,000 – 1,800                  |
| Australia | 500,000                       | 7                                       | Moderate                       | 20,000 – 40,000                | 1,200 – 2,000                  |
| China     | 492,000                       | 6                                       | High                           | 2,000 – 5,000                  | 500 – 1,000                    |

### 1.3.2 Number of International Students

India has made efforts to attract international students, but it still trails behind key competitors. As of 2023, India hosts approximately 50,000 international students, a stark contrast to major study destinations, which host over one million and 600,000 international students, respectively (AISHE, 2022). This is despite India's strategic geographical position, rich cultural heritage, and relatively low cost of education. Countries with established international education framework with robust marketing strategies, higher rankings in global university indices, and better employment opportunities for graduates. In contrast, India's relatively low international student numbers can be attributed to challenges such as bureaucratic hurdles, safety



concerns, and the global perception of its higher education institutions (ICEF Monitor, 2023).

### **1.3.3 Quality of Education (Global University Rankings)**

A country's higher education system's global reputation is frequently highlighted through international university rankings. According to the QS World University Rankings 2023, only three Indian institutions appear among the top 200 universities worldwide (QS, 2023). In contrast, the United States boasts over 30 universities within the top 200, including renowned institutions such as Harvard, MIT, and Stanford, while the United Kingdom has 18 universities in this elite group.

This discrepancy in rankings is indicative of the research output, faculty quality, and global reputation of Indian institutions compared to those in more established education destinations. Indian universities, though improving, often face challenges related to funding, faculty recruitment, and infrastructure, limiting their ability to compete with their Western counterparts.

### **1.3.4 Research Output and Innovation**

Research output and innovation capacity are key indicators of a country's performance in the tertiary education. The global leader in academic publications, patents, and research collaborations is US followed by China, which has rapidly scaled its research productivity in recent years (World Bank, 2022). India ranks moderately in terms of research output but lags in innovation, where countries like South Korea, Japan, and Germany outpace India significantly (Elsevier, 2023).

India's focus on STEM education has produced a significant amount of research, particularly in engineering and technology. However, inadequate research funding, a lack of incentives for faculty, and limited interdisciplinary collaboration impede India's progress. In contrast, countries like the USA and UK have strong industry-academic partnerships that drive innovation, research commercialization, and technological advancements (ICEF Monitor, 2023).

### **1.3.5 Affordability and Cost of Living**

One of the advantages India offers is affordability. Both cost to study and stay are substantially lower than in countries like the USA, Canada, and Australia. For example, annual tuition fees in India range from USD 1,000 to 3,000, whereas tuition fees in these countries can exceed fifty thousand united states dollar for international students (World Bank, 2022). Similarly, the cost of living in Indian cities like Delhi

or Mumbai averages USD 300 to 600 per month, considerably lower than cities in Western nations.

While affordability is an attractive feature, international students often weigh other reasons like education quality, employability, & post-graduation work options, where India falls short compared to its global competitors.

#### **1.3.6 Employability and Industry Partnerships**

Employability and industry-academic partnerships are critical factors influencing the perceived value. India, because of its burgeoning IT & service sectors, offers reasonable employability in these fields; however, global firms still tend to recruit more heavily from countries with established education destinations, where universities have stronger ties to industry (Times Higher Education, 2022).

Countries like Australia and Canada have structured post-study work visas and industry-driven curricula, which significantly enhance graduate employability. India's rigid academic structure, with limited opportunities for internships and hands-on industry exposure, has contributed to a perception gap regarding employability, particularly in comparison to Western universities that emphasize skills development alongside academic learning (Kumar & Agarwal, 2021).

#### **1.3.7 Government Initiatives for Internationalization**

India has made notable progress in its policy initiatives to get more international students. The programmes like Study in India, launched in 2018, aims to increase international student enrolment by offering scholarships, easing visa regulations, and enhancing global marketing efforts (MOE, 2020). Additionally, NEP 2020 promotes internationalization through partnerships with foreign universities and proposes establishing Indian campuses abroad.

However, compared to aggressive marketing and internationalization strategies in the USA, UK, and Australia, India still has significant ground to cover. Countries like Australia have capitalized on their proximity to Asia, while Canada's immigration-friendly policies have made it a top choice for international students (ICEF, 2023).

### **1.4 Globalization of Higher Education in India**

The educational international outreach refers to the process by which nations and educational institutions foster cross-border collaborations, student and faculty

mobility, and curriculum reform to align with global standards. In India, this concept has gained significant traction over the past decade as the country seeks to elevate its position as a global education hub. Internationalization in Indian higher education is driven by multiple factors, including government initiatives, academic collaborations, and the global mobility of students. However, despite the country's progress, there are still significant challenges and barriers that hinder its ability to become a leading destination for international students.

India's internationalization strategy encompasses regulatory reforms, policy initiatives. However, despite this push, internationalization remains a complex and uneven process, shaped by geopolitical, economic, and institutional factors. This study examines India's strategy, the regulatory framework, barriers to internationalization.

#### **1.4.1 India's Approach to Globalizing Higher Education**

The ambition of India to emerge as education hub globally, is reflected in its multifaceted strategy to internationalize higher education. The national education policies have evolved to encourage global collaboration, cultural exchange, and the inflow of international students. The NEP 2020 is critical document to outline country's commitment to integrating global standards into its academic framework while attracting foreign students and faculty. According to the Ministry of Education (2021), NEP 2020 emphasizes creating global partnerships and increasing the global mobility of Indian students through institutional collaborations. This policy encourages the establishment of international campuses, opening pathways for foreign universities to operate in India, and facilitating joint research programs.

India's strategic push for internationalization also hinges on enhancing its global image through rankings and accreditations. Government schemes like SII are designed to get more students from abroad and promote Indian universities at global education fairs (Ministry of Education, 2021). Moreover, the policy encourages curriculum modernization, faculty development, and an inclusive learning environment that fosters cross-cultural engagement, all of which are essential in building a robust international education framework.

#### **1.4.2 Legal and Regulatory Policies for International Education in India**

The internationalization of tertiary education in India operates within a legal and regulatory framework that governs academic collaboration, foreign student enrollment, and institutional autonomy. Under UGC and AICTE, institutions setup programmes with foreign educational institutions, but stringent guidelines regulate these partnerships. The UGC regulations, 2016, mandate that Indian universities seeking foreign collaborations must meet high accreditation standards, thereby ensuring quality assurance in international programs (UGC, 2016).

Furthermore, visa policies for international students have been streamlined to support the influx of foreign students, and initiatives like e-visa services have been expanded to facilitate easier access. The NEP 2020 also proposes reforms that would grant Indian universities greater autonomy to pursue international collaborations independently, reducing bureaucratic delays (Ministry of Education, 2021).

#### **1.4.3 Obstacles to Global Integration in Higher Education**

Despite efforts by the Indian government to enhance the global reach of its higher education system, several obstacles hinder progress. A major issue is the perception of safety within India, which discourages many prospective international students. Research indicates that concerns around social stability and gender safety significantly influence students' choices (Raghuram, 2020). Limited financial support, including scholarships and stipends for international students, remains a notable barrier. Compounding this challenge is the competition from established education destinations like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, where scholarships and research funding are more widely available, reducing India's appeal as a study abroad option.

Cultural adaptation presents another challenge for international students in India. The linguistic diversity, combined with differences in academic cultures, often creates a gap in social integration, making it difficult for foreign students to adapt (Chakrabarti & Mandal, 2019). Another significant barrier is the limited global recognition of Indian degrees, particularly in non-technical fields. International students often prioritize the international portability of their qualifications, and

India's struggle to match the academic prestige of its Western counterparts is a significant drawback in this regard (Knight, 2021).

#### **1.4.4 Challenges and Hurdles Faced by International Students in India**

International students studying in India confront various obstacles that complicate their academic journey and diminish the overall perceived value of their educational experience. Following are few important ones:

**Language Barriers:** Although English being well spoken in many Indian universities, regional languages dominate in social and administrative settings. The inability to effectively communicate in local languages exacerbates feelings of isolation and limits students' ability to engage fully in campus life (Chowdhury, 2017).

**Cultural Adaptation:** The cultural complexity of India, with its distinct socio-religious traditions, caste system, and regional diversity, presents significant challenges for international students who must navigate unfamiliar social norms (Patel, 2017). For example, students from Western countries may face difficulties adjusting to hierarchical social structures, while students from neighboring South Asian nations may encounter challenges despite shared cultural elements.

**Economic Hardships:** International students in India often face financial challenges due to limited opportunities for part-time employment and the relatively high costs of living in urban areas. Many scholarship options available to international applicants in Western countries are not as accessible in India, further compounding these difficulties (Bhushan, 2018).

**Inadequate Support Systems:** Many universities in India lack dedicated international student offices or services that could help mitigate the challenges associated with cultural adaptation, administrative hurdles, and academic integration (Singh, 2020).

Each of these factors contributes to international students' experiences of marginalization, which, in turn, affects their satisfaction and overall perception of India as a viable education destination.

#### **1.4.5 Collaborative Programs between Indian and Foreign Universities**

Collaborative academic represent a key facet of India's internationalization strategy. These partnerships often involve joint degrees, faculty exchanges, and collaborative research projects. Several Indian universities have established successful collaborative arrangements with foreign institutions, such as IITs and IIMs partnering with renowned universities in the US, Europe, and Asia to offer dual degree programs. The UGC regulations encourage such collaborations, stipulating that courses taught under these partnerships must meet the academic standards of both institutions involved (UGC, 2016).

One notable example is the collaborative effort between the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and universities like MIT and Stanford, which engage in joint research projects (Narayana, 2022). These partnerships not only enhance India's academic reputation but also offer Indian students' exposure to global pedagogical methods and research infrastructure. However, regulatory complexities and bureaucratic hurdles still limit the scope and scale of such partnerships. NEP 2020 aims to resolve these issues by reducing red tape and granting universities greater autonomy to engage in international collaborations freely (Ministry of Education, 2021).

#### **1.5 Government Initiatives and Educational Diplomacy**

Over the last decade, India's approach to tertiary education has evolved considerably, with a strong focus on international collaboration, educational diplomacy, and enhancing student mobility. Through multiple government-driven initiatives, India is working to establish itself as a global education center, aiming to attract international students, build academic partnerships, and advance research excellence. These efforts are part of a larger diplomatic strategy to bolster India's educational connections with other countries, highlighting its expanding role within the global knowledge economy. We examine major government initiatives and diplomatic efforts designed to boost international engagement and elevate the global profile of Indian higher education.

### **1.5.1 Study in India (SII) Scheme**

Launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Education, the Study in India (SII) initiative aims to attract international students to India through simplified admissions, scholarships, and centralized university information. It highlights India's academic diversity and affordability, especially appealing to students from Asia and Africa. By participating in global education fairs and digital outreach, SII supports cultural exchange and positions India as an attractive education destination (Ministry of Education, 2019).

### **1.5.2 Global Academic Network Initiative (GIAN)**

Since 2015, the GIAN program has invited global faculty to Indian institutions for short-term teaching and research, fostering knowledge exchange in fields like science and engineering. This initiative aims to build a robust academic network and enhance India's academic reputation by linking it with top international institutions (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2015).

### **1.5.3 Program for Advancing Academic and Research Partnerships (SPARC)**

The SPARC initiative, introduced in 2018, facilitates impactful research partnerships between Indian and foreign institutions, emphasizing areas such as AI, healthcare, and climate science. Focusing on collaborations with top universities worldwide, SPARC promotes joint research, faculty exchanges, and workshops to strengthen India's research landscape (Ministry of Education, 2018).

### **1.5.4 ASEAN-India Scholarship**

Aligned with India's Act East Policy, the ASEAN-India Scholarship provides educational opportunities for students from Southeast Asian nations. This scholarship program fosters academic and cultural ties, supporting workforce development in the ASEAN region (ASEAN-India Centre, 2021).

### **1.5.5 The 21st Century Knowledge Partnership: Indo-US Initiative**

This 2012 initiative supports academic collaboration between Indian and U.S. universities, with a focus on public health, energy, and IT. By funding joint research

and faculty exchanges, the initiative strengthens educational links and encourages solutions to shared global challenges (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012).

#### **1.5.6 E-Vidya Bharti and E-Arogya Bharti Digital Network Project (E-VBAB)**

Launched in 2019, the E-VBAB project provides online education and telemedicine to African students and professionals, strengthening India's educational diplomacy with Africa. This initiative leverages India's digital capabilities to promote learning and healthcare, enhancing India's soft power in the region (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018).

#### **1.5.7 Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) Scheme**

DASA offers foreign students a streamlined admission pathway to premier Indian institutions in fields like engineering and management. Targeting students from regions such as Southeast Asia and the Gulf, this scheme simplifies admissions and promotes Indian education abroad (Ministry of Education, 2020).

#### **1.5.8 National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)**

Introduced in 2015, NIRF ranks Indian institutions based on criteria such as research quality and teaching. This framework supports healthy competition, helping Indian institutions improve standards and providing benchmarks for international students (Ministry of Education, 2015).

#### **1.5.9 Institution of Eminence (IOE) Scheme**

The 2017 IOE initiative grants select Indian institutions greater autonomy and funding, enabling them to pursue global excellence in education and research. Aiming to place Indian universities among the world's top 100, the scheme promotes innovation and strengthens the international standing of India's higher education (Ministry of Education, 2017).

### **1.6 Impact of Government Policies on International Student Inflow**

India has recognized the strategic importance of students from abroad in strengthening its tertiary education system. Different policy measures, including the



Study in India (SII) Scheme, NEP 2020, and various international scholarship programs, reflect the government's commitment to increasing its global academic footprint. These policies not only focus on attracting students but also emphasize partnerships with foreign universities to promote research and innovation.

Understanding the nuances of these government policies and their actual impact on student inflow can shed light on India's progress in becoming an international education destination.

### **1.6.1 Study in India (SII) Scheme and Its Impact**

The Study in India (SII) scheme, launched in 2018, represents one of the most important schemes to get international students. Aimed at increasing the global visibility of Indian institutions, the program focuses on offering scholarships, simplifying admissions processes, and promoting Indian universities through targeted international marketing campaigns (Ministry of Education, 2019). The scheme particularly targets students from developing nations, with the intent of making Indian education accessible and affordable to a broader international audience.

While the SII scheme has generated some success in increasing enrollments, its impact remains modest in contrast to the influx of foreign students in more established education destinations. According to recent data, international student numbers have risen since the inception of the program, but challenges such as insufficient financial aid, perceptions of safety, and international recognition of degrees have constrained more substantial growth (Raghuram, 2020). Although the SII scheme has contributed to raising awareness about Indian education, it has yet to fully resolve these structural barriers.

### **1.6.2 National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Globalization of Higher Education**

The NEP 2020 marks a significant transformation in Indian higher education, emphasizing international engagement. Key aspects include granting more autonomy to institutions, promoting Indian campuses overseas, and fostering partnerships with leading global universities. NEP 2020 also aims to enhance global

exposure for students through international exchanges, dual degree opportunities, and foreign faculty recruitment (Government of India, 2020).

NEP 2020 has laid the groundwork for institutional reforms aimed at making Indian universities more competitive globally. By encouraging international partnerships and promoting research collaborations, the policy seeks to position Indian institutions on par with their global counterparts. While the NEP's emphasis on internationalization is promising, the actual increase in international student inflow has been incremental. Concerns regarding administrative bottlenecks, visa delays, and insufficient funding for implementation have limited the immediate impact of the policy (Knight, 2021).

### **1.6.3 Visa Reforms and Their Influence on Student Inflow**

Government initiatives to streamline visa processes have had a notable impact on the ease with which international students can enter and study in India. The introduction of e-visas for students has simplified the application process, reducing both the cost and time needed to secure a visa (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018). This reform is part of a broader effort to align visa policies with international standards and facilitate mobility for foreign students, researchers, and faculty.

Despite these improvements, visa policies continue to pose a challenge for many international students. Bureaucratic delays and inconsistent regulations have been cited as major barriers, particularly for students from developing nations (Kapur & Mehta, 2020).

### **1.6.4 Financial Aid and Scholarships: A Double-Edged Sword**

The provision of scholarships and financial aid is a critical determinant in international students' choice of study destination. Indian government policies have expanded scholarship offerings, including initiatives such as the ASEAN-India Scholarship and the DASA programme, which provide financial support to students from applying in India (MoE, 2021).

However, the availability of financial aid in India remains limited in comparison to developed countries, which offer more extensive scholarship programs. So, many

applicants from low-income countries still view Indian education as unaffordable, particularly when living costs and accommodation are factored in (Choudaha & de Wit, 2020). Increasing scholarship opportunities and providing targeted financial assistance could significantly boost India's international student inflow.

### **1.6.5 Institutional Reforms and the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)**

NIRF provides a transparent ranking system that assesses universities based on teaching quality, research output, outreach, and inclusivity (Ministry of Education, 2015). This ranking system is part of India's larger effort to boost the visibility and reputation of its institutions in the global education market.

International students often base their decisions on global rankings, which influence perceptions of quality and employability. By promoting domestic institutions through NIRF, the Indian government has sought to enhance their credibility on the global stage. However, while NIRF rankings have helped improve the global visibility of Indian universities, they have not yet translated into a substantial increase in international student inflow (Narayana, 2021). Many Indian universities still lag behind their Western counterparts in global rankings, which may deter students seeking internationally recognized qualifications.

### **1.6.6 Barriers to International Student Integration**

Despite numerous government initiatives, international students in India continue to face significant barriers to integration, including linguistic challenges, cultural differences, and limited access to support services. Unlike countries with established internationalization frameworks, India's efforts to integrate foreign students into campus life have been uneven. Many students report difficulties in adapting to the academic culture, which can be more hierarchical and less participatory than Western models (Chakrabarti & Mandal, 2019).

## **1.7 Inbound International Student Trends**

The dynamics of inbound international student flows to India have transformed over the past two decades due to evolving policies, global education trends, and regional

cooperation. India has established itself as a regional study destination, and more recently, efforts to enhance internationalization have attracted a growing number of students from diverse regions. This study examines the trends in inbound international students to India from 2000 to 2024, categorized by key phases. The data are presented in tables for clarity and analysis.

### **1.7.1 Historical Context and Evolution**

India's journey as a destination for international students began post-independence, when the country focused on fostering educational ties with its neighbors and the Global South. However, its status as a leading education hub remained nascent compared to Western countries. Historically, India attracted students from developing nations, particularly from South Asia and Africa, often on government scholarships such as ICCR scholarships.

Over the past two decades, a shift in India's higher education strategy, coupled with global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has shaped the pattern of inbound international student mobility. Major policies like the Study in India (SII) scheme and the NEP 2020 have further aimed to promote India as an education destination, yet several challenges persist in terms of attracting students from developed nations and offering globally recognized qualifications.

### **1.7.2 Inbound International Students in India (2000-2024)**

The following sections explore the key trends in inbound international student flow in India, broken down into five specific time periods: 2000-2015, 2016-2018, 2019, 2020-2021 (during the COVID-19 pandemic), and 2022-2024 (post-COVID).

#### **2000-2015: The Formative Years**

The growth was incremental, driven largely by the government's diplomatic ties and scholarships for students from developing nations. Higher education programs in medicine and engineering remained the most sought-after fields.

Table 1.2: Region wise international students' priority of programmes in India (2000 -2015) (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2016)

| Region      | Top Contributing Countries             | Popular Fields of Study |
|-------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| South Asia  | Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh | Medicine, Engineering   |
| Africa      | Nigeria, Kenya, Sudan                  | Medicine, Technology    |
| Middle East | Iran, Iraq                             | Engineering, Business   |

#### 2016-2018: Policy Initiatives and Growth

This period saw more concerted efforts with IITs and IIMs started getting global publicity, further attracting international students to specialized programs.

Table 1.3: Year wise enrolment of international students in India (2016-2018) (MoE, Government of India, 2019)

| Year | International Student Enrolment (Apx) | Key Policy/Initiative                         |
|------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 2016 | 40,000                                | Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) |
| 2017 | 45,000                                | Increase in government scholarships           |
| 2018 | 50,000                                | Study in India (SII) launched                 |

#### 2019: Diversification and Expansion

In 2019, India saw a noticeable increase in student mobility, with growing diversification in countries of origin and fields of study. Alongside traditional STEM fields, there was increased enrollment in business administration, humanities, and social sciences. Indian universities actively pursued partnerships with foreign institutions, expanding exchange programs and research collaborations.

Table 1.4: Region wise international student priority for programmes in India (2019) (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020)

| <b>Region</b>  | <b>Newly Contributing Countries</b> | <b>Emerging Fields of Study</b>      |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Africa         | Tanzania, Ethiopia                  | Public Health, Environmental Science |
| Southeast Asia | Vietnam, Indonesia                  | Data Science, Business               |
| Middle East    | Oman, Jordan                        | Management, Law                      |

#### 2020-2021: Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 a catastrophe for international student mobility globally. In India, inbound student numbers dropped sharply due to travel restrictions and the shift to online learning. Many students deferred their studies or opted for online programs, affecting overall enrolment.

Table 1.5: Year wise enrolment of international students in India (2020 – 2021) (AISHE, 2022)

| <b>Year</b> | <b>International Student Enrolment (Apx.)</b> | <b>Notable Impact</b>        |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2020        | 35,000                                        | Travel bans, online learning |
| 2021        | 30,000                                        | Decreased new enrollments    |

#### 2022-2024: Recovery and Post-COVID Trends

As the world moved into a post-pandemic era, India's inbound international student numbers began to recover, though they have yet to reach pre-pandemic levels. The introduction of NEP 2020 and the revitalization of the Study in India scheme contributed to a slow but steady rise in student numbers. The emphasis on digital

learning and hybrid models helped India accommodate international students more effectively during this period.

Table 1.6: Year wise enrolment of international students in India (2022 – 2024) (AISHE, 2023)

| Year | International Student Enrolment (Apx.) | Key Trends                                        |
|------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 2022 | 40,000                                 | Recovery of physical enrollments, hybrid learning |
| 2023 | 45,000                                 | Focus on interdisciplinary programs               |
| 2024 | 48,000 (estimated)                     | Increased regional cooperation                    |

### 1.7.3 Programme Wise Distribution

International students in India are primarily drawn to technical, but there has been a growing interest in social sciences, humanities, and business administration.

Table 1.7: Distribution of International Students by Program in India (AISHE,2023)

| Field of Study             | Percentage of International Students |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Engineering and Technology | 30%                                  |
| Medicine                   | 25%                                  |
| Business Administration    | 20%                                  |
| Social Sciences            | 15%                                  |
| Humanities and Arts        | 10%                                  |

The diversification of programs in recent years highlights India’s efforts to broaden its appeal to students from diverse academic backgrounds.

#### 1.7.4 State Wise Distribution

The distribution of international students across Indian states reflects significant concentration in regions with leading academic institutions. States like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Delhi attract the majority of students due to the presence of globally recognized universities and favorable infrastructure.

Table 1.8: Distribution of International Students Across Indian States  
(AISHE,2023)

| State         | Percentage of International Students | Key Universities                                       |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Karnataka     | 22%                                  | Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru          |
| Maharashtra   | 18%                                  | University of Mumbai, IIT Bombay                       |
| Tamil Nadu    | 16%                                  | Anna University, IIT Madras                            |
| Delhi         | 14%                                  | Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), University of Delhi |
| Uttar Pradesh | 10%                                  | AMU and BHU                                            |

#### 1.7.5 Country Wise Distribution

South Asia remains the largest contributor, followed by Africa and the Middle East. A notable increase from Southeast Asia and Central Asia, driven by new regional cooperation agreements and scholarships.



Table 1.9: Regional Distribution of International Students in India (AISHE, 2023)

| Region       | Top Contributing Countries     | Percentage of Total International Students |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| South Asia   | Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan | 40%                                        |
| Africa       | Nigeria, Sudan, Kenya          | 25%                                        |
| Rest of Asia | Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand   | 25%                                        |
| Central Asia | US, UK, Australia              | 5%                                         |

The growing diversity in countries of origin reflects India's increasing efforts to broaden its appeal as a global education destination.

## 1.8 India as a Study Destination

India's reputation as a study destination has been steadily evolving, driven by its growing higher education sector, diverse culture, and competitive academic programs. However, despite the increasing initiatives to attract international students, India still faces challenges in competing with Western nations and other Asian countries. This study explores international students' study destination choices, the trends in inbound student mobility in India.

### 1.8.1 Global Study Destinations for International Students

The global landscape for tertiary education has changed drastically in few years, with millions of applicants travelling abroad in pursuit of academic excellence, personal development, and career opportunities. Traditionally, the global west has been the top preference because of well-established universities, research opportunities, and multicultural environments (Altbach & Knight, 2019). These countries offer strong incentives such as globally recognized degrees, generous post-

study work visas, and advanced facilities, making them highly attractive to international students.

Emerging destinations in Asia, such as China, Singapore, and Malaysia, have also increased their global market share by offering world-class universities, improved infrastructure, and government-backed scholarships (De Wit et al., 2020). These countries have been particularly successful in leveraging their geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and economic ties to neighbouring regions. In contrast, India's share of international student inflows has remained modest, despite its extensive higher education network and the government's efforts to promote internationalization.

Table 1.10: Top study destinations and respective number of international students (OECD, 2022)

| <b>Top Study Destinations</b> | <b>Number of International Students (2022)</b> | <b>Key Factors for Attractiveness</b>            |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| United States                 | 1,075,496                                      | Quality education, post-study work opportunities |
| United Kingdom                | 605,130                                        | Prestigious institutions, English-speaking       |
| Canada                        | 622,000                                        | Immigration pathways, multicultural environment  |
| Australia                     | 480,092                                        | Research opportunities, work visa options        |
| China                         | 492,185                                        | Government scholarships, regional proximity      |
| India                         | 50,000                                         | Cost-effective education, cultural diversity     |

The table above illustrates that while India is positioned as a cost-effective study destination, it still lags behind leading countries in terms of international student enrollment, emphasizing the need for more robust policies and infrastructural improvements.

### 1.8.2 Inbound International Student Mobility in India

India with students travelling to study there has depicted gradual increase over the last two decades, largely attributed to government initiatives, increased global recognition of Indian institutions, and regional cooperation. However, the growth has been slow, with the country struggling to attract students from outside its neighboring regions.

### 1.8.3 Growth and Distribution

As of 2022, India hosted approximately 50,000 international students, a small number compared to major global destinations. Most students come from South Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries, driven by lower tuition fees, scholarship opportunities, and strong diplomatic ties (Singh & Rajput, 2020). Popular courses include medicine, engineering, and business studies, offered primarily by institutions in urban centers such as Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai.

Table 1.11: Trend of International students in India (2015 – 2022) (MoE, Government of India, 2016, 2017, AISHE, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022)

| Year | Number of International Students | Percentage Growth |
|------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 2015 | 42,293                           | 3.5%              |
| 2017 | 47,575                           | 5.0%              |
| 2019 | 50,000                           | 5.1%              |
| 2021 | 30,000 (COVID-19 Impact)         | - 40%             |
| 2022 | 50,000                           | Recovery Phase    |

India's inbound student population is concentrated in a few states that are home to well-established universities. States like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, and Tamil Nadu attract majority of them, with programs in medicine and technology being the most popular. IITs and IIMs are gaining international recognition, although they primarily attract graduate-level students from neighboring regions (Rizvi, 2021).

Table 1.12: State wise distribution of international students in India (AISHE, 2023)

| State         | Number of International Students (2022) | Top Institutions                              |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Maharashtra   | 12,500                                  | University of Mumbai, IIT Bombay              |
| Karnataka     | 10,000                                  | IISc Bangalore, Christ University             |
| Delhi         | 8,000                                   | Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University |
| Tamil Nadu    | 6,500                                   | Anna University, IIT Madras                   |
| Uttar Pradesh | 5,000                                   | Banaras Hindu University, AMU                 |

While there has been a consistent flow of students, particularly from developing nations, India's ability to attract students from Western countries or advanced economies remains limited. This can be attributed to multiple factors, including concerns about infrastructure, safety, and global recognition of Indian degrees.

#### 1.8.4 Why International Students Do Not Select India

Despite India's efforts to increase international student enrollment, there are several reasons why it is not a top choice for many students, especially those from developed nations. Key barriers include concerns about safety, limited global recognition of Indian qualifications, cultural integration challenges, and a lack of sufficient financial aid and scholarships.

**Safety Concerns:** One of the primary deterrents for international students considering India is safety. International reports on personal security and crime rates have occasionally highlighted incidents that raise concerns about student safety, particularly for women (Altbach & Reisberg, 2020). This can create a perception that India is not as secure as other destinations such as Canada or Australia.

**Global Recognition of Indian Degrees:** Although India has some well-regarded institutions, the recognition of Indian degrees abroad remains a challenge. Unlike degrees from the US or UK, many Indian qualifications, especially in professional fields, do not easily translate into international career opportunities. This lack of alignment with global standards in some areas is a critical factor that deters them to select India (Choudaha, 2020).

**Financial Assistance and Scholarships:** Compared to destinations like the US or China, India offers fewer government-backed scholarships for international students. While programs such as the Study in India initiative provide some financial support, it is not as extensive as scholarships available in countries like China, which actively subsidizes education for students from Africa and Asia (Chakrabarti, 2019).

**Cultural and Social Integration:** Cultural and social integration also presents challenges for many international students. India's rich and diverse culture can sometimes be overwhelming, especially for students from Western countries who may struggle to adapt to differences in language, lifestyle, and social norms (Knight, 2021). Also, the lack of robust support systems at some institutions for international students makes cultural adjustment difficult.

Table 1.13: Primary Reasons for Not Choosing India as a Study Destination  
(Kumar & Sinha, 2022)

| <b>Reasons for Not Selecting India</b> | <b>Percentage of Respondents</b> |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Safety Concerns                        | 35%                              |
| Lack of Global Recognition             | 30%                              |

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Limited Scholarships            | 25% |
| Cultural Integration Challenges | 10% |

## **1.9 Marketing Strategies for Promoting India as a Study Destination**

The global higher education market is increasingly competitive, with countries around the world vying for international students to boost academic diversity, enhance institutional reputation, and drive economic growth. In this context, India's positioning as a study destination has gained renewed attention, especially in the wake of significant policy reforms like the NEP 2020 and the launch of the SII. The marketing strategies India employs to promote itself as a desirable study destination and examines their effectiveness in attracting international students.

### **1.9.1 India's Global Education Branding Strategy**

India has adopted a multifaceted branding strategy focused on leveraging its unique cultural, economic, and academic strengths. The Study in India (SII) initiative, launched in 2018, is at the forefront of this effort, they offer financial incentives, simplified visa procedures, and a curated list of participating institutions.

### **1.9.2 Key Components of India's Branding Strategy**

**Cultural Diplomacy:** India emphasizes its rich cultural heritage, diversity, and history as a core component of its branding. International students are offered a unique educational experience, blending rigorous academic programs with exposure to Indian civilization. Initiatives such as cultural exchange programs, organized tours, and language classes (particularly in Sanskrit and Hindi) are designed to deepen student engagement with India's cultural legacy (Rizvi, 2016).

**Affordability and Cost Competitiveness:** One of India's strongest selling points is the affordability of education, which is less than western countries. Offering world-class education at a fraction of the cost has become a central theme in India's promotional efforts. This affordability is particularly attractive to students from developing countries, where financial constraints often limit access to international education (Choudaha & de Wit, 2020).

**Academic Excellence and Research Opportunities:** India promotes its reputation for academic rigor, particularly in IT and technology. Top institutions are positioned as global leaders in their respective fields. Furthermore, the emphasis on collaborative research opportunities and innovation hubs adds to India's appeal for graduate and doctoral students (Knight, 2021).

**Ease of Application and Admissions:** The Study in India initiative introduced a single-window admission portal that simplifies the application process for international students. This portal provides detailed information about participating institutions, available scholarships, and visa procedures, thereby reducing the administrative barriers often associated with studying abroad (Government of India, 2019).

### **1.9.3 Digital Marketing and Online Campaigns**

The rapid digital transformation of the global education market has made online marketing a critical component of India's strategy to attract international students. The digital marketing efforts have intensified, with virtual fairs, webinars, and online information sessions becoming the norm.

### **1.9.4 Key Digital Marketing Approaches**

**Virtual Education Fairs and Webinars:** India has participated in numerous virtual education fairs, targeting regions such as Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. These fairs provide a platform for Indian universities to interact directly with prospective students, answering their questions and providing detailed information on programs, scholarships, and campus life (Raghuram, 2021).

**Social Media Engagement:** Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, have become key channels for promoting Indian higher education. The Study in India program, in particular, has established a strong presence on these platforms, sharing success stories, student testimonials, and videos that highlight the advantages of studying in India.

**SEO and Paid Advertising:** Search engine optimization (SEO) and targeted paid advertising campaigns have been employed to ensure that prospective international

students can easily find information about studying in India. Keywords such as "affordable education abroad" and "study in Asia" have been strategically used to attract traffic to government and university websites (Singh & Jain, 2020).

**Interactive Websites and Portals:** The official Study in India website serves as a one-stop destination for international students, offering information on admissions, available programs, scholarship opportunities, and accommodation options. User-friendly design, multilingual support, and video content further enhance the site's appeal, making it easier for students to navigate (Government of India, 2019).

### **1.9.5 Regional Targeting and Market Segmentation**

India's marketing strategy has been highly segmented, with different approaches tailored to the needs of various regions. Given the diversity of international students, India's promotional efforts focus on understanding the unique motivations and challenges faced by students from different parts of the world.

### **1.9.6 Targeting South Asia and Africa**

South Asia and Africa have historically been India's largest markets for international students. Marketing efforts in these regions emphasize affordability, cultural similarities, and longstanding diplomatic ties. Scholarships given by ICCR, continue to help in increasing students from these areas (Chakrabarti & Mandal, 2019).

### **1.9.7 Expanding into Southeast Asia and Central Asia**

In recent years, the country turned its focus to Southeast Asia and Central Asia, regions with growing student populations but limited access to Western education due to cost and geographical distance. Indian higher education is marketed as a quality alternative to more expensive options in the West, with particular emphasis on regional partnerships, including ASEAN-India cooperation and the Indo-Central Asia Education Partnership.

### **1.9.8 Niche Markets in the Middle East and Latin America**

While SAARC and Africa remain dominant markets, India is also getting inflow from the Middle East and Latin American countries. Middle East students for,



specialized programs in Islamic studies, engineering, and business are promoted, while Latin American students are attracted by India's affordability and rising reputation in STEM fields.

### **1.9.9 Student Testimonials and Alumni Networks**

One of the most effective marketing strategies in promoting this is the use of student testimonials and the creation of strong alumni networks. Testimonials from current international students, featured on the Study in India website and across social media platforms, provide firsthand insights into the student experience in India.

Alumni networks, both formal and informal, have proven instrumental in promoting India abroad. These alumni act as informal ambassadors, sharing their positive experiences and encouraging others to pursue education in India (Rizvi, 2023).

### **1.9.10 Leveraging International Alumni for Promotion**

India's higher education institutions have begun to formalize their alumni outreach efforts, organizing reunions and networking events in countries with large numbers of Indian university graduates. These events not only foster alumni relationships but also promote India's educational institutions to new audiences.

### **1.9.11 Public-Private Partnerships in Marketing**

To increase global visibility of Indian tertiary education, the government involved public and private partnerships (PPPs) in marketing and outreach. Indian universities have collaborated with marketing firms to design tailored campaigns, host international recruitment fairs, and conduct market research. Additionally, industry partnerships have enhanced the appeal of academic programs, by linking students with internships and job opportunities in multinational companies (Knight, 2021).

### **1.9.12 Role of Indian EdTech Firms**

India's burgeoning EdTech sector has also helped in marketing the country as a global education hub. Companies such as Byju's and Unacademy have collaborated with educational institutions to deliver digital programs and hybrid learning models, further expanding India's appeal in the post-pandemic era.

## **1.10 Financial Aspects of Studying in India**

The financial considerations of studying in a foreign country are pivotal in shaping the decision-making process for international students. India, as an emerging education destination, has crafted its appeal not only through academic excellence and cultural diversity but also by offering a comparatively affordable education.

### **1.10.1 Cost Competitiveness of Indian Higher Education**

The relatively low tuition fees, coupled with the affordability of living expenses, make India an attractive choice for students from both developing and developed nations.

### **1.10.2 Tuition Fees**

The tuition fees change from education institution to institution depending on the type of institution, the program, and the level of education.

In general, tuition fees for international students at public universities varies from \$1,000 upto \$4,000 per year. Private institutions can charge higher fees, with certain programs such as medicine, engineering, and business management potentially reaching up to \$10,000 per year (Singh & Jain, 2020).

Table 1.14: Approximate Tuition fee of educational institutions in India (ICEF Monitor, 2023)

| <b>Institution Type</b> | <b>Approximate Tuition Fee (per year, USD)</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Public Universities     | \$1,000 - \$4,000                              |
| Private Universities    | \$4,000 - \$10,000                             |

### **1.10.3 Living Expenses**

Cost of staying, which includes accommodation, food, transportation, and other personal expenses. India offers a wide range of living options, from university-hosted dormitories to private housing in cities. On average, monthly living expenses

for international students in India range from \$200 to \$500, depending on the city and lifestyle choices (Choudaha & de Wit, 2020).

Major metropolitan areas like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore are more expensive, whereas smaller cities and towns offer more affordable living options. University towns such as Pune and Chandigarh provide an ideal balance.

Table 1.15: Estimated monthly living expenses in different Indian cities (ICEF Monitor, 2023)

| City             | Estimated Monthly Living Expense (USD) |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Mumbai, Delhi    | \$400 - \$600                          |
| Bangalore        | \$300 - \$500                          |
| Pune, Chandigarh | \$200 - \$400                          |
| Smaller Towns    | \$150 - \$300                          |

#### 1.10.4 Scholarships and Financial Aid

India provides different concessions and support financially to attract students from abroad, many of which are government-funded, while others are sponsored by universities or private organizations. These scholarships are critical in reducing the financial burden on students and making education in India more accessible.

#### 1.10.5 Government-Funded Scholarships

The Indian government has established several scholarship programs to encourage international student enrollment. Among the most prominent is the Study in India scholarship, which provides financial assistance through scholarships that covers up to 50% of the tuition fees and is awarded (Government of India, 2019).

Additionally, ICCR offers a range of scholarships to students from over 100 countries that includes tuition, stay, food and also travel in some cases. Notable ICCR scholarships include the Africa Scholarship Scheme and the ASEAN-India Scholarship (Chakrabarti & Mandal, 2019).

### **1.10.6 University-Specific Scholarships**

Many Indian universities have introduced scholarships tailored for international students. Institutions like IITs and IIMs, along with other private universities, offer merit-based scholarships and research grants for postgraduate and doctoral students. These scholarships are often tied to academic performance, leadership potential, and the specific fields of study, such as engineering, technology, and management.

For example, the Global Excellence Scholarship offered by select private universities in India aims to attract top-tier international talent by covering full or partial tuition fees, while research institutions like the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) offer fellowship programs that cover research costs for PhD candidates (Knight, 2021).

### **1.10.7 Student Loans and Other Funding Options**

Though scholarships and grants are crucial, they do not cover the full financial needs of every international student. Therefore, many students rely on student loans and other external funding sources to finance their education in India.

### **1.10.8 Student Loan Options**

International students typically have limited access to Indian bank loans, as most banks in India offer education loans only to Indian citizens. However, some private financial institutions and international lenders, such as Prodigy Finance and MPOWER Financing, offer student loans to foreign students studying in India. These loans are tailored for international students and often have flexible repayment terms, though they may come with higher interest rates (Singh & Jain, 2020).

### **1.10.9 Work Opportunities and Part-Time Employment**

In addition to loans, international students may seek part-time employment to supplement their finances. Under current regulations, international students in India are not permitted to work during their studies, except for internships that are part of the academic program. However, some universities provide opportunities for on-campus employment, such as research assistantships or positions in administrative departments, which can help offset living expenses.

#### **1.10.10 Financial Challenges for International Students**

While India's affordability is a major selling point, international students still face several financial challenges. The lack of substantial work opportunities and the limited availability of student loans adds to difficulty of students to fully fund their education. Moreover, fluctuating exchange rates and inflationary pressures can further exacerbate financial strains.

Additionally, while the Indian government and institutions offer numerous scholarships, they often fall short of covering the entire cost of studying abroad. This limitation is especially burdensome for students from developing countries, who may already be navigating tight financial constraints.

#### **1.10.11 Impact of Financial Factors on Student Enrollment**

Studies indicate that affordability is the top reason for international students to opt study in India (Raghuram, 2021). However, financial challenges, such as the lack of comprehensive funding options and limited opportunities for employment, can deter students from wealthier countries, where expectations for work-study programs and generous financial aid packages are more prevalent.

#### **1.10.12 Financial Incentives and Enrolment Trends**

To boost international student enrollment, India has introduced financial incentives such as subsidized tuition fees and scholarship programs, particularly through initiatives like Study in India. However, to attract them from more diverse geographical regions, such as Europe and North America, India may need to further enhance its financial aid offerings (Choudaha & de Wit, 2020).

### **1.11 Student Visa Policies and Their Impact**

The Student Visa (S-Visa) is the primary visa issued to foreign nationals pursuing full-time academic programs at recognized institutions in India. This visa allows students to study at universities, technical institutions, or language schools and is typically granted for the duration of the academic program.

The Indian government, through its embassies and consulates worldwide, provides comprehensive guidelines on the application process, which includes requirements such as:

- Proof of admission to a recognized Indian institution.
- Financial documents proving the student's ability to support themselves during their stay.
- A valid passport, academic records, and, in some cases, medical clearances.

The visa is issued for six months upto five years, based on the course length and can be extended in India if required (Choudaha & de Wit, 2020). This flexibility in visa duration offers some assurance to students, particularly for those pursuing extended academic programs like engineering, medicine, or doctoral research.

#### **1.11.1 Streamlining the Application Process**

The Indian government has initiated work to simplify the visa application through the introduction of online platforms such as e-Visa services. This has reduced the bureaucratic delays and enhanced the accessibility of visa applications from various countries.

In recent years, the introduction of the e-Visa has allowed students from certain countries to apply for a visa electronically, making the process more efficient and user-friendly. However, the e-Visa is often limited to short-term programs such as language courses or exchange programs, and full-time students are required to apply through traditional consular services (Government of India, 2021).

#### **1.11.2 Impact of Student Visa Policies on International Student Enrollment**

**Ease of Visa Obtaining and Decision Making:** The ease of obtaining a student visa significantly impacts decision making. For India, the visa process is perceived as relatively straightforward, but it can present several challenges depending on the applicant's nationality, the institution's reputation, and the specific course of study.

For students from South Asian and African nations, India's visa process has generally been more accessible, owing to longstanding diplomatic ties and strategic

educational collaborations. For example, India has facilitated visa processes for countries under the Study in India initiative, making it easier for students from these regions to obtain visas promptly (Chakrabarti & Mandal, 2019).

However, for students from Western countries, particularly in Europe and North America, the process can sometimes be more cumbersome due to bureaucratic requirements and a lack of adequate information dissemination by Indian consulates abroad. As a result, some students may be deterred by the perceived complexities in obtaining visas.

Table 1.16: Major challenges and visa processing time region wise (ICEF Monitor, 2023)

| <b>Region</b> | <b>Visa Processing Time (Apx.)</b> | <b>Challenges</b>                               |
|---------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| South Asia    | 1-3 weeks                          | Generally smooth, but paperwork-intensive       |
| Africa        | 2-4 weeks                          | Financial proof requirements can be stringent   |
| Europe        | 4-6 weeks                          | Delays in processing, communication barriers    |
| North America | 4-6 weeks                          | Additional medical clearances and documentation |

**Financial Constraints and Visa Approval:** An essential part of the visa process for international students is demonstrating the financial ability especially for developing country students, this can be a significant barrier. Visa applications often get delayed or rejected due to inadequate financial documentation, despite students securing admission at reputable Indian institutions (Singh & Jain, 2020).

This financial aspect disproportionately impacts students from regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia, where personal financial resources may be limited,

and external funding or scholarships are necessary to meet visa conditions. The ICCR has worked to address this issue by providing scholarships that cover tuition fees, accommodation, and living expenses, easing the financial burden for students and aiding their visa approvals (Government of India, 2019).

### **1.11.3 Post-Visa Challenges: Employment and Work Opportunities**

One of the notable limitations of India's student visa policies is the lack of provision for study and work together. In contrast to countries such as Australia, Canada, and Germany, where student visas come with part-time work allowances, India's Student Visa prohibits any form of employment during studies, barring internships that are an integral part of the curriculum (Rizvi, 2016).

This restriction on employment options can be a significant deterrent for students who rely on part-time work to support themselves financially during their studies. For students from developing countries, where scholarships may not cover the entirety of their expenses, this policy can make studying in India less appealing compared to other destinations that offer more flexible visa policies regarding work-study opportunities.

### **1.11.4 Policy Reforms and Recent Developments**

In recent years, under the Study in India initiative and other educational diplomacy efforts, India has worked to reduce processing times, improve transparency in visa decisions, and increase collaboration with universities in the visa application process (Chakrabarti & Mandal, 2019).

For example, the Study in India visa facilitation desk has been established in key regions to offer guidance and assistance to prospective students, streamlining the documentation process. Additionally, considering the COVID-19, the government has introduced provisional visas that allow students to begin their programs online before arriving in India once travel restrictions are lifted (Raghuram, 2021).

### **1.11.5 Impact of Visa Policies on Enrolment Patterns**

India's visa policies have a measurable impact on the trends of international student enrolment. For countries that benefit from streamlined visa processes and specific



government-to-government educational agreements, such as Nepal, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, the student number grow. Conversely, students from regions where visa policies are perceived as more restrictive or less transparent, such as Western Europe and North America, have shown slower growth in enrolment numbers (Knight, 2021).

**Case Study of Nepal and Bangladesh:** Students from Nepal and Bangladesh represent two of the largest groups of international students in India. Their relatively hassle-free visa process, combined with cultural and geographical proximity, has made India a preferred destination for higher education. The streamlined visa application procedures for these countries, along with bilateral agreements on educational cooperation, have resulted in a sustained flow of students into Indian universities (Singh & Jain, 2020).

**Case Study of African Nations:** Students from African nations, particularly Kenya, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, have benefited from the Indian government's visa-on-arrival policies and enhanced scholarship offerings. However, challenges remain in terms of providing adequate information and support through Indian embassies, resulting in occasional delays and confusion during the visa process. Improving these channels of communication can further bolster student inflow from African countries (Choudaha & de Wit, 2020).

## **1.12 Role of Indian Diaspora in Promoting Indian Higher Education**

India's global diaspora plays a significant task in promoting Indian higher education abroad. As of 2024, approximately 18 million Indians live and work outside India, spanning various sectors from academia to technology to business. This study explores how the Indian diaspora helps to increase the visibility and reputation, focusing on key aspects such as diaspora-led knowledge transfer, institutional partnerships, student recruitment, and policy advocacy.

### **1.12.1 Indian Diaspora: A Global Asset**

The Indian diaspora, often referred to as the *Pravasi Bharatiya*, is a powerful transnational community that maintains deep cultural, economic, and academic ties with India. Historically, members of the Indian diaspora have been instrumental in

facilitating cross-border knowledge exchanges, supporting research collaboration, and establishing networks that connect Indian institutions with universities abroad (Khadria, 2009).

Indian-origin academics at prominent universities abroad often serve as role models for students and faculty in India, creating opportunities for educational collaborations and research partnerships that ultimately enhance India's standing as a viable study destination.

### **1.12.2 Knowledge Transfer and Academic Contributions**

One of the most prominent ways in which the Indian diaspora promotes Indian higher education is through knowledge transfer. Indian-origin professors and researchers in prestigious global universities frequently engage with Indian institutions through guest lectures, seminars, and collaborative research projects. This interaction contributes to the intellectual enrichment of both parties, enabling Indian universities to access cutting-edge research and innovative teaching methodologies while helping their international counterparts better understand Indian society, culture, and economy.

The GIAN, launched in 2015, serves as a formal platform for the Indian diaspora to contribute to higher education in India. GIAN invites renowned Indian-origin academics from prestigious institutions abroad to engage in short-term teaching and research collaborations at Indian universities. This initiative enhances the academic infrastructure and research capabilities of Indian universities, allowing them to benefit from global expertise (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Additionally, Indian-origin professionals who hold prominent positions in multinational companies or academic institutions often encourage and facilitate student exchange programs, internships, and mentorship opportunities for students from India.

### **1.12.3 Institutional Partnerships and Collaborations**

Indian diaspora members also help in collaboration between Indian universities and abroad institutions, enhancing the international visibility of Indian higher education.

These partnerships can take the form of dual-degree programs, research collaborations, joint seminars, and faculty exchange programs. For example, partnerships between Indian institutes like the IITs and global universities like MIT, Stanford, and Oxford have been significantly driven by Indian-origin academics in these institutions who advocate for deeper cooperation (Khadria, 2010).

The Indo-US 21st Century Knowledge Initiative, for instance, is one such collaboration that has been strongly supported by the Indian diaspora in the U.S. This initiative fosters academic cooperation between U.S. and Indian institutions, enabling the exchange of students and faculty, collaborative research projects, and shared learning resources.

Moreover, Indian-origin business leaders and entrepreneurs in sectors such as technology, finance, and healthcare have supported institutional partnerships by offering funding and mentorship for research initiatives that bridge Indian institutions with leading universities in the West. Such partnerships create opportunities for Indian students to engage in globally relevant research, improving their educational experience and career prospects.

#### **1.12.4 Diaspora as Student Recruitment Ambassadors**

The Indian diaspora, particularly in countries with a strong Indian community presence, helps in advertising India as a study destination to students from various backgrounds. Members of the diaspora often encourage their children or relatives to explore educational opportunities in India, particularly for professional programs like engineering, medicine, and business. This is especially prevalent among the NRI and PIO diaspora, whose strong cultural and familial ties to India make the country an attractive option for higher education (Choudaha, 2017).

In regions such as the Middle East, where large expatriate Indian populations reside, Indian schools and community organizations actively promote Indian universities and programs. For example, Indian schools in Dubai and Kuwait regularly host education fairs featuring Indian institutions, allowing prospective students and their families to directly engage with representatives from Indian universities (Roy, 2019).

Moreover, Indian diaspora members often serve as informal advisors and mentors for international students considering studying in India. They provide valuable insights into navigating the Indian higher education system, visa requirements, and cultural adjustments, thereby easing the transition for international students from diverse backgrounds.

### **1.12.5 Policy Advocacy and Diaspora Diplomacy**

The Study in India initiative, launched in 2018, has leveraged the diaspora's influence to attract international students to India. Diaspora members have been instrumental in spreading awareness about this initiative in their host countries, promoting India as a vibrant, affordable, and culturally rich education destination. Additionally, the Indian government has sought to create avenues for diaspora members to directly invest in India's education sector, encouraging philanthropy, endowments, and scholarships for underprivileged students in Indian universities.

Furthermore, the Indian diaspora's influence extends to policy advocacy in host countries, where Indian-origin politicians, academics, and business leaders advocate for stronger educational ties with India. These advocacy efforts help enhance the visibility of Indian higher education on the global stage and create more opportunities for academic cooperation between India and foreign universities (Khadria, 2010).

### **1.13 Language Proficiency Requirements for International Students in India**

Language proficiency is essential for international students' academic success and their ability to integrate into India's diverse educational environment. This section explores India's language proficiency expectations, emphasizing English as the primary instructional language, the significance of regional languages, and the role of language barriers on students' academic and social experiences.

#### **1.13.1 Language Landscape in Indian Higher Education**

India's vast linguistic diversity includes over 1,600 languages, yet English is predominantly used in higher education, especially in institutions welcoming international students. In addition to English, regional languages like Hindi, Tamil,

Bengali, or Telugu are also used in state and regional universities (Kumar, 2019). The prominence of English enhances India's appeal to students from regions where English is common, such as South Asia, Africa, and Southeast Asia. However, outside major cities, regional languages can heavily influence students' social interactions, making language proficiency in both English and regional languages crucial for a well-rounded experience in India.

### **1.13.2 English Proficiency Requirements for International Students**

Since most Indian universities use English as the medium of instruction, proficiency in English is typically necessary for international applicants. Specific requirements vary, with many universities not requiring formal proof of English proficiency, considering prior studies in English sufficient.

### **1.13.3 Common English Language Tests and Criteria**

Leading Indian universities with international partnerships or global outreach generally require applicants to submit scores from English proficiency tests. Typical benchmarks include:

- TOEFL: Score ranges from 80-100, depending on the program level.
- IELTS: Overall band scores of 6.0 or higher, with specific program requirements (Choudaha, 2020). Alternative tests like the Pearson Test of English (PTE) or Cambridge English qualifications may also be accepted, while exemptions are sometimes made for students from countries with English as the primary instructional language.

### **1.13.4 Conditional Admissions and Language Support Programs**

Some universities offer conditional admission to students who do not meet the minimum English requirements, allowing them to complete intensive English language courses before or alongside academic coursework. Universities like the University of Hyderabad and Manipal Academy of Higher Education provide such programs, particularly for students from Central Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Singh & Bhatia, 2021).

### **1.13.5 Regional Language Requirements and Impact**

While English is widely used in academics, some institutions offer courses in regional languages, especially in fields like humanities and social sciences. State and regional universities may require language proficiency in Hindi, Tamil, or Bengali for subjects like Indian literature and sociology. However, STEM students rarely need regional language skills (Knight, 2018). Language requirements can challenge international students from diverse linguistic backgrounds but remain confined to specific academic disciplines.

### **1.13.6 Language Barriers and Academic Success**

Language barriers, particularly with academic English, can impact international students' academic performance in India. Challenges arise for students from non-English-speaking countries, who may struggle with technical English in lectures, assignments, and discussions (Choudaha, 2020). Language support services, such as writing centers or peer tutoring, are available in some institutions, though their accessibility can vary by university location and resources.

### **1.13.7 Social Integration and Language Challenges**

Language proficiency is also crucial for social integration in India. Students may face difficulties communicating in regional languages outside academic settings, especially in smaller towns with lower English use. Those in metropolitan areas like Delhi or Mumbai tend to experience smoother cultural integration due to broader English use, while students in Tier-2 or Tier-3 cities report greater isolation due to language barriers (Kumar, 2019; Singh & Bhatia, 2021).

## **1.14 Cultural Adaptation and Support Systems for International Students in India**

Cultural adaptation significantly shapes the experience of international students, particularly in a culturally rich country like India. This section explores the complexities of cultural adaptation, the role of acculturation, and institutional support that aids students' transitions.

#### **1.14.1 The Importance of Cultural Adaptation**

Cultural adaptation, or adjusting to new social norms and behaviors, is crucial for international students' academic success and personal well-being. In India, students must navigate diverse linguistic, religious, and social dynamics, which can affect their ability to connect with peers and engage in academic life (Berry, 2017; Singh & Bhatia, 2021). Effective adaptation enhances students' educational experience and satisfaction with their host country.

#### **1.14.2 Challenges of Cultural Adaptation for International Students in India**

India's cultural diversity can present challenges for international students, particularly those from more homogeneous backgrounds, like East Asia or Central Asia. Students from these regions may find the diversity of languages, religions, and traditions overwhelming (Knight, 2018). Adjusting to different social norms, such as communication styles and religious practices, can also be difficult. Language barriers further complicate students' social integration, particularly in areas where regional languages are predominant (Kumar, 2019).

#### **1.14.3 Institutional Support Systems for International Students**

To facilitate cultural adaptation, Indian universities offer various support services, including pre-arrival orientation and on-campus cultural programs under initiatives like the Study in India program. These services cover visa processes, housing, and academic expectations, helping students manage cultural transitions more smoothly (Choudaha, 2020). Leading universities, such as IITs and JNU, provide language support, cultural workshops, and peer mentoring to ease students' cultural adjustments (Knight, 2018).

#### **1.14.4 Acculturation and Long-Term Adaptation**

Acculturation, the process of balancing one's original culture with the host country's values, is essential for students' long-term success. Research indicates that students adopting an integrative approach to acculturation report higher satisfaction and academic success. Institutions that foster inclusivity and support cultural exchange

create environments where international students thrive both academically and socially (Berry, 2017).

### **1.15 Influence of Studying in India**

The impact of studying in India on international students extends beyond the individual to their source country and host country. This study explores the broad range of impacts from the perspective of individuals, source countries, and India as the host nation. Additionally, it examines case studies of successful international alumni who have leveraged their Indian education for substantial achievements in their home countries and internationally.

#### **1.15.1 Effects on Individual Experiences**

Studying in India can have profound and far-reaching impacts on the personal and professional development of international students. Many of these students gain exposure to a diverse educational environment, develop critical intercultural competencies, and acquire globally relevant skills. Additionally, access to India's strong academic programs, particularly in fields like technology, medicine, and business, provides international students with technical expertise and practical knowledge that enhances their employability.

**Academic Development:** India's reputation as an emerging hub for academic excellence, especially in fields like engineering, information technology, and management, offers significant advantages to international students (Choudaha, 2020). Esteemed institutions, including the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), are known for their demanding academic programs, through which students develop strong technical abilities and analytical skills. This rigorous training prepares graduates to make meaningful contributions to their home countries as well as within India.

**Cultural Competency and Global Citizenship:** Living and studying in India exposes students to a multitude of cultures, languages, and traditions, significantly enhancing their intercultural understanding. This experience helps international students develop the flexibility and adaptability needed in an increasingly interconnected world (Knight, 2018). Such competencies are highly sought after by global



employers and can position individuals as bridges between cultures in international business, diplomacy, and academia.

**Career Opportunities and Professional Growth:** An Indian education opens up various pathways for international students in both global and local job markets. The reputation of Indian institutions in specific disciplines enhances employability, particularly in technology sectors, where graduates from India are often regarded as highly skilled professionals (Naik, 2021). Additionally, many international students establish professional networks during their studies, which can later facilitate global career opportunities.

### **1.15.2 Impact on Source Country**

The impact of studying in India is not limited to the individual; it also has significant ripple effects on the students' home countries. International students often return home with enhanced skills, knowledge, and networks that contribute to national development. Several key areas where the source country benefits from this educational exchange include economic development, knowledge transfer, and diplomatic relations.

**Brain Gain and Knowledge Transfer:** Unlike the brain drain often associated with students who remain in their host countries after studying abroad, international students returning from India contribute to a brain gain in their source countries. They bring with them the technical expertise and soft skills gained in Indian institutions, helping to strengthen important industries like information technology, healthcare, and education (Naidoo, 2020). In many cases, returning graduates assume leadership positions in their home countries, using their education to innovate and contribute to national progress.

**Strengthening Diplomatic and Economic Ties:** Educational diplomacy, through initiatives like SII, plays a vital role in enhancing bilateral relations of India with their own countries. International students often become informal ambassadors of India upon their return, helping to foster stronger cultural, diplomatic, and economic ties. Additionally, returning alumni are likely to engage in international trade or collaborative ventures, further strengthening cross-border relations (Jayaram, 2018).

**Socio-Economic Impact:** Many international students come from developing or emerging economies, and their education in India can have substantial socio-economic implications for their home countries. For example, the technical skills gained by students studying engineering, medicine, or business in India are often applied to solve pressing problems in their own communities, driving economic growth and contributing to societal development (Knight, 2018).

### **1.15.3 Impact on Host Country**

International students offer numerous benefits to India, including economic contributions, cultural diversity, and boosting India's soft power globally. Attracting these students aligns with India's aim to become a global educational center.

**Economic Impact:** International students contribute significantly to the economy through tuition and living expenses, supporting local businesses in student-heavy cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, and Delhi. This revenue is vital for many universities, particularly private institutions (Choudaha, 2020).

**Cultural Exchange and Campus Globalization:** The presence of international students enhances cross-cultural interactions, enriching campus experiences for both international and local students. This cultural exchange also promotes a global perspective on Indian campuses, emphasizing India's commitment to diversity (Jayaram, 2018).

**Strengthening India's Global Standing:** International education serves as soft power for India, fostering relationships with future leaders. Alumni often assume leadership roles in their home countries, fostering positive diplomatic ties. The Study in India (SII) initiative supports this vision, promoting India as an alternative to other popular study destinations (Naik, 2021).

### **1.15.4 Case Studies of Successful International Alumni from Indian Institutions**

India's influence is visible in the achievements of its international alumni, who often go on to make meaningful contributions in their fields.

**Case Study 1: Dr. Tadesse Mekonnen (Ethiopia)** A graduate of AIIMS, Dr. Mekonnen returned to Ethiopia, where he now leads public health initiatives and

collaborates with Indian doctors on projects, demonstrating the impact of an Indian education.

Case Study 2: Amara Diallo (Senegal) Completing a master's in computer science at IIT Bombay, Diallo returned to Senegal to co-found a tech startup in educational software, a venture inspired by India's tech ecosystem.

Case Study 3: Fatima Al-Hassan (Nigeria) A JNU graduate in International Relations, Al-Hassan now serves as a Nigerian diplomat, advocating for stronger educational and diplomatic ties with India.

### **1.16 Impact of Global Events on International Student Mobility**

Global events like economic crises, political conflicts, and pandemics influence international student mobility, shaping both student decisions and host country policies.

#### **1.16.1 Economic Crises and International Student Mobility**

The 2008 Financial Crisis: This crisis limited international student mobility, particularly for those from low- and middle-income countries. As a result, Indian universities also saw reduced inbound students, as families reconsidered expenses (Altbach & de Wit, 2019).

Currency Fluctuations: Currency devaluation impacts student decisions, with affordable destinations like India benefiting during economic downturns (Naik, 2021).

#### **1.16.2 Geopolitical Events and Conflicts**

Post-9/11 Visa Policies: After 9/11, visa restrictions in Western countries led students from impacted regions to consider alternative destinations like India, which saw a rise in students from countries with more restrictive visa policies (Koser & Salt, 2018).

Political Instability: Conflicts in countries like Syria and Afghanistan have led students to seek education abroad, and India has supported displaced students with scholarships, enhancing its educational diplomacy (Naidoo, 2020).

### **1.16.3 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Effect on International Student Movement**

Initial Impact (2020-2021): COVID-19 created significant disruptions, with many students deferring or shifting to online learning due to travel restrictions. This period highlighted the digital divide for students from developing nations (Altbach & de Wit, 2020).

Post-COVID Recovery (2022-2024): As institutions reopened, India positioned itself as a safe study destination through its vaccination efforts and university reopening.

### **1.16.4 Environmental and Climate-Related Events**

Natural disasters and climate changes affect student decisions. Countries with strong disaster preparedness attract students, while climate refugees increasingly seek education in stable regions. India's improved disaster management has mitigated concerns and positioned it as a viable option for students from vulnerable areas (Naidoo, 2020).

## **1.17 Motivation for the Study**

The globalization of higher education has shifted the flow of international students toward emerging markets. India, with its unique blend of academic offerings and affordability, is attracting international students, but little is known about their motivations and experiences. This research seeks to explore these motivations, focusing on how student origin impacts perceptions, satisfaction, and acculturation experiences in India.

### **1.17.1 Professional Experience**

With over a decade of experience in international student recruitment, the researcher brings valuable insight into the motivations and experiences of international students in India.

### **1.17.2 Objectives to be Achieved**

This study addresses five core objectives:

1. Identify motivational factors influencing students' decision to study in India, including affordability, culture, and academic reputation.
2. Explore the influence of geographic and cultural backgrounds on motivations for choosing India.
3. Examine perceived value of studying in India, considering factors like institutional reputation, experience, and affordability.
4. Analyze acculturation's moderating role between perceived value and student experiences.

Investigate satisfaction levels and how they are shaped by academic quality, social integration, and economic factors.

### **1.18 Scope of Study**

This study delves into the motivations, experiences, and expectations of international students who choose India for their higher education. Despite increasing global interest in Indian universities, India is yet to emerge as a preferred study destination comparable to countries like the United States, United Kingdom, or Australia.

This research balances a broad and focused scope, aiming to uncover and examine the primary motivations influencing international students' decision to select India. This exploration includes both students contemplating India as a potential study destination from their home countries and those currently pursuing higher education at Indian universities. The study specifically focuses on full-time degree programs at undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels.

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques, including detailed interviews with international students and large-scale surveys. It also integrates secondary data from sources such as the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) and established academic literature to comprehensively analyze the international student experience in India.

### **1.19 Future Implications for International Education in India**

The findings of this study are expected to have far-reaching implications, informing long-term strategies to strengthen India's appeal as an international education hub. By highlighting the challenges faced by international students and factors contributing to their satisfaction, this research can help create a roadmap for enhancing India's higher education sector. Additionally, it provides comparative insights that position India alongside other emerging educational destinations like China, Malaysia, and Singapore, which have made significant progress in attracting international students.

This study also emphasizes the value of fostering a globally inclusive academic environment that meets the needs and expectations of international students. As global trends shaped higher education, nations offering supportive and enriching academic experiences for international students were well-positioned to remain competitive. Consequently, this research provides valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, and institutions seeking to boost India's reputation as an appealing international study destination.

### **1.20 Thesis Outline**

The thesis is structured to systematically investigate the factors influencing international students' decisions to study in India, as well as their experiences, while building a theoretical and empirical foundation for examining these factors. The study is organized into the following main sections:

**Introduction:** Provides an overview of the research topic, outlines the scope of the study, presents research objectives, and discusses the study's importance within the context of international education in India.

**Literature Review:** Examines relevant literature on international student mobility, factors influencing study destination choices, student satisfaction, and the role of acculturation in shaping experiences. This review positions the research within existing theoretical frameworks and identifies specific gaps in the literature, especially concerning India as a study destination.

**Research Methodology:** Details the research design, methodology, and data collection methods used. It describes the mixed-methods approach involving qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys and discusses the sampling strategies to ensure a broad representation of international student perspectives.

**Findings and Discussion:** Presents the research findings, including a detailed analysis of motivational factors influencing international students' choice of India, university reputation, economic considerations, and the impact of acculturation on their experiences. Additionally, it compares motivations based on students' country of origin and assesses how perceived value affects student satisfaction.

**Conclusion and Recommendations:** Summarizes the study's key findings and presents conclusions based on the data analysis. It offers recommendations for Indian higher education institutions and policymakers on improving India's attractiveness as a study destination. The chapter also suggests areas for future research, particularly in understanding the long-term impact of international student mobility on both home and host countries.

## **1.21 Chapter Summary**

This introductory chapter lays the foundation for the thesis by presenting the research topic, its significance, and the study's scope. The research investigates the factors that influence international students' motivations to choose India as a study destination, as well as how these factors affect their experiences and satisfaction levels. By examining the roles of perceived value, university reputation, and acculturation in shaping international students' outcomes, the study contributes to a nuanced understanding of India's evolving position in global higher education.

The thesis structure is carefully crafted to address the research objectives, starting with an extensive literature review, followed by a thorough discussion of the research methodology, findings, and implications for Indian higher education institutions. Ultimately, this research provides actionable insights that can support initiatives to internationalize India's higher education sector and attract a more diverse international student body.

This introduction serves as a roadmap for the study, illustrating its relevance to broader discussions on international student mobility and situating India within this global landscape.



## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Chapter Outline**

This literature review delves into the main factors affecting international students' choices, experiences, and satisfaction, with an emphasis on Indian higher education institutions. Understanding these elements is crucial for institutions aiming to attract and retain global talent, underscoring how globalization and internationalization are reshaping educational systems.

It assesses globalization's influence on education and India's developing role in the global higher education market. The review explores student mobility and identifies push and pull factors guiding students' decisions, particularly in choosing India as a study destination. The motivations that contribute to selecting study locations, especially India, are analyzed, noting the roles of family, peers, and educational consultants in the decision-making process.

Financial factors, such as tuition and living costs, are evaluated in the context of India's perceived value. The academic reputation of Indian universities is discussed, covering rankings, accreditations, and partnerships that influence perception. Quality of education emerges as a central aspect, with comparisons made between Indian institutions and international standards.

The experiences of international students in India, encompassing educational quality, socio-cultural setting, administrative services, and infrastructure, are examined. The impact of the socio-cultural environment and acculturation on student experiences and perceived value is highlighted, while administrative support and infrastructure are discussed as key satisfaction factors.

The review centers on the link between student experiences and perceived value, showing how positive experiences enhance India's appeal as a study destination. It concludes by analyzing research on acculturation as a moderating factor and strategies for improving student satisfaction, identifying gaps this study intends to address.

## **2.2 Globalization and the International Expansion of Higher Education**

As global interconnectivity expands, education has become closely tied with globalization. This shift has opened educational institutions to a global audience, setting the stage for extensive internationalization. Here, we explore higher education's journey through the forces of globalization and the ensuing internationalization (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

### **2.2.1 Higher Education in a Globalized World**

Globalization offers both benefits and challenges to higher education. It has broadened institutions' reach across borders, creating culturally diverse educational environments that enrich the learning experience (Altbach, 2016). However, it also intensifies competition, treating education as an economic commodity where quality and cost are weighed (Marginson, 2006).

As global trends gain prominence, higher education institutions have adapted, expanding curriculum to meet international demands and focusing on cross-border partnerships (Knight, 2004). This global outlook has spurred universities to engage in collaborations and curriculum development aimed at addressing global challenges (De Wit, 2020).

### **2.2.2 Impacts of Globalization**

The impact of globalization on higher education is substantial. Diversity in student bodies has increased, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and inclusivity within academic environments (Teichler, 2017). However, it has also raised concerns about quality and equity, as some institutions are better positioned to pursue global outreach than others, exacerbating existing inequalities (Altbach, 2016).

Further, global ambitions have sometimes overshadowed local obligations, challenging institutions to balance international recognition with community-focused goals (Rizvi & Lingard, 2019).

### **2.2.3 Prospects for Globalization**

Looking forward, technological advancements and online platforms are expected to further globalize education, expanding access (Altbach et al., 2019). Yet, trends like nationalism and protectionist policies may hinder internationalization efforts (Marginson, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the need for adaptable and resilient education systems, accelerating digital adoption and signaling a potential shift to hybrid educational models (Marinoni et al., 2020).

### **2.2.4 Internationalization Pathways in Higher Education**

Internationalization in education involves integrating global perspectives across teaching, research, and service missions (Knight, 2004). This comprehensive approach prepares students for a globalized world through partnerships, exchange programs, and globalized curricula (De Wit & Hunter, 2015). Increasingly, institutions view internationalization as essential for developing global networks and enriching student experiences through cultural immersion (Paige et al., 2009).

### **2.2.5 India's Role in Global Higher Education Governance**

India, with its rich educational legacy and growing higher education sector, is increasingly involved in global education governance. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to internationalize Indian education, attracting global students and enhancing academic collaborations (Government of India, 2020). Through these initiatives, India seeks to build educational diplomacy and contribute to global knowledge-sharing (Choudaha, 2017).

## **2.3 International Student Mobility**

International student mobility has become a hallmark of global higher education, as students cross borders to pursue academic opportunities, enriching both individuals and institutions. Mobility trends reflect students' aspirations for global competencies, quality education, and career advantages in an interconnected world (Altbach & de Wit, 2020).

### **2.3.1 Global and Regional Trends in International Student Mobility**

While Western countries have traditionally been primary destinations for international students, Asian countries, such as China and Vietnam, are gaining prominence (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2021) shows a rise in regional mobility within Asia, driven by factors like economic growth and significant investment in education.

### **2.3.2 India's Growing Role in International Education**

India's increasing focus on educational quality, infrastructure, and affordability makes it an attractive option for international students. Despite past challenges in attracting students, initiatives such as the NEP 2020 and the "Study in India" program aim to enhance India's appeal as a study destination (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020).

### **2.3.3 Drivers of International Student Mobility**

Push factors, such as limited educational opportunities and economic conditions, drive students to seek education abroad, while pull factors like quality institutions, scholarships, and favorable policies draw them to specific destinations (Mazzarol et al., 2020).

### **2.3.4 International Student Mobility in India**

India, traditionally a source of international students, now seeks to attract foreign students, with programs like "Study in India" and NEP 2020 emphasizing quality and inclusivity. Nevertheless, challenges like visa issues, safety concerns, and infrastructure remain barriers (Chen & Zimitat, 2006).

## **2.4 Motivational Factors Influencing Study Destination Choice**

International student mobility reflects students' complex motivations in choosing where to study. Recognizing these factors is essential for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in supporting and drawing international students.

### 2.4.1 Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Student Motivation

Various frameworks offer insights into student motivations for studying abroad. The Push-Pull Model identifies factors driving students from their home country while attracting them to a foreign destination (Hao et al., 2020). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs also applies, as students seek to fulfil basic to self-actualization needs through education abroad (Jones et al., 2021).

Economic factors encompass aspects like the affordability of education, access to scholarships, and job prospects after graduation. Many students pursue international degrees to enhance their employability, particularly those from developing countries who see studying abroad as a means to improve their economic circumstances (Nguyen & Tran, 2019).

Socio-cultural factors include the appeal of the destination's culture, the presence of supportive communities, and opportunities for cultural exchange. Students often select countries where they expect a welcoming atmosphere and the chance to participate in cross-cultural experiences (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Key factors also include the destination's language and overall social environment, which can influence a student's sense of comfort and integration.

Personal factors involve individual ambitions, such as a desire for personal development, independence, and exposure to diverse perspectives. The opportunity to build global networks and gain international experience often motivates students (Marginson, 2018). Furthermore, in cultures that prioritize education, family expectations and aspirations for enhanced social standing can also influence students' decisions to study abroad.

Table 2.1: Key motivational factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Chen & Zimitat, 2006; Li & Chen, 2019; Nguyen & Tran, 2019, Marginson, 2018)

| Category | Motivational Factors                                                    |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Academic | Quality of education, reputation of institution, research opportunities |

|                |                                                         |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Economic       | Affordability, scholarships, future job prospects       |
| Socio-Cultural | Cultural appeal, community support, language, lifestyle |
| Personal       | Personal growth, independence, family expectations      |

#### **2.4.2 Key Motivators Shaping International Students' Study Destination Choices**

**Quality of Education:** The educational quality of the host country is a major factor for international students considering study abroad. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2021) highlight that students seek institutions known for academic excellence, cutting-edge research, and experienced faculty. International rankings and the institution's global reputation heavily influence perceptions of quality (Knight, 2020). Students from countries with emerging educational systems view studying abroad as a means to access superior academic training and improve their career and social standing (Zhao & Reeve, 2020).

**Career Prospects:** Career opportunities play an essential role in students' educational choices. Many believe that education in specific countries opens doors to greater career potential and advancement (Maringe, 2021). The likelihood of securing employment post-graduation in sectors with high demand is particularly appealing (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2021). International education is often seen as a pathway to enter global job markets and enhance economic mobility, especially for students from developing regions (Mohammad & Rahimi, 2019).

**Institutional Reputation and Rankings:** A school's reputation and ranking are crucial in shaping students' choices. Institutions with high rankings are often perceived as offering superior educational and professional outcomes (Knight & De Wit, 2020). Attending a prestigious university is commonly linked to increased earning potential and greater career opportunities upon graduation (Jones & de Wit, 2021).

**Institutional Support and Student Services:** Indian institutions are placing a stronger emphasis on support services for international students, including orientation programs, academic advising, and cultural integration activities (Nguyen & Tran, 2019). These resources contribute to positive student experiences and academic

success, thus making India more attractive to international students (Zhao & Reeve, 2020).

**Government Policies:** Government policies, particularly those related to immigration, visas, and work opportunities post-graduation, significantly impact international student choices. According to Choudaha and de Wit (2020), policies that streamline visa processes and offer pathways to permanent residency are especially attractive to students. Countries such as Canada and Australia have seen growth in international student numbers due to policies that favor student mobility (Marginson, 2021).

### **2.4.3 Comparative Analysis of Motivational Factors Across Different Regions**

Motivational factors vary globally based on socio-economic, cultural, and local circumstances.

**Asia:** In countries like China and India, students prioritize career-related factors, such as employment prospects and the prestige of international qualifications. With highly competitive education environments, students seek foreign degrees to gain a competitive advantage in the job market (Zhang et al., 2018). Limited local access to high-quality education also drives this trend.

**Europe:** Students often prioritize socio-cultural experiences, valuing opportunities for cultural exchange and immersion in diverse environments. Programs like Erasmus, which promote student mobility within Europe, highlight the emphasis on academic and cultural exchange, though economic considerations like living costs remain significant (Van Mol, 2020).

**Africa:** African students are driven by a strong need for high-quality education and economic opportunities. However, push factors like political instability and economic challenges in their home countries make them seek education in more stable and prosperous nations (Owino et al., 2021). Scholarships and migration prospects also serve as key motivators.

**North America:** For North American students, factors like academic reputation and specialized programs often hold significant weight. However, rising tuition costs and



the availability of financial aid are increasingly influential in their choices (Knight, 2020).

**Latin America:** Students from Latin America are motivated by a mix of factors, including access to high-quality education, career prospects, and cultural exposure. The geographic proximity to the United States and Canada makes these destinations appealing for their academic standards and employment opportunities after graduation (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Table 2.2: Comparative analysis of the primary motivational factors across different regions. (Zhang et al., 2018; Van Mol, 2020; Owino et al., 2021; Knight, 2020; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002)

| <b>Region</b> | <b>Primary Motivational Factors</b>                                      |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Asia          | Economic prospects, educational prestige, limited domestic opportunities |
| Europe        | Cultural exchange, academic quality, cost of living                      |
| Africa        | Educational quality, scholarships, political stability                   |
| North America | Academic reputation, financial aid, program-specific opportunities       |
| Latin America | Quality education, career prospects, and cultural experience             |

#### **2.4.4 Specific Motivational Drivers for Choosing India as a Study Destination**

India has a unique appeal that is increasingly attracting students, especially from neighboring countries and parts of Africa. The main factors motivating these students to choose India include:

**Affordable Education:** Compared to Western countries, India offers a more cost-effective education. Alongside lower tuition fees, the cost of living in India is also relatively low, making it an appealing choice for students from developing regions (Maringe & Foskett, 2021).

**Diverse Academic Offerings:** India's educational institutions provide an extensive range of programs, particularly in technical fields like engineering, medicine, and information technology. The country's reputation in technical and professional education draws students interested in specialized courses that align with industry needs.

**Cultural Proximity and Shared Heritage:** Students from South Asia and other regions with cultural or historical ties to India often feel a sense of familiarity that eases their adaptation. The cultural alignment and shared heritage provide a smoother integration experience for students from these backgrounds (Galli & Paraventi, 2020).

**Government Initiatives:** The Indian government has introduced several programs aimed at increasing international student enrollments, such as the Study in India initiative, which provides scholarships and streamlined admission processes. These efforts aim to make India a more accessible and appealing study option (Tazreiter & Flitton, 2020).

**English as a Medium of Instruction:** The prevalence of English as the language of instruction in Indian universities is a key factor for many international students, especially those from non-English-speaking countries who want to improve their language skills while studying abroad (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2021).

Table 2.3: Lists the specific motivational factors for choosing India as a study destination (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2021; Maringe & Foskett, 2021; Tazreiter & Flitton, 2020; Galli & Paraventi, 2020)

| <b>Motivational Factor</b> | <b>Description</b>                            |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Affordable Education       | Lower tuition fees and cost of living         |
| Diverse Academic Offerings | Strength in technical and specialized courses |
| Cultural Proximity         | Shared heritage with neighbouring countries   |

|                        |                                                  |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Government Initiatives | Scholarships and streamlined admission processes |
| English Instruction    | Use of English as the medium of instruction      |

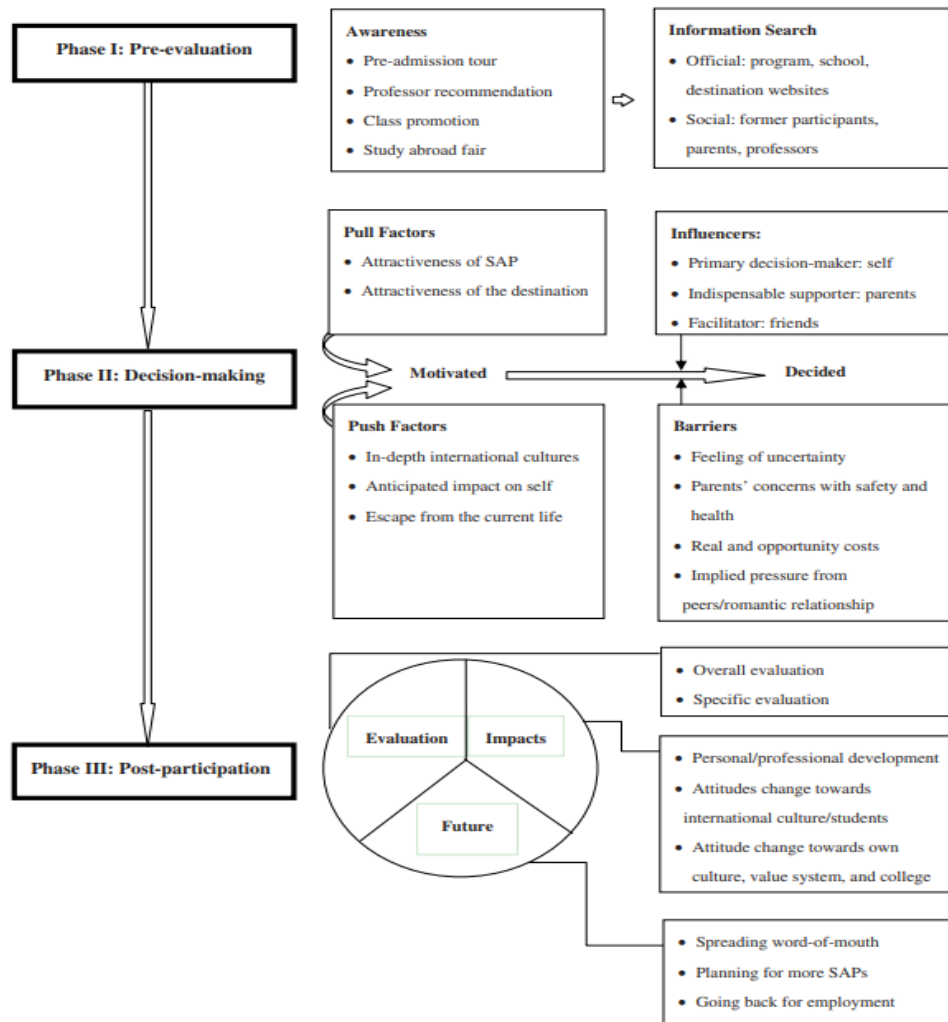
## **2.5 Higher Education Institution Choice**

Selecting to study abroad for higher education is a critical, multifaceted decision for international students. This section examines the various factors and influences that guide students in making this choice, considering the complex dynamics involved in selecting higher education institutions (HEIs). Such decisions are rarely made in isolation and are often shaped by a blend of personal goals, family expectations, societal norms, and advice from trusted sources.

### **2.5.1 Understanding International Students' Decision-Making**

The process of decision-making for international students involves numerous, interrelated factors. Central to this process is the drive for a promising future, motivating students to pursue educational paths that align with their personal, academic, and career aspirations. Choosing to study abroad is frequently viewed as a way to gain a global outlook, enhance employability, and access more robust career prospects (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). However, transitioning from the general decision to study abroad to selecting a specific institution entails many stages. Students must weigh factors such as academic quality, costs, geographic location, and institutional reputation (Bourke, 2000).

Figure 2.1: Study Abroad Program (SAP) Decision-making Flowchart (Cai, Wei, Lu, & Day, 2015)



### 2.5.2 Selecting a Higher Education Institution – A Multifaceted Decision Process

The Tertiary education decision-making process is affected by multitude of factors, including academic offerings, reputation of institution, geographic location, and the availability of scholarships or financial aid (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014). Moreover, students must consider their personal goals, cultural preferences, and long-term career aspirations when selecting an institution. The complexity of this process is heightened by the uncertainty and risk associated with studying in a foreign country, making the choice of institution a critical determinant of a student's overall success and satisfaction (Chen & Zimitat, 2006).

Table 2.4: Key Factors Affecting Choice of Higher Education Institution (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; Chen & Zimitat, 2006; McMahon, 1992; Bodycott, 2015)

| Category | Key Factors                                                                        |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Academic | Program offerings, faculty expertise, research opportunities, accreditation        |
| Economic | Tuition fees, availability of scholarships or financial aid, living expenses       |
| Social   | Institutional reputation, peer network, alumni success, campus diversity           |
| Personal | Cultural preferences, geographic location, proximity to home, personal aspirations |

The decision-making process can be viewed as a series of stages, beginning with the initial consideration of studying abroad and culminating in the final choice of institution. At each stage, students gather information, assess options, and weigh the potential outcomes. This process is often iterative, with students revisiting earlier decisions as they gain new information or as their circumstances change (McMahon, 1992). The availability of information, particularly through digital platforms, has transformed how students approach this process, enabling them to access a wealth of data about institutions and programs, but also overwhelming them with choices (Bodycott, 2015).

### 2.5.3 Influential Factors in International Students' Decision-Making

The decision-making process for international students is shaped by a variety of academic, social, economic, and personal factors. Academic aspects, such as the institution's educational quality, the availability of desired programs or courses, and faculty reputation, significantly affect how attractive a university appears (Maringe, 2006). Economic considerations—such as tuition costs, living expenses, and potential for financial assistance through scholarships or aid—are also influential in students' decision-making (Wilkins, 2011).

Social elements, including a culturally diverse student population, community support, and the institution's geographic location, hold substantial weight in students' choices. Many students prefer environments that not only foster academic success but also provide an inclusive and supportive community (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). Additionally, personal motivations, including family expectations, career goals, and lifestyle preferences, further guide students' choices (Soutar & Turner, 2002).

**Family & Friends:** Family and friends often exert a significant influence on international students' educational decisions. In cultures that value collective decision-making, input from parents, relatives, and close friends can heavily impact students' institution choices (Li, 2010). This guidance from family and friends frequently interacts with students' personal ambitions, reflecting a balance between individual aspirations and family expectations.

Table 2.5: Influence of Family & Friends on Decision-Making (Li, 2010)

| <b>Group</b>  | <b>Type of Influence</b>                                                      |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Parents       | Emotional support, financial guidance, cultural expectations, career advice   |
| Relatives     | Emotional support, financial assistance, advice based on personal experiences |
| Close Friends | Emotional support, peer opinions, shared experiences, advice on student life  |

**Parents:** For many international students, parents are the primary influencers in their educational choices. Parents' concerns often center around ensuring their child's safety, security, and future career opportunities, leading them to favor institutions known for their stability, reputation, and strong professional outcomes (Maringe, 2006). Frequently, parents also serve as the primary financial supporters of their child's education, which strengthens their influence over the decision-making process. Factors like tuition costs, living expenses, and the potential return on their investment are often central to their considerations (Chen, 2007).

Some parents may have particular preferences shaped by their own experiences or cultural values. For example, they might favor institutions in English-speaking countries or those with a strong global presence, even if these preferences don't fully align with the student's personal or academic interests (Bodycott, 2015). The desire to equip their children for success in an increasingly globalized world often motivates parents to advocate for institutions they believe offer the best pathways to a prosperous future (Bourke, 2000).

**Relatives:** Beyond parents, extended family members and close friends can also impact international students' educational decisions. Relatives who have studied abroad or possess knowledge of international education systems often provide useful guidance and recommendations (Li, 2010). Friends who are currently studying abroad or who recently graduated also serve as valuable sources of information, sharing firsthand experiences and setting realistic expectations for prospective students (Bodycott, 2015).

In cultures that emphasize community and family bonds, the decision to study abroad is often viewed as a shared journey, with extended family and friends actively contributing to the decision process (Kelley & Meyers, 1995). This collective approach offers students a broad perspective on their options, though it may also bring social pressure to follow the preferences of their close network (Soutar & Turner, 2002).

#### **2.5.4 External Influences on Students' Choices and Decisions**

In addition to family and friends, third-party influencers such as education agents, teachers, and professors can play a significant role in shaping students' choices and decisions. These third parties frequently offer specialized advice, guiding students through the complexities of international education and helping them make well-informed choices for their futures.

**Education Agents:** Education agents act as intermediaries who help students with applications, assist in choosing institutions, and facilitate visa processes (Beine et al., 2014). These agents possess extensive knowledge about various international education systems and can offer insights into the strengths and potential drawbacks of different institutions. However, the influence of these agents may not always be

impartial, as some agents may have financial incentives that encourage them to recommend specific institutions or programs (Perkins & Neumayer, 2014).

Table 2.6: Role of Education Agents in Decision-Making (Bourdon & Michel, 2014)

| Aspect                  | Description                                                                                                |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Services Provided       | Assistance with selecting institutions, preparing application materials, securing visas                    |
| Benefits                | Expert advice on international education systems, insights into different institutions                     |
| Drawbacks               | Potential for biased recommendations due to financial incentives, possible misalignment with student needs |
| Critical Considerations | Importance of evaluating advice critically, ensuring alignment with long-term goals                        |

**Education Agents:** While education agents provide valuable support to students during the application process, it's crucial for students and their families to evaluate the advice given critically. In some instances, agents might focus more on their interests, which can result in students being matched with institutions that don't fully meet their needs (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Despite these challenges, education agents are still commonly used, especially in countries where knowledge of international education systems is limited or access to such information is challenging (Wilkins, 2011).

**Professors and Teachers:** Professors and teachers also play a significant role in the decision-making process, especially for students with strong academic goals. These educators often offer insights into suitable academic programs, research opportunities, and potential career paths, helping students find institutions that align with their aspirations (Li, 2010). When these recommendations come from respected educators within a specific field, students tend to place considerable value on their advice (Beine et al., 2014).



Additionally, professors and teachers may support students' applications with reference letters or other crucial endorsements, which can improve a student's chances of acceptance into competitive programs. This makes educators' guidance an essential element of the decision-making process (Soutar & Turner, 2002). However, just as with education agents, it's important for students to view this advice within the larger context of their personal goals to ensure their chosen institution aligns with their long-term aspirations (Chen & Zimitat, 2006).

## **2.6 Economic Factors in Study Destination Choice**

Economic factors are key influences on students' study destination decisions. With globalization expanding access to diverse higher education options, students now consider multiple financial aspects when choosing where to study. These considerations include tuition costs, living expenses, scholarship availability, and potential financial aid. The comparative cost of studying across various countries and the perceived value of the education also play a significant role in shaping their decisions.

### **2.6.1 The Impact of Tuition Fees and Living Expenses on Study Destination Choice**

One of the primary economic considerations in choosing a study destination is the cost of tuition and living expenses. According to the push-pull model by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), financial factors, particularly tuition fees, act as "push" factors that encourage students to leave their home countries, as well as "pull" factors that attract them to certain study destinations. High or low costs of tuition and living can directly impact the affordability of studying abroad, thereby influencing students' choices.

Table 2.7: Average Annual Tuition Fees for International Students (*Gonzalez, Mesanza & Mariel, 2011; Li & Bray, 2007*)

| <b>Country</b> | <b>Public University</b> | <b>Private University</b> |
|----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| United States  | \$40,000                 | \$55,000                  |

|                |          |          |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| United Kingdom | \$30,000 | \$45,000 |
| Germany        | \$1,500  | \$3,000  |
| Australia      | \$35,000 | \$50,000 |
| India          | \$2,000  | \$4,000  |
| Canada         | \$25,000 | \$40,000 |

Table 2.8: Average Monthly Living Expenses for International Students (*Murphy-Lejeune, 2003; Singh & Tiwari, 2011*)

| <b>Coun<br/>try</b>       | <b>Accommo<br/>dation</b> | <b>Food<br/>&amp;<br/>Drin<br/>k</b> | <b>Transport<br/>ation</b> | <b>Miscellan<br/>eous</b> | <b>Tota<br/>l</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Unite<br>d<br>States      | \$1,200                   | \$400                                | \$150                      | \$300                     | \$2,0<br>50       |
| Unite<br>d<br>King<br>dom | \$1,000                   | \$350                                | \$120                      | \$250                     | \$1,7<br>20       |
| Germ<br>any               | \$600                     | \$300                                | \$100                      | \$200                     | \$1,2<br>00       |
| Austr<br>alia             | \$1,000                   | \$400                                | \$130                      | \$250                     | \$1,7<br>80       |
| India                     | \$300                     | \$150                                | \$50                       | \$100                     | \$600             |

|        |       |       |       |       |         |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Canada | \$800 | \$350 | \$120 | \$200 | \$1,470 |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|

Studies indicate that high tuition and living costs often discourage students from studying in certain countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Gonzalez, Mesanza, & Mariel, 2011). Increasing educational expenses in these nations have contributed to a decline in international student numbers, as many opt for more affordable destinations like Germany, where public universities offer tuition-free programs, or countries in the Asia-Pacific region with comparatively lower living costs (Chankseliani, 2018).

Research by Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014) shows that the financial strain of tuition and living expenses is often eased by scholarships and financial aid availability. Li and Bray (2007) further affirm this by highlighting that scholarships and financial support are strong "pull" factors that can offset high educational costs, thereby increasing the appeal of certain destinations to international students. Therefore, while high tuition and living expenses can be obstacles, financial aid opportunities can play a vital role in attracting students to these countries.

Economic factors also extend beyond tuition and living costs alone. For example, Murphy-Lejeune (2003) emphasizes that the cost of day-to-day expenses, including housing, transportation, and other necessities, significantly influences students' choices. Students from lower- and middle-income families are particularly mindful of these costs and often favor destinations where they can maintain a comfortable lifestyle within their budget.

### **2.6.2 Comparative Analysis of the Economic Cost of Studying in India Versus Other Countries**

India has become an attractive option in the global education market, especially for students from developing countries who seek high-quality yet affordable education. Comparative analyses of the economic costs of studying in India versus other popular study destinations reveal notable differences in tuition and living expenses, factors that greatly influence student decisions.

India's higher education system provides lower tuition fees compared to Western countries. Varghese (2009) notes that education costs in India are significantly more affordable than in the United States, the United Kingdom, or Australia. This affordability serves as a major attraction for students from nearby South Asian and African countries, who view India as a viable, cost-effective alternative to the more expensive education systems in the West.

Table 2.9: Comparative Tuition Fees and Living Expenses (*Varghese, 2009; Altbach & Knight, 2007*)

| <b>Country</b> | <b>Tuition Fees<br/>(Annual)</b> | <b>Living Expenses<br/>(Annual)</b> | <b>Total Annual<br/>Cost</b> |
|----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| United States  | \$40,000                         | \$24,600                            | \$64,600                     |
| United Kingdom | \$30,000                         | \$20,640                            | \$50,640                     |
| Germany        | \$1,500                          | \$14,400                            | \$15,900                     |
| Australia      | \$35,000                         | \$21,360                            | \$56,360                     |
| India          | \$2,000                          | \$7,200                             | \$9,200                      |
| Canada         | \$25,000                         | \$17,640                            | \$42,640                     |

However, while India's lower educational costs attract many students, concerns remain about the quality of education and the global recognition of Indian degrees. Marginson (2006) suggests that students increasingly seek a balance between affordability and quality. Consequently, countries like Germany and China, which offer a blend of low-cost education and high academic standards, are gaining appeal among international students.

Additionally, the cost of studying in India is further offset by available scholarships and financial aid. Singh and Tiwari (2011) note that the Indian government and various institutions provide a range of scholarships for international students,

helping to reduce financial burdens and enhancing India's appeal as a study destination.

In contrast, countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, despite their high tuition fees, continue to attract international students due to the perceived high value of their degrees and the anticipated return on investment. Research by Altbach and Knight (2007) suggests that students are often willing to bear higher education costs in these countries, associating their degrees with prestige and favorable employment opportunities.

### 2.6.3 Economic Considerations and Influence on Perceived Value

Economic considerations encompass not only the direct expenses of education but also the perceived value of the education provided. The Theory of Rational Choice (RCT) posits that individuals make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits of available options to maximize personal gain (Becker, 1976). When selecting a study destination, students assess the potential return on investment (ROI) of their education, taking into account factors like educational quality, employability, and future career opportunities.

Table 2.10: Perceived Value and Return on Investment (ROI) of Education in Selected Countries (*Becker, 1976; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007*)

| <b>Country</b> | <b>Perceived Quality of Education</b> | <b>Potential ROI</b> | <b>Employment Rate for Graduates</b> |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| United States  | High                                  | High                 | 90%                                  |
| United Kingdom | High                                  | High                 | 85%                                  |
| Germany        | High                                  | Moderate             | 80%                                  |
| Australia      | High                                  | High                 | 85%                                  |
| India          | Moderate                              | Moderate             | 70%                                  |

|        |      |      |     |
|--------|------|------|-----|
| Canada | High | High | 90% |
|--------|------|------|-----|

A study by Perna (2006) highlights how perceived value significantly shapes students' choices in selecting study destinations. The research indicates that students' socio-economic backgrounds influence how they assess the benefits of studying abroad. For example, students from wealthier backgrounds might prioritize the prestige and networking prospects provided by universities in the United States or the United Kingdom, while students with limited financial means may prioritize affordability and the potential for upward mobility offered by countries like India or Malaysia.

Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) also helps explain how economic considerations impact perceived value. According to TPB, the intention to study abroad is influenced by attitudes toward the decision, subjective norms, and perceived control over the behavior. Economic factors affect each of these components. For instance, if a student believes that studying in a more expensive country leads to better job prospects and higher future income, this positive outlook can strengthen their intention to study in that location despite the costs.

Economic considerations also shape perceived value through the concept of opportunity cost. McMahon (1992) suggests that students must weigh not only the direct expenses of education but also the opportunity costs, such as foregone income during the study period. For students from lower-income backgrounds, the opportunity cost of studying abroad may be higher, prompting them to consider destinations that promise faster returns or allow part-time work to offset costs.

Additionally, the perceived value of a study destination is affected by the economic stability of the host country. Research by Verbik and Lasanowski (2007) finds that students are more inclined to choose countries with stable economies, where they can work part-time or secure employment after graduation. Economically strong countries like Germany and Canada are especially appealing, as they provide both affordable education options and substantial job opportunities for international students.

## 2.7 University Reputation and Academic Excellence

The reputation and academic standing of a university have always been central to its success and influence. In today's globalized educational landscape, these aspects play a crucial role in shaping public perception, attracting top students, building industry connections, and securing financial support.

### 2.7.1 Reputation of Indian Universities

Over the years, the reputation of Indian universities has developed considerably. Historically, institutions such as the University of Calcutta, the University of Mumbai, and Banaras Hindu University established India's academic rigor. Recently, institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have achieved international recognition for their specialized programs and research contributions.

A university's reputation reflects its legacy, academic culture, faculty expertise, and alumni achievements. In India, reputation is also influenced by government initiatives, societal expectations, and media portrayals. Studies indicate that a university's reputation greatly influences student decisions, with many preferring institutions that have earned a strong national or global reputation (Mishra, 2016).

### 2.7.2 Ranking Systems for Indian Higher Education Institutions

University rankings have become key indicators of quality and prestige within academia. In India, the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), established by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, is the primary tool for evaluating and ranking universities. The NIRF assesses institutions based on various criteria, including 'Teaching, Learning, and Resources,' 'Research and Professional Practices,' 'Graduation Outcomes,' 'Outreach and Inclusivity,' and 'Perception' (MHRD, 2020).

Table 2.11: NIRF Ranking Parameters and Weightage (NIRF, 2023)

| Parameter                         | Weightage (%) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Teaching, Learning, and Resources | 30            |

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Research and Professional Practice | 30 |
| Graduation Outcomes                | 20 |
| Outreach and Inclusivity           | 10 |
| Perception                         | 10 |

The impact of university rankings is substantial, as it affects not only student admissions but also funding allocations, partnerships with international institutions, and educational policy-making. However, the NIRF's ranking approach has faced criticism for its strong focus on quantitative metrics, which may overlook critical qualitative aspects of academic excellence (Gupta & Gupta, 2019).

### **2.7.3 University Reputation as a Key Factor in Perceived Value**

University reputation is a major factor influencing the perceived value of education among students and stakeholders. This perceived value impacts student satisfaction, loyalty, and the institution's capacity to draw in and retain talent. A strong reputation boosts the perceived quality of education, increasing the likelihood that students and parents view the education institution as a worthwhile investment (Kotler & Fox, 2017).

Agarwal and Thakur (2019) suggest that students are inclined to choose universities with robust reputations, even at higher tuition costs, because they believe these institutions offer better career prospects and networking advantages. This trend is particularly noticeable in Indian higher education, where competition for places at well-regarded institutions remains intense.

### **2.7.4 Academic Standards of Indian Higher Education Institutions**

Academic excellence within Indian higher education is primarily evaluated through research output, faculty expertise, and student success rates. A focus on research has driven substantial progress in various fields, notably in engineering, technology, and science. Institutions like the IITs and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) lead in these areas, consistently achieving high positions in both national and global rankings.



Despite these successes, challenges remain. The prioritization of STEM subjects has sometimes overshadowed fields like the humanities and social sciences, resulting in an academic imbalance. Moreover, the push to publish in prestigious journals has occasionally impacted research quality, as noted in analyses of NIRF rankings (Kumar & Narain, 2020).

### 2.7.5 Accreditations and Recognitions Among Indian Institutions

Accreditations and recognitions validate an institution's quality and adherence to educational standards. In India, bodies such as the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) are tasked with accrediting institutions and specific programs. These accreditations signify quality, influencing aspects such as funding eligibility, student enrollments, and opportunities for international partnerships.

Table 2.12: Distribution of NAAC-Accredited Universities in India (NAAC, 2023)

| Region        | Number of Accredited Universities |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| North India   | 45                                |
| South India   | 60                                |
| East India    | 30                                |
| West India    | 50                                |
| Central India | 20                                |

The role of these accreditations is becoming increasingly important as Indian universities seek to align with global educational standards and attract international students (Reddy, 2018).

### 2.7.6 Industry Collaborations and Partnerships with Indian Higher Education

Collaborations with industry are essential for connecting academic learning with real-world applications. In India, institutions like the IITs, IIMs, and other prominent universities have developed strong partnerships with various industries, facilitating

opportunities for student internships, research projects, and job placements. These collaborations enhance graduate employability, positively impacting the institution's reputation and academic standing (Singh, 2019).

Data reveals that universities with well-established industry ties are more successful in securing research funding and achieving higher employment rates for graduates.

## **2.8 International Student Experience in India**

As globalized education continues to expand, India has become an attractive destination for international students. These students' experiences in India cover multiple areas, including academic standards, socio-cultural integration, administrative assistance, infrastructure, and other aspects that collectively shape their educational experience.

### **2.8.1 Educational Quality at Indian Higher Education Institutions**

For international students, the academic quality of institutions plays a central role in selecting a study destination. India's educational landscape is diverse, featuring elite universities alongside regional colleges, leading to a wide range in educational quality. Premier institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) are known for their rigorous academic programs, respected faculty, and extensive research contributions, drawing students from around the world (Kapur & Mehta, 2017).

However, the quality varies significantly across institutions. Many regional universities face challenges like outdated curricula, limited faculty expertise, and restricted research opportunities (Altbach & Jayaram, 2016). This variation impacts the academic experience of international students, who may encounter difficulties navigating these differences. Research by Singh and Singh (2020) highlights that students at top-tier institutions generally report high levels of satisfaction, whereas those at lesser-known colleges often face challenges related to academic rigor and available resources.

Table 2.13: A comparative analysis of student satisfaction across different types of institutions in India (Singh & Singh, 2020)

| <b>Institution Type</b> | <b>High Satisfaction (%)</b> | <b>Moderate Satisfaction (%)</b> | <b>Low Satisfaction (%)</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Elite Institutions      | 75%                          | 20%                              | 5%                          |
| Regional Universities   | 45%                          | 35%                              | 20%                         |
| Private Colleges        | 60%                          | 30%                              | 10%                         |

### 2.8.2 Socio-Cultural Experiences of International Students in India

The socio-cultural environment in Indian higher education is as diverse as the country itself. International students encounter a rich yet challenging cultural mosaic, with adaptation often overwhelming, especially for those from vastly different backgrounds (Choudaha & De Wit, 2014). Students with higher cultural intelligence integrate more smoothly (Thomas & Inkson, 2017), while others may face cultural shock, language barriers, and social isolation (Kashima & Loh, 2006). India's religious and social diversity can add challenges, and though not widespread, discrimination and racism have been reported, affecting student experiences (Nair, 2019).

Figure 2.2: Berry's Model of Acculturation (1997)



### 2.8.3 Administrative Support Experiences for International Students in India

Administrative support is a critical aspect of the international student experience, encompassing visa processing, enrollment procedures, academic counseling, and more. In India, the quality of administrative support varies widely across institutions. While top-tier universities often have dedicated international student offices that provide comprehensive support, many regional and private institutions lack such infrastructure, leaving students to navigate complex bureaucratic processes on their own (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

A survey conducted by Kapoor (2018) found that international students at Indian universities rated administrative support as one of the most challenging aspects of their experience. Delays in visa processing, unclear communication, and inadequate support services were commonly cited issues.

Table 2.14: Key administrative challenges faced by international students in India (Kapoor, 2018)

| Administrative Challenge           | Percentage of Students Affected (%) |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Visa and Immigration Issues        | 60%                                 |
| Enrollment and Registration Delays | 45%                                 |
| Lack of Academic Counseling        | 50%                                 |
| Inadequate Orientation Programs    | 35%                                 |

### 2.8.4 Infrastructure Quality at Indian Higher Education Institutions

The country's tertiary education infrastructure varies from state-of-the-art facilities in leading institutions to basic amenities in many regional colleges. Students at well-funded institutions enjoy access to modern libraries, laboratories, and residential facilities, enhancing their academic and social experiences (Altbach, 2019).

However, infrastructural disparities are evident, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where many institutions lack even basic amenities such as reliable internet, clean water, and adequate housing (Mukherjee, 2016).

Table 2.15: Infrastructure Quality in Various Types of Higher Education Institutions in India (Mukherjee, 2016)

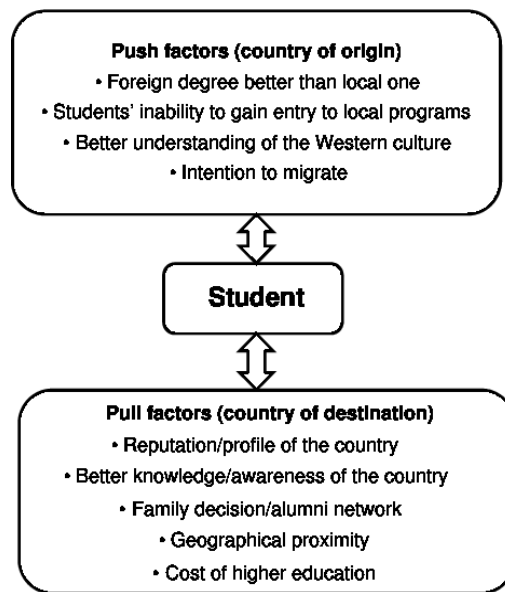
| <b>Institution Type</b> | <b>Excellent Infrastructure (%)</b> | <b>Good Infrastructure (%)</b> | <b>Poor Infrastructure (%)</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Elite Institutions      | 80%                                 | 15%                            | 5%                             |
| Regional Universities   | 50%                                 | 30%                            | 20%                            |
| Private Colleges        | 60%                                 | 25%                            | 15%                            |

### 2.8.5 Push and Pull Factors

The decision to study abroad is influenced by a combination of push and pull factors that work together in shaping students' choices. Push factors originate from challenges within the home country, such as limited educational opportunities, political instability, economic constraints, or lower academic quality, compelling students to seek alternatives overseas. These factors create a sense of necessity, driving students toward international education.

On the other hand, pull factors stem from the attractiveness of the destination country, including high academic standards, globally recognized institutions, cultural diversity, and better career prospects. Students are also drawn by the prospect of personal growth, networking opportunities, and exposure to international experiences that enhance their academic and professional trajectories (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

Figure 2.3: Mazzarol & Soutar (2002), Push Pull Model



### 2.8.6 Cultural Experience

Cultural experience is one of the most enriching aspects of studying in India. The country's rich history, diverse traditions, and vibrant festivals offer international students a unique cultural immersion that few other countries can match (Gupta, 2018). Students often participate in cultural events, explore historical sites, and engage with local communities, gaining a deeper understanding of India's socio-cultural fabric.

However, this cultural richness can also present challenges, particularly for students unaccustomed to the social norms and practices in India. Issues such as gender roles, religious practices, and social etiquette can be sources of confusion and discomfort for some students (Oberg, 1960). Despite these challenges, many students report that their cultural experiences in India have been transformative, contributing to their personal growth and intercultural competence.

### 2.8.7 Access to Unique Knowledge

India's ancient heritage in fields such as Ayurveda, yoga, and classical arts offers international students access to unique knowledge that is often unavailable in their

home countries. Many students are drawn to India to study traditional medicine, spirituality, and other indigenous knowledge systems (Mitra, 2016).

This access to unique knowledge is not just limited to traditional fields. India's burgeoning technology and innovation sectors also attract students interested in cutting-edge research and development. Institutions like the IITs and IISc are well known abroad for their contributions to science and technology, offering students opportunities to engage in pioneering research (Varghese, 2013).

### **2.8.8 Opportunities for Migration**

For many international students, the possibility of migration is a significant consideration. India's growing economy and employment opportunities in industries like information technology, healthcare, and finance makes it lucrative (Saxenian, 2006).

However, the pathway to migration is not always straightforward. India's visa policies, employment regulations, and complex bureaucratic processes can pose challenges for international students wishing to settle in the country post-graduation (Choudaha, 2017). Despite these hurdles, many students successfully transition into the Indian workforce, leveraging their education to secure employment and permanent residency.

### **2.8.9 Enhanced Career Opportunities**

India's rapidly growing economy and the presence of multinational corporations provide a conducive environment for career advancement (Nagarajan, 2020). Graduates from prestigious Indian institutions are often sought after by employers both within India and globally.

However, the extent to which international students can capitalize on these opportunities relies on different reasons, including the reputation of the institution, the field of study, and their ability to navigate the job market in India. While many students find success, others may face challenges such as language barriers and cultural differences in the workplace.

### **2.8.10 Personal Growth and Development**

Studying in a foreign country is a transformative experience that contributes to personal development in numerous ways. International students in India often report significant growth in areas such as intercultural competence, adaptability, and resilience (Jones, 2017). The challenges they face, from adjusting to a new culture to navigating academic and administrative systems, foster a sense of independence and self-reliance.

Moreover, the diverse social interactions and exposure to different perspectives enhance students' global outlook, making them more culturally aware and empathetic.

## **2.9 Quality of Education and Its Impact on Student Choice**

In the global landscape of higher education, the quality of education stands out as a major factor in students' choices regarding study destinations. The interaction between perceived educational standards, international academic expectations, and India's higher education environment provides a valuable area for examination.

### **2.9.1 The Role of Perceived Quality of Education in Destination Choice**

Perceptions of educational quality play a pivotal role in influencing university selection, particularly among international students. As universities compete in a globalized education market, they emphasize the quality of academic programs, faculty expertise, research achievements, and student experience to set themselves apart. Research by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) shows that international students' choices are strongly swayed by the academic reputation of the institution, the quality of teaching, and anticipated career prospects after graduation.

The "push-pull" model, as described by Altbach (1998), captures the forces driving student mobility: limited opportunities in the home country (push factors) and the appeal of high-quality foreign universities (pull factors). For instance, Knight (2012) explains that English-medium programs, global partnerships, and international rankings all enhance students' perceptions of educational quality, making certain universities more attractive.



The role of educational quality in a university's branding strategy is substantial. Universities with established reputations for academic excellence and research success are more likely to attract both domestic and international students, thereby strengthening their appeal and market position. This perception of quality becomes a reinforcing cycle; institutions that attract high-caliber students tend to achieve better academic outcomes, which in turn enhances their reputation.

### 2.9.2 Assessment of Educational Quality in Indian Universities

India's higher education system encompasses a wide range of institutions with varying quality standards. While access to higher education has expanded significantly, maintaining consistent quality remains a significant challenge. Agarwal (2009) observes that while elite institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are celebrated internationally for their standards, numerous institutions face issues related to insufficient resources, faculty shortages, and outdated curricula.

To address quality disparities, the Indian Ministry of Education introduced the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) as a tool for evaluating universities based on factors such as teaching quality, research performance, graduation outcomes, and outreach. Although the NIRF provides a benchmark to assess and encourage quality improvements, it also reveals wide gaps in performance between elite institutions and others. Table 2.16, for instance, illustrates a comparison of selected Indian universities based on their NIRF scores in areas like teaching and research.

Table 2.16: Comparative analysis of NIRF Scores of Select Indian universities (AISHE, 2023)

| <b>Institution</b>                 | <b>Teaching, Learning &amp; Resources (TLR)</b> | <b>Research &amp; Professional Practice (RP)</b> | <b>Graduation Outcomes (GO)</b> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Indian Institute of Science (IISc) | 89.3                                            | 92.5                                             | 87.6                            |

|                                   |      |      |      |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) | 83.2 | 74.8 | 82.1 |
| Delhi University (DU)             | 78.6 | 69.7 | 79.2 |
| University of Hyderabad (UoH)     | 74.3 | 62.4 | 75.8 |

These disparities are further exacerbated by the uneven distribution of resources and the concentration of top talent in a few institutions. Despite these challenges, some Indian universities have managed to create niches of excellence, particularly in areas such as engineering, technology, and management. However, the overall quality of higher education in India is still perceived as lagging behind global standards, which affects the country's attractiveness as an educational destination for international students.

### **2.9.3 Comparative Analysis of Indian Higher Education Quality with Global Standards**

When compared to global benchmarks, Indian higher education presents both strengths and areas needing enhancement. Premier institutions like the IITs and IIMs are renowned worldwide for their rigorous academic standards, innovation, and research output. However, many other universities in India still face challenges in reaching international benchmarks. According to the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, only a few Indian institutions regularly rank within the top 500 globally, underscoring a gap in worldwide competitiveness.

A primary area where Indian universities fall behind is in research output and innovation. Many Indian institutions place limited emphasis on research, which impacts their ability to compete internationally. Narayan and Sahoo (2015) indicate that only a small fraction of Indian universities maintain substantial research programs, and even fewer possess the infrastructure and resources necessary to reach the level of leading global universities. This issue is compounded by administrative

challenges, insufficient funding, and a lack of a robust research and innovation culture.

Despite these challenges, Indian universities have excelled in fields such as information technology and business education, with institutions like the IITs and IIMs becoming widely respected for their achievements. These institutions have fostered strong global connections, attracting faculty and students from around the world. However, the larger task remains to replicate these successes across the broader Indian higher education sector.

## **2.10 Socio-Cultural Environment and International Student Experience**

The socio-cultural setting of a host country has a profound influence on the experiences of international students. This section delves into the complex role of socio-cultural dynamics in shaping the student experience, particularly in India. We examine how India's unique socio-cultural landscape creates both challenges and opportunities for international students, considering factors like cultural diversity, inclusivity, and the process of acculturation that students undergo while studying in India.

### **2.10.1 Influence of Socio-Cultural Factors on the Student Experience**

Socio-cultural elements play a substantial role in shaping international students' experiences. These elements include cultural customs, societal values, language, religious practices, and the broader social environment of the host country. In India, these factors are especially impactful due to the nation's immense cultural diversity and rich traditions. This diversity presents international students with both enriching experiences and adaptation challenges as they navigate India's unique socio-cultural landscape.

Table 2.17: Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing International Students in India  
(Ward and Kennedy, 1999; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986)

| <b>Factor</b> | <b>Description</b> | <b>Impact</b> |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
|---------------|--------------------|---------------|

|                                 |                                                                                            |                                                                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Language Proficiency            | The ability to communicate effectively in the host country's language.                     | Affects academic performance and social integration.              |
| Cultural Norms                  | Understanding and adapting to the cultural practices and expectations of the host country. | Influences daily interactions and social acceptance.              |
| Social Support Networks         | Availability of support from peers, faculty, and local communities.                        | Enhances psychological well-being and academic success.           |
| Prior Cross-Cultural Exposure   | Previous experience in multicultural environments.                                         | Facilitates smoother adaptation and reduces culture shock.        |
| Religious and Spiritual Beliefs | The role of religion and spirituality in the student's life.                               | Can either provide comfort or lead to conflict with host culture. |

International students often find themselves navigating a complex socio-cultural landscape that is vastly different from their home countries. For example, the collectivist nature of Indian society, where community and familial ties are paramount, may contrast sharply with the more individualistic cultures from which many students originate. This cultural divergence can affect everything from daily interactions to academic collaboration.

A study by Ward and Kennedy (1999) highlights that strong identification with the host culture enhances psychological well-being and socio-cultural adaptation. This suggests that international students who are able to engage meaningfully with Indian culture may experience a smoother adjustment period. However, the process of adaptation is not without its challenges, as students must reconcile their own cultural identities with the new environment they find themselves in.

Moreover, socio-cultural factors such as language barriers and differences in educational practices can pose significant challenges. This can lead to misunderstandings and feelings of isolation among students who are not familiar with these cultural nuances.

### **2.10.2 Challenges and Opportunities in India's Socio-Cultural Environment for International Students**

The rich cultural heritage and diversity of India offer students a unique opportunity to broaden their cultural horizons and gain new perspectives. On the other hand, these same factors can also pose significant challenges, particularly for students who may not be accustomed to such diversity.

Table 2.18: Challenges and Opportunities in India's Socio-Cultural Environment (Berry, 1997)

| <b>Aspect</b>         | <b>Challenges</b>                                                               | <b>Opportunities</b>                                                                                |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Language              | Difficulty in understanding and communicating in regional languages.            | Opportunity to learn new languages and enhance communication skills.                                |
| Cultural Norms        | Struggle with adapting to collectivist cultural practices and expectations.     | Exposure to diverse cultural practices and the chance to develop cross-cultural competence.         |
| Social Integration    | Initial difficulties in forming social connections due to cultural differences. | Potential for building strong social networks and gaining a deeper understanding of Indian society. |
| Academic Expectations | Adjustment to different teaching and assessment styles.                         | Opportunity to experience diverse educational methodologies.                                        |

|                     |                                                                              |                                                                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Religious Practices | Potential conflicts between students' religious beliefs and local practices. | Exposure to a wide array of religious practices and increased religious tolerance. |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Language is another significant challenge. Although English is widely spoken in India, regional languages dominate in many areas, which can create communication barriers for international students. This can affect not only their social interactions but also their academic performance, as students may struggle to fully engage with course materials and discussions that incorporate regional languages or cultural references.

Despite these challenges, India's socio-cultural environment also offers numerous opportunities for international students. The country's emphasis on hospitality and community can help foster a sense of belonging among students who may feel alienated in a foreign land. Additionally, the diverse cultural landscape provides ample opportunities for cross-cultural learning and exchange, which can enrich the academic experience and contribute to personal growth.

For instance, participating in cultural festivals, engaging with local communities, and exploring India's rich historical and cultural sites can enhance students' understanding of the country and promote a deeper appreciation for its cultural diversity. These experiences can also help students develop important intercultural communication skills, which are increasingly valued in today's globalized world.

### **2.10.3 Impact of Cultural Diversity and Inclusivity on Student Satisfaction**

The extent to which students feel included and valued within the host culture can significantly impact their overall experience and academic success.

Research by Leask (2009) suggests that inclusive practices in educational institutions, such as culturally responsive teaching and support services, can improve the learning experiences. Where universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusivity, there is a growing emphasis on creating a supportive environment for international students.

However, the reality on the ground can be mixed. While some institutions have made significant strides in promoting inclusivity, others may still fall short. For example, international students may encounter challenges in accessing support services that are tailored to their specific needs, such as language support or counseling services that address the unique challenges faced by students from diverse cultural backgrounds (Sawir et al., 2008).

The impact of cultural diversity on student satisfaction is also influenced by the broader societal attitudes towards diversity. In India, attitudes towards diversity can vary significantly depending on the region and the community. In some areas, international students may feel welcomed and embraced by the local community, while in others, they may encounter prejudice or discrimination.

To illustrate this, a survey of international students in Indian universities revealed that those who perceived their institutions as being culturally inclusive reported higher levels of satisfaction and academic success compared to those who did not (Gomes et al., 2014).

#### **2.10.4 Acculturation of International Students in India**

Acculturation, the adjustment process individuals undergo when adapting to a new cultural environment, is a central component of the experience for international students. In India, this adjustment requires navigating a complex social landscape marked by diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic influences.

Berry's (1997) model of acculturation lists down four strategies that one may use to adjust to a new culture: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. For international students in India, the chosen approach can deeply influence their overall experience and well-being.

The integration strategy, where students retain their cultural identity while actively engaging with the host culture, is generally linked to the most favorable outcomes. Students who integrate are more likely to build robust social connections, excel academically, and experience better psychological well-being (Berry, 1997), as they benefit from support within both their own cultural community and the host culture.

In contrast, assimilation—where students abandon their own cultural identity to adopt the host culture—may ease their acceptance into the local community but can also lead to a diminished sense of cultural identity and feelings of disconnect from their home culture. Separation, wherein students retain their cultural identity without engaging with the host culture, often leads to social isolation and challenges in adapting to academic life.

Marginalization, characterized by a detachment from both one’s original and the host cultures, tends to produce the most negative effects, including isolation, academic struggles, and emotional distress. Unfortunately, some international students in India may face these issues, especially when navigating India’s complex cultural environment.

Acculturation outcomes are also shaped by several factors, including language proficiency, social support networks, and local attitudes towards cultural diversity. For instance, students with strong support systems—whether from their own community or the host community—tend to have more successful acculturation experiences (Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

Additionally, the receptiveness of the host community toward cultural diversity can significantly impact the acculturation journey. In India, where views on diversity can differ widely across regions, international students may encounter varied experiences depending on the specific community in which they reside.

Table 2.19: Acculturation Strategies and Outcomes for International Students in India (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1999)

| <b>Acculturation Strategy</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                                      | <b>Psychological Outcomes</b>                                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Integration                   | Maintaining original cultural identity while also adopting aspects of the host culture. | High satisfaction, lower stress, better psychological well-being. |



|                 |                                                                                             |                                                                          |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Assimilation    | Abandoning original cultural identity to fully adopt the host culture.                      | Mixed outcomes, potential identity confusion.                            |
| Separation      | Retaining original cultural identity while rejecting the host culture.                      | Higher stress, feelings of isolation, lower satisfaction.                |
| Marginalization | Losing both original and host cultural identities, feeling disconnected from both cultures. | High psychological distress, low satisfaction, risk of academic failure. |

## 2.11 Administrative Support and International Student Experience

As universities try to recruit and retain students, the quality and scope of administrative support services have become critical factors influencing their success and satisfaction.

### 2.11.1 The Importance of Administrative Support

Administrative support comprises of different services made to help them integrate into their new teaching and cultural setup. These services are essential not only for academic success but also for overall well-being. Research by Beine, de Wit, and Verbruggen (2018) highlights that institutions providing a broad spectrum of support services tend to see higher retention rates and greater satisfaction among their international student populations. This section explores the various dimensions of administrative support, including pre-arrival orientation, academic advising, language support, and mental health services.

Table 2.20: Key Dimensions of Administrative Support Services (Beine et al., 2018)

| Dimension | Description | Examples |
|-----------|-------------|----------|
|-----------|-------------|----------|

|                         |                                                      |                                                |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-Arrival Orientation | Information and guidance provided before arrival     | Visa assistance, cultural orientation sessions |
| Academic Advising       | Support related to academic planning and performance | Course selection, academic progress monitoring |
| Language Support        | Assistance with language barriers                    | English language tutoring, writing workshops   |
| Mental Health Services  | Support for emotional and psychological well-being   | Counseling, stress management workshops        |

### 2.11.2 Acculturation and Stress Management

Smith and Choi (2020) explore how stress related to adapting to a new cultural environment can be mitigated through effective administrative support. Their study underscores the importance of social support networks, which are often facilitated by university services.

#### Impact of Social Support on Acculturation Stress

Table 2.21: Illustrates the relationship between social support and levels of acculturation stress among international students (Smith & Choi, 2020)

| Social Support Level | Stress Reduction (%) |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| High                 | 60                   |
| Medium               | 40                   |
| Low                  | 25                   |

### 2.11.3 Enhancing Support Services Through Co-Design

Effective administrative support requires alignment with student needs, which can be achieved through co-design practices. Johnson and Carter (2019) argue that

involving international students in the design of support services leads to more effective and personalized assistance. Their study illustrates how co-design processes can improve service delivery by ensuring that services meet the actual needs and preferences of students.

Table 2.22: Benefits of Co-Design in Support Services (Johnson and Carter, 2019)

| <b>Benefit</b>      | <b>Description</b>                          | <b>Example</b>                 |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Increased Relevance | Services better align with student needs    | Tailored orientation programs  |
| Enhanced Engagement | Higher student involvement and satisfaction | Student feedback sessions      |
| Improved Efficiency | More efficient use of resources and time    | Streamlined advising processes |

#### 2.11.4 Perceptions of Support Services

The gap between student expectations and the services provided is a key issue. Brown and Green (2021) conducted a study examining how staff and student perceptions of support services differ. Their findings reveal that while staff may view services as adequate, students often feel that their needs are not fully met.

##### Perception Discrepancies Between Staff and Students

Table 2.23: Differences in how staff and students perceive the effectiveness of various support services (Brown & Green, 2021)

| <b>Service Type</b>  | <b>Staff Perception (%)</b> | <b>Student Perception (%)</b> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Academic Advising    | 75                          | 65                            |
| Language Support     | 70                          | 60                            |
| Counselling Services | 65                          | 55                            |

|                    |    |    |
|--------------------|----|----|
| Social Integration | 60 | 50 |
|--------------------|----|----|

### 2.11.5 Comparative Analysis of International Student Services

Comparative studies offer valuable insights into how administrative support varies across different contexts. Davis and Lee (2018) use the Australian international education model as a case study to examine governance structures and their impact on student satisfaction. Their research highlights that a robust governance network involving multiple stakeholders is essential for maintaining high-quality support services.

Table 2.24: Comparison of International Student Support Services by Country (Davis & Lee, 2018).

| Country   | Key Services Offered                                                 | Satisfaction Levels (%) |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| USA       | Comprehensive visa support, academic advising, cultural events       | 70                      |
| Australia | Extensive orientation, language support, cultural integration        | 75                      |
| UK        | Strong academic support, language assistance, mental health services | 65                      |

### 2.11.6 Addressing Gaps in Support Services

Identifying and addressing gaps in support services is crucial for improving the international student experience. Adams and Thompson (2019) highlight several critical gaps. They emphasize the need for continuous feedback and iterative improvements to align services with student expectations.

Identified Gaps in Support Services

Table 2.25: Illustrates the gaps identified in the support services and their impact on student satisfaction (Adams & Thompson, 2019)

| <b>Gap Identified</b>                          | <b>Impact on Satisfaction (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Quality of Language Support                    | 50                                |
| Adequacy of Counseling Services                | 45                                |
| Effectiveness of Social Integration Activities | 55                                |

### 2.11.7 The Role of Technology in Support Services

The integration of technology into support services is becoming increasingly important. Nguyen and Liu (2021) explore the impact of e-services capes on student engagement and satisfaction. Their study finds that high-quality digital support services can significantly enhance student engagement, particularly when combined with high-quality service delivery.

Table 2.26: E-Servicescape Quality and Student Engagement (Nguyen & Liu, 2021).

| <b>E-Servicescape Quality</b> | <b>Engagement Level (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| High Quality                  | 80                          |
| Medium Quality                | 65                          |
| Low Quality                   | 40                          |

### 2.11.8 The Impact of Supervisor Support and Language Competence

The study by Zhang et al. (2021) examines these factors in the context of Chinese universities and finds that supervisor support and language competence are significant predictors of academic adaptation.

Table 2.27: Impact of Supervisor Support and Language Proficiency on Academic Adjustment (Zhang et al., 2021).

| Factor              | Impact on Adaptation (%) |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Supervisor Support  | 70                       |
| Language Competence | 65                       |
| Self-Efficacy       | 60                       |

## 2.12 University Infrastructure and International Student Experience

In an increasingly globalized world, universities are becoming more culturally diverse as they attract international students from all corners of the globe. For these students, the physical and social infrastructure of a university, from libraries and lecture halls to accommodation and extracurricular facilities is an important factor. The connection between infrastructure, student services, and international student satisfaction is crucial, especially as universities in countries like India aim to attract more international students.

### 2.12.1 Analysis of Infrastructure and Student Services in Indian Universities

Indian universities, with their growing emphasis on internationalization, are making strides in infrastructure development. However, the success of these initiatives often hinges on more than just building world-class facilities; it depends on how well these resources cater to their requirements.

**University Reputation and Facilities:** The reputation of a university is often tied to its infrastructure, a point highlighted by studies showing that students perceive universities with better facilities as more prestigious (Kumar & Chauhan, 2020). Tier-one institutions like IITs and IIMs boast modernized, high-tech campuses that rival their Western counterparts. However, many regional universities and colleges still struggle with outdated or inadequate infrastructure (Rao & Bhat, 2018).

International students, many of whom come from countries with advanced educational systems, often expect more from university infrastructure. When these expectations are not met, it can lead to dissatisfaction. As research suggests, perceived discrepancies between expected and actual service quality lead to cognitive dissonance, which negatively affects student satisfaction (Bhattarai et al., 2019).

#### International Student Satisfaction with University Infrastructure and Services in Indian Universities

Table 2.28: University Services and Student Satisfaction (Bhatt & Sharma, 2021)

| <b>Aspect of University Experience</b> | <b>Percentage of Satisfied Students (%)</b> | <b>Percentage of Dissatisfied Students (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Academic Facilities                    | 65%                                         | 35%                                            |
| Library Resources                      | 58%                                         | 42%                                            |
| Student Accommodation                  | 50%                                         | 50%                                            |
| Extracurricular Opportunities          | 60%                                         | 40%                                            |
| Administrative Services                | 45%                                         | 55%                                            |
| Mental Health Support                  | 40%                                         | 60%                                            |

This table provides a breakdown of international student satisfaction across various university services, highlighting areas of strength (e.g., academic facilities) and areas for improvement (e.g., administrative services and mental health support).

Table 2.29: Disparities in University Infrastructure by Type of Institution (Rao and Bhat, 2018)

| <b>Type of Institution</b>             | <b>Average Classroom Capacity</b> | <b>Availability of Smart Classrooms (%)</b> | <b>Quality of Student Housing (Rating out of 5)</b> | <b>Library Resources (Books per Student)</b> |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Tier-1 Universities (e.g., IITs, IIMs) | 50                                | 80%                                         | 4.5                                                 | 8 books per student                          |
| Regional Universities                  | 70                                | 40%                                         | 3.0                                                 | 4 books per student                          |
| Private Universities                   | 45                                | 75%                                         | 4.0                                                 | 6 books per student                          |

This table illustrates the disparities in university infrastructure across different types of Indian institutions, demonstrating how tier-1 institutions generally offer better resources compared to regional universities.

**Student Services: Beyond Physical Infrastructure:** Research conducted in the UAE and Malaysia demonstrate that they prioritize not just the academic rigor of their programs but also the quality of student services, which they rely on to navigate the complexities of a foreign education system (Johnstone et al., 2017). In the Indian context, universities are often criticized for their lack of student services tailored to international students, which creates a gap in the student experience (Singh & Sharma, 2018).

According to a survey conducted by Bhatt and Sharma (2021), only 45% of international students in Indian universities were satisfied with the level of support provided, particularly in areas related to administrative services and personal well-being. A recurring issue is the lack of coordination between academic and



administrative units, leaving students to manage bureaucratic processes on their own.

### 2.12.2 Role of Campus Facilities in Shaping the International Student Experience

Figure 2.4: Impact of Academic Infrastructure on International Student Satisfaction (Sharma et al., 2020).

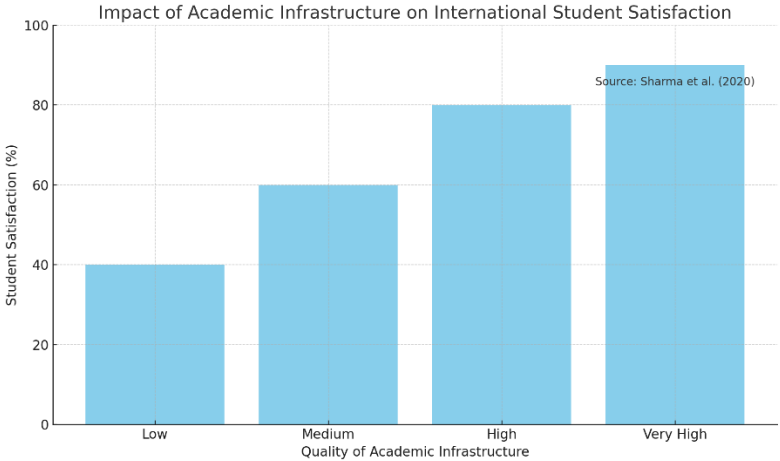


Figure 2.5: Availability of Extracurricular Opportunities and Their Impact on Social Integration (Ramos et al., 2019).

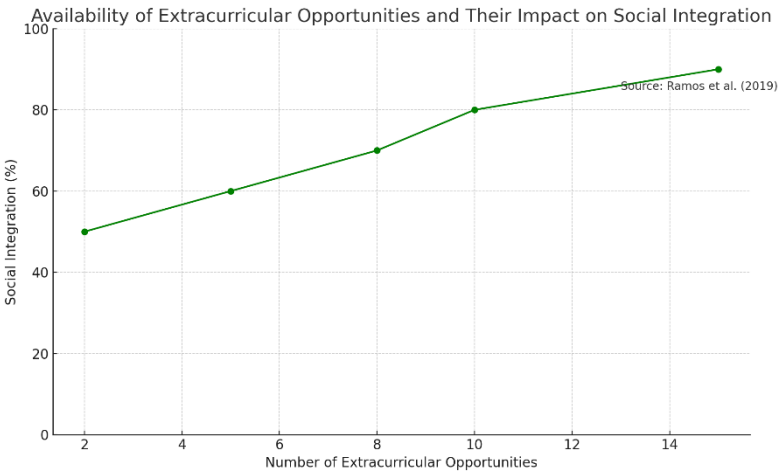


Figure 2.6: Student Satisfaction with Accommodation Facilities by University Type (Mahapatra and Singh, 2017).

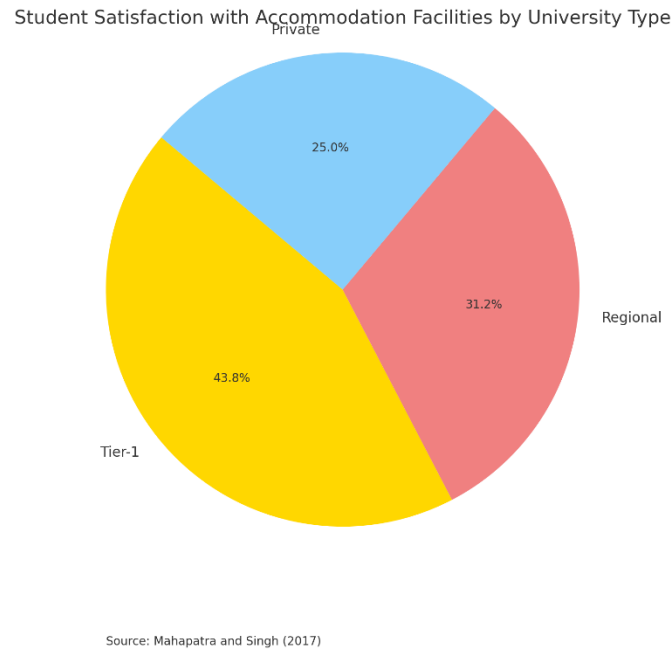
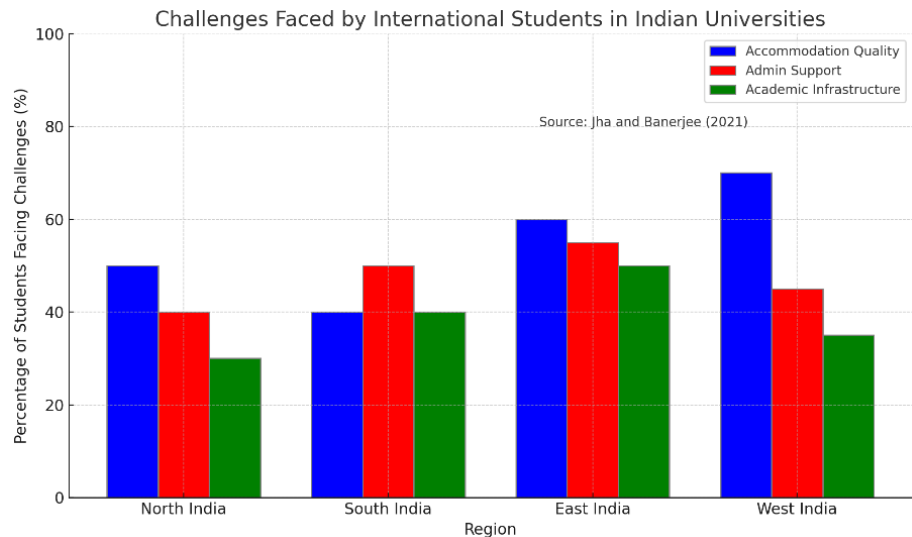


Figure 2.7: Challenges Faced by International Students in Indian Universities (Jha and Banerjee, 2021).



**Academic Spaces and Learning Environments:** Studies have shown that learning environments, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, directly influence student satisfaction and academic performance (Pereira & Mota, 2016). In upgraded learning environments with modern technology, students report higher levels of engagement, satisfaction, and perceived value from their education (Ramalho &

Silva, 2020). In contrast, when classrooms lack essential resources like reliable internet access or adequate seating, students become disengaged, which negatively impacts their academic outcomes (Astin, 1993).

At Indian universities, discrepancies exist between what is promised and what is delivered in terms of academic facilities. Many students, particularly those enrolled in lesser-known institutions, report challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited library resources, and underfunded laboratories (Sharma et al., 2020). These issues disproportionately affect international students, who may have higher expectations based on their experiences in their home countries. In response, some universities have begun to implement changes, investing in "smart classrooms" equipped with the latest educational technologies, though the implementation remains uneven (Singh & Verma, 2019).

**Accommodation and Social Spaces:** A well-designed, comfortable living environment can significantly ease the transition for international students, providing them with a space to study, relax, and form social connections. Research shows that students who are satisfied with their on-campus accommodation are more likely to have positive social experiences and, subsequently, higher levels of overall satisfaction (Yusof et al., 2020).

However, in Indian universities, the quality of student accommodation varies widely. While top-tier institutions provide well-maintained housing with modern amenities, many universities still offer dormitories that are overcrowded and poorly maintained (Mahapatra & Singh, 2017). This disparity often leads to frustration among international students, who may find themselves living in conditions far below what they expected. The lack of social spaces such as common rooms, cafes, and recreational areas further hampers the ability of international students to form meaningful social connections, thereby exacerbating feelings of isolation (Jha & Banerjee, 2021).

**Cultural Integration and Extracurricular Opportunities:** Extra-Curricular events, student clubs, and sports facilities provide international students with opportunities to engage with local students, fostering cross-cultural understanding and reducing feelings of isolation (Ramos et al., 2019). Universities that actively promote such

activities contribute to a more inclusive and supportive environment, which positively influences student satisfaction and retention rates (Garcia & Johnson, 2018).

In India, many universities are beginning to recognize the importance of extracurricular activities in enhancing the international student experience. However, the extent to which these opportunities are available varies significantly across institutions. While some universities offer a rich array of cultural and extracurricular activities, others fall short, leaving international students with limited options for social engagement (Kumar & Chauhan, 2020). These disparities highlight the need for a more standardized approach to campus life, one that ensures that all students, regardless of their institution, have access to a supportive and enriching university experience.

### **2.13 Student Experience and Its Relationship to Perceived Value**

The experiences of international students are fundamental in shaping their perception of the value they derive from their education abroad. By analyzing essential aspects of these experiences and how they contribute to perceived value, this section underscores the crucial role that educational institutions play in cultivating a supportive environment that bolsters student satisfaction and academic achievement. The following case studies illustrate specific challenges and opportunities encountered by international students within Indian universities.

#### **2.13.1 Defining the International Student Experience**

The international student experience encompasses a range of academic, social, and cultural interactions and adaptations that students undergo while studying abroad. This experience significantly impacts students' personal development, academic success, and overall satisfaction with their education (Beine, de Groot, & van der Meer, 2014).

Academic experiences include engagement with faculty, accessibility of resources, and instructional quality. Social experiences pertain to making friends, participating in extracurricular activities, and integrating into the local community. Cultural

experiences focus on adjusting to and understanding new cultural norms and customs (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

### 2.13.2 Measuring the International Student Experience

Researchers use various methods, including quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to evaluate the international student experience. Instruments such as the International Student Experience Survey (ISES) and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) are widely used (Rienties & Nolan, 2014). These tools measure aspects like academic satisfaction, social involvement, cultural adjustment, and mental well-being.

Table 2.30: Dimensions of International Student Experience Measurement  
(Rienties & Nolan, 2014)

| <b>Dimension</b>         | <b>Measurement Tools</b>   | <b>Indicators</b>                                     |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Academic Support         | Surveys, Academic Records  | Access to resources, quality of instruction           |
| Social Integration       | Social Surveys, Interviews | Participation in social activities, friendship levels |
| Cultural Adaptation      | Questionnaires, Interviews | Ease of cultural adjustment, language proficiency     |
| Psychological Well-being | Psychological Assessments  | Stress levels, satisfaction with support services     |

### 2.13.3 The Link Between Student Experience and Perceived Value in Higher Education

Understanding Perceived Value: Perceived value in tertiary education encompasses students' assessments of the worth of their educational experiences in terms of both tangible and intangible benefits (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

The student experience has a direct impact on perceived value. High levels of academic support, positive social interactions, and successful cultural adaptation

significantly enhance the perceived value of an educational program (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Conversely, negative experiences such as inadequate support or cultural isolation can diminish the perceived value and lead to dissatisfaction (Smith & Choi, 2020).

#### Case Study 1: The Impact of Administrative Support on Perceived Value

A study by Tinto (1993) emphasized that Administrative Support services are crucial in enhancing student retention and satisfaction.

#### Case Study 2: Social Integration and Its Effect on Perceived Value

Research by Rienties and Nolan (2014) found that society integration performs a critical play in students' perceived value of their educational experience. Those who actively participate in campus activities and form strong social connections tend to have a higher perceived value of their overall experience.

Table 2.31: Relationship Between Student Experience and Perceived Value  
(Research by Rienties and Nolan, 2014)

| <b>Experience Factor</b> | <b>Impact on Perceived Value</b> | <b>Description</b>                                                    |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Academic Support         | High Positive                    | Directly influences educational outcomes and satisfaction             |
| Social Integration       | Moderate Positive                | Enhances overall satisfaction and sense of belonging                  |
| Cultural Adaptation      | High Positive                    | Affects students' ability to adjust and thrive in the new environment |
| Psychological Well-being | Moderate Negative                | Poor psychological support can decrease perceived value               |

### 2.13.4 Case Studies on International Student Experiences in Indian Universities

#### Case Study 1: St. Paul University Philippines

The study at St. Paul University Philippines highlighted significant language adjustment challenges faced by international students. The research utilized hermeneutical phenomenology to uncover themes related to language-related general living, academic, socio-cultural, and psychological adjustments (Sarang, 2023). This study underscored the importance of developing tailored support tools to assist students in overcoming language barriers and enhancing their overall experience.

Case Analysis 2: The Role of Cultural Intelligence in Psychological Adjustment

Research in India by Reddy and Bhatia (2022) examined how cultural intelligence relates to the psychological adjustment of international students. Using structural equation modeling, the study found that higher levels of behavioral cultural intelligence contributed positively to students’ psychological adaptation. This finding highlights the importance for educational institutions to encourage the development of cultural intelligence, thereby enhancing the adjustment and satisfaction levels of international students.

Case Analysis 3: Comparing Educational Experiences of Domestic and International Students

Sharma and Gupta’s (2021) comparative study analyzed the educational experiences of Indian and international students. The research revealed that stereotypes and cultural differences played a significant role in shaping students’ academic experiences. The study underscored the need for educational institutions to address these issues to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for international students.

Table 2.32: Summary of Case Studies on International Student Experiences in India (Sharma & Gupta, 2021)

| Case Study                         | Focus                  | Key Findings                                                  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| St. Paul University<br>Philippines | Language<br>Adjustment | Developed assessment tool;<br>identified adjustment<br>themes |

|                                                          |                                         |                                                  |                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cultural Intelligence<br>and Psychological<br>Adaptation | Cultural Intelligence<br>and Adaptation | Behavioral intelligence<br>adaptation            | cultural<br>impacts |
| Indian and<br>International Student<br>Experiences       | Academic and<br>Cultural Adjustment     | Stereotypes influence<br>educational experiences |                     |

## **2.14 Perceived Value of India as an Education Destination**

### **2.14.1 Defining Perceived Value in Higher Education**

Perceived value is a multidimensional construct pivotal in shaping students' educational choices and experiences. It represents the assessment of benefits versus costs associated with an educational service (Zeithaml, 1988). This assessment is influenced by various dimensions, including the quality of education, personal outcomes, and financial implications (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991).

In the higher education context, perceived value integrates both tangible and intangible elements. According to Zeithaml (1988), it encompasses the evaluation of what students receive compared to what they give. This evaluation process is deeply subjective and varies according to individual expectations, societal norms, and institutional characteristics. For instance, the perceived value of studying in India may hinge on factors like academic reputation, cultural exposure, and cost-effectiveness (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000).

### **2.14.2 Factors Influencing the Perceived Value of India as a Study Destination**

Several factors shape the perceived value of India as an educational destination. These include educational quality, cultural experiences, cost considerations, and institutional reputation.

**Educational Quality:** India's higher education system offers a broad spectrum of institutions and programs, each contributing uniquely to students' perceived educational value. This perceived value is often linked to factors such as instructional quality, faculty expertise, and the availability of research opportunities.



According to Ghosh (2020), students frequently evaluate the value of their education based on the academic rigor of their program and its potential to enhance career opportunities.

**Cultural Experience:** Studying in India offers a unique cultural immersion that is often a significant part of the perceived value. The country's rich cultural heritage and diverse traditions provide international students with experiences that extend beyond academics (Rao, 2021). This experiential aspect adds to the perceived value, as students evaluate the holistic educational experience, including cultural and social interactions (Chen, 2022).

**Cost Considerations:** Cost-effectiveness is a critical factor in the perceived value of studying in India. Compared to Western countries, India offers relatively lower tuition fees and living costs (Sharma, 2021). This financial advantage makes India an attractive destination for students seeking quality education at a lower cost. Research by Gupta and Roy (2019) highlights that cost savings significantly influence the perceived value, particularly for students from developing countries.

**Institutional Reputation:** Institutional ranking and fame are important to shape the perceived value. Institutions which are highly ranked and famous for their academics and research output enhance their perceived value (Saha & Sharma, 2022). The global rankings and accreditation of Indian institutions contribute to their perceived value among international students (Singh, 2023).

### **2.14.3 Link Between Perceived Value and Student Satisfaction**

The relationship between perceived value and student satisfaction is a central theme in higher education research. Perceived value often directly influences overall student satisfaction, which in turn affects institutional reputation and student loyalty (Oliver, 1999).

**Direct Influence on Satisfaction:** Perceived value plays a crucial role in predicting student satisfaction. Studies show that when students perceive greater value in their education, their satisfaction with the educational experience tends to increase (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). For instance, students who view their education as high-

quality and reasonably priced often report higher satisfaction levels (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2009).

**Impact on Institutional Reputation:** Student satisfaction is closely linked to institutional reputation. Positive experiences and high satisfaction levels enhance the reputation of educational institutions (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). In the context of India, institutions with high perceived value and satisfaction rates often see improved global rankings and increased attractiveness to future students (Kumar & Garg, 2021).

**Mediating Role of Satisfaction:** Satisfaction acts as a bridge between perceived value and outcomes like repeat enrollment intentions and positive referrals. Oliver (1999) highlights that satisfied students are more inclined to share favorable feedback and recommend their institutions to others. This intermediary role of satisfaction emphasizes the importance of nurturing perceived value to cultivate strong student satisfaction and commitment.

#### **2.14.4 Evidence from Past Research**

**Multidimensional Models of Perceived Value:** Research indicates that perceived value is a multidimensional construct encompassing various dimensions such as functional, emotional, and social value (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991). For instance, a study by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a multidimensional scale for measuring perceived value in the education sector, which included dimensions like quality, price, and overall value.

**Influence of the Quality of Service:** The play between quality of service and perceived value has been extensively studied. A study by Zeithaml (1988) found that service quality significantly affects perceived value, which in turn influences overall satisfaction. Similarly, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) demonstrated that perceived service quality and value are critical determinants of customer satisfaction in various service sectors, including higher education.

**Conceptual Models and Frameworks:** Several conceptual models have been proposed to understand the dimensions and impacts of perceived value. For example, the model by Oliver (1999) suggests that perceived value influences satisfaction,

which subsequently affects behavioral intentions such as loyalty and repurchase intentions. This model has been adapted to higher education contexts to analyze the relationships between perceived value, satisfaction, and institutional reputation (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000).

Table 2.33: Summary of Key Studies on Perceived Value in Higher Education  
(Author's own calculations)

| Study                       | Key Findings                                                                      | Dimensions of Perceived Value        |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Zeithaml (1988)             | Perceived value as a trade-off between benefits and costs.                        | Functional, Emotional, Social        |
| Sweeney & Soutar (2001)     | Developed a multidimensional scale for perceived value.                           | Quality, Price, Overall Value        |
| Parasuraman & Grewal (2000) | Perceived value influences satisfaction and repurchase intentions.                | Service Quality, Value, Satisfaction |
| Saha & Sharma (2022)        | Institutional reputation and the value he understand impact student satisfaction. | Quality, reputation, Cost            |

#### 2.14.5 Discussion and Implications

The concept of perceived value in higher education is intricate and encompasses multiple dimensions. Key factors like educational quality, cultural experience, financial considerations, and institutional prestige all play a vital role in shaping perceived value, which in turn influences student satisfaction and the institution's reputation.

**Future Research Directions:** Future studies should delve into the evolving nature of perceived value and its response to new developments in higher education. Investigating the effects of advancements in technology, the rise of online learning,

and increasing global competition on perceived value and student satisfaction would provide valuable insights.

**Implications for University Management:** Universities in India should focus on enhancing the perceived value by improving service quality, managing costs effectively, and leveraging their cultural and academic strengths. By addressing these factors, institutions can boost student satisfaction, enhance their reputation, and attract more international students.

**Practical Recommendations:** Educational institutions should develop strategies to communicate their perceived value effectively to prospective students. This includes showcasing academic achievements, providing detailed information on costs, and highlighting unique cultural experiences.

## **2.15 Moderating Effects of Acculturation on Experience and Satisfaction**

Acculturation, which refers to the process by which individuals adapt to a new cultural environment, significantly influences the experiences and satisfaction of international students within higher education contexts. As these students navigate both academic and social spheres in their host countries, the degree and method of their acculturation can profoundly shape their overall educational satisfaction. This section examines how acculturation serves as a moderating factor between the experiences of international students and their satisfaction, with an emphasis on the different strategies students adopt to manage cultural transitions. Through reviewing empirical studies and theoretical perspectives, this discussion highlights the influence of acculturation strategies—such as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization—on levels of student satisfaction.

### **2.15.1 Analyzing the Moderating Role of Acculturation in the Experience-Satisfaction Link**

Acculturation, characterized by the adaptation of cultural norms and social behaviors from another group, plays a crucial role in shaping the experiences and satisfaction of international students within educational institutions. Initially studied by early American researchers, the concept of acculturation has evolved to encompass the

complex interactions between individuals from diverse backgrounds and their host cultures (Berry, 2005).

The impact of acculturation on satisfaction is multi-layered. Positive acculturation experiences can foster a sense of integration within the academic and social communities of the host institution, contributing to higher satisfaction levels (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Conversely, challenges in acculturation can introduce stressors that may lower students' satisfaction (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014). Exploring this dynamic involves assessing how elements such as cultural adaptation, language proficiency, and social engagement influence the relationship between students' experiences and satisfaction.

For example, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found that students who adapt well to the host culture through positive social connections and integration experiences tend to report higher satisfaction. On the other hand, those who face difficulties in cultural adaptation, including language barriers and feelings of isolation, are more likely to report lower satisfaction levels. This moderating effect of acculturation underscores the importance of support structures within institutions that assist students in adjusting to cultural differences, thus enhancing their overall educational experience and satisfaction.

Table 2.34: Acculturation Strategies and Their Impact on Student Satisfaction (Berry, 2005)

| <b>Acculturation Strategy</b> | <b>Description</b>                               | <b>Impact on Satisfaction</b>                       |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Assimilation                  | Adopting the host culture exclusively            | Lower satisfaction due to loss of cultural identity |
| Integration                   | Engaging with both home and host cultures        | Higher satisfaction due to cultural harmony         |
| Separation                    | Retaining home culture and avoiding host culture | Variable satisfaction, often lower due to isolation |

|                 |                                       |                                              |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Marginalization | Rejecting both home and host cultures | Lowest satisfaction due to lack of belonging |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|

### 2.15.2 Research on the Impact of Acculturation in Higher Education

Table 2.35: Key Findings from Empirical Studies on Acculturation (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002)

| Study                    | Key Findings                                                              |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Schwartz et al. (2006)   | Integration associated with higher educational attainment                 |
| Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) | Positive academic acculturation leads to greater success and satisfaction |

Integration vs. Separation: Academic Outcomes and Satisfaction Research highlights how various acculturation strategies affect international students' academic success and satisfaction levels. Berry's (1997) acculturation model—encompassing assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization—provides a basis for understanding these effects. Integration, which allows students to retain their cultural identity while engaging with the host culture, often yields the highest levels of academic achievement and satisfaction (Ward et al., 2001). In contrast, a separation strategy, where students limit their interaction with the host culture, tends to correlate with reduced satisfaction and academic performance (Berry, 2005).

Zhang and Goodson (2011) found that international students adopting integration strategies had better academic outcomes and higher satisfaction compared to those who pursued separation or marginalization. This underscores the value of institutional policies that encourage integration through supportive programs.

Cultural Adaptation and Academic Acculturation: The process of adapting to a new educational environment significantly impacts students' academic acculturation. Mori (2000) found that students better able to align with the academic norms and expectations in their host country reported greater satisfaction with their studies.

This adjustment includes learning to navigate differences in teaching styles, assessment formats, and classroom interaction.

Similarly, Myers and Young (2009) investigated international students' experiences and noted that those who adapted successfully to the academic environment experienced higher satisfaction. The study emphasized the importance of orientation sessions and continued support in helping students adjust to new academic norms.

**Acculturation Stress and Mental Health:** Acculturation stress, a common issue for international students, can negatively impact satisfaction and mental well-being. Leong and Chou (2011) identified a link between high levels of acculturation stress and lower satisfaction, as well as poorer mental health outcomes. This stress can stem from language barriers, cultural differences, and social isolation.

The findings underscore the need for institutions to offer targeted services to alleviate acculturation stress, such as counseling, language assistance, and social integration initiatives. By reducing stress and fostering effective coping mechanisms, institutions can contribute to enhanced student satisfaction and overall well-being.

### **2.15.3 Strategies for Enhancing Acculturation and Improving Student Satisfaction**

**Institutional Support Programs:** Robust support programs are essential for aiding acculturation and boosting student satisfaction. These programs may include orientation sessions, language assistance, and cultural workshops to help students adjust to new academic and social settings (Lee, 2010). Peer mentoring programs, where seasoned students guide newcomers, have shown positive impacts on acculturation and satisfaction (Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006).

**Promoting Cultural Exchange and Social Integration:** Fostering cultural exchange and social integration is another effective strategy for enhancing acculturation and student satisfaction. By hosting events and activities that encourage intercultural interaction, institutions can help international and domestic students build connections. Rienties and Tempelaar (2013) found that students involved in

intercultural activities reported higher satisfaction and a stronger sense of social integration.

**Tailored Counseling and Support Services:** Providing tailored counseling and support services can address specific challenges faced by international students. These services may include mental health counseling, academic advising, and personal development workshops. For instance, the implementation of targeted mental health support for students experiencing acculturation stress can significantly improve their well-being and satisfaction (Yoon & Jepsen, 2008).

Table 2.36: Strategies for Enhancing Acculturation and Their Benefits (Smith, 2020)

| Strategy                      | Description                                      | Benefits                                          |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Cultural Orientation Programs | Pre-departure and on-campus orientation sessions | Eases cultural transition and reduces stress      |
| Peer Support Networks         | Establishment of mentorship and support groups   | Enhances social integration and emotional support |
| Tailored Academic Support     | Specialized academic resources and tutoring      | Improves academic performance and satisfaction    |

## 2.16 International Student Satisfaction: Outcomes and Implications

Due to its implications for institutional effectiveness, student retention, and overall educational quality, the experience of foreign students has become important.

### 2.16.1 Key Determinants of International Student Satisfaction

**Perceived Value and Quality:** Perceived value, which encompasses the benefits students believe they gain relative to the costs incurred, is a fundamental determinant of satisfaction. Studies by Yang and Jang (2023) have demonstrated that higher perceived value is associated with increased satisfaction among international students (Yang, S., & Jang, S. S., 2023). Similarly, perceived service quality,



assessed through dimensions like tangibles, reliability, and empathy, significantly impacts satisfaction levels (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Table 2.37: Summary of Key Determinants of Student Satisfaction (Yang, S., & Jang, S. S., 2023; Parasuraman et al., 1988)

| Study                     | Key Determinants                   | Methodology                          | Findings                                                           |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yang & Jang (2023)        | Perceived Value, Satisfaction      | Survey, Structural Equation Modeling | High perceived value correlates with higher satisfaction           |
| Parasuraman et al. (1988) | Service Quality                    | SERVQUAL Model                       | Service quality dimensions impact satisfaction                     |
| Ali & Zhou (2024)         | Value Co-Creation, Service Quality | Partial Least Squares SEM            | Value co-creation enhances satisfaction and loyalty                |
| Ibrahim et al. (2024)     | Institutional Image, Satisfaction  | Survey, Structural Equation Modeling | Institutional image affects satisfaction and behavioral intentions |

**Value Creation:** The concept of value creation, wherein students actively participate in shaping their educational experiences, has gained prominence. This participatory approach not only enhances satisfaction but also fosters loyalty (Ali et al., 2024). Research by Ibrahim et al. (2024) highlights the importance of involving international students in campus management and service improvements as a strategy to boost their satisfaction levels (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Table 2.38: Impact of Value Co-Creation on Student Satisfaction (Ali et al., 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2024)

| Study             | Value Co-Creation Impact          | Methodology                 | Findings                                                       |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ali et al. (2024) | Positive impact on Satisfaction   | Partial Least Squares SEM   | Value co-creation enhances satisfaction and reduces complaints |
| Lee & Park (2023) | Student Involvement, Satisfaction | Survey, Regression Analysis | Student involvement in service processes boosts satisfaction   |

### 2.16.2 The Impact of Perceived Value on Student Satisfaction

It encompasses both tangible and intangible factors, including academic quality, campus facilities, and overall university experience (Zeithaml, 1988).

Empirical Evidence: A study by Wang and Zhang (2024) reinforces this by showing that both functional and emotional aspects of perceived value significantly impact satisfaction (Wang, H., & Zhang, Y., 2024).

Table 2.39: Perceived Value Factors Affecting Satisfaction (Lee & Park, 2023; Wang, H., & Zhang, Y., 2024)

| Factor           | Impact on Satisfaction   | Source              |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Functional Value | Direct positive impact   | Wang & Zhang (2024) |
| Emotional Value  | Direct positive impact   | Lee & Park (2023)   |
| Social Value     | Moderate positive impact | Yang & Jang (2023)  |

|                   |                                      |                       |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Conditional Value | Moderate impact depending on context | Ibrahim et al. (2024) |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|

### 2.16.3 Long-Term Implications of Student Satisfaction for Indian Higher Education

**Strategic Importance:** For Indian higher education, enhancing international student satisfaction is crucial for improving institutional reputation, attracting more students, and fostering international collaborations.

**Impact on Institutional Reputation:** Satisfaction levels among international students directly influence institutional reputation. Positive experiences lead to favorable word-of-mouth recommendations and increased global rankings, which in turn attract more students (Kumar & Singh, 2023). Conversely, dissatisfaction can damage reputation and deter potential students.

**Long-Term Institutional Strategies:** To enhance satisfaction, Indian institutions need to invest in improving service quality, enhancing campus facilities, and engaging in value co-creation activities (Rao et al., 2024).

Table 2.40: Long-Term Implications for Indian Higher Education (Rao et al., 2024)

| Implication                  | Description                                  | Example                                              |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Enhanced Reputation          | Increased global rankings and attractiveness | Investment in international student support services |
| Increased Student Retention  | Higher retention rates and loyalty           | Improved academic and non-academic support           |
| Better Global Collaborations | More partnerships and collaborations         | Strategic international alliances and programs       |

## **2.17 Key Studies Underpinning the Research**

The landscape of higher education has seen considerable change over recent decades, largely due to the impact of globalization and internationalization. As universities extend their influence globally, they are increasingly affected by economic, cultural, and political trends worldwide. This discussion offers an in-depth review of foundational research that deepens our understanding of these complex factors, especially the connections between globalization and higher education, patterns of international student mobility, and the motivations behind students' choices of study destinations. By integrating insights from key studies, this overview seeks to illuminate significant trends and challenges shaping today's higher education landscape.

The accompanying table features a carefully selected collection of influential research papers that form the basis of current scholarship in these areas. Each study is evaluated for its contributions to the field, offering a valuable perspective on the evolving role of higher education within a global framework. This synthesis highlights not only the studies that have been pivotal in shaping academic perspectives but also provides a foundation for future research directions in this domain.

Table 2.41: Key Studies Underpinning the Research (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Findlay, 2011; Hao & Welch, 2020; Knight, 2011, 2013; Li & Bray, 2007; Marginson, 2006; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Zhang & Hou, 2019)

| Paper                                                                   | Authors                      | Year | Publication Type | Research Field                          | Institution(s)                        | Citations | Key Insights                                                                                      | Significance                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------|------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities | Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. | 2007 | Journal Article  | Higher Education Studies                | Boston College; University of Toronto | High      | Explores the relationship between globalization and the internationalization of higher education. | Foundational for understanding global influences on universities' strategies. |
| The Global Context of Higher Education: Changing                        | Marginson, S.                | 2006 | Journal Article  | Education Policy, Globalization Studies | University of Melbourne               | High      | Discusses the competitive landscape and commodification of higher                                 | Critical analysis of globalization's impact on educational                    |

| <b>Paper</b>                                                    | <b>Authors</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>Publication Type</b> | <b>Research Field</b>           | <b>Institution(s)</b> | <b>Citations</b> | <b>Key Insights</b>                                               | <b>Significance</b>                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Geopolitics and Policy                                          |                |             |                         |                                 |                       |                  | education due to globalization.                                   | quality and equity.                                                   |
| The Globalization of Higher Education                           | Altbach, P. G. | 2004        | Edited Volume           | Higher Education, Globalization | Boston College        | High             | Analyzes global forces impacting higher education institutions.   | Key for understanding global education policies.                      |
| Globalizing the University: Changing Roles and Responsibilities | Knight, J.     | 2013        | Journal Article         | International Education         | University of Toronto | Medium           | Examines the evolving role of universities in a globalized world. | Important for understanding institutional responses to globalization. |

| <b>Paper</b>                                                           | <b>Authors</b>                | <b>Year</b> | <b>Publication Type</b> | <b>Research Field</b>              | <b>Institution(s)</b>                 | <b>Citations</b> | <b>Key Insights</b>                                                                                  | <b>Significance</b>                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Push-Pull Factors Influencing International Student Destination Choice | Mazzarol, T., & Soutar, G. N. | 2002        | Journal Article         | International Education, Marketing | University of Western Australia       | High             | Investigates push and pull factors in international students' decisions, focusing on Asian students. | Comprehensive framework for understanding student mobility decisions. |
| The Dynamics of International Student Mobility                         | Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J.  | 2007        | Journal Article         | International Education            | Boston College; University of Toronto | High             | Analyzes global student mobility trends, highlighting non-Western countries.                         | Pioneering analysis of decentralization in higher education.          |

| Paper                                                                              | Authors              | Year | Publication Type | Research Field          | Institution(s)          | Citations | Key Insights                                                                                        | Significance                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Applying the Push-Pull Model to International Student Mobility                     | Hao, J., & Welch, A. | 2020 | Journal Article  | International Education | University of Sydney    | Medium    | Explores the Push-Pull Model to understand motivational factors influencing international students. | Detailed analysis of push-pull dynamics in study destination choices.   |
| Motivations Behind International Student Mobility: A Review of the Push-Pull Model | Li, M., & Bray, M.   | 2007 | Journal Article  | Comparative Education   | University of Hong Kong | High      | Reviews the Push-Pull Model in international student mobility studies.                              | Foundational understanding of motivational factors in student mobility. |



| Paper                                                                                            | Authors              | Year | Publication Type | Research Field                                  | Institution(s)            | Citations | Key Insights                                                                           | Significance                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The Role of Attitudes, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Control in International Student Mobility | Zhang, Y., & Hou, M. | 2019 | Journal Article  | Educational Psychology, International Education | Beijing Normal University | Medium    | Applies the Theory of Planned Behavior to international students' decision-making.     | Insights into psychological and social factors influencing study choices. |
| International Student Mobility in the Context of Globalization                                   | Findlay, A. M.       | 2011 | Journal Article  | Migration Studies, Education                    | University of Dundee      | Medium    | Explores patterns and drivers of international student mobility in a globalized world. | Key for understanding global trends in student mobility.                  |

| Paper                                                         | Authors    | Year | Publication Type | Research Field                  | Institution(s)        | Citations | Key Insights                                                                          | Significance                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Education Hubs: The Globalizing World of Borderless Education | Knight, J. | 2011 | Journal Article  | Higher Education, Globalization | University of Toronto | Medium    | Examines the role of education hubs in the global education market, focusing on Asia. | Important for understanding new trends in international education markets. |

## **2.18 Summary and Synthesis of Literature**

India's evolving reputation as an educational hub is influenced by its rich cultural heritage, diverse academic offerings, and the economic appeal of lower tuition fees compared to Western countries (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Naidoo, 2013). However, these potential advantages are often tempered by challenges related to socio-cultural adaptation, administrative support, and varying expectations of educational quality.

### **2.18.1 Summary of Key Findings from the Literature**

**Motivations and Expectations:** Research indicates that the primary motivations driving international students to choose India include the desire for cultural immersion, the pursuit of affordable education, and the availability of unique academic programs (Choudaha & De Wit, 2014; Altbach, 2004). Students from developing countries often view India as an accessible gateway to quality education, while others are drawn by India's historical and spiritual significance (Maringe & Carter, 2007). While many expect a seamless integration into Indian society and academia, they often encounter significant challenges, including language barriers, different pedagogical approaches, and varying levels of institutional support (Yan & Berliner, 2011; Sawir et al., 2008).

**Experiences and Adaptation:** The socio-cultural environment in India presents both opportunities and obstacles for international students. On one hand, the exposure to India's vibrant and diverse culture can be enriching (Kashima & Loh, 2006). On the other hand, cultural dissonance, language difficulties, and social isolation are common issues that impede students' adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Lee & Rice, 2007). The literature suggests that students' psychological well-being and academic success are closely linked to their ability to navigate these challenges. Moreover, studies by Andrade (2006) and Smith and Khawaja (2011) emphasize the role of host institutions in providing adequate support to ease this transition.

**Administrative Support:** Administrative support is a critical determinant of international student satisfaction and retention. Effective administrative support, including pre-arrival orientation, academic advising, language assistance, and mental health services, is essential for mitigating acculturation stress and enhancing

students' overall experiences (Smith & Choi, 2020). The literature calls for a more student-centered approach, where support services are co-designed with student input to ensure they are responsive to their needs (Brown & Green, 2021). Furthermore, technological integration in administrative processes, as highlighted by Nguyen and Liu (2021), can significantly enhance the efficiency and accessibility of these services.

**Comparative Perspectives:** When comparing the international student experience in India with that in other countries, the literature underscores the need for robust governance structures and comprehensive support systems (Davis & Lee, 2018). Studies suggest that countries with well-established frameworks for international education, such as the US, Canada and Australia, tend to offer more consistent and higher-quality support services (Altbach & Knight, 2007). India's relatively nascent position in the global education market means that it must address these gaps to remain competitive (Naidoo, 2013).

### **2.18.2 Final Reflections on the Literature Review**

The review of literature highlights important multifaceted nature of the international student experience in India, shaped by a complex web of motivations, socio-cultural dynamics, and institutional factors. It is evident that while India has significant potential as a study destination, there are critical areas that require attention to better align with the expectations of international students.

**Motivational Discrepancies:** The gap between the motivations and expectations of international students and their actual experiences in India is a recurring theme in the literature. While students are drawn to India for various reasons, including cultural enrichment and affordable education, the reality often falls short due to cultural barriers, differing academic practices, and inadequate support services. This discrepancy suggests the need for more transparent communication and expectation management by Indian institutions.

**Challenges in Socio-Cultural Adaptation:** Cultural adaptation presents a considerable challenge for numerous international students studying in India. Research underscores the importance of fostering cultural awareness and building supportive social networks as essential components for successful adaptation (Ward

& Kennedy, 1999; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986). However, Indian institutions differ in the level of support they offer, revealing a gap in the consistent application of these practices. To effectively address these challenges, a comprehensive approach to supporting international students is needed—one that integrates both academic and socio-cultural aspects.

**Institutional Support and Governance:** The role of administrative support in shaping international students' experiences cannot be overstated. The literature points to significant disparities in the quality and accessibility of support services across Indian institutions, which often lead to dissatisfaction among international students (Beine et al., 2018; Johnson & Carter, 2019). The integration of technology into administrative processes, as well as the co-design of support services with student input, are identified as potential solutions to these challenges. Moreover, the comparative perspective underscores the need for Indian institutions to adopt best practices from more established international education markets to enhance their competitiveness.

### **2.18.3 Potential Contributions of the Research to the Field of International Education**

This research on the motivations, experiences, and expectations of international students choosing India as a study destination offers a range of potential contributions to international education.

**Enhanced Understanding of Student Motivations and Expectations:** By investigating what motivates international students and what they expect when studying in India, this study provides insights that can help shape strategies to attract students and improve their early experiences. Such insights can help institutions create targeted recruitment approaches and develop orientation programs that better prepare students for academic and cultural adjustments in India.

**Improvement in Institutional Support Practices:** The research findings could support Indian universities in adapting their student services to better meet international students' needs. By highlighting the role of administrative and technological support, as well as the value of incorporating student input, the study could inform practices that make support services more responsive and efficient. In turn, these

enhancements can contribute to higher levels of student satisfaction and streamline interactions with university administration.

**Informed Policy Development and Comparative Analyses:** By offering a comparative perspective on international student support services, this research could serve as a valuable resource for policymakers and education leaders. The findings may highlight successful strategies and policies from other countries that could be adapted to the Indian context, ultimately helping to improve India's competitiveness in the global education market.

**Focus on Continuous Improvement:** Identifying gaps in current support services and examining discrepancies between students' expectations and their actual experiences highlights the importance of ongoing enhancement of international education practices. This research can lay the groundwork for regular assessments and continuous adjustments in support services, ensuring they are in line with the changing needs of international students.

## **2.19 Gaps in the Current Research**

With the globalization of education, there has been rapid growth in international student mobility. Established destinations like the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Australia have developed reputations as prime study locations. In recent years, however, emerging economies like India have entered this competitive landscape by offering an affordable education paired with unique cultural experiences. Although international student motivations and experiences in Western destinations are widely studied, there remains limited literature on these factors in India.

Significant research gaps exist concerning the motivations and experiences of students coming to India, as well as the impact of acculturation on their satisfaction and perception of value. Below, these gaps are explored in detail.

### **2.19.1 Limited Literature on Motivations Driving International Students to India**

A major research gap lies in the lack of studies on what drives international students to choose India as a study destination. India is well-known for its affordable education, especially in fields like medicine, engineering, and IT, but it remains unclear how these factors vary based on students' regions of origin.

For instance, students from Africa and Southeast Asia may find India appealing due to lower costs and industry opportunities, while students from culturally similar

countries, like Nepal or Bangladesh, may feel more comfortable with India's social environment. Some students are also drawn to India for its unique spiritual and philosophical offerings, combining academic study with personal growth opportunities (Chowdhury, 2017). However, limited research has explored how motivational factors vary based on cultural, economic, or geographic differences.

### **2.19.2 International Students in India: A Neglected Area of Inquiry**

While there is considerable research on international student experiences in Western countries, few studies focus on India as a study destination. This is surprising given India's growing importance in global education, supported by its reputable institutions and rich cultural environment. International students' motivations, challenges, and experiences within India remain largely underrepresented in academic research.

India's socio-cultural setting, marked by linguistic diversity and a complex caste system, creates a distinct adaptation process for international students, differing considerably from that in Western nations. These unique factors influence international students' experiences but are often overlooked (Patel, 2017).

India's regulatory environment also affects students' experiences, influencing admissions, housing, and post-study employment. Yet, few studies have delved into how these policies impact international students' lives, limiting our understanding of the distinct challenges they face while studying in India (Singh, 2020).

### **2.19.3 Insufficient Exploration of Acculturation and Its Moderating Role**

Acculturation is a vital concept in understanding international students' experiences; however, it remains underexplored within the Indian context. Most acculturation studies focus on Western host countries where cultural differences are more binary (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). India's unique and complex cultural landscape presents both similarities and differences for international students, suggesting a need for more detailed examination of acculturation processes.

For instance, South Asian students may find cultural similarities that ease adaptation, whereas students from other regions may face pronounced social differences. The current literature does not adequately explore how international students navigate these cultural dynamics in India, resulting in limited understanding of acculturation in this non-Western context (Chirkov, 2009).

Additionally, research rarely examines the moderating role of acculturation between students' perceived educational value and their satisfaction levels. This study aims to address this gap, exploring how acculturation shapes students' perceptions of the value of their education and their satisfaction with their choice to study in India.

#### **2.19.4 The Impact of Perceived Value on Student Satisfaction**

The connection between students' perceived value of their education and satisfaction is well-established in studies focusing on traditional Western study destinations (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). However, little research has explored this relationship in India, where factors like cost, quality of teaching, and cultural experiences may uniquely shape students' perceptions of value and satisfaction. Examining these factors in the Indian context could provide insights into what drives satisfaction among international students.

#### **2.20 Contribution to the Literature**

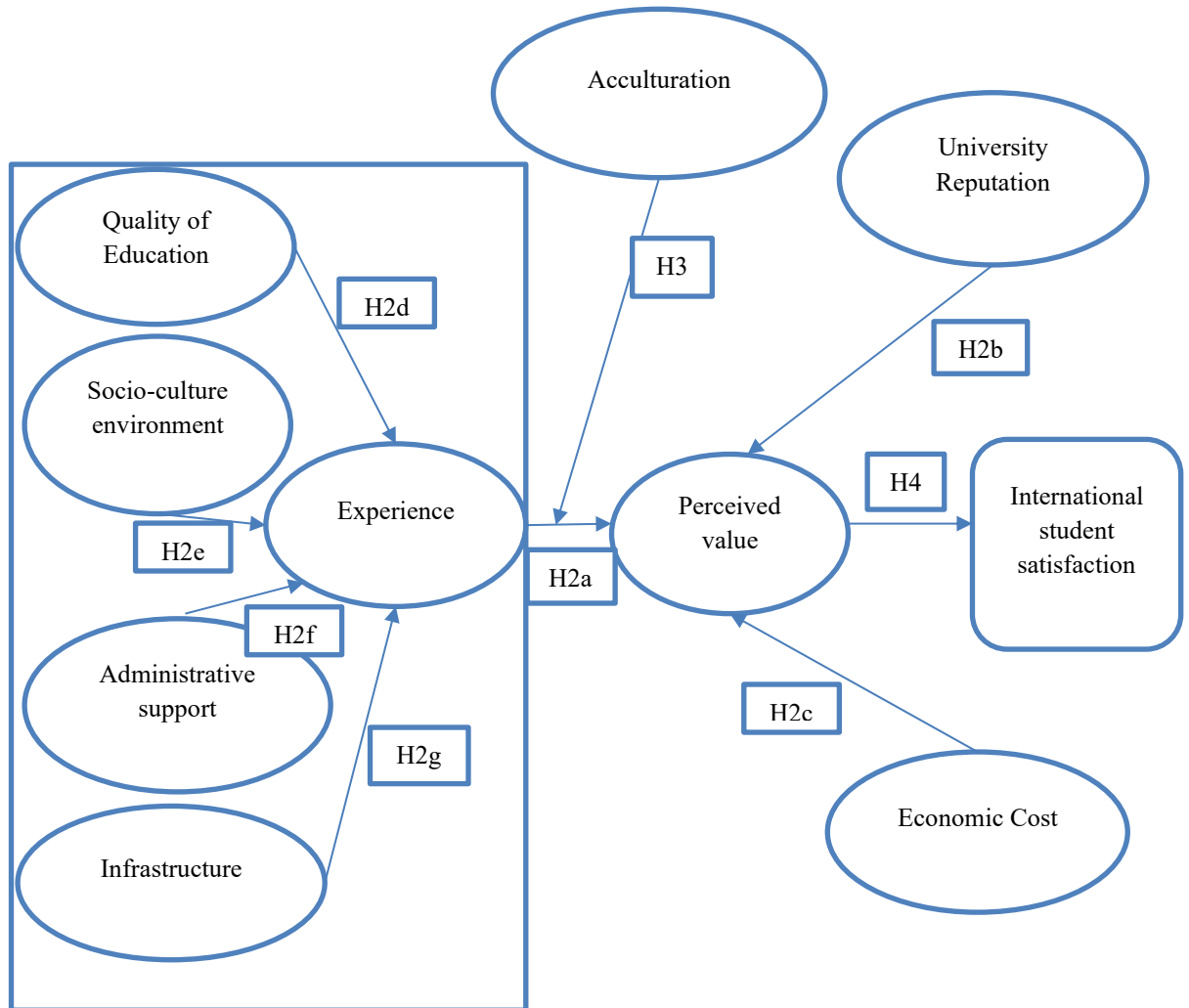
This research contributes to the understanding of international student mobility in non-Western contexts. While studies frequently cover international student experiences in places like the U.S., U.K., and Australia, fewer examine India's unique socio-cultural environment and its challenges for international students (Patel, 2017).

This study addresses these gaps by offering a detailed analysis of the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction of international students in India. Additionally, it examines the moderating role of acculturation, exploring how these factors influence students' perceptions of India as an educational destination. The findings not only expand academic discourse on international education but also provide practical implications to improve India's global educational standing.



## 2.21 Conceptual Model Framework

Figure 2.8: Conceptual Framework of inbound international student satisfaction in India (Author's own work)



### 2.21.1 Operational Definitions

**Quality of Education:** In this study, the quality of education refers to the overall effectiveness of teaching, learning, and pedagogical methods used within Indian higher education institutions (HEIs). This includes not only course content but also teaching practices, academic resources, and student engagement. While often benchmarked against global standards, the quality of education in India must also address the alignment with local cultural and societal contexts (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

**University Reputation:** University reputation in this study signifies the perceived standing of Indian universities based on their credibility, influence, and recognition both within India and internationally. This reputation includes institutional rankings, alumni achievements, faculty distinction, and the university's impact on research and industry. It is a vital factor in student choice, often indicating academic quality and potential career opportunities (Hazelkorn, 2015).

**Experience:** Experience encompasses the complete range of academic and social interactions that international students encounter in India. It includes the educational quality they experience, the socio-cultural environment, administrative assistance, and the university infrastructure. These factors collectively impact students' academic and social adaptation, shaping their satisfaction with their study experience in India (Montgomery, 2010).

**Socio-Cultural Environment:** This term represents the broader social, historical, and cultural setting of India that international students encounter. It includes India's diverse traditions, social norms, languages, and societal structures, all of which influence students' ability to adapt to the local environment. A supportive socio-cultural environment is essential for positive acculturation and overall satisfaction among international students (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

**Administrative Support:** Administrative support involves the various services and guidance provided to international students by non-academic staff at Indian HEIs. This includes assistance from international offices, help with visa and housing arrangements, and navigating academic policies. Effective administrative support is key to ensuring that international students have a smooth transition and an enriching experience in a new country (Ryan & Viete, 2009).

**University Infrastructure:** University infrastructure includes the physical and technological resources provided to students at Indian HEIs. This includes buildings, libraries, labs, sports facilities, student housing, medical services, and IT infrastructure. High-quality infrastructure is essential for students' academic success and overall satisfaction, providing a conducive environment for learning and living (Dill & Soo, 2005).

**Acculturation:** Acculturation refers to the process by which international students adjust to the host country's culture while maintaining their cultural identity. In this study, it is seen as a dynamic process affected by the cultural distance between the students' home and host countries, impacting students' experiences and perceptions of their time in India (Berry, 2005).

**Economic Cost:** In this study, economic cost refers to the financial investment made by international students to study in India, which includes tuition fees, living expenses, and other associated costs. It also considers opportunity cost, which is the value of other options that students forego to pursue education in India. Economic cost significantly influences students' decision-making and their perceived value of education (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

**International Student Satisfaction:** International student satisfaction reflects how well students' expectations are met or exceeded during their educational journey in India. It includes academic and non-academic elements, such as education quality, social integration, and administrative support. Satisfaction is essential as it shapes students' overall perceptions of their study experience and their likelihood of recommending India as a study destination to others (Kotler & Clarke, 1987).

## **2.22 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides an in-depth review of existing literature on international students' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction, with a particular focus on India as a study destination. It begins with an exploration of globalization and internationalization trends, illustrating India's evolving role in higher education on a global scale. A discussion of student mobility follows, with attention to the factors influencing international students' destination choices, particularly regarding Indian universities.

The chapter analyzes international students' decision-making processes, including family and peer influences, and how these affect the choice of India as a study destination. Economic considerations, such as tuition, living expenses, and scholarship opportunities, are examined to understand their role in the perceived value of studying in India. Additionally, it scrutinizes the reputation and academic

quality of Indian universities, focusing on rankings, accreditations, and India's global educational competitiveness.

The experiences of international students in India are also reviewed, with emphasis on factors such as educational quality, socio-cultural adaptation, and administrative support. The chapter highlights how infrastructure and institutional services impact student satisfaction and examines the role of socio-cultural environments and acculturation in shaping students' experiences. Further analysis addresses how acculturation moderates the relationship between student experiences and perceived educational value, linking these findings to broader strategies for enhancing student satisfaction.

This chapter synthesizes studies on acculturation and international student satisfaction, identifying critical gaps that this research aims to address. In doing so, it contributes to the wider discourse on India's role as an emerging global destination for higher education.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Chapter Outline**

This chapter aims to establish a detailed outline of the research methodology applied in this study. Recognizing the importance of comprehensively examining factors that impact international students' decision-making when selecting India as a study destination, the methodology is thoughtfully crafted to facilitate effective data collection and analysis. This study describes the strategic methodology that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative components, providing a robust foundation for assessing the study's validity and reliability.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore international students' motivations, experiences, and levels of satisfaction in India. This approach enables a comprehensive view of students' academic and cultural journeys, along with the structural and social dynamics that influence their experiences. This study provides a detailed discussion of the research design, data collection strategies, and analytical methods utilized to address the core research questions. The main objective is to lay a solid methodological groundwork that supports an in-depth investigation of the critical factors affecting international students' experiences in India.

### **3.2 Problem Definition**

With globalization enhancing the movement of students internationally, host countries are increasingly encouraged to establish supportive environments that foster both academic and personal growth. Nations like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have positioned themselves as primary destinations for international students, offering extensive support systems tailored to meet foreign students' unique needs. However, the rising influx of international students into emerging markets like India introduces a set of unique challenges, which existing studies have not fully explored. While India provides affordable education and cultural diversity, international students often encounter barriers that impede both educational and social integration, impacting their overall satisfaction and perception of India as a desirable study destination. This study addresses the various

challenges international students face in India, highlighting research gaps and emphasizing the need for a comprehensive examination of these issues.

Table 3.1: Gap in the existing literature (Anderson, 2018; Bhushan, 2018; Chirkov, 2009; Chowdhury, 2017; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Patel, 2017; Singh, 2020; Wilkins & Huisman, 2011)

| <b>Gap</b>                       | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                | <b>Sources</b>                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Motivations for Choosing India   | Limited research on why students from diverse regions choose India as a study destination.                        | Chowdhury (2017), Bhushan (2018)                   |
| Acculturation Challenges         | Insufficient exploration of how international students adapt to India's unique cultural and social environments.  | Patel (2017), Chirkov (2009)                       |
| Perceived Value and Satisfaction | Lack of studies exploring the relationship between perceived educational value and student satisfaction in India. | Wilkins & Huisman (2011), Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) |
| Impact of Institutional Policies | Little research on how India's regulatory framework and administrative practices affect international students.   | Singh (2020), Anderson (2018)                      |

### 3.2.1 The Need for In-Depth Investigation

The unique and varied challenges faced by international students in India necessitate a thorough examination. Current research only partially addresses the relationships between students' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction, and lacks insight into how acculturation impacts these aspects. For example, some students may be drawn to India for its spiritual and cultural depth, while others are attracted by affordable education in specialized fields like medicine and engineering (Chowdhury, 2017). Yet, these initial motivations alone do not determine the students' satisfaction; rather,

it is their ability to overcome cultural barriers and institutional challenges that ultimately shapes their overall perception of India as an academic destination.

This research highlights the need for a closer look at the elements shaping international students' experiences and satisfaction in India. The current lack of comprehensive studies on students' motivations, experiences, and adaptation processes within the Indian context limits a full understanding of their specific challenges. Additionally, it constrains the development of effective policies and support systems that could enhance their experiences. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by offering a detailed exploration of international students' experiences in India, adding valuable insights to the existing literature on global student mobility.

### **3.3 Relevance of the Study**

In a globalized world, higher education has transcended local boundaries, creating a competitive global market for students. As countries strive to attract international students, emerging destinations like India are gaining prominence. However, India's potential as an international education hub brings challenges, such as cultural, linguistic, and institutional obstacles that may impact student experiences. Understanding what motivates, challenges, and satisfies international students in India is essential to positioning the country as a globally competitive academic destination. This section discusses the broader implications of this study within the context of global education, emphasizing its value to policymakers, educators, and academic institutions in India.

#### **3.3.1 The Globalization of Higher Education**

The internationalization of higher education has expanded opportunities for students seeking academic and cultural exposure abroad. Established destinations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have historically dominated this market due to their academic reputation and comprehensive support for international students (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011). However, rising tuition costs in these countries and the growth of emerging economies are making destinations like India more appealing for students seeking affordable, quality education (Bhushan, 2018). India's extensive cultural heritage, diverse academic options, and cost-effective educational system offer promising opportunities to attract international students.



This study’s relevance is underscored by its potential to deepen our understanding of how international students perceive India as an academic destination. By examining students' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction levels in India, the research adds to the dialogue on international student mobility, especially within non-Western contexts. It also identifies the challenges and opportunities that India must address to strengthen its appeal as an education hub on the global stage.

### 3.3.2 Relevance for Policymakers

This study provides valuable insights into regulatory and administrative frameworks affecting international student mobility, which are often under-explored in the Indian higher education context. As Singh (2020) notes, India's bureaucratic processes, including visa policies and accreditation requirements, present notable obstacles for international students. Additionally, the lack of a cohesive system for managing international student services exacerbates these challenges, potentially leading to dissatisfaction and, at times, early withdrawal from programs.

By addressing these administrative hurdles, this research can guide policymakers in implementing structural improvements to make India more accessible to international students. Findings emphasize the importance of policies that support cultural exchange, enhance institutional support, and improve academic resources. Additionally, evidence-based recommendations from this study can help policymakers strengthen India’s position in the global education sector.

### 3.3.3 Relevance for Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions in India can gain significantly from this research, particularly as they aim to attract and retain a diverse international student body. Although India is known for its affordable education, international students continue to encounter challenges that may detract from their educational experience.

Table 3.2: Key factors influencing student satisfaction and experiences (Bhushan, 2018; Wilkins and Huisman, 2011)

| Factor | Description | Implication for Institutions |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|

|                        |                                                                                   |                                                                             |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cultural Integration   | International students often struggle with cultural adaptation in India.          | Institutions should provide cultural orientation programs.                  |
| Language Barriers      | While English is widely spoken in academics, local languages dominate socially.   | Offer language support services and facilitate interactions.                |
| Administrative Support | Navigating bureaucratic processes can be overwhelming for international students. | Streamline administrative procedures and provide dedicated support offices. |
| Academic Integration   | Differences in teaching styles and academic expectations pose challenges.         | Develop tailored academic support programs for international students.      |

By focusing on these critical elements, higher education institutions can foster stronger academic and social integration for international students. This study provides actionable recommendations for enhancing institutional support, such as establishing dedicated international student offices, implementing intercultural training for staff, and offering orientation programs that ease cultural adjustment (Bhushan, 2018).

Furthermore, by examining how perceived educational value impacts student satisfaction, this study assists institutions in refining their academic programs and enhancing student services. As noted by Wilkins and Huisman (2011), student satisfaction plays a significant role in building institutional reputation and global competitiveness. Consequently, findings from this research provide institutions with practical insights on improving academic offerings and creating a more welcoming environment for international students.

### **3.4 Key Research Questions**

Research questions are the foundation of any academic investigation, shaping the study's direction and methodological approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, which aims to explore the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction of international students in India, the questions are crafted to investigate key factors influencing students' choices and experiences. These questions aim to shed light on the nuances of international student mobility within India, including how acculturation affects satisfaction and perceptions of India's educational value.

Question 1: What motivates international students to select India as their study destination?

Question 2: How do these motivations vary according to students' geographic backgrounds?

Question 3: How do international students' experiences in India, along with the reputation of Indian universities, influence their perception of India's educational value?

Question 4: What impact does acculturation have on the relationship between experience and perceived value?

Question 5: How does the perceived value of India as a study destination affect international students' overall satisfaction?

These research questions form the core of the inquiry into the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction of international students in India. By exploring these questions, the study aims to provide a thorough understanding of the factors driving students to study in India, the challenges they face during their academic journey, and ways institutions can improve their experiences. These questions not only align with the study's objectives but also contribute to the broader discussion on international student mobility, especially in emerging education markets like India. The insights gathered are expected to be valuable for policymakers, educators, and institutions striving to create a supportive and globally competitive academic environment.

### **3.5 Study Objectives**

Research questions are fundamental to scholarly inquiry, as they not only define the focus of the investigation but also determine the methodologies employed throughout the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

1. To explore the motivational factors of international students in selecting India as a study destination.
2. To compare the motivations of international students selecting India as a study destination based on the students' place of origin.
3. To examine the impact of the international students' experience, university reputation and economic cost on the perceived value of India as an education destination.
4. To examine the moderating effect of acculturation between perceived value and experience of international students in India.
5. To analyse the impact of value perceived by international students studying in India on their satisfaction.

### **3.6 Proposed Hypotheses**

This study formulates hypotheses aligned with research objectives 2 through 5 to explore the complex relationships among international students' motivations, experiences, and perceptions of India as a study destination. The proposed hypotheses are as follows:

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ 1): There is no significant difference in the motivations of international students choosing India as a study destination based on their region of origin.

Alternate Hypothesis ( $H_1$ 1): Significant differences exist in the motivations of international students choosing India as a study destination based on their region of origin.

This hypothesis investigates whether students from various regions prioritize different factors when selecting India for higher education, helping to inform tailored recruitment strategies and support for diverse student demographics (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2a): International students' experiences in India do not significantly influence their perceived value of India as a study destination.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2a): International students' experiences in India significantly influence their perceived value of India as a study destination.

This hypothesis seeks to understand how students' in-country experiences shape their overall views of India's educational offerings (Lee, 2014).

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2b): The reputation of Indian universities has no significant effect on the perceived value of India as an educational destination.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2b): The reputation of Indian universities significantly impacts the perceived value of India as an educational destination.

This hypothesis addresses the influence of university reputation on students' valuation of India's education system, underlining the role of institutional prestige in their decision-making (Bodycott, 2009).

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2c): Economic costs associated with studying in India do not significantly impact the perceived value of India as a study destination.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2c): Economic costs associated with studying in India significantly impact the perceived value of India as a study destination.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2d): Quality of Education in Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2d): Quality of Education in Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2e): Administrative Support in Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2e): Administrative Support in Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2f): Socio-culture Environment in India do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>12f</sub>): Socio-culture Environment in India significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>02g</sub>): Infrastructure of Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>12g</sub>): Infrastructure of Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

These hypotheses examine how factors such as Quality of Education, Infrastructure, Socio-Cultural Environment, Administrative Support, and financial aspects—including tuition fees and living costs—affect students' experiences and their assessment of India's value as a study destination, highlighting the significance of economic considerations in educational decision-making (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>03</sub>): Acculturation does not moderate the relationship between students' experiences in India and their perceived educational value of the country.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>13</sub>): Acculturation moderates the relationship between students' experiences in India and their perceived educational value of the country.

This hypothesis investigates the role of cultural adaptation in influencing how experiences relate to students' perceptions of India's educational value, emphasizing the importance of acculturation in international student experiences (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>04</sub>): The perceived value of India as a study destination does not significantly influence international students' satisfaction.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>14</sub>): The perceived value of India as a study destination significantly influences international students' satisfaction.

This hypothesis explores the link between perceived value and students' satisfaction with their education in India, highlighting the impact of perceived educational value on overall student satisfaction (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011).

### **3.7 Research Design**

This study employs a robust research design that combines both exploratory and descriptive methods to thoroughly investigate the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction levels of international students in India. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates both qualitative and quantitative analyses to examine constructs such as student motivations, perceptions, and characteristics of the international student population.

This combined approach enables a deeper exploration of the factors influencing students' decisions to study in India and how these elements relate to their overall satisfaction. By employing both qualitative insights and quantitative data, the research design aims to present a comprehensive view of the international student experience in India.

#### **3.7.1 Geographical Focus of the Study**

The study focuses on India, a country with a deep-rooted tradition of education, historically known for its centers of learning such as Nalanda and Takshashila. In contemporary times, India is struggling to be an international study destination. The study aims to explore the country's positioning as an education destination by examining international students' motivations for studying in India, and their perceptions of the country's academic offerings, social environment, and cultural appeal.

India's higher education system offers numerous advantages, including relatively low tuition fees. However, the country also faces challenges, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited infrastructure, and cultural complexities, which could impact students' experiences and overall satisfaction. These challenges form a critical aspect of the study, offering a view on India's struggle to be a global educational destination (Choudaha, 2017).

#### **3.7.2 Motivations for International Students to Choose India**

India's rich cultural heritage, diverse society, and growing economy make it an increasingly attractive choice for international students. The country offers a unique

combination of affordability, academic rigor, and cultural engagement, drawing students from various backgrounds. This study examines the motivating factors for international students in choosing India, shedding light on their experiences, satisfaction, and the primary drivers behind their decision.

By analyzing these factors, the research provides valuable insights into what appeals to international students and how Indian universities can enhance their global appeal. Findings from this study are intended to help educational institutions and policymakers develop strategies to further establish India as a leading destination for international education.

**Affordability: High-Quality Education at a Lower Cost** One of the strongest attractions for international students considering India is the affordability of its education system. Compared to study destinations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, India provides quality education at a much lower cost. Tuition fees in India are substantially lower, which makes it a viable option, especially for students from developing nations (Bhagat & Ghosh, 2019). Additionally, India's cost of living is relatively economical, which helps minimize students' overall expenses.

For students from Asia and Africa, India offers globally recognized programs without the financial challenges often associated with studying in the West. Scholarships and financial aid options also contribute to India's appeal, positioning it as a competitive choice for those in search of quality education on a budget (Singh & Rajput, 2021).

**Academic Prestige: The Attraction of IITs and IIMs** India's elite institutions, particularly the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), serve as significant draws for international students. These institutions are highly regarded for their rigorous academics, esteemed faculty, and strong focus on research and innovation. IITs, in particular, are recognized internationally for their excellence in engineering and technology, making them a favored choice for students interested in these specialized fields (Nair, 2020).

The highly competitive admission process for these institutions further enhances their prestige. Students who secure a spot at IITs or IIMs often view it as a badge of



honor, recognizing the global value of an Indian education in these fields. The exposure to cutting-edge research and collaboration with peers from diverse backgrounds provides students with a unique and enriching academic experience.

International students are also attracted to India's growing emphasis on entrepreneurship and innovation. Institutions like IIMs are well-known for producing business leaders and entrepreneurs who have made significant contributions to global markets. This focus on developing practical skills and leadership capabilities gives students the tools they need to excel in the international job market.

**Cultural Diversity and Immersion:** India's rich cultural heritage and diversity are key reasons for an attractive study destination. For foreign students, studying in India offers the opportunity to immerse themselves in a culture that is both ancient and evolving. The experience of living in a country with such diverse languages, religions, and traditions is invaluable for students seeking a global perspective (Patel, 2017).

India's festivals, food, music, and art add to the cultural richness that international students enjoy. Students from Africa and Asia, in particular, find the cultural diversity of India to be an exciting part of their education journey. For many, studying in India goes beyond academics—it becomes a holistic experience of personal growth and intercultural learning.

Moreover, Indian universities increasingly support cultural integration through international student offices, orientation programs, and student-led cultural events. These initiatives help students adapt to Indian society and foster a sense of belonging, enhancing their overall satisfaction with their study-abroad experience (Thomas, 2020).

**Opportunities for Global Networking and Career Growth:** Another critical factor that attracts international students to India is the opportunity for global networking and career development. Indian universities are increasingly forming partnerships with institutions abroad, enabling international students to gain access to global networks of academics, researchers, and industry professionals. This international

collaboration helps students build connections that can enhance their career prospects both in India and globally (Rao & Shukla, 2020).

Additionally, India's evolving economy offers numerous opportunities for students to engage in internships, research projects, and entrepreneurial ventures. These industries provide students with practical, hands-on experiences that prepare them for the global job market (Gupta & Basu, 2019).

**Academic Flexibility and Diverse Course Offerings:** India's higher education system is recognized for its academic adaptability, providing a wide selection of programs across various fields. International students can choose from an extensive range of subjects, from traditional areas like science, engineering, and business to specialized fields such as yoga, Ayurveda, and cultural studies, allowing them to customize their academic journey to align with their personal and career aspirations (Sharma, 2019).

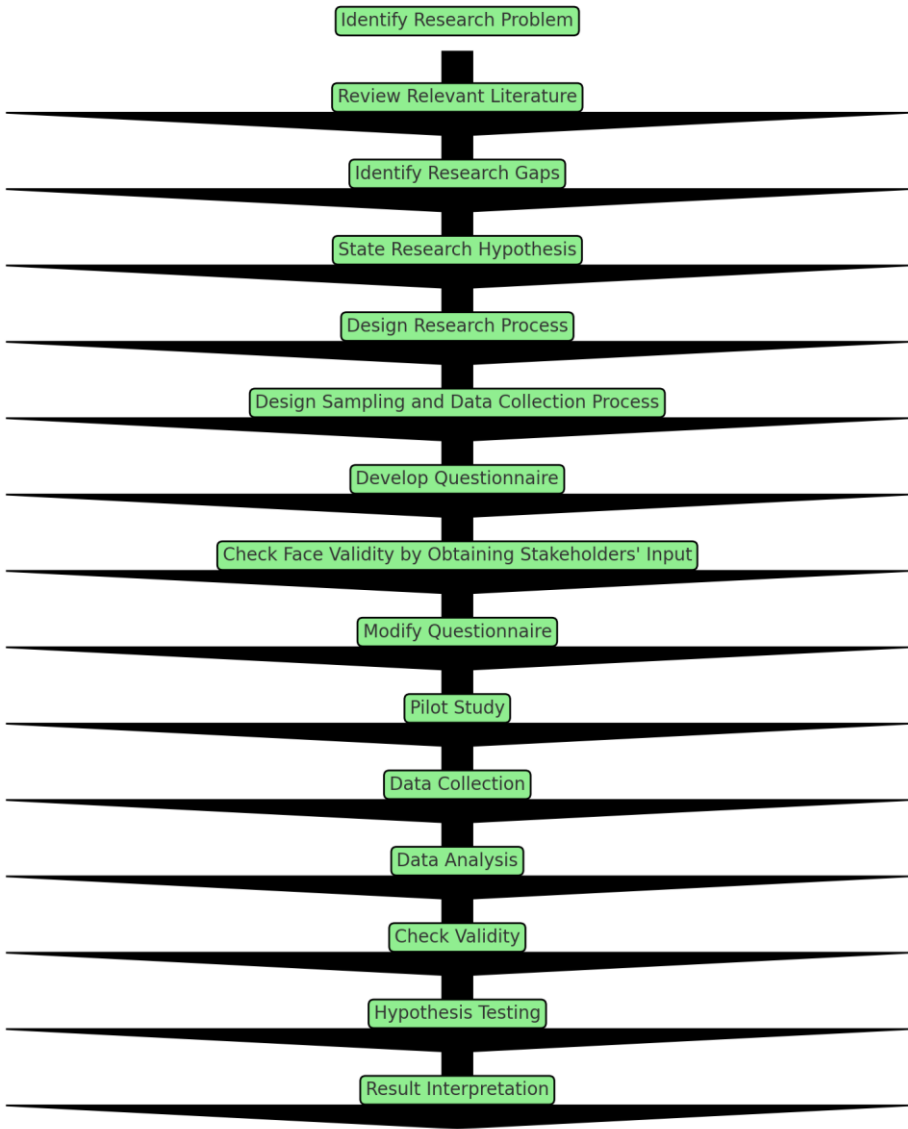
Many students from regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East are particularly interested in India's programs in health sciences, engineering, and management. Additionally, unique courses in fields like environmental sustainability, rural development, and alternative medicine attract students seeking specialized academic paths that may not be available in their home countries.

**The Rising Appeal of India as a Study Destination:** India's mix of affordability, academic reputation, cultural richness, and career prospects makes it an increasingly popular choice for international students. Although India is still emerging as a global education destination compared to traditional study hubs, it presents a compelling option for students looking for a cost-effective, culturally rich, and academically challenging education.

For Indian universities to continue attracting international students, it is crucial to maintain a focus on improving academic quality, expanding global partnerships, and ensuring cultural integration. By addressing these factors, India has the potential to strengthen its position as a global education destination and attract a more diverse pool of international students.

### 3.8 Research Workflow

Figure 3.1: Research Process Followed



The flowchart above presents a comprehensive and methodologically sound research process, meticulously designed to ensure academic rigor. Beginning with the identification of a research problem, the flow transitions through a systematic review of relevant literature, pinpointing key research gaps. These gaps form the basis for hypothesis development, guiding the research design and sampling strategy. After crafting a robust questionnaire, the study integrates stakeholder input to ensure face validity, followed by pilot testing to refine the instrument. Once the data collection process is complete, sophisticated data analysis is conducted to test the hypotheses,

culminating in the interpretation of results. This iterative and well-structured approach ensures that each step builds upon the previous, promoting both validity and reliability in the research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **3.9 Methodological Approach**

The study uses a mixed-methods way, integrating exploratory and descriptive components to investigate the core constructs influencing international students' motivations and experiences in India. This approach allowed for a holistic understanding, with the exploratory phase uncovering underlying motivations, while the descriptive phase provided a structured examination of key factors like student experience, economic considerations, Acculturation, perceived value, and satisfaction (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In the exploratory phase, semi structured interviews using zoom were performed to delve into the personal motivations and lived experiences of international students. This qualitative method enabled the capture of nuanced perspectives, allowing for flexibility in the questions posed to participants. By using open-ended inquiries, the research aimed to uncover the social, psychological, and academic factors that motivated applicants to select, study destination as India (Maxwell, 2013). This phase illuminated critical elements that might have remained obscured in a purely quantitative study, offering rich, context-dependent insights.

On the other hand, the descriptive phase utilized a structured self-administered, close-ended questionnaire to quantify constructs such as motivation, perceived value, and satisfaction. This phase was essential for testing hypotheses about the relationships between key variables and exploring the extent to which these constructs were consistent across a broader sample of international students. The quantitative data complemented the qualitative findings, offering a more comprehensive picture of the student experience in India (Creswell, 2014).

By integrating these two phases, the study provided a multi-faceted exploration of the international student experience, offering both depth and breadth in its analysis.

### **3.10 Research Methodology**

The research method was carefully designed to use qualitative and then quantitative study, ensuring a thorough exploration of the international student experience in India. This mixed-methods design allowed for the triangulation of data, providing both in-depth qualitative insights and robust quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

**Exploratory Component: Qualitative Interviews** The qualitative component was conducted through semi-structured interviews with international students, utilizing video conferencing tools. This method was selected to offer flexibility, as it allowed participants to share their experiences in an open, conversational format while still maintaining a consistent focus on the key topics of interest. The interviews probed into the complex motivations behind students' decisions, including academic, cultural, and financial factors (Maxwell, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews offered a unique advantage: they allowed the researcher to adapt to the participants' responses, enabling a deeper dive into areas of interest that might have been overlooked in a more rigid research design. The insights gleaned from this phase were instrumental in shaping the survey questions used in the quantitative phase, ensuring that they were reflective of the real-world concerns and experiences of international students (Yin, 2018).

**Descriptive Component: Quantitative Surveys** In the quantitative phase, a self-administered, close-ended questionnaire was employed to measure the constructs of motivation, satisfaction, and perceptions of India as a study destination. The questionnaire was meticulously designed, drawing on insights from the qualitative findings and a thorough review of relevant literature (Malhotra & Dash, 2011). This ensured that the instrument was comprehensive, addressing the major factors influencing international students' experiences in India.

The survey was distributed in two stages. First, it was administered to a group of students who had recently applied to study in India, capturing their pre-arrival expectations. The second stage targeted international students already studying in India, gathering data on their post-arrival experiences. This two-stage process

enabled a comparison between initial expectations and actual experiences, offering valuable insights into how perceptions evolve over time (Creswell, 2014).

The collected data underwent analysis using a range of statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and factor analysis. These analytical tools helped reveal key patterns and relationships among the variables, offering an in-depth understanding of international students' motivations and satisfaction levels with their educational experiences in India (Kothari & Garg, 2014).

### **3.11 Sampling Framework and Data Acquisition**

To capture a representative view of international students, a dual-sampling approach was implemented, targeting both prospective students and those already enrolled in Indian institutions. Each phase was carefully structured to ensure methodological rigor and reliability.

#### **Qualitative Survey: Gaining Insight into International Students' Perspectives**

For the qualitative phase, a snowball sampling method was applied to reach students considering India for their studies. Through personal networks, educational consultants, and contacts, a varied group of students in the planning stages of studying abroad—particularly those considering India—was identified. This approach proved effective in reaching participants who might not be easily accessed through traditional sampling methods (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

To ensure demographic representativeness, the researcher used data from the All India Survey on Higher Education 2022 (AISHE) to balance participants by country of origin. This helped the qualitative sample mirror the larger population of international students, aiming to provide comprehensive insights into what motivates or dissuades students from choosing India as a study destination. A sample of 50 students who had considered India as a potential destination participated in this phase.

#### **Quantitative Survey 1: Examining Reasons for Student hesitation**

The first quantitative survey explored why some international students apply to study in India but ultimately decide not to enroll. Using judgment sampling, the

study specifically targeted students who had applied to Indian institutions in 2021 but did not proceed with enrollment. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on a subgroup whose experiences were directly relevant to the study's objectives (Thomas, 2022).

An initial list of 10,000 international students was compiled, and a self-administered online questionnaire was sent out, achieving a strong response rate of 24%. This provided substantial data on the factors influencing students' decisions to refrain from studying in India.

#### Quantitative Survey 2: A Comprehensive Snapshot of International Students in India

The second quantitative survey targeted international students already studying in India, using a quota sampling method to ensure equal representation from both North and South India. The sample included 1000 students, equally divided between the two regions, and represented a range of academic levels and disciplines. This method was chosen to capture the diverse experiences of students across different academic fields, including engineering, management, and the arts.

Additionally, the study ensured gender representation aligned with national data, maintaining a male-to-female ratio of 2.13:1, which varied across different disciplines. This comprehensive sampling strategy allowed the research to explore how gender, academic discipline, and geographic location influenced students' experiences and satisfaction with their education in India.

##### **3.11.1 Target Population**

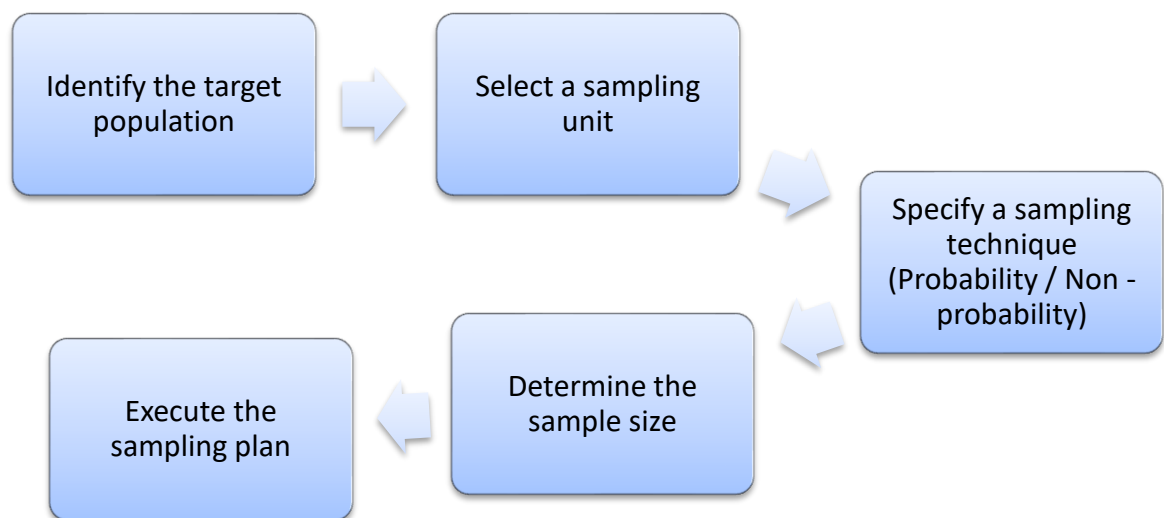
This study targeted two key groups: international students who initially applied to study in India but opted out before completion, and those currently enrolled in academic programs within India. By focusing on both groups, the study gathered insights into the factors influencing prospective students' decision-making, as well as the actual experiences of those who chose to pursue their studies in India.

##### **3.11.2 Sampling Design**

A well-defined sampling approach is essential for ensuring that research findings are both credible and applicable to the broader context. For this study, the sampling

strategy was meticulously crafted to achieve adequate representation of the target population, which includes international students engaged in full-time undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral studies in India, as well as potential students in their home countries considering studying in India. The design aimed to determine an optimal sample size that would reflect the diversity within the population while remaining feasible for in-depth analysis. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007), an effective sample should balance sufficient population variability with practical feasibility for in-depth investigation. This approach, therefore, supports the study in generating reliable insights into the decision-making processes of international students, regardless of their final choice to study in India.

Figure 3.2: Flow chart of sampling design (Source: Kothari and Garg, 2014)



### 3.11.3 Sampling Unit Definition

The sampling unit forms a foundational component of the research design, representing the specific individuals or entities from whom data is gathered. In this study, the sampling unit varied by research phase: for the qualitative phase, it included international students considering India as a potential study destination, while the quantitative phase involved both prospective students who opted against studying in India and those currently enrolled in undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs in Indian institutions. Defining the sampling unit clearly is crucial



to maintain consistency and relevance in data collection (Bryman, 2016). This careful selection ensures that the collected data effectively reflects the experiences and perceptions of the study's target groups.

#### **3.11.4 Sampling Strategy**

This study adopted a tailored sampling approach to capture both in-depth and representative data about international students' experiences in India. For the qualitative interviews, snowball sampling was utilized, wherein current participants help identify additional candidates from their network, a method particularly useful for reaching students who may be challenging to access, such as those with limited social connections in India (Noy, 2008). The study relied on recommendations from enrolled students in India, educational consultants involved in international recruitment for Indian universities, and contacts in target countries to reach prospective participants.

In the quantitative phase, a combination of judgment sampling and quota sampling was applied. Judgment sampling, or purposive sampling, involved selecting participants with relevant knowledge and alignment with the study's objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This technique targeted students who applied to study in India in 2021 but did not complete their applications, offering valuable insights into their experiences. To enhance diversity, data collection was balanced across educational institutions in northern and southern India, capturing students from diverse backgrounds. Quota sampling further ensured proportional representation of different nationalities, following the distribution in AISHE 2022 data (Daniel, 2012). This approach maintained sample diversity while achieving a representative cross-section of the international student population in India.

By integrating these sampling techniques, the study balanced qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, enabling a comprehensive understanding of international students' expectations, motivations, and experiences in selecting India as an education destination.

### 3.11.5 Determination of Sample Size

Sample size is a pivotal aspect of research design, impacting the reliability, validity, and generalizability of study findings. For this mixed-method study, which explores international students' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction with studying in India, the sample size was determined thoughtfully for each research phase, taking into account theoretical frameworks, methodological needs, and logistical factors.

**Qualitative Sample Size:** The qualitative phase included in-depth interviews with 50 international students from various countries. This sample size was chosen based on data saturation, the point at which no new information or insights emerge from additional interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). In this study, saturation was achieved by interviewing students from a wide array of cultural and academic backgrounds, providing a comprehensive view while avoiding repetitive responses. To ensure a broad perspective, the sample mirrored the diversity of international students in India, with representation from both developing and developed countries, informed by AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) data.

**Quantitative Sample Size Survey I:** For the first quantitative phase, an online survey was conducted with 2,063 international students. Given the uncertain size of the population of interest, Cochran's formula was used to estimate the sample size required to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Cochran's formula is commonly applied to determine the sample size for population studies, particularly when estimating a proportion with a specific characteristic (Cochran, 1977).

The formula used is as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p * q}{e^2}$$

Where: n = required sample size

Z = Z-score (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)

p = estimated proportion of the population (0.5, assuming maximum heterogeneity)

q = 1 - p

e = margin of error (0.05)

Calculated sample size using above formula is 385. A survey link was sent to 10,000 foreign students who earlier filled the application to study in India but had postponed or abandoned their plans. This yielded 2,069 responses, of which 2,063 were usable after excluding incomplete submissions.

Table 3.3: Characteristics of Quantitative Survey I Participants (Author's own calculations)

| Characteristic        | Number of Respondents |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Total Responses       | 2,069                 |
| Completed Responses   | 2,063                 |
| Countries Represented | 61                    |
| Response Rate         | 20.6%                 |

This extensive sample size, achieved via judgmental sampling, ensured that the findings were both reliable and reflective of the broader population of international students who had considered studying in India.

Quantitative Sample Size Survey II: For the second quantitative survey, aimed at international students currently studying in India, the population size was established at 47,427, as per AISHE (2022) data. Using Cochran's formula with adjustments for a finite population, the required sample size was calculated to be 385. However, to strengthen the robustness and generalizability of the results, the survey was expanded to include 1,000 respondents.

The formula applied to calculate sample size for a known population is:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 * p * q}{e^2} \div \left(1 + \frac{Z^2 * p * q}{e^2 * N}\right)$$

Where: N = population size (47,427)

p = estimated proportion of the population (0.5)

$n$  = required sample size

$Z$  = Z-score (1.96 for a 95% confidence level)

$q = 1 - p$

$e$  = margin of error (0.05)

The final survey was divided between students studying in North and South India, with 500 students selected from each region. Additionally, the sample was structured by academic level (undergraduate, postgraduate, Ph.D.) and gender, following proportions from the AISHE data.

Table 3.4: Quantitative Survey II Sample Breakdown by Region and Academic Level (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Region</b> | <b>Undergraduate (%)</b> | <b>Postgraduate (%)</b> | <b>Ph.D. (%)</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| North India   | 390 (78%)                | 87 (17.5%)              | 23 (4.5%)        | 500          |
| South India   | 390 (78%)                | 87 (17.5%)              | 23 (4.5%)        | 500          |

#### Sample Size Considerations for PLS-SEM in a Reflective Model

A key advantage of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is its ability to generate reliable results even when working with a relatively small sample size, particularly in models with multiple constructs and indicator variables (Fornell & Bookstein, 1981; Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2016; Willaby, Costa, Burns, MacCann, & Roberts, 2015). This is achieved through the PLS-SEM algorithm, which separately computes the measurement model and structural model relationships. The algorithm applies Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to estimate the relationships in both models, making it well-suited for complex structural models.

However, choosing PLS-SEM solely due to small sample size is a misconception and has been widely debated in methodological research (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Some researchers have misused this justification, leading to incorrect applications and criticisms of PLS-SEM (Goodhue, Lewis, & Thompson, 2012; Marcoulides & Saunders, 2006; Sarstedt et al., 2016). Instead, the selection of PLS-SEM should be based on the research objectives and the nature of empirical analysis rather than just sample size constraints (Rigdon, 2014).

To ensure statistical power in reflective models, determining an adequate sample size is crucial. The minimum sample size in PLS-SEM is often estimated using the 10-times rule (Barclay, Higgins, & Thompson, 1995), which states that the sample size should be:

- 10 times the maximum number of reflective indicators per construct, or
- 10 times the maximum number of structural paths directed at a construct in the model.

While the 10-times rule provides a rough estimate, a more robust approach involves statistical power analysis, which considers the model structure, expected  $R^2$  values, and significance levels (Marcoulides & Chin, 2013). Cohen's (1992) recommendations for multiple regression models offer a more precise estimate of the required sample size.

For this study, with a reflective model and a sample size of 1000, the model's complexity requires assessing whether this size is sufficient to detect meaningful relationships. Given that the maximum number of structural paths directed at a single construct is 9, the 10-times rule suggests a minimum sample size of 90 ( $9 \times 10$ ). However, statistical power analysis provides a more accurate requirement. According to Cohen (1992), detecting an  $R^2$  value of 0.10 at a 5% significance level with 80% power requires 88 respondents, while detecting an  $R^2$  of 0.25 requires at least 53 respondents.

Since the sample size of this study is 1000, it is far above these minimum thresholds, ensuring high statistical power and robust estimation in PLS-SEM. This larger

sample size minimizes the risk of Type II errors and enhances the generalizability of findings.

Thus, while PLS-SEM is often selected for its ability to handle smaller samples, this study's reflective model, combined with a sample size of 1000, ensures rigorous empirical analysis and reliable results.

### **3.12 Data Collection Methodology**

Data collection is a cornerstone of empirical research, serving as the basis for analysis and conclusions. This section outlines the processes used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for understanding the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction levels of international students in India. Data collection was organized in two phases: qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. Each method was specifically structured to capture students' perspectives and the factors influencing their choice to study in India.

Both primary and secondary sources informed this research. Secondary data, including academic literature, reports, and prior studies, helped shape the research framework. For primary data, structured surveys and Zoom interviews were conducted, each carefully aligned with the research questions and objectives. The surveys were based on a validated research instrument, with copyright protection under the Government of India, ensuring that the methodology adhered to high ethical and academic standards.

#### **3.12.1 Data Collection Methods**

To capture a diverse range of responses, the study employed both surveys and interviews. Surveys were distributed to two main groups: international students who had initially applied to study in India (Survey I) and those currently enrolled in Indian institutions (Survey II). Additionally, interviews were conducted with 50 students from various countries and academic backgrounds, using AISHE (2022) data for participant selection.

**Survey Method:** Surveys are frequently utilized in social sciences to efficiently gather substantial data from large, varied populations. In this study, online self-

administered questionnaires were used, offering benefits such as time efficiency and a wider reach. As noted by Hair et al. (2006), online surveys can enhance response rates when accompanied by follow-up reminders and clear instructions, which was especially relevant given the geographical diversity of the participants.

**Interview Method:** Interviews were conducted via Zoom to collect qualitative data. Each interview followed a structured format but allowed participants to elaborate on their personal motivations and experiences. The interviews provided context and deeper insights into the quantitative survey findings. This method allowed for the exploration of themes such as cultural integration, safety concerns, and career aspirations, which may not have been fully captured through a structured survey alone.

### **3.12.2 Research Instrument**

The research tools used in study was a comprehensive tool designed to gather insights from international students about their experiences, motivations, and satisfaction levels regarding studying in India. The instrument consisted of three different surveys: a Qualitative Survey (administered through online interviews) and two Quantitative Surveys. Each survey focused on specific areas aligned with the research objectives and targeted different phases of the student experience.

According to Kothari and Garg (2014), a well-constructed questionnaire is essential for capturing primary data. The design was carefully reviewed to ensure clarity and precision, with particular attention paid to the flow of questions, as Fisher et al. (2004) suggests that logical sequencing improves respondent engagement.

**Qualitative Survey (Online Interviews):** The Qualitative Survey was conducted through online interviews, with open-ended questions designed to explore the motivational factors, expectations, and perceptions of students considering or currently studying in India. The interview allowed for deeper exploration of themes such as the appeal of India as a study destination and potential challenges.

**Quantitative Survey 1 (Prospective Students):** This initial quantitative survey focused on students who had applied to study in India but ultimately decided not to complete the process. Its primary objective was to uncover reasons why India was

not chosen as their preferred study destination and to examine the key factors that impacted their decisions. The survey incorporated a combination of multiple-choice questions and Likert-scale items.

This survey provided valuable insights into the obstacles and challenges that may deter prospective students from selecting India, highlighting potential areas for enhancement in promoting Indian higher education internationally.

**Quantitative Survey 2 (Current Students):** The second quantitative survey targeted international students currently enrolled in a range of institutions across India. This survey aimed to collect data on students' experiences, levels of satisfaction, and their perceptions regarding the value of an education in India. It included a variety of questions, such as demographic, multiple-choice, and Likert-scale items, to comprehensively capture students' academic and cultural experiences.

This second quantitative survey provided valuable insights into the factors driving student satisfaction and perceived value of studying in India. By assessing aspects such as academic quality, cultural integration, and administrative support, this survey helped identify key areas where Indian institutions can improve to better support international students, while also highlighting the strengths that make India an attractive study destination.

### **3.12.3 Measures**

This study utilized several measurement tools to capture the nuanced motivations, experiences, and perceptions of international students studying in India. The main tool was a 5-point Likert scale, a widely accepted method in social sciences for gauging attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Joshi et al., 2015). Ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), the scale allowed respondents to indicate their level of agreement with statements about the quality of education, cultural adaptation, administrative assistance, and overall satisfaction. Likert scales were further used to assess perceived value, with questions centered on the reputation of Indian universities, affordability, and infrastructure quality. Other tools included multiple-choice questions to collect demographic information and open-ended questions in the qualitative phase to gain deeper insights into students' motivations and career aspirations. This combination of methods allowed for a robust analysis of



factors shaping international students' experiences (DeVellis, 2017). A summary of the tools is shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Measurement Tools Used in the Study (*DeVellis, 2017; Joshi et al., 2015*)

| Measure                            | Description                                                            | Scale/Format                              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Likert Scale                       | Measures agreement or disagreement with statements on a 5-point scale. | 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree |
| Multiple-Choice Questions          | Captures demographic data and objective responses.                     | Predefined answer options                 |
| Open-Ended Questions (Qualitative) | Explores motivations, expectations, and personal experiences.          | Narrative responses                       |

By integrating various measurement tools, the study ensured both the reliability and validity of collected data, capturing the full scope of student experiences through both quantitative and qualitative methods (Cronbach, 1951). This approach enabled a thorough examination of international student journeys in India.

#### 3.12.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were rigorously observed throughout this study. Participants were clearly informed about the study's purpose and assured of both anonymity and confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained before conducting both the surveys and interviews. The study also adhered to all ethical standards required by the Government of India, particularly regarding the protection of intellectual property associated with the research instrument.

#### 3.12.5 Period of Surveys

This study was done over a long period, from November 2021 to August 2023, to ensure a comprehensive and methodologically sound investigation into international

students' decision-making processes. A three-phase survey approach was adopted to capture both prospective and current international students' perspectives, aligning with previous research suggesting that longitudinal studies provide a more nuanced understanding of educational decision-making (Wilkins et al., 2012; Maringe & Carter, 2007). The first phase, a qualitative study involving online interviews, was conducted via Zoom from November 2021 to February 2022. This phase was designed to explore in-depth insights into students planning to study abroad and considering India as a destination, consistent with the use of qualitative interviews in educational research to uncover complex decision-making processes (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The second phase involved a quantitative survey distributed between May and June 2022 to a larger cohort of prospective students, aligning with studies suggesting that timely data collection during key decision periods (i.e., application and decision deadlines) yields more accurate insights (Maringe & Gibbs, 2009). Finally, the third phase consisted of a quantitative survey conducted between May and August 2023, targeting foreign students at Indian higher education institutions, pursuing their higher education. This timing was chosen to allow sufficient time for students to reflect on their study abroad experiences, which is critical for capturing post-enrollment attitudes and satisfaction (Wilkins, 2012). The extended timeline ensured that data was collected at critical stages in the students' decision-making journey, enhancing the validity and depth of the findings.

### **3.13 Data Analysis Plan**

Data analysis is a pivotal stage in the research process, where raw data is converted into valuable insights to meet the research objectives and test hypotheses. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe this phase as the point at which researchers "make sense" of collected data, ensuring that findings are both valid and add to the current knowledge base. This study presents a data analysis plan covering both qualitative and quantitative data, specifying the analytical methods and statistical tools to be applied for deriving conclusions from the primary data collected.

#### **3.13.1 Analysis Techniques**

**Qualitative Data Analysis:** The qualitative data, mainly gathered through Zoom interviews with international students, undergoes thematic analysis. As noted by

Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a versatile and approachable method for identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data. The thematic analysis process begins with data familiarization, where the interviews are transcribed verbatim, followed by an initial coding phase. During this stage, codes are assigned to meaningful units of text, corresponding to specific aspects of the students' motivations, experiences, and perceptions regarding studying in India.

After coding, the next step involves categorizing these codes into broader themes that address the research questions. Themes such as "cultural adaptation," "financial considerations," and "university reputation" are expected to emerge, each offering insights into the factors driving their adoption of study option in India. As Braun and Clarke (2012) suggest, thematic analysis not only organizes data but also interprets its significance, helping to construct a narrative that reflects the students' lived experiences.

Given the large volume of qualitative data, NVivo software was used to assist in managing and organizing the data for thematic analysis. NVivo enables the systematic categorization of text and visualization of relationships between themes, providing a structured approach to handling qualitative insights (Zamawe, 2015).

**Quantitative Data Analysis:** The quantitative data for this study were obtained through two distinct surveys: one focused on prospective students who applied but ultimately decided not to study in India, and the other targeted current international students. The analysis started with descriptive statistics to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and provide an overview of their motivations, experiences, and satisfaction levels.

For hypothesis testing, both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to identify the motivations, compare them based on the region of origin, and apply structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the proposed model on the experience and satisfaction of international students. SEM explored complex interconnections among variables, including how acculturation moderated the relationship between perceived value and experience.

### **3.13.2 Statistical Approach**

Statistical analysis is a critical component of social science research, enabling scholars to develop, explore, and validate research findings through empirical evidence. In this thesis, a combination of statistical techniques is employed to investigate the motivations of international students selecting India as a study destination and to examine regional differences in these motivations. Specifically, the research utilizes the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for descriptive statistical analysis and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for advanced multivariate analysis, implemented through SmartPLS software.

#### **Descriptive Statistical Analysis Using SPSS**

SPSS is widely used for conducting descriptive statistical analysis in social science research. It provides a comprehensive suite of tools for summarizing, visualizing, and interpreting data (Pallant, 2020). In this research, SPSS is applied to:

- Calculate measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) to determine the overall importance of different motivational factors.
- Assess variability through standard deviation and variance to understand the distribution of responses.
- Conduct frequency analysis to categorize responses based on regional differences among international students.
- Perform cross-tabulations and chi-square tests to examine relationships between categorical variables.
- Utilize exploratory data analysis (EDA) to detect any patterns or anomalies before conducting advanced statistical modeling.

SPSS is chosen for its user-friendly interface, robust statistical capabilities, and wide acceptance in social science research (Field, 2018). The findings from SPSS provide foundational insights that guide further multivariate analysis using PLS-SEM.

#### **Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)**

PLS-SEM is a second-generation statistical technique that allows researchers to estimate complex models with multiple endogenous and exogenous and endogenous constructs while accounting for measurement errors (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Unlike covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM), PLS-SEM is variance-based and does not require strict data normality assumptions, making it particularly suitable for exploratory and predictive research (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2016).

The selection of PLS-SEM in this study is justified by several factors:

- **Exploratory Nature:** PLS-SEM is well-suited for theory development and exploratory research, which aligns with this study's aim of identifying key motivational factors influencing international students' decisions.
- **Handling Complex Models:** It efficiently manages complex structural models with multiple latent constructs.
- **Small Sample Size Compatibility:** Compared to CB-SEM, PLS-SEM performs well with smaller sample sizes (Hair et al., 2016).
- **Predictive Capabilities:** The technique provides high explanatory power, making it useful for forecasting trends in international student mobility.

### **SPSS Statistical Software**

SPSS serves as a foundational tool in this research, offering a range of functionalities for data preparation, analysis, and visualization. The software's key advantages include:

- **Data Management:** Ability to clean, transform, and prepare data for analysis.
- **Hypothesis Testing:** Conducting ANOVA to examine statistical relationships.
- **Reliability Analysis:** Assessing the internal consistency of survey instruments using Cronbach's alpha.
- **Factor Analysis:** Identifying underlying structures within motivational factors through exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

- The integration of SPSS with PLS-SEM ensures a comprehensive analytical approach, combining traditional statistical methods with advanced modeling techniques (Pallant, 2020).

### **SmartPLS for PLS-SEM**

SmartPLS is a specialized software used for implementing PLS-SEM, offering an intuitive graphical user interface (GUI) for variance-based structural equation modeling (Wong, 2013, 2019). The software facilitates:

- PLS Path Modeling: Estimating relationships among latent constructs using the PLS-SEM algorithm (Lohmöller, 1989; Wold, 1982).
- Measurement and Structural Model Assessment: Evaluating construct reliability, validity, and model fit (Ramayah, Cheah, Chuah, Ting, & Memon, 2016).
- Bootstrapping and Blindfolding: Generating confidence intervals and predictive relevance measures.
- Multi-Group Analysis (MGA): Comparing structural models across different student groups.
- Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA): Identifying key drivers of student satisfaction.

SmartPLS is widely recognized for its flexibility, cross-platform compatibility (Windows, Mac), and ability to handle complex models (Temme, Kreis, & Hildebrandt, 2010). The study employs SmartPLS 3 (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015), a widely used version known for its robust statistical capabilities.

### **Justification for Using SPSS**

SPSS is selected due to its robust capabilities in handling large datasets and performing complex statistical tests with efficiency and precision. The choice of SPSS is justified based on the first two research objectives:

- SPSS facilitates the analysis of key factors such as affordability, culture, and academic reputation through frequency distribution, mean comparisons, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA).
- Factor analysis helps in identifying latent variables influencing students' motivations, ensuring a structured and data-driven approach to categorization.
- SPSS allows for cross-tabulation and comparative analysis like ANOVA to examine differences among students from diverse regions.
- It enables the identification of significant differences in motivation based on cultural backgrounds, ensuring that conclusions are grounded in statistical evidence.

### **Justification for Using PLS-SEM**

PLS-SEM has gained significant traction across various disciplines, including marketing, strategic management, and social sciences, due to its ability to model latent constructs and relationships effectively (Hair et al., 2017). Compared to CB-SEM, PLS-SEM is increasingly preferred for research focusing on theory exploration rather than strict model validation (Richter, Sinkovics, Ringle, & Schlägel, 2015).

**Hypothesis Testing:** To evaluate the research hypotheses, the following inferential statistical methods was applied:

**Descriptive Statistics and Principal Factor Analysis:** Hypothesis 1 to find the motivations of international students selecting India as a study destination, descriptive statistics serve as the foundation of quantitative analysis by summarizing and organizing data (Field, 2018) and principal factor analysis (PFA) identifying latent variables influencing students' motivations, ensuring a structured and data-driven approach to categorization.

**Non-Parametric Test ANOVA:** Hypothesis 1, ANOVA tests whether there are statistically significant differences in motivational factors among students from different regions. If the test showed significant differences, post-hoc tests were applied to determine specific regional variations.

**PLS-SEM:** Hypothesis 2a: To test this hypothesis, the latent variable "International Students' Experiences" was modeled as an independent construct influencing

"Perceived Educational Value of India" as the dependent construct. Measurement indicators such as quality of teaching, campus facilities, and student support services were used to assess experiences. A bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS determines the path coefficient's significance (Hair et al., 2019).

**PLS-SEM:** Hypothesis 2b: University reputation was included as an independent latent construct measured by factors such as faculty qualifications, global rankings, and employer recognition. PLS-SEM was used to estimate the direct path coefficient from "University Reputation" to "Perceived Educational Value." The significance of this relationship was assessed through t-statistics and p-values obtained via bootstrapping (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**PLS-SEM:** Hypothesis 2c: Economic costs, including tuition fees, living expenses, and the availability of scholarships, were modeled as an exogenous latent construct. The effect of economic costs on perceived educational value was examined using PLS path modeling, with model fit indicators such as  $R^2$  values providing insights into the predictive power of economic considerations (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

**Moderation Analysis with PLS-SEM:** Hypothesis 3, a moderation analysis was conducted using the interaction effect modelling approach in SmartPLS. The construct "Acculturation" was measured using indicators such as cultural adaptation, social integration, and language proficiency. A significant interaction term in the structural model confirmed the moderating role of acculturation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

**PLS-SEM:** Hypothesis 4: To test this hypothesis, "Perceived Educational Value" was linked to "International Student Satisfaction" in the structural model. SmartPLS was used to analyze the direct effect of perceived value on satisfaction levels, with path coefficients, t-values, and explained variance ( $R^2$ ) indicating the strength of the relationship (Wilkins & Huisman, 2011).

### 3.13.3 Structural Equation Modeling

Historically, researchers primarily relied on univariate and bivariate analyses to explore data patterns and relationships. However, when dealing with more complex relationships, multivariate analysis becomes necessary. This approach involves



multiple statistical methods such as factor analysis, cluster analysis, logistic regression, multiple regression, and multidimensional scaling, allowing for simultaneous examination of multiple variables. These methods, known as first-generation statistical techniques (Fornell, 1981, 1987), can be categorized into exploratory and confirmatory approaches. Confirmatory methods, such as logistic regression, multiple regression, analysis of variance, and confirmatory factor analysis, are used to test hypotheses based on pre-existing theories. Conversely, exploratory methods, including cluster analysis, multidimensional scaling, and exploratory factor analysis, aim to identify patterns or relationships when prior knowledge is limited.

In social sciences, first-generation statistical techniques have been widely applied. However, due to their limitations, researchers have increasingly adopted second-generation techniques, collectively known as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM is a sophisticated statistical method capable of assessing relationships between constructs, including latent (unobserved) and indicator (observed) variables, while accounting for measurement error (Chin, 1998; Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000; Golob, 2003). SEM is generally divided into two approaches: covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and component-based or partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM) (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). Initially referred to as PLS path modeling, the term is still commonly used for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2011).

#### CB-SEM vs. PLS-SEM

CB-SEM is traditionally recognized as the most widely used SEM method and was developed by Jöreskog (1973). This method estimates model parameters by analyzing covariance and considering only common variance (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2016). However, CB-SEM is highly restrictive and relies on numerous assumptions (Hair et al., 2011). In contrast, PLS-SEM, introduced by Wold (1975, 1982, 1985), is considered an alternative to CB-SEM. It employs a two-step process: first estimating the path coefficients of the measurement (outer) model and then estimating the path coefficients of the structural (inner) model (Tenenhaus, 2008). By integrating principal components analysis with ordinary least squares

regression, PLS-SEM allows for the assessment of partial model structures (Mateos-Aparicio, 2011).

The fundamental distinction between these two techniques lies in their estimation methods. While CB-SEM utilizes covariance to estimate parameters, PLS-SEM relies on total variance (Hair et al., 2017). CB-SEM interprets constructs as common factors explaining indicator variables' covariance, whereas PLS-SEM employs proxies to approximate specific constructs (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). These proxies, although not identical to constructs, are weighted composites of indicators and serve as approximations (Rigdon, 2012). As a result, CB-SEM depends on strong assumptions to explain all indicator covariance, whereas PLS-SEM adopts a composite-based approach (Henseler et al., 2014; Rigdon, 2012; Rigdon et al., 2014). Moreover, CB-SEM focuses primarily on parameter estimation, while PLS-SEM is mainly used for predictive analysis. Additionally, PLS-SEM can be applied with smaller sample sizes (Sarstedt, Hair, Ringle, Thiele, & Gudergan, 2016), whereas CB-SEM typically requires larger samples for more accurate estimation. Thus, these two techniques differ in their objectives, assumptions, parameter estimation, latent-variable scores, model complexity, and sample size (Chin & Newsted, 1999).

Regarding their applications, CB-SEM is used to confirm or reject theories, while PLS-SEM is often employed for theory development in exploratory research. The choice between CB-SEM and PLS-SEM depends on the research study's characteristics and objectives (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2016). PLS-SEM is preferable when the study aims to predict and explain target constructs or identify significant structural model constructs (Rigdon, 2012). Furthermore, when theoretical development is limited or prior knowledge is insufficient, PLS-SEM is the more suitable approach (Rigdon, 2012).

Various software packages support the execution of PLS-SEM and CB-SEM. PLS-SEM can be implemented using PLS-Graph (Chin, 2003), SmartPLS (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005; Ringle et al., 2015), and the statistical computing environment R (e.g., *semPLS* by Monecke & Leisch, 2012). CB-SEM, on the other hand, can be executed using LISREL, AMOS, CALIS, EQS, and SEPATH.

## PLS Path Modeling

PLS-SEM, also referred to as PLS path modeling, involves developing and analyzing path models to visualize hypotheses and variable relationships using SEM techniques (Hair, Celsi, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2016; Hair et al., 2011). A PLS path model consists of two main components: the structural model (inner model) and the measurement model (outer model) (Chatelin, Vinzi, & Tenenhaus, 2002; Diamantopoulos, 2006; Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, & Lauro, 2005).

The structural model defines constructs and their relationships, representing variables not directly measured. The measurement model, in contrast, includes indicator variables that serve as observable proxies for latent constructs. These indicator variables contain raw data and are used to estimate latent constructs. Measurement models are further classified based on their relationship with latent variables. If latent variables explain other constructs in the model, the measurement model is termed exogenous. If constructs are explained by other variables, it is referred to as an endogenous measurement model.

Path models also incorporate error terms associated with endogenous latent variables and reflectively measured indicators. These error terms account for unexplained variance, while exogenous latent variables and formatively measured indicators do not contain error terms.

To construct a PLS path model, researchers must rely on theoretical frameworks that consist of related hypotheses systematically developed and logically linked to predict and explain outcomes. Two primary theories underpin PLS path modeling: structural theory and measurement theory. Structural theory outlines the relationships between latent variables, positioning constructs sequentially. The first construct in a sequence act as an independent variable (exogenous latent variable), while the last construct is considered a dependent variable (endogenous latent variable). If a construct functions as both an independent and dependent variable, it is still classified as an endogenous latent variable.

Measurement theory defines how constructs in the structural model are measured, typically employing either a formative or reflective measurement approach. In a formative measurement model, indicator variables causally determine the construct's

measurement, with arrows pointing from indicators to the construct. This approach assumes that formative measures are error-free (Diamantopoulos, 2006, 2011; Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000). Conversely, in a reflective measurement model, indicator variables are considered effects of the latent construct, with arrows pointing from the construct to its indicators.

By integrating structural and measurement theories, PLS-SEM facilitates the development of comprehensive path models, allowing for robust exploratory and predictive research applications in various fields.

#### PLS-SEM Bootstrapping Procedure

The bootstrapping procedure is a non-parametric method used to assess the stability and significance of various coefficients, including outer weights, outer loadings, and path coefficients. This method involves resampling subsamples with replacement from the original dataset, which are randomly drawn (Davison & Hinkley, 1997; Efron & Tibshirani, 1986).

PLS-SEM employs bootstrapping because it does not assume a normal distribution of data. As a result, traditional parametric significance tests are not suitable for evaluating the statistical significance of coefficients such as outer weights, outer loadings, and path coefficients. Instead, the non-parametric bootstrapping procedure provides a robust alternative for significance testing in PLS-SEM models (Davison & Hinkley, 1997).

During bootstrapping in PLS-SEM, a substantial number of subsamples, known as bootstrap samples, are randomly drawn from the original data. Each bootstrap sample contains the same number of observations as the original dataset. A higher number of bootstrap samples enhances result reliability. Chin (1998) recommends using 500 bootstrap subsamples, whereas more recent literature suggests 5000 bootstrap samples as a widely accepted standard (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017).

Bootstrap confidence intervals are also essential in PLS-SEM as they provide additional insights into the stability of estimated coefficients. A confidence interval is constructed to exclude the lowest 2.5% and highest 2.5% of values, ensuring that

the true parameter estimate falls within this range with 95% probability. If a confidence interval does not include zero, the estimated parameter is considered significant. This method is known as the percentile method. However, prior research highlights that for small sample sizes and asymmetric distributions, the percentile method may be prone to coverage errors, effectively reducing a 95% confidence interval to a 90% interval (Chernick, 2008). To address this issue, Efron (1987) introduced the bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrap confidence interval, which adjusts for biases and skewness in the bootstrap distribution. Additional details on the BCa bootstrap method can be found in studies by Gudergan, Ringle, Wende, and Will (2008), Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009), and Sarstedt, Henseler, and Ringle (2011).

An alternative approach to constructing bootstrap confidence intervals is the double bootstrapping method, which is more accurate than standard bootstrapping techniques. However, its efficacy in PLS-SEM applications has not been extensively tested. Consequently, the BCa bootstrap method remains the most reliable approach for constructing bootstrap confidence intervals in PLS-SEM (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017).

More comprehensive discussions on the bootstrapping procedure in PLS-SEM are available in Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017).

### **3.14 Chapter Summary**

The methodology described in this chapter is designed to offer an in-depth understanding of international students' experiences in India. This mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analyses, provides a well-rounded perspective on the factors influencing students' decisions and satisfaction. The chapter outlines the reasoning behind this approach, emphasizing the value of capturing both broader patterns and the nuanced insights that define the international student experience.

The data collection was executed across three phases, beginning with in-depth qualitative interviews, followed by two quantitative surveys targeting prospective and currently enrolled students. The extended timeline, spanning from 2021 to 2023, ensured that the data captured the dynamic nature of students' experiences at various

stages of their academic journey. Qualitative data, gathered through Zoom interviews, were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for an exploration of patterns such as cultural adaptation, financial concerns, and institutional reputation. The qualitative phase provided the narrative depth necessary to understand individual student motivations, challenges, and expectations, further enriched using NVivo software to manage the substantial volume of data.

Quantitative data collection employed structured surveys to gather measurable insights on factors such as academic satisfaction, administrative support, and financial affordability. Descriptive statistics offered an initial understanding of demographic and motivational patterns, while inferential techniques. The use of SEM PLS allowed for a sophisticated model testing including the moderating role of acculturation.

This comprehensive research methodology was essential in addressing the central research questions and hypotheses, contributing to the overall aim of understanding why international students select India as their study destination and how satisfied they are with their choice. The chapter on research methodology thus analysis and discusses the complexities of international student motivations and the areas in which Indian institutions must improve to enhance their global appeal.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

### **4.1 Chapter Outline**

This chapter presents data from a research study conducted across three distinct phases, each offering valuable insights into the decision-making process of international students. The study begins with a qualitative phase involving in-depth Zoom interviews with international students who had actively considered India as a leading choice for higher education. These interviews provided a rich narrative, exploring the range of factors influencing their decision to study in India, including aspirations, concerns, and pivotal experiences that shaped their choices.

Using NVivo 19 software, the qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, uncovering prominent themes and patterns. These findings highlighted the motivations and challenges international students face when selecting a study destination. To enhance the robustness of these insights, statistical tests were also employed, offering a grounded interpretation of the emerging themes.

The second phase involves a quantitative survey directed at students who ultimately chose not to study in India. This phase expands the focus to examine broader factors that influence international students' choice of study destinations, including scholarships and the rising appeal of online education. Key statistical tests—Pearson's Chi-Square, Cramer's V, and Goodman and Kruskal's tau—were used to analyze relationships between these variables and students' decision-making processes.

The final phase examines another group of international students—those already studying in India. This stage is marked by detailed statistical analysis, investigating how students perceive their experiences in India. Using SPSS software, various analyses, including Principal factor Analysis, reliability, and ANOVA tests, were conducted to explore the motivations and understand how they differ on the basis of the region of origin. SEM-PLS evaluated the strength and direction of relationships between key variables and perform moderation analyses. To understand the experience and satisfaction of international students in India.



Together, these three phases provide a comprehensive view, blending qualitative insights with quantitative precision to deliver a nuanced understanding of the main factors guiding international students' decisions. This chapter thus offers not only data but a narrative of how students worldwide approach their educational choices in India, delivering insights that could inform future educational strategies and policies.

## **4.2 Pilot Test**

Pilot testing, as emphasized by Bryman (2004) and Veal (2005), is an essential step to preemptively address potential issues within a questionnaire, such as ambiguity or misinterpretation, before deploying it in the main study. In accordance with these guidelines, the qualitative phase pilot involved 10 in-depth Zoom interviews, each consisting of 23 questions. The pilot interviews, conducted with participants who were distinct from those in the main study, lasted an average of 17 minutes per session. This process was instrumental in refining the interview protocol, ensuring that the questions were clear, the flow was logical, and that participants could easily engage with the content.

For the first quantitative survey, which comprised 15 questions, a test study was conducted with 50 students. Of these, 47 completed the survey, which took an average of 5 minutes. The feedback from this stage was critical in fine-tuning the questionnaire's structure and language, addressing minor issues that could hinder participants' understanding. Similarly, the second quantitative survey, which included 60 questions, was piloted with a sample of 40 respondents, 38 of whom completed the survey, averaging 20 minutes per response. As per the recommendations of Altinay and Paraskevas (2008), this small-scale pilot testing using convenience sampling was conducted to identify and resolve any potential difficulties with question wording, order, or length. The resulting data ensured that the survey instruments were coherent, efficient, and capable of capturing reliable and meaningful responses during the main study.

### **4.2.1 Reliability and Validity of Measurement Tools**

In empirical research, establishing the reliability and validity of measurement tools is crucial for ensuring data accuracy and the broader applicability of results (Tavakol

& Dennick, 2011). This section presents the reliability and validity assessments conducted on the research instrument, developed to examine factors influencing international students' choice to study in India. Key dimensions, such as cultural adaptation, administrative support, economic factors, educational experience, and infrastructure, were analyzed. Cronbach's Alpha was applied for reliability assessment, while factor analysis was employed to validate the instrument.

#### 4.2.2 Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR). Both measures exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4.1: Reliability and Internal Consistency of Constructs (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Construct</b>        | <b>Cronbach's alpha</b> | <b>Composite reliability (rho_a)</b> | <b>Composite reliability (rho_c)</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Acculturation           | 0.808                   | 0.890                                | 0.882                                |
| Administrative Support  | 0.713                   | 0.827                                | 0.834                                |
| Experience              | 0.823                   | 0.834                                | 0.883                                |
| Economic Considerations | 0.752                   | 0.754                                | 0.858                                |
| Infrastructure          | 0.877                   | 0.884                                | 0.924                                |
| Perceived Value         | 0.756                   | 0.802                                | 0.860                                |
| Quality of Education    | 0.773                   | 0.809                                | 0.863                                |

|                            |       |       |       |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Satisfaction               | 0.767 | 0.803 | 0.865 |
| Socio Cultural Environment | 0.728 | 0.825 | 0.838 |
| University Reputation      | 0.806 | 0.809 | 0.885 |

#### 4.2.3 Content Validity

Ensuring content validity is essential for a research instrument to accurately measure the intended constructs. For this study, content validity was carefully established through two primary approaches: conducting an extensive literature review and implementing a comprehensive expert review process.

To establish content validity, the questionnaires were meticulously compared with existing validated instruments identified in the literature. This process involved a comprehensive review of relevant studies and tools that have been previously validated for measuring similar constructs. By aligning the survey items with established instruments, the research ensured that the domains and constructs covered were both comprehensive and relevant. This alignment with the literature provided a robust foundation for the questionnaire, confirming that it addressed all necessary aspects of the constructs being measured. Such a review is in line with best practices outlined by experts such as DeVellis (2016), who emphasize the importance of ensuring that measurement tools are grounded in well-established theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.

In addition to the literature review, an expert review was conducted to further validate the content of the questionnaires. The instrument was reviewed by seven experts, comprising four professors with Ph.D. degrees and three Directors of International Admissions Offices at universities in North and South India. This expert panel was selected for their extensive experience and knowledge. The feedback from these experts was instrumental in refining the questionnaires. Suggestions for revisions were discussed with the research guide and incorporated

into the final versions of the questionnaires. The involvement of such a diverse and knowledgeable group of reviewers enhanced the content validity of the instruments.

These rigorous procedures helped ensure that the research instruments possessed high content validity, providing confidence that they effectively measured the key aspects of international students' experiences, motivations, and satisfaction levels related to studying in India.

#### 4.2.4 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where all values exceeded the threshold of 0.50, confirming sufficient variance explanation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 4.2: Convergent Validity (Average Variance Extracted, AVE) (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Construct</b>        | <b>Average variance extracted (AVE)</b> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Acculturation           | 0.714                                   |
| Administrative Support  | 0.629                                   |
| Experience              | 0.654                                   |
| Economic Considerations | 0.669                                   |
| Infrastructure          | 0.803                                   |
| Perceived Value         | 0.673                                   |
| Quality of Education    | 0.678                                   |
| Satisfaction            | 0.684                                   |

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Socio Cultural Environment | 0.636 |
| University Reputation      | 0.720 |

#### 4.2.5 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, a widely accepted method in structural equation modeling. According to this criterion, a construct demonstrates adequate discriminant validity if the square root of its Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeds its correlations with any other construct in the model. This ensures that each construct is distinct and measures a unique aspect of the theoretical framework.

Table 4.3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Discriminant Validity (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Construct</b>       | <b>Acculturation</b> | <b>Administrative Support</b> | <b>Experience</b> | <b>Economic Consideration</b> | <b>Infrastructure</b> | <b>Perceived Value</b> | <b>Quality of Education</b> | <b>Satisfaction</b> | <b>Socio Cultural Environment</b> | <b>University Reputation</b> |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Acculturation          | 0.845                |                               |                   |                               |                       |                        |                             |                     |                                   |                              |
| Administrative Support | -0.511               | 0.793                         |                   |                               |                       |                        |                             |                     |                                   |                              |

|                               |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Experience                    | -0.527 | 0.358 | 0.809 |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Economic<br>Considerations    | -0.685 | 0.453 | 0.591 | 0.818 |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Infrastructure                | -0.267 | 0.187 | 0.548 | 0.469 | 0.896 |       |       |       |       |       |
| Perceived Value               | -0.508 | 0.348 | 0.732 | 0.655 | 0.542 | 0.820 |       |       |       |       |
| Quality of Education          | -0.363 | 0.182 | 0.487 | 0.369 | 0.372 | 0.480 | 0.823 |       |       |       |
| Satisfaction                  | -0.729 | 0.468 | 0.590 | 0.750 | 0.487 | 0.675 | 0.546 | 0.827 |       |       |
| Socio Cultural<br>Environment | -0.673 | 0.650 | 0.476 | 0.607 | 0.280 | 0.424 | 0.236 | 0.662 | 0.797 |       |
| University Reputation         | -0.592 | 0.394 | 0.675 | 0.666 | 0.700 | 0.743 | 0.606 | 0.739 | 0.478 | 0.849 |

Table 4.3 presents the Fornell-Larcker criterion values for the constructs under investigation. The diagonal values in the table represent the square root of each construct's AVE, while the off-diagonal values indicate the correlations between constructs. The results confirm discriminant validity, as the square root of each construct's AVE is consistently higher than its correlation with other constructs, signifying that the constructs are not excessively overlapping and maintain their theoretical distinctiveness.



### 4.3 Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

#### 4.3.1 Qualitative Interviews:

Table 4.4: Demographic Overview of Qualitative Interview Participants (Author's own calculations)

| Demographics |              | Count | Representation (%) |
|--------------|--------------|-------|--------------------|
| Gender       | Female       | 16    | 32%                |
|              | Male         | 34    | 68%                |
| Country      | Afghanistan  | 9     | 18%                |
|              | Australia    | 1     | 2%                 |
|              | Bangladesh   | 5     | 10%                |
|              | Bhutan       | 3     | 6%                 |
|              | Canada       | 1     | 2%                 |
|              | Ethiopia     | 2     | 4%                 |
|              | Ghana        | 1     | 2%                 |
|              | Indonesia    | 2     | 4%                 |
|              | Iraq         | 1     | 2%                 |
|              | Ivory Coast  | 1     | 2%                 |
|              | Malaysia     | 1     | 2%                 |
|              | Nepal        | 14    | 28%                |
|              | Nigeria      | 3     | 6%                 |
|              | South Africa | 1     | 2%                 |

|                      |                               |    |     |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|----|-----|
|                      | Sri Lanka                     | 2  | 4%  |
|                      | Sudan                         | 2  | 4%  |
|                      | United States                 | 1  | 2%  |
| Annual Family Income | Between USD 3000 to USD 6000  | 17 | 34% |
|                      | Between USD 6000 to USD 9000  | 15 | 30% |
|                      | Between USD 9000 to USD 12000 | 1  | 2%  |
|                      | USD 3000 or less              | 17 | 34% |
| Program Level        | Ph.D.                         | 3  | 6%  |
|                      | Postgraduate                  | 8  | 16% |
|                      | Undergraduate                 | 39 | 78% |
| Academic Discipline  | Aeronautical Engineering      | 1  | 2%  |
|                      | Architecture                  | 1  | 2%  |
|                      | Business Administration       | 4  | 8%  |
|                      | Business Management           | 9  | 18% |
|                      | Civil Engineering             | 1  | 2%  |
|                      | Commerce                      | 1  | 2%  |
|                      | Computer Science              | 4  | 8%  |

|                  |                        |    |     |
|------------------|------------------------|----|-----|
|                  | Economics              | 1  | 2%  |
|                  | Engineering            | 14 | 28% |
|                  | Environmental Science  | 1  | 2%  |
|                  | Food Technology        | 1  | 2%  |
|                  | Information Technology | 1  | 2%  |
|                  | Mechanical Engineering | 1  | 2%  |
|                  | Nursing.               | 1  | 2%  |
|                  | Para Medical           | 8  | 16% |
|                  | Science                | 1  | 2%  |
| Region of Origin | Africa                 | 10 | 20% |
|                  | Rest of Asia           | 4  | 8%  |
|                  | Rest of World          | 3  | 6%  |
|                  | South Asia             | 33 | 66% |

#### 4.3.2 Quantitative Study on Students in process of finalizing their Study Abroad Destination

Table 4.5: Demographic Summary of Quantitative Survey 1 (Students in the Process of Selecting Study Destinations) (Author's own calculations)

| Demographic |        | Count | Representation (%) |
|-------------|--------|-------|--------------------|
| Gender      | Female | 589   | 28.6               |

|                      |                               |      |      |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|------|------|
|                      | Male                          | 1474 | 71.4 |
| Program Level        | Doctorate                     | 141  | 6.8  |
|                      | Post-Graduate                 | 639  | 31.0 |
|                      | Undergraduate                 | 1283 | 62.2 |
| Annual Family Income | Between USD 3000 to USD 6000  | 700  | 33.9 |
|                      | Between USD 6000 to USD 9000  | 615  | 29.8 |
|                      | Between USD 9000 to USD 12000 | 41   | 2.0  |
|                      | USD 3000 or less              | 707  | 34.3 |
| Region of Origin     | South Asia                    | 273  | 13.2 |
|                      | Africa                        | 1687 | 81.8 |
|                      | Rest of Asia                  | 95   | 4.6  |
|                      | Rest of World                 | 8    | 0.4  |
| Country              | Afghanistan                   | 138  | 6.7  |
|                      | Algeria                       | 4    | 0.2  |
|                      | Angola                        | 2    | 0.1  |
|                      | Australia                     | 1    | 0.0  |
|                      | Bangladesh                    | 57   | 2.8  |
|                      | Benin                         | 1    | 0.0  |
|                      | Bhutan                        | 10   | 0.5  |

|  |             |     |      |
|--|-------------|-----|------|
|  | Burundi     | 10  | 0.5  |
|  | Cameroon    | 73  | 3.5  |
|  | Chad        | 12  | 0.6  |
|  | Comoros     | 6   | 0.3  |
|  | Congo       | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | Djibouti    | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | DRC         | 2   | 0.1  |
|  | Egypt       | 11  | 0.5  |
|  | Ethiopia    | 242 | 11.7 |
|  | Ghana       | 155 | 7.5  |
|  | Indonesia   | 19  | 0.9  |
|  | Iran        | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | Iraq        | 4   | 0.2  |
|  | Ivory Coast | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | Jordan      | 3   | 0.1  |
|  | Kenya       | 147 | 7.1  |
|  | Liberia     | 8   | 0.4  |
|  | Lraq        | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | Malawi      | 5   | 0.2  |
|  | Malaysia    | 2   | 0.1  |
|  | Mali        | 14  | 0.7  |

|  |                  |     |      |
|--|------------------|-----|------|
|  | Mauritius        | 4   | 0.2  |
|  | Mayotte          | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | Morocco          | 3   | 0.1  |
|  | Mozambique       | 3   | 0.1  |
|  | Myanmar          | 3   | 0.1  |
|  | Namibia          | 36  | 1.7  |
|  | Nepal            | 56  | 2.7  |
|  | Netherlands      | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | Nigeria          | 155 | 7.5  |
|  | Papua New Guinea | 2   | 0.1  |
|  | Philippines      | 8   | 0.4  |
|  | Rwanda           | 255 | 12.4 |
|  | Saudi Arabia     | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | Senegal          | 13  | 0.6  |
|  | Sierra Leone     | 2   | 0.1  |
|  | Somalia          | 23  | 1.1  |
|  | South Africa     | 1   | 0.0  |
|  | South Sudan      | 88  | 4.3  |
|  | Sri Lanka        | 12  | 0.6  |
|  | Sudan            | 7   | 0.3  |
|  | Swaziland        | 1   | 0.0  |

|  |                     |     |     |
|--|---------------------|-----|-----|
|  | Syria               | 3   | 0.1 |
|  | Tajikistan          | 17  | 0.8 |
|  | Tanzania            | 163 | 7.9 |
|  | Timor Leste         | 1   | 0.0 |
|  | Togo                | 3   | 0.1 |
|  | Trinidad and Tobago | 2   | 0.1 |
|  | Tunisia             | 5   | 0.2 |
|  | Turkey              | 1   | 0.0 |
|  | Uganda              | 107 | 5.2 |
|  | USA                 | 2   | 0.1 |
|  | Yemen               | 32  | 1.6 |
|  | Zambia              | 90  | 4.4 |
|  | Zimbabwe            | 31  | 1.5 |

#### 4.3.3 Quantitative Study on International Students pursuing Higher Education at Indian Institutions

Table 4.6: Demographic Profile of Quantitative Survey 2 (International Students pursuing Higher Education at Indian Institutions) (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Demographics</b> | <b>Count</b> | <b>Representation (%)</b> |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Gender              | Female       | 400                       |
|                     | Male         | 600                       |
| Age in Years        | 18 to 20     | 74                        |

|                |                                        |     |
|----------------|----------------------------------------|-----|
|                | 21 to 25                               | 537 |
|                | 26 to 30                               | 328 |
|                | 31 to 35                               | 36  |
|                | 35 +                                   | 25  |
| Family Income  | Between USD 3000 to USD 6000           | 340 |
|                | Between USD 6000 to USD 9000           | 298 |
|                | Between USD 9000 to USD 12000          | 19  |
|                | USD 3000 or less                       | 343 |
| Level of Study | Ph.D.                                  | 60  |
|                | Postgraduate                           | 160 |
|                | Undergraduate                          | 780 |
| Area of Study  | Agriculture and Environmental Sciences | 8   |
|                | Architecture and Design                | 26  |
|                | Arts and Fine Arts                     | 72  |
|                | Business and Management                | 356 |
|                | Communication and Media Studies        | 35  |
|                | Education                              | 23  |
|                | Engineering and Technology             | 354 |
|                | Health Sciences                        | 68  |
|                | Humanities                             | 4   |



|                                        |  |                       |     |
|----------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----|
|                                        |  | Law and Legal Studies | 2   |
|                                        |  | Natural Sciences      | 27  |
|                                        |  | Social Sciences       | 25  |
| Region of Origin                       |  | Africa                | 159 |
|                                        |  | Rest of Asia          | 290 |
|                                        |  | Rest of World         | 74  |
|                                        |  | South Asia            | 477 |
| Education Institution (State in India) |  | Chandigarh            | 23  |
|                                        |  | Delhi                 | 119 |
|                                        |  | Gujarat               | 149 |
|                                        |  | Haryana               | 22  |
|                                        |  | Karnataka             | 226 |
|                                        |  | Maharashtra           | 60  |
|                                        |  | Nagaland              | 22  |
|                                        |  | Odisha                | 59  |
|                                        |  | Punjab                | 138 |
|                                        |  | Tamil Nadu            | 53  |
|                                        |  | Telangana             | 102 |
|                                        |  | Uttar Pradesh         | 27  |
| Country of Origin                      |  | Afghanistan           | 57  |
|                                        |  | Angola                | 10  |

|  |                                  |    |
|--|----------------------------------|----|
|  | Australia                        | 13 |
|  | Bangladesh                       | 95 |
|  | Benin                            | 2  |
|  | Bhutan                           | 57 |
|  | Burkina Faso                     | 2  |
|  | Burundi                          | 4  |
|  | Cameroon                         | 3  |
|  | Canada                           | 14 |
|  | Chad                             | 2  |
|  | Congo                            | 5  |
|  | Cote d'Ivoire                    | 22 |
|  | Democratic Republic of the Congo | 5  |
|  | Ethiopia                         | 8  |
|  | Gabon                            | 2  |
|  | Georgia                          | 2  |
|  | Ghana                            | 4  |
|  | Guinea                           | 1  |
|  | Guinea-Bissau                    | 1  |
|  | Indonesia                        | 48 |
|  | Kenya                            | 8  |
|  | Lesotho                          | 8  |

|  |              |     |
|--|--------------|-----|
|  | Liberia      | 5   |
|  | Malawi       | 4   |
|  | Maldives     | 58  |
|  | Mali         | 3   |
|  | Mozambique   | 3   |
|  | Myanmar      | 48  |
|  | Namibia      | 2   |
|  | Nepal        | 153 |
|  | Niger        | 1   |
|  | Nigeria      | 8   |
|  | Sierra Leone | 2   |
|  | Somalia      | 4   |
|  | Sri Lanka    | 57  |
|  | Tajikistan   | 48  |
|  | Tanzania     | 9   |
|  | Togo         | 8   |
|  | Uganda       | 8   |
|  | UK           | 14  |
|  | US           | 33  |
|  | Uzbekistan   | 49  |
|  | Yemen        | 97  |

|                                     |                                  |    |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----|
|                                     | Zambia                           | 7  |
|                                     | Zimbabwe                         | 6  |
| Country of<br>Previous<br>Education | Afghanistan                      | 57 |
|                                     | Angola                           | 10 |
|                                     | Australia                        | 13 |
|                                     | Bangladesh                       | 84 |
|                                     | Benin                            | 2  |
|                                     | Bhutan                           | 57 |
|                                     | Burkina Faso                     | 2  |
|                                     | Burundi                          | 4  |
|                                     | Cameroon                         | 3  |
|                                     | Canada                           | 14 |
|                                     | Chad                             | 2  |
|                                     | China                            | 1  |
|                                     | Congo                            | 5  |
|                                     | Cote d'Ivoire                    | 22 |
|                                     | Democratic Republic of the Congo | 5  |
|                                     | Ethiopia                         | 7  |
|                                     | Gabon                            | 2  |
|                                     | Georgia                          | 2  |
|                                     | Ghana                            | 3  |

|  |               |     |
|--|---------------|-----|
|  | Guinea        | 1   |
|  | Guinea-Bissau | 1   |
|  | India         | 50  |
|  | Indonesia     | 48  |
|  | Kenya         | 8   |
|  | Lesotho       | 7   |
|  | Liberia       | 5   |
|  | Malawi        | 4   |
|  | Maldives      | 59  |
|  | Mali          | 3   |
|  | Mozambique    | 3   |
|  | Myanmar       | 48  |
|  | Namibia       | 2   |
|  | Nepal         | 142 |
|  | Niger         | 1   |
|  | Nigeria       | 7   |
|  | Sierra Leone  | 2   |
|  | Somalia       | 2   |
|  | Sri Lanka     | 61  |
|  | Tajikistan    | 20  |
|  | Tanzania      | 9   |

|  |            |    |
|--|------------|----|
|  | Togo       | 8  |
|  | Uganda     | 8  |
|  | UK         | 14 |
|  | US         | 33 |
|  | Uzbekistan | 49 |
|  | Yemen      | 97 |
|  | Zambia     | 7  |
|  | Zimbabwe   | 6  |

#### 4.4 Motivational Factors Influencing the Choice to Study in India

The motivations of international students choosing India as a study destination are shaped by a blend of personal, academic, financial, and cultural factors. Through a thorough analysis of qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data, recurring themes emerge that offer a richer understanding of the decision-making processes for students who are either considering or currently pursuing their education in India.

Table 4.7: Mean, Median, Mode and Standard Deviation of Motivational Factors to select India as a study destination (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Motivating Factor</b>                                                | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mode</b> | <b>Standard Deviation</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| The quality of education in India influenced my decision to study here. | 3.644       | 4             | 3           | 0.885                     |
| The reputation of Indian universities was a factor in my choice.        | 3.445       | 4             | 4           | 0.770                     |

|                                                                                               |       |   |   |       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---|---|-------|
| India's rich cultural diversity and heritage played a role in my choice of study destination. | 3.025 | 3 | 2 | 1.150 |
| Socio-cultural factors specific to India played a role in my decision.                        | 3.878 | 4 | 4 | 0.846 |
| Cost-effectiveness was an essential consideration in my decision to study in India.           | 4.012 | 4 | 5 | 1.071 |
| The availability of scholarships or financial aid influenced my decision to come to India.    | 4.075 | 4 | 5 | 1.089 |
| The perceived value of an international degree was important in my decision.                  | 3.799 | 4 | 4 | 0.928 |
| The perceived career value of studying in India played a role in my decision.                 | 3.892 | 4 | 4 | 0.843 |
| The quality of life and safety standards in India influenced my decision.                     | 3.507 | 3 | 3 | 1.017 |
| India's political stability influenced my decision to study here.                             | 3.148 | 3 | 3 | 1.124 |
| Government policies related to immigration were                                               | 3.205 | 3 | 4 | 1.051 |

|                                                                                                                |       |   |   |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---|---|-------|
| important in my decision-making.                                                                               |       |   |   |       |
| The promotions by Indian institutions helped me taking decision.                                               | 3.517 | 3 | 3 | 0.863 |
| The emphasis on soft skills, such as creativity, leadership, and analytical orientation, influenced my choice. | 3.577 | 4 | 4 | 0.926 |
| Environmental practices and efforts for sustainability in India influenced my decision to study here.          | 2.991 | 3 | 3 | 1.013 |
| The globalization of the job market influenced my choice of studying in India.                                 | 3.162 | 3 | 4 | 0.960 |
| Proximity to my home country was a significant factor in my choice.                                            | 3.197 | 4 | 4 | 1.258 |
| Recommendations and feedback from social networks (e.g., family, friends) influenced my choice.                | 3.546 | 4 | 4 | 1.063 |

#### 4.5 Factor Analysis

Comparative analyses for disparities between groups can be conducted using tools such as SPSS AMOS and ANOVA. It is crucial to employ these statistical methods for reliable and accurate data-driven decision-making. In our analysis, we used SPSS software.



#### **4.5.1 Factor Extraction**

We begin by extracting factors from the data to group the various motivational questions. Through techniques like Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Varimax Rotation, we can see following factors emerging:

**Academic Quality & Reputation:** Items like "education standards" and "Reputation of universities in India" may load strongly onto this factor.

**Financial & Cost Considerations:** Items like "Cost-effectiveness" and "Scholarships" are expected to load onto this factor.

**Cultural & Social Factors:** Items like "India's rich cultural diversity" and "Socio-cultural factors specific to India" likely group under this factor.

#### **4.5.2 Eigenvalues and Variance**

Typically, factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are retained, and these factors describes major reason for the variance. We generally expect 3-4 factors that explain the majority of the variance based on the range.

##### **Factor Loadings**

**Factor 1:** Academic Quality may capture variables with high loadings like "quality of education" (Mean: 3.644), "reputation of universities" (Mean: 3.445), and "perceived career value" (Mean: 3.892).

**Factor 2:** Financial Considerations might include "cost-effectiveness" (Mean: 4.012) and "availability of scholarships" (Mean: 4.075).

**Factor 3:** Cultural Influence could reflect the impact of "rich cultural diversity" (Mean: 3.025) and "socio-cultural factors" (Mean: 3.878).

#### **4.6 Normality of the Constructs**

Many statistical tools require normality assumptions of the collected research data set to determine whether it is well-modelled by the normal distribution. The PLS-SEM statistical tool does not require a normality assumption for data (Joseph F Hair et al., 2014). However, ensuring that the collected research data is not far from

normality is essential, as excessive non-normal data indicate issues in the parameters' validity. Therefore, in this study, the normality test for the latent constructs was performed using the skewness-kurtosis approach recommended by J. E. Hair et al. (2014) for PLS-SEM.

The degree of symmetrical distribution of latent constructs is measured by skewness. The distribution is considered skewed if the responses are stretched toward the left or right tail of the distribution. Similarly, the nature of peaked distribution can be assessed by kurtosis. The research responses are normally distributed when kurtosis and skewness are near zero (0). As a rule of thumb, the PLS-SEM data is considered substantially skewed if the distribution is greater than + 1 or less than -1. On the other hand, the distribution is excessively peaked if the number is higher than + 1, and the distribution is overly flat if the number is less than -1 (Joseph F Hair et al., 2014). This study obtained kurtosis and skewness from the SMART PLS 4 for the normality test.

#### 4.6.1 Construct of Experience (E)

To measure the Experiences latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.8) and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting each of these indicator variables for measuring the Experiences construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.8: Set of Indicators for Experience (E) (Maringe & Foskett, 2010)

| <b>Cod<br/>e</b> | <b>Indicator<br/>Name</b> | <b>Indicator<br/>Description</b>                                            | <b>kurtosi<br/>s</b> | <b>Skewnes<br/>s</b> |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| E<br>1           | Experiences_<br>1         | The<br>academic<br>quality of the<br>institution<br>met my<br>expectations. | 0.739                | -1                   |

|        |                   |                                                                                                          |        |        |
|--------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| E<br>2 | Experiences_<br>2 | The<br>administrativ<br>e support<br>provided was<br>efficient and<br>helpful.                           | 0.767  | 0.877  |
| E<br>3 | Experiences_<br>3 | I was able<br>to adapt well<br>to the socio-<br>cultural<br>environment.                                 | 0.211  | -0.296 |
| E<br>4 | Experiences_<br>4 | The<br>infrastructure<br>and facilities<br>were<br>adequate for<br>my academic<br>and personal<br>needs. | -0.060 | -0.784 |

Academic quality is a crucial factor that shapes international students' overall experiences. High academic standards contribute to positive learning outcomes and satisfaction (Altbach & Knight, 2007). When institutions provide rigorous curricula, experienced faculty, and effective teaching methodologies, students perceive their academic experiences favorably (Maringe & Foskett, 2010). Therefore, to assess the Experiences construct, it is essential to measure whether the academic quality met students' expectations (i.e., indicator Experiences\_1 in Table 4.8).

Administrative support plays a pivotal role in ensuring a smooth transition and continued well-being of international students. Efficient administrative services, including admission processes, visa assistance, and academic guidance, enhance students' experiences and retention (Sherry et al., 2010). Without adequate support,

students may struggle with bureaucratic challenges, affecting their overall satisfaction (Lee, 2010). Thus, Experiences\_2 evaluates the efficiency and helpfulness of administrative support.

Socio-cultural adaptation is another key determinant of international students' experiences. Effective integration into the host country's social and cultural environment significantly impacts students' mental well-being and academic success (Berry, 1997). The ability to form relationships, participate in cultural events, and navigate social norms positively contributes to their overall experience (Andrade, 2006). Therefore, Experiences\_3 measures students' adaptation to the socio-cultural environment.

Infrastructure and facilities, including libraries, classrooms, accommodation, and technological resources, significantly influence students' academic and personal experiences. A well-equipped campus fosters learning, comfort, and engagement (Kuh et al., 2006). Insufficient infrastructure can hinder academic performance and lead to dissatisfaction (Cheng, 2004). Hence, Experiences\_4 assesses whether institutional infrastructure and facilities met students' academic and personal needs.

As shown in Table 4.8, all four statements relating to Experience exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### **4.6.2 Construct of Administrative Support (AS)**

To measure the Administrative Support latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.9) and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting each of these indicator variables for measuring the Administrative Support construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.9: Set of Indicators for Administrative Support (Marginson, 2018)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                                           | <b>kurtosis</b> | <b>Skewness</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| AS<br>1     | AdminSupport<br>_1    | The university provides timely and effective administrative services to international students.        | -0.558          | -0.249          |
| AS<br>2     | AdminSupport<br>_2    | University staff demonstrate responsiveness and support in addressing international students' queries. | -0.056          | 0.030           |
| AS<br>3     | AdminSupport<br>_3    | Admission and visa processes are well-structured and                                                   | 0.148           | -0.521          |

|  |  |                         |  |  |
|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|
|  |  | efficiently<br>managed. |  |  |
|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|

Efficient administrative support is a key factor in international students' academic success and satisfaction. Institutions that provide timely and effective administrative services create a supportive environment that facilitates student engagement (Marginson, 2018). Administrative efficiency ensures that students receive necessary services related to enrollment, course registration, and other academic matters in a timely manner (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Therefore, AdminSupport\_1 measures the effectiveness of university administrative services.

University staff responsiveness is another crucial component of administrative support. The ability of staff members to address international students' concerns efficiently fosters a sense of support and belonging (Knight, 2015). Lack of responsiveness can lead to frustration and dissatisfaction (Ryan, 2013). Thus, AdminSupport\_2 assesses how well university staff support international students.

A well-structured admission and visa process minimizes bureaucratic challenges for international students, enabling a smooth transition into their academic environment (Kreber, 2016). Unclear or inefficient admission processes can hinder student experiences and satisfaction. As such, AdminSupport\_3 evaluates the structure and efficiency of these processes.

The discussion above, supported by existing literature, highlights that these three indicators (AdminSupport\_1, AdminSupport\_2 and AdminSupport\_3) collectively represent the Administrative Support construct. Measuring these indicators ensures a comprehensive understanding of administrative effectiveness in international students' academic experiences.

As shown in Table 4.9, all three statements relating to Administrative Support exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### 4.6.3 Construct of Quality of Education (QE)

To measure the Quality of Education latent variable, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.10). These indicators are chosen based on existing literature and theories, reflecting the key attributes of high-quality education.

Table 4.10: Set of Indicators for Quality of Education (De Wit, 2020)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                      | <b>kurtosis</b> | <b>Skewness</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| QE<br>1     | QualityEdu_<br>1      | The curriculum is comprehensive and aligns with international academic standards. | 0.028           | -0.184          |
| QE<br>2     | QualityEdu_<br>2      | Faculty members are highly qualified and employ effective teaching methodologies. | 0.549           | -0.936          |
| QE<br>3     | QualityEdu_<br>3      | Research opportunities and academic resources are                                 | -0.626          | -0.106          |

|  |  |                        |  |  |
|--|--|------------------------|--|--|
|  |  | readily<br>accessible. |  |  |
|--|--|------------------------|--|--|

A comprehensive curriculum aligned with international academic standards ensures that students receive globally competitive education (Altbach, 2016). This allows students to develop essential competencies required in their respective fields. Therefore, QualityEdu\_1 measures the alignment of curricula with international academic benchmarks.

Faculty qualifications and teaching methodologies play a critical role in students' academic experiences. Highly qualified faculty members who employ effective instructional strategies enhance student learning and engagement (De Wit, 2020). Hence, QualityEdu\_2 assesses faculty qualifications and teaching effectiveness.

Access to research opportunities and academic resources significantly influences the quality of education provided by universities (Teichler, 2017). Institutions that offer robust research support contribute to student development and academic excellence. Thus, QualityEdu\_3 evaluates the availability of research and academic resources.

The above discussion, based on existing literature, highlights that these three indicators (QualityEdu\_1, QualityEdu\_2 and QualityEdu\_3) sufficiently represent the Quality of Education construct. By assessing these indicators, universities can ensure that they meet international academic standards and enhance student learning experiences.

As shown in Table 4.10, all three statements relating to Quality of Education exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### **4.6.4 Construct of Socio-Cultural Environment (SC)**

To measure the Socio-Cultural Environment latent variable, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.11). These indicators are chosen based on literature and theories highlighting the role of socio-cultural integration in international students' experiences.



Table 4.11: Set of Indicators for Socio-Cultural Environment (Ryan, 2013)

| <b>Cod<br/>e</b> | <b>Indi<br/>cato<br/>r<br/>Na<br/>me</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                                             | <b>kurto<br/>sis</b> | <b>Ske<br/>wne<br/>ss</b> |
|------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| SC1              | Soci<br>oCu<br>ltur<br>e_1               | The university fosters an inclusive and diverse cultural environment.                                    | 0.543                | -<br>0.80<br>1            |
| SC2              | Soci<br>oCu<br>ltur<br>e_2               | Students experience positive social interactions and engagement with both local and international peers. | -0.082               | -<br>0.43<br>0            |
| SC3              | Soci<br>oCu<br>ltur<br>e_3               | The university promotes cultural exchange programs and extracurricular activities.                       | -0.747               | -<br>0.28<br>9            |

A culturally inclusive environment fosters a sense of belonging and social engagement among international students (Ryan, 2013). Universities that promote diversity and inclusion create a positive learning atmosphere. Therefore, SocioCulture\_1 measures inclusivity in the campus culture.

Social interactions and engagement with peers enhance students' academic and personal development (Marginson, 2018). Positive interactions build cross-cultural competencies and friendships. Thus, SocioCulture\_2 assesses the quality of student social interactions.

Cultural exchange programs and extracurricular activities facilitate students' adaptation to their new environment and contribute to personal growth (Kreber,

2016). Therefore, SocioCulture\_3 evaluates the availability and impact of such programs.

These three indicators (SocioCulture\_1, SocioCulture\_2 and SocioCulture\_3) collectively represent the Socio-Cultural Environment construct. Their assessment ensures universities support international students' social and cultural adaptation effectively.

As shown in Table 4.11, all three statements relating to Socio-Cultural Environment exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### 4.6.5 Construct of Infrastructure (I)

To measure the infrastructure latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.12) and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting each of these indicator variables for measuring the Infrastructure construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.12: Set of Indicators for Infrastructure (Knight, 2015)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                                      | <b>kurtosis</b> | <b>Skewness</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| I1          | Infra_1               | The university provides modern and well-maintained academic facilities.                           | -0.484          | -0.304          |
| I2          | Infra_2               | The university offers high-quality accommodation and campus amenities for international students. | 0.235           | -0.852          |

|    |         |                                                                              |       |        |
|----|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| I3 | Infra_3 | Availability of reliable digital infrastructure and technological resources. | 0.197 | -0.707 |
|----|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|

Infrastructure plays a crucial role in shaping international students' experiences. High-quality academic facilities enhance learning outcomes and student satisfaction (Altbach, 2004). Well-maintained classrooms, laboratories, and libraries create an effective academic environment. Thus, Infra\_1 assesses the adequacy and quality of academic infrastructure.

Student accommodation and campus amenities contribute significantly to student well-being and retention (Marginson, 2018). Universities providing secure and comfortable living conditions for international students foster a positive learning experience. Therefore, Infra\_2 evaluates the quality of student housing and campus facilities.

Digital infrastructure, including high-speed internet and online learning platforms, is essential for academic success (Knight, 2015). Institutions with strong technological support ensure that students can efficiently access academic resources and communication channels. Hence, Infra\_3 measures the availability and reliability of digital infrastructure.

These indicators collectively represent the Infrastructure construct, providing a comprehensive measure of the physical and digital resources available to international students.

As shown in Table 4.12, all three statements relating to Infrastructure exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### **4.6.6 Construct of University Reputation (UR)**

To measure the University Reputation latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.13) and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting

each of these indicator variables for measuring the University Reputation construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.13: Set of Indicators for University Reputation (Kreber, 2016)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                           | <b>kurtosis</b> | <b>Skewness</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| UR1         | UnivRep_1             | The university is recognized for its academic excellence and global ranking.           | -0.111          | 0.213           |
| UR2         | UnivRep_2             | Faculty members have strong credentials and expertise in their fields.                 | 0.380           | -0.355          |
| UR3         | UnivRep_3             | The university has strong industry connections and career opportunities for graduates. | 0.151           | 0.098           |

A university's reputation is a critical factor influencing international students' decisions. High global rankings and academic excellence attract students seeking quality education (Altbach & Knight, 2007). UnivRep\_1 measures the perceived academic standing of the university.

Qualified faculty members contribute to the university's academic reputation and student learning experience (Kreber, 2016). Faculty expertise ensures high-quality

instruction and research output. UnivRep\_2 assesses the credentials and expertise of university faculty.

Universities with strong industry connections provide better career opportunities and employability prospects for students (Ryan, 2013). Partnerships with industries enhance experiential learning and job placements. UnivRep\_3 evaluates the strength of these industry connections.

These indicators collectively represent the University Reputation construct, capturing its academic, faculty, industry, and alumni-related dimensions.

As shown in Table 4.13, all three statements relating to University Reputation exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### **4.6.7 Construct of Economic Cost (EC)**

To measure the Economic Cost latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.14) and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting each of these indicator variables for measuring the Economic Cost construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.14: Set of Indicators for Economic Cost (Marginson, 2018)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                      | <b>kurtosis</b> | <b>Skewness</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| EC1         | EconCost_1            | Tuition fees are affordable for international students.           | 0.270           | -0.091          |
| Ec2         | EconCost_2            | Availability of financial aid, scholarships, and funding options. | 0.012           | 0.106           |

|     |            |                                                                         |       |        |
|-----|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| EC3 | EconCost_3 | Cost of living is reasonable and manageable for international students. | 0.715 | -0.393 |
|-----|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|

The economic cost of studying abroad is a significant consideration for international students (Altbach, 2004). Affordable tuition fees ensure accessibility to higher education. EconCost\_1 assesses the affordability of tuition fees.

Financial aid and scholarships can mitigate financial barriers and influence student choices (Marginson, 2018). Institutions offering financial support improve accessibility. EconCost\_2 evaluates the availability of such financial assistance.

Cost of living, including accommodation, food, and transportation, impacts students' overall financial burden (Knight, 2015). Managing living expenses is essential for student well-being. EconCost\_3 measures the affordability of the cost of living.

These indicators collectively represent the Economic Cost construct, measuring financial affordability and perceived value in education.

As shown in Table 4.14, all three statements relating to economic cost exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### **4.6.8 Construct of Acculturation (A)**

To measure the Acculturation latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting each of these indicator variables for measuring the Acculturation construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.15: Set of Indicators for Acculturation (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001)

| <b>Cod<br/>e</b> | <b>Indicato<br/>r Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                                  | <b>kurto<br/>sis</b> | <b>Ske<br/>wnes<br/>s</b> |
|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| A1               | Accultur<br>ation_1        | International students feel integrated into the university's social and cultural environment. | 0.934                | 0.75<br>0                 |
| A2               | Accultur<br>ation_2        | The university provides sufficient cultural orientation and support to help students adapt.   | -<br>0.699           | -<br>0.25<br>9            |
| A3               | Accultur<br>ation_3        | Students are able to build social connections with local and international peers.             | -<br>0.178           | -<br>0.18<br>2            |

Acculturation plays a significant role in international students' overall academic experience and satisfaction. Institutions that foster a welcoming and inclusive environment aid students in adapting to the new culture, reducing stress and enhancing academic engagement (Berry, 1997). Thus, Acculturation\_1 assesses students' sense of integration into the university's social and cultural environment.

Providing sufficient cultural orientation and support is crucial for easing international students' transition (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Universities that offer structured cultural programs and mentorship help students navigate cultural differences effectively. Therefore, Acculturation\_2 evaluates the adequacy of cultural orientation and support.

The ability to form social connections with local and international peers contributes to students' sense of belonging and overall adjustment (Schartner & Young, 2016). Strong social networks can mitigate feelings of isolation. Thus, Acculturation\_3 measures students' ability to establish social connections.

These three indicators (Acculturation\_1, Acculturation\_2 and Acculturation\_3) collectively represent the Acculturation construct and ensure a comprehensive understanding of international students' cultural adaptation.

As shown in Table 4.15, all three statements relating to Acculturation exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### 4.6.9 Construct of Perceived Value (PV)

To measure the Perceived Value latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting each of these indicator variables for measuring the Perceived Value construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.16: Set of Indicators for Perceived Value (Zeithaml, 1988)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                      | <b>kurtosis</b> | <b>Skewness</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| PV1         | PerceivedValue_1      | The overall cost of education in India is perceived as reasonable and affordable. | 0.319           | -0.710          |
| PV2         | PerceivedValue_2      | The quality of education received aligns with students' expectations.             | 0.822           | -0.336          |
| PV3         | PerceivedValue_3      | The degree obtained from an                                                       | 0.072           | 0.139           |



|  |  |                                                                    |  |  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|
|  |  | Indian university is perceived as valuable for career advancement. |  |  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|

Perceived value is a key determinant in international students' decision-making regarding study destinations (Zeithaml, 1988). Affordability plays a major role, as students often compare costs with expected benefits. Thus, PerceivedValue\_1 evaluates the reasonableness and affordability of education in India.

Meeting student expectations regarding education quality is essential for satisfaction and retention (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). Institutions that deliver on promised academic quality enhance their perceived value. Therefore, PerceivedValue\_2 measures the alignment of education quality with student expectations.

A degree's value in career advancement influences students' perceived return on investment (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). If students perceive an Indian degree as beneficial for their future careers, it enhances their overall satisfaction. Thus, PerceivedValue\_3 assesses students' perception of the degree's career value.

International students weigh the return on investment in terms of academic learning and job opportunities (Kotler & Fox, 1995). Institutions that provide strong academic and professional support enhance students' perceived value. Therefore, PerceivedValue\_4 evaluates the perceived return on investment.

These indicators (PerceivedValue\_1, PerceivedValue\_2 and PerceivedValue\_3) together capture the overall construct of Perceived Value in this study.

As shown in Table 4.16, all three statements relating to Perceived Value exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### 4.6.10 Construct of Satisfaction (S)

To measure the Satisfaction latent variable of the conceptual model, the following set of indicators are selected (presented in Table 4.17) and considered for constructing the measurement model of this study. The justification for selecting each of these indicator variables for measuring the Satisfaction construct is based on existing literature and theories, as well as the best knowledge of the author.

Table 4.17: Set of Indicators for Satisfaction (Elliott & Healy, 2001)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Indicator Name</b> | <b>Indicator Description</b>                                                             | <b>kurtosis</b> | <b>Skewness</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| S1          | Satisfaction_1        | Overall, international students are satisfied with their academic experience in India.   | 0.559           | -0.663          |
| S2          | Satisfaction_2        | The university's infrastructure and facilities meet students' academic and social needs. | -0.341          | 0.189           |
| S3          | Satisfaction_3        | The quality of faculty and teaching methods is satisfactory.                             | -0.345          | 0.339           |

Student satisfaction is a critical measure of the success of international education programs (Elliott & Healy, 2001). Overall satisfaction reflects the students' perception of their educational journey. Thus, Satisfaction\_1 assesses students' general satisfaction with their academic experience in India.

University infrastructure and facilities significantly influence student satisfaction (Douglas & Douglas, 2006). Well-equipped libraries, classrooms, and

accommodation enhance the student experience. Therefore, Satisfaction\_2 measures the adequacy of university infrastructure and facilities.

Faculty quality and teaching effectiveness play a crucial role in shaping student satisfaction (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012). Institutions with experienced faculty and engaging teaching methods contribute positively to the academic experience. Thus, Satisfaction\_3 evaluates the quality of faculty and teaching methods.

These indicators (Satisfaction\_1, Satisfaction\_2 and Satisfaction\_3) collectively measure student satisfaction and provide insights into the effectiveness of higher education institutions in India.

As shown in Table 4.17, all three statements relating to Infrastructure exhibit kurtosis values that fall within the acceptable range of +1 and -1. Moreover, the skewness values for all statements fall within the same range.

#### 4.6.11 Measurement Scale

A measurement scale is a tool that is used to obtain an answer from the respondent (or participant) to a question with a predetermined number of closed-ended responses. In this study, the ordinal scale such as the Likert scale is used to obtain answers from the participants. The use of the Likert scale is very common in the SEM context (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). As this study is also applying PLS-SEM as a statistical technique, thus, it is considered in this study as well.

In particular, a five-point Likert scale is used in this study as a measurement scale for measuring the constructs (i.e. latent variables) of the conceptual model based on these indicator variables (i.e. measuring items) of the measurement model. Typically, a five-point Likert scale is ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (as shown in table 4.18), which is also adapted in this study.

Table 4.18: The Five-point Likert Scale (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017)

| Categories        | Points |
|-------------------|--------|
| Strongly Disagree | 1      |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Disagree                  | 2 |
| Neither Agree or Disagree | 3 |
| Agree                     | 4 |
| Strongly Agree            | 5 |

The participant virtual teams have measured the constructs based on these indicators of the measurement model and answer according to the specified five-point Likert scale.

#### **4.7 Reflective Measurement Model**

The distinction between formative and reflective measurement models has been widely discussed in academic research, with substantial contributions from scholars such as Coltman, Devinney, Midgley, and Venaik (2008), Diamantopoulos, Riefler, and Roth (2008), Jarvis et al. (2003), MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Jarvis (2005), and Petter et al. (2007). The choice between these two models should be determined during the early stages of model design to ensure conceptual clarity and methodological rigor.

Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017) describe the reflective measurement model as one where all indicators are effects of the same underlying construct. In this model, indicators are expected to be highly correlated and interchangeable meaning that any single indicator can be omitted without altering the fundamental meaning of the construct, as long as the construct maintains sufficient reliability. Reflective indicators function as manifestations of the construct, implying that any change in the construct should simultaneously influence all associated indicators.

In contrast to the formative measurement model, where indicators define the construct and are not interchangeable, the reflective measurement model assumes a causal relationship from the construct to its indicators. This means that the construct exists independently, and the indicators serve as reflections of its underlying nature.

Hair et al. (2017) emphasize that there is no absolute rule for choosing between formative and reflective models; rather, the decision should be guided by the

conceptualization of the construct and the research objectives. Andreev et al. (2009) proposed a set of criteria, largely based on the work of Jarvis et al. (2003) and Petter et al. (2007), to determine whether a construct should be measured reflectively or formatively. These criteria are presented in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Criteria for Determining Reflective Constructs Andreev, P., Heart, T., Maoz, H., & Pliskin, N. (2009)

| <b>Criteria</b>                                          | <b>Description</b>                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nature of relationships between construct and indicators | If the indicators are manifestations of the construct, then the construct is reflective. If they define the construct, then it is formative.                     |
| Impact of changes in the construct and indicators        | Changes in the construct affect all reflective indicators simultaneously, whereas changes in an individual indicator do not necessarily influence the construct. |
| Interchangeability of indicators                         | Reflective indicators are interchangeable, meaning that removing one does not significantly alter the construct.                                                 |
| Correlation among indicators                             | Reflective indicators should be highly correlated since they measure the same underlying construct.                                                              |
| Antecedents and consequences                             | Reflective indicators share the same antecedents and consequences, as they represent the same theoretical concept.                                               |

(Source: Adapted from Andreev, P., Heart, T., Maoz, H., & Pliskin, N. (2009))

Applying these decision criteria, it is evident that the reflective measurement model is the appropriate choice for the PLS path model of this study. The indicators in this

model are highly correlated, interchangeable, and represent the same underlying construct rather than defining distinct aspects of it. Additionally, changes in the construct are expected to affect all indicators uniformly, reinforcing the reflective nature of the measurement. Therefore, based on these theoretical and methodological justifications, a reflective measurement model is the optimal choice for this study's structural equation modelling approach.

#### **4.8 PLS SEM**

The use of statistical methods is widely regarded as a crucial component in validating findings within social science research. Traditional statistical techniques, such as regression and factor analysis, are classified as "first-generation methods" and have been employed for many years. However, in the early 1990s, a more advanced statistical approach, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), emerged as a "second-generation method" in social research (Hair et al., 2017). SEM analysis comprises two primary approaches: Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM). While CB-SEM is typically used to assess theoretical models and their goodness-of-fit, PLS-SEM is particularly advantageous for exploratory studies and causal-predictive research (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019; Chin et al., 2020). The choice between these methods depends on the nature and objectives of the research.

PLS-SEM has gained prominence as an advanced second-generation statistical tool in social science research (Hair et al., 2017). This multivariate technique operates using an alternating least squares algorithm and is widely applied in various fields, including finance, marketing, behavioral studies, and information systems research (Henseler, 2018). It is recognized as one of the most sophisticated variance-based estimation systems, integrating reflective measurement models, formative constructs, and composite models (Henseler, 2017). PLS-SEM is particularly beneficial when dealing with complex models that incorporate formative constructs, small sample sizes, or non-normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2019).

Given these advantages, PLS-SEM is the most suitable choice for this study, as the research model involves reflective-formative higher-order constructs (HOCs) or hierarchical component models. Moreover, for predictive-oriented research and

complex modeling, PLS-SEM is often preferred over CB-SEM (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019). Accordingly, this study employs the PLS-SEM approach to analyze the collected data for research objectives three, four, and five using the SMART PLS 4.0 software.

The evaluation of the model for experience and satisfaction of inbound international students in India by analysing the data using the PLS-SEM technique. At the beginning it assesses the PLS-SEM results of the measurement model and then it assesses the PLS-SEM results of the structure model, to illustrate the evaluation of the model and the quality assessment of the results. Finally, it presents the assessment of the model fit.

As per the conceptual model derived in chapter 2, and the measurement model specified in chapter 4, the following PLS path (presented in figure 4.1) model was evaluated using the PLS-SEM statistical technique. Before going for the step-by-step evaluation of the model, let's check whether all the relationships (i.e. hypotheses) of the model are supported statistically or not. Afterwards, the model was assessed with all the standard evaluation criteria of the PLS-SEM technique, separately for both measurement and structural parts of the model.

#### **4.9 Evaluation of Measurement Model**

The quality of a study's constructs is typically assessed through an evaluation of the measurement model. This process begins with an examination of factor loadings (or item loadings) and is followed by an assessment of internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019). Construct reliability is determined by evaluating internal validity and consistency within the measurement model. In this study, SMARTPLS 4.0 was utilized to assess construct reliability and validity using metrics such as Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), composite reliability ( $\rho_a$ ), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Figure 4.1 depicts the standard measurement construct relationships Lower Order Constructs (LOCs).

Figure 4.1: Measurement Result (LOCs Inner Model)

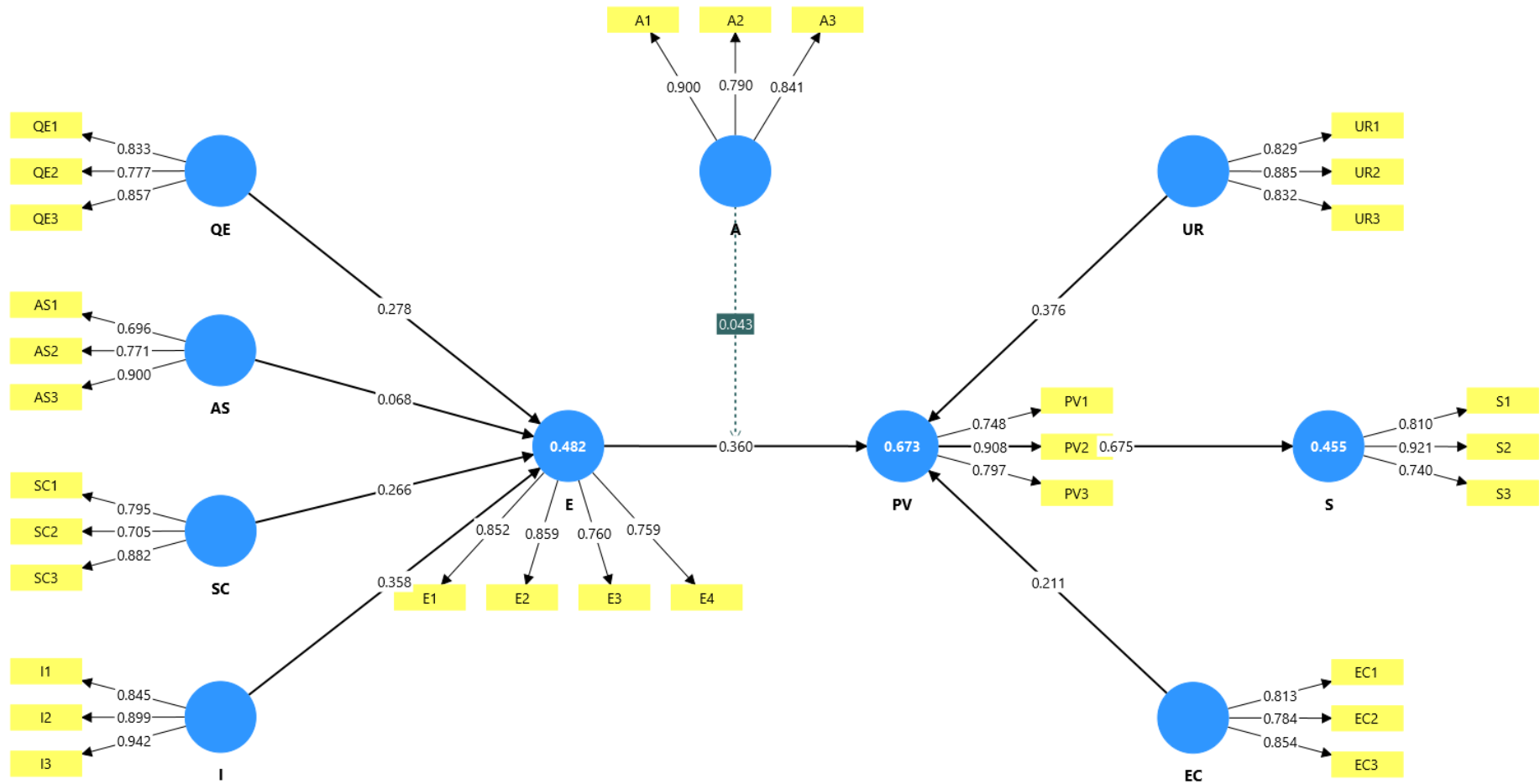




Table 4.20: Codes in the Figure 4.1 (Given by Author)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Construct Name</b>      |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| QE          | Quality of Education       |
| AS          | Administrative Support     |
| SC          | Socio-Cultural Environment |
| I           | Infrastructure             |
| E           | Experience                 |
| A           | Acculturation              |
| PV          | Perceived Value            |
| UR          | University Reputation      |
| EC          | Economic Considerations    |
| S           | Satisfaction               |

#### 4.9.1 Reliability Analysis

Internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability (CR). Both measures exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4.21: Factor Loadings for Lower Order Constructs (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Construct</b> | <b>Items</b> | <b>Factor loadings</b> |
|------------------|--------------|------------------------|
|------------------|--------------|------------------------|

|                            |     |       |
|----------------------------|-----|-------|
| Quality of Education       | QE1 | 0.833 |
|                            | QE2 | 0.777 |
|                            | QE3 | 0.857 |
| Administrative Support     | AS1 | 0.696 |
|                            | AS2 | 0.771 |
|                            | AS3 | 0.900 |
| Socio-Cultural Environment | SC1 | 0.795 |
|                            | SC2 | 0.705 |
|                            | SC3 | 0.882 |
| Infrastructure             | I1  | 0.845 |
|                            | I2  | 0.899 |
|                            | I3  | 0.942 |
| Experience                 | E1  | 0.852 |
|                            | E2  | 0.859 |
|                            | E3  | 0.760 |
|                            | E4  | 0.759 |

|                         |     |       |
|-------------------------|-----|-------|
| Acculturation           | A1  | 0.900 |
|                         | A2  | 0.790 |
|                         | A3  | 0.841 |
| Perceived Value         | PV1 | 0.748 |
|                         | PV2 | 0.908 |
|                         | PV3 | 0.797 |
| University Reputation   | UR1 | 0.829 |
|                         | UR2 | 0.885 |
|                         | UR3 | 0.832 |
| Economic Considerations | EC1 | 0.813 |
|                         | EC2 | 0.784 |
|                         | EC3 | 0.854 |
| Satisfaction            | S1  | 0.810 |
|                         | S2  | 0.921 |
|                         | S3  | 0.740 |

Factor loadings are a critical component in evaluating the reliability and validity of measurement models in structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4.21 presents the factor loadings for the lower-order constructs, which measure the

strength of the relationship between observed variables (items) and their respective latent constructs. A higher factor loading indicates a stronger association between an item and its construct, typically with values above 0.70 considered acceptable for establishing convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The results in Table 4.21 show that all items exhibit satisfactory factor loadings, with most exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Chin, 1998). The construct Quality of Education demonstrates strong loadings across its three indicators, ranging from 0.777 to 0.857, signifying a reliable measurement of the construct. Similarly, Administrative Support has loadings between 0.696 and 0.900, indicating moderate to high reliability. Socio-Cultural Environment shows acceptable loadings between 0.705 and 0.882, confirming its construct validity.

The construct Infrastructure exhibits particularly high factor loadings, ranging from 0.845 to 0.942, suggesting strong item representation. Experience, which includes four indicators, shows consistent loadings between 0.760 and 0.859, supporting its internal consistency. Acculturation also meets reliability expectations, with loadings between 0.790 and 0.900.

Perceived Value, University Reputation, and Economic Considerations demonstrate strong factor loadings, with values consistently above 0.74, affirming their construct validity. Lastly, the construct Satisfaction exhibits loadings between 0.740 and 0.921, confirming the reliability of its measurement.

Overall, the findings in Table 4.21 validate the measurement model by demonstrating that all observed variables effectively measure their respective constructs, thus supporting their inclusion in further analyses. These results align with best practices in structural equation modeling and contribute to the robustness of the study's theoretical framework (Hair et al., 2021).

#### 4.9.2 LOC Reliability and Validity

Table 4.22: Reliability and Internal Consistency of Constructs (Author's own calculations)

| Construct               | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability (rho_a) | Composite reliability (rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Acculturation           | 0.808            | 0.890                         | 0.882                         | 0.714                            |
| Administrative Support  | 0.713            | 0.827                         | 0.834                         | 0.629                            |
| Experience              | 0.823            | 0.834                         | 0.883                         | 0.654                            |
| Economic Considerations | 0.752            | 0.754                         | 0.858                         | 0.669                            |
| Infrastructure          | 0.877            | 0.884                         | 0.924                         | 0.803                            |
| Perceived Value         | 0.756            | 0.802                         | 0.860                         | 0.673                            |

|                               |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Quality of Education          | 0.773 | 0.809 | 0.863 | 0.678 |
| Satisfaction                  | 0.767 | 0.803 | 0.865 | 0.684 |
| Socio Cultural<br>Environment | 0.728 | 0.825 | 0.838 | 0.636 |
| University Reputation         | 0.806 | 0.809 | 0.885 | 0.720 |

Table 4.22 presents key reliability and validity metrics used to assess the internal consistency and convergent validity of the study's constructs. These include Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), composite reliability (rho\_a and rho\_c), and average variance extracted (AVE), which are widely recognized indicators in structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2019).

## Internal Consistency and Reliability

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) is a measure of internal consistency, indicating how well a set of items measures a single construct. A value above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). As shown in Table 4.22, all constructs exhibit Cronbach's alpha values above this threshold, with Infrastructure (0.877) having the highest reliability, followed by Experience (0.823) and Acculturation (0.808), demonstrating strong internal consistency. Constructs such as Administrative Support (0.713) and Socio-Cultural Environment (0.728) meet the minimum acceptable standard, indicating moderate reliability.

Composite reliability ( $\rho_a$  and  $\rho_c$ ) provides a more robust measure of construct reliability than Cronbach's alpha, accounting for differences in indicator loadings (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The values for  $\rho_a$  and  $\rho_c$  across all constructs exceed 0.80, indicating strong construct reliability, with the highest being Infrastructure (0.924,  $\rho_c$ ) and Acculturation (0.890,  $\rho_a$ ).

## Convergent Validity

The average variance extracted (AVE) assesses the degree to which a construct explains the variance of its indicators. A threshold of 0.50 or higher is recommended for sufficient convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE values for all constructs in Table 4.22 exceed this threshold, confirming the constructs' ability to explain more than half of the variance in their indicators. The highest AVE is observed for Infrastructure (0.803), followed by University Reputation (0.720) and Acculturation (0.714), suggesting strong convergent validity.

Overall, the results in Table 4.22 confirm that all constructs exhibit satisfactory reliability and validity, meeting established thresholds for internal consistency and convergent validity. These findings support the robustness of the measurement model and ensure that the constructs are appropriate for further structural analysis (Hair et al., 2021).

### 4.9.3 Discriminant Validity

To determine the distinctiveness of each construct in relation to other latent constructs, discriminant validity was evaluated following the guidelines of Fornell and Larcker (1981). The correlation values between constructs were found to be lower than their corresponding Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, confirming discriminant validity as in Table 4.23.

Additionally, in accordance with the recommendations of Henseler et al. (2016), the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was employed as an alternative approach to assess discriminant validity. An HTMT value exceeding 0.90 can indicate potential issues with discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). However, in this study, the highest value is 0.814 none of the HTMT values surpassed this threshold, as shown in Table 4.24. These findings confirm that all constructs are empirically distinct, thereby establishing the required discriminant validity.

Table 4.23: Fornell-Larcker for Discriminant Validity (Author's own calculations)

| Construct | Acculturation | Administrative Support | Experience | Economic Consideration | Infrastructure | Perceived Value | Quality of Education | Satisfaction | Socio Cultural Environment | University Reputation |
|-----------|---------------|------------------------|------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
|-----------|---------------|------------------------|------------|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|



|                               |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |  |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| Acculturation                 | <b>0.845</b> |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |  |
| Administrative Support        | 0.513        | <b>0.793</b> |              |              |              |              |              |              |              |  |
| Experience                    | 0.530        | 0.360        | <b>0.809</b> |              |              |              |              |              |              |  |
| Economic<br>Considerations    | 0.685        | 0.453        | 0.594        | <b>0.818</b> |              |              |              |              |              |  |
| Infrastructure                | 0.267        | 0.186        | 0.547        | 0.469        | <b>0.896</b> |              |              |              |              |  |
| Perceived Value               | 0.509        | 0.348        | 0.729        | 0.655        | 0.542        | <b>0.820</b> |              |              |              |  |
| Quality of Education          | 0.363        | 0.184        | 0.490        | 0.369        | 0.372        | 0.480        | <b>0.823</b> |              |              |  |
| Satisfaction                  | 0.729        | 0.469        | 0.593        | 0.750        | 0.487        | 0.675        | 0.546        | <b>0.827</b> |              |  |
| Socio Cultural<br>Environment | 0.673        | 0.649        | 0.478        | 0.607        | 0.281        | 0.424        | 0.236        | 0.661        | <b>0.797</b> |  |

|                       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |              |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|
| University Reputation | 0.592 | 0.394 | 0.674 | 0.666 | 0.700 | 0.743 | 0.606 | 0.739 | 0.478 | <b>0.849</b> |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|

Table 4.24: Hetrotrait Monotrait ratio for Discriminant Validity (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Construct</b>       | <b>Acculturation</b> | <b>Administrative Support</b> | <b>Experience</b> | <b>Economic Consideration</b> | <b>Infrastructure</b> | <b>Perceived Value</b> | <b>Quality of Education</b> | <b>Satisfaction</b> | <b>Socio Cultural Environment</b> | <b>University Reputation</b> |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Acculturation          | 0.717                |                               |                   |                               |                       |                        |                             |                     |                                   |                              |
| Administrative Support | 0.608                | 0.44                          |                   |                               |                       |                        |                             |                     |                                   |                              |
| Experience             | 0.764                | 0.645                         | 0.759             |                               |                       |                        |                             |                     |                                   |                              |

|                            |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Economic Considerations    | 0.299 | 0.276 | 0.628 | 0.584 |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Infrastructure             | 0.582 | 0.461 | 0.703 | 0.654 | 0.667 |       |       |       |       |       |
| Perceived Value            | 0.462 | 0.292 | 0.578 | 0.496 | 0.405 | 0.585 |       |       |       |       |
| Quality of Education       | 0.724 | 0.639 | 0.754 | 0.769 | 0.614 | 0.814 | 0.735 |       |       |       |
| Satisfaction               | 0.695 | 0.755 | 0.568 | 0.614 | 0.323 | 0.547 | 0.364 | 0.777 |       |       |
| Socio Cultural Environment | 0.711 | 0.527 | 0.621 | 0.661 | 0.738 | 0.745 | 0.749 | 0.453 | 0.608 |       |
| University Reputation      | 0.109 | 0.033 | 0.419 | 0.326 | 0.372 | 0.408 | 0.354 | 0.198 | 0.076 | 0.288 |

The values in the table 4.24 where highest value of HTMT is 0.814 is below the threshold value of 0.85 and suggests that the discriminant validity is achieved.

Table 4.25: Table of Cross Loadings for Discriminant Validity (Author's own calculations)

|                                       | <b>Accul<br/>turati<br/>on</b> | <b>Admi<br/>nistra<br/>tive<br/>Suppo<br/>rt</b> | <b>Exper<br/>ience</b> | <b>Econo<br/>mic<br/>Consi<br/>derati<br/>ons</b> | <b>Infras<br/>tructu<br/>re</b> | <b>Percei<br/>ved<br/>Value</b> | <b>Qualit<br/>y of<br/>Educa<br/>tion</b> | <b>Satisf<br/>action</b> | <b>Socio-<br/>Cultu<br/>ral<br/>Envir<br/>onme<br/>nt</b> | <b>Unive<br/>rsity<br/>Reput<br/>ation</b> | <b>Accultu<br/>ration x<br/>Experie<br/>nce</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Acc<br/>ultu<br/>rati<br/>on 1</b> | <b>0.900</b>                   | -0.369                                           | -0.549                 | -0.467                                            | -0.267                          | -0.547                          | -0.219                                    | -0.477                   | -0.585                                                    | -0.562                                     | -<br>0.085                                      |
| <b>Acc<br/>ultu<br/>rati<br/>on 2</b> | <b>0.790</b>                   | -0.411                                           | -0.249                 | -0.543                                            | -0.108                          | -0.273                          | -0.246                                    | -0.439                   | -0.407                                                    | -0.409                                     | 0.088                                           |
| <b>Acc<br/>ultu</b>                   | <b>0.841</b>                   | -0.412                                           | -0.457                 | -0.505                                            | -0.260                          | -0.392                          | -0.485                                    | -0.540                   | -0.473                                                    | -0.498                                     | -<br>0.083                                      |

|                                     |        |              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |            |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| <b>ratio<br/>on 3</b>               |        |              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |            |
| <b>Administrative<br/>Support 1</b> | -0.522 | <b>0.696</b> | 0.212 | 0.372 | 0.128 | 0.203 | 0.373 | 0.446 | 0.388 | 0.345 | -<br>0.032 |
| <b>Administrative<br/>Support 2</b> | -0.250 | <b>0.771</b> | 0.208 | 0.421 | 0.277 | 0.283 | 0.016 | 0.319 | 0.507 | 0.290 | -<br>0.014 |
| <b>Administrative</b>               | -0.445 | <b>0.900</b> | 0.380 | 0.336 | 0.096 | 0.327 | 0.094 | 0.377 | 0.417 | 0.321 | 0.022      |

|                                             |        |       |              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>strat<br/>ive<br/>Sup<br/>port<br/>3</b> |        |       |              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| <b>Exp<br/>erie<br/>nce<br/>1</b>           | -0.334 | 0.245 | <b>0.852</b> | 0.412 | 0.588 | 0.416 | 0.361 | 0.418 | 0.351 | 0.446 | 0.386 |
| <b>Exp<br/>erie<br/>nce<br/>2</b>           | -0.462 | 0.300 | <b>0.859</b> | 0.434 | 0.366 | 0.416 | 0.304 | 0.415 | 0.395 | 0.507 | 0.311 |
| <b>Exp<br/>erie<br/>nce<br/>3</b>           | -0.541 | 0.346 | <b>0.760</b> | 0.581 | 0.430 | 0.563 | 0.475 | 0.564 | 0.460 | 0.523 | 0.288 |

|                                                                   |        |       |              |              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Exp<br/>erie<br/>nce<br/>4</b>                                 | -0.375 | 0.273 | <b>0.759</b> | 0.496        | 0.355 | 0.432 | 0.446 | 0.529 | 0.331 | 0.485 | 0.254 |
| <b>Eco<br/>nom<br/>ic<br/>Con<br/>side<br/>rati<br/>ons<br/>1</b> | -0.576 | 0.378 | 0.534        | <b>0.813</b> | 0.508 | 0.495 | 0.412 | 0.579 | 0.516 | 0.427 | 0.345 |
| <b>Eco<br/>nom<br/>ic<br/>Con<br/>side<br/>rati</b>               | -0.552 | 0.386 | 0.474        | <b>0.784</b> | 0.289 | 0.551 | 0.393 | 0.443 | 0.442 | 0.588 | 0.164 |

|                                                                   |        |       |       |              |              |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>ons<br/>2</b>                                                  |        |       |       |              |              |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| <b>Eco<br/>nom<br/>ic<br/>Con<br/>side<br/>rati<br/>ons<br/>3</b> | -0.555 | 0.347 | 0.446 | <b>0.854</b> | 0.365        | 0.557 | 0.113 | 0.414 | 0.533 | 0.429 | 0.268 |
| <b>Infr<br/>astr<br/>uctu<br/>re 1</b>                            | -0.351 | 0.293 | 0.469 | 0.488        | <b>0.845</b> | 0.536 | 0.378 | 0.495 | 0.249 | 0.448 | 0.244 |
| <b>Infr<br/>astr<br/>uctu<br/>re 2</b>                            | -0.191 | 0.089 | 0.543 | 0.394        | <b>0.899</b> | 0.454 | 0.316 | 0.419 | 0.277 | 0.554 | 0.355 |



|                                             |        |       |       |       |              |              |       |       |       |       |       |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Infr<br/>astr<br/>uctu<br/>re3</b>       | -0.181 | 0.130 | 0.451 | 0.378 | <b>0.942</b> | 0.468        | 0.307 | 0.395 | 0.221 | 0.588 | 0.330 |
| <b>Perc<br/>eive<br/>d<br/>Val<br/>ue 1</b> | -0.192 | 0.260 | 0.461 | 0.438 | 0.436        | <b>0.748</b> | 0.433 | 0.342 | 0.191 | 0.551 | 0.362 |
| <b>Perc<br/>eive<br/>d<br/>Val<br/>ue 2</b> | -0.571 | 0.294 | 0.406 | 0.438 | 0.490        | <b>0.908</b> | 0.504 | 0.436 | 0.444 | 0.488 | 0.306 |
| <b>Perc<br/>eive<br/>d</b>                  | -0.433 | 0.308 | 0.415 | 0.512 | 0.405        | <b>0.797</b> | 0.217 | 0.520 | 0.377 | 0.576 | 0.208 |

|                               |        |       |       |       |       |       |              |       |       |       |       |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Value 3</b>                |        |       |       |       |       |       |              |       |       |       |       |
| <b>Quality of Education 1</b> | -0.218 | 0.095 | 0.477 | 0.270 | 0.489 | 0.481 | <b>0.833</b> | 0.420 | 0.039 | 0.565 | 0.316 |
| <b>Quality of Education 2</b> | -0.206 | 0.077 | 0.245 | 0.318 | 0.141 | 0.285 | <b>0.777</b> | 0.438 | 0.244 | 0.441 | 0.224 |
| <b>Quality of Edu</b>         | -0.454 | 0.259 | 0.414 | 0.340 | 0.200 | 0.371 | <b>0.857</b> | 0.501 | 0.348 | 0.467 | 0.234 |

|                                      |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |              |              |       |            |
|--------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|-------|------------|
| <b>cati<br/>on 3</b>                 |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |              |              |       |            |
| <b>Sati<br/>sfact<br/>ion<br/>1</b>  | -0.408 | 0.249 | 0.411 | 0.408 | 0.308 | 0.578 | 0.360 | <b>0.810</b> | 0.532        | 0.496 | 0.135      |
| <b>Sati<br/>sfact<br/>ion<br/>2</b>  | -0.460 | 0.534 | 0.565 | 0.441 | 0.420 | 0.442 | 0.450 | <b>0.921</b> | 0.421        | 0.476 | 0.171      |
| <b>Sati<br/>sfact<br/>ion<br/>3</b>  | -0.532 | 0.369 | 0.495 | 0.478 | 0.520 | 0.423 | 0.497 | <b>0.740</b> | 0.478        | 0.493 | 0.133      |
| <b>Soci<br/>o-<br/>Cult<br/>ural</b> | -0.419 | 0.523 | 0.323 | 0.497 | 0.025 | 0.376 | 0.193 | 0.580        | <b>0.795</b> | 0.438 | -<br>0.031 |

|                                                                       |        |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |              |       |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------------|-------|------------|
| <b>Envi<br/>ron<br/>men<br/>t 1</b>                                   |        |       |       |       |       |       |        |       |              |       |            |
| <b>Soci<br/>o-<br/>Cult<br/>ural<br/>Envi<br/>ron<br/>men<br/>t 2</b> | -0.445 | 0.438 | 0.241 | 0.434 | 0.240 | 0.196 | -0.015 | 0.455 | <b>0.705</b> | 0.277 | -<br>0.033 |
| <b>Soci<br/>o-<br/>Cult<br/>ural<br/>Envi<br/>ron</b>                 | -0.555 | 0.579 | 0.501 | 0.524 | 0.354 | 0.399 | 0.292  | 0.554 | <b>0.882</b> | 0.413 | 0.082      |

|                                |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |              |       |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|-------|
| <b>ment 3</b>                  |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |              |       |
| <b>University Reputation 1</b> | -0.413 | 0.324 | 0.560 | 0.558 | 0.432 | 0.584 | 0.467 | 0.534 | 0.370 | <b>0.829</b> | 0.197 |
| <b>University Reputation 2</b> | -0.539 | 0.440 | 0.431 | 0.581 | 0.530 | 0.445 | 0.509 | 0.469 | 0.377 | <b>0.885</b> | 0.274 |
| <b>University Rep</b>          | -0.545 | 0.239 | 0.526 | 0.558 | 0.524 | 0.457 | 0.561 | 0.470 | 0.465 | <b>0.832</b> | 0.185 |

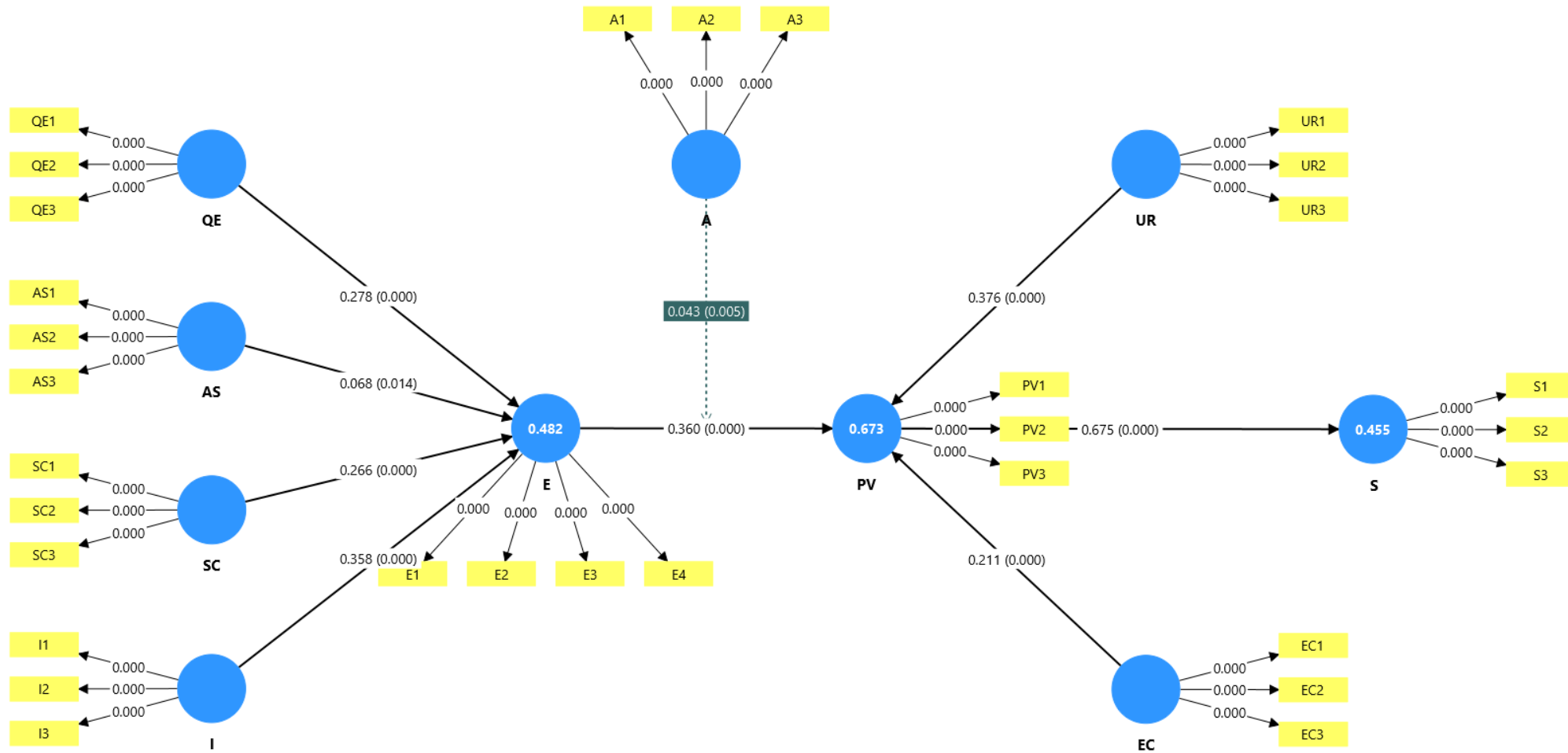
|                                                                |        |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>utati<br/>on 3</b>                                          |        |        |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| <b>Acc<br/>ultu<br/>rati<br/>on x<br/>Exp<br/>erie<br/>nce</b> | -0.053 | -0.002 | 0.389 | 0.313 | 0.348 | 0.353 | 0.321 | 0.178 | 0.026 | 0.258 | 1.000 |

The values in the above table where highest value of HTMT is 0.814 is below the threshold value of 0.85 and suggests that the discriminant validity is achieved.

#### **4.10 Valuation of Structural Model**

This section presents the structural model evaluation criteria of applying PLS-SEM in order to estimate the model of this research study. The structural model assessment builds on the results from the standard PS-SEM algorithm, the bootstrapping routine procedure, and the blindfolding procedure, which is presented thoroughly in the following subsections of this section.

Figure 4.2: Bootstrapping results of the Model (Author's own calculations)



Besides, table 4.26 provide a more detailed overview of the results of path coefficients by means of bootstrapping procedure including bootstrap mean values,  $t$  values, and  $p$  values. It indicates that all the relationships in the structural model are found statistically significant (i.e., all  $p$  values less than 0.05).

#### **4.10.1 Assessment of Collinearity Statistics (VIF Inner)**

Table 4.25 presents the collinearity statistics for the inner model, assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Collinearity issues arise when predictor constructs exhibit high intercorrelations, potentially distorting path coefficient estimates (Hair et al., 2021). A VIF value exceeding 5.00 typically indicates problematic multicollinearity, while values below 3.00 suggest acceptable levels of collinearity (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006).

As shown in Table 4.25, all VIF values fall well below the recommended threshold of 5.00, confirming the absence of severe multicollinearity within the structural model. Specifically, Acculturation (VIF = 2.234), Experience (VIF = 2.191), Economic Considerations (VIF = 2.595), and University Reputation (VIF = 2.374) demonstrate moderate collinearity when predicting Perceived Value. However, these values remain within the acceptable range, ensuring the stability and interpretability of path estimates. Furthermore, interaction effects (Acculturation  $\times$  Experience, VIF = 1.317) exhibit minimal collinearity, reinforcing the robustness of the moderation analysis.

Moreover, constructs of Administrative Support, Infrastructure, Quality of Education, and Socio-Cultural Environment predicting Experience (VIF = 1.733), (VIF = 1.216), (VIF = 1.188) and (VIF = 1.828) respectively along with Perceived Value predicting Satisfaction (VIF = 1.000), indicate minimal multicollinearity. These results suggest that the independent constructs are sufficiently distinct, minimizing redundancy in predictor variables.

In summary, the collinearity assessment confirms that the structural model meets the recommended statistical standards, ensuring that subsequent path coefficient estimations and hypothesis testing remain valid and reliable.



Table 4.26: Collinearity Statistics (VIF Inner) (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Construct</b>                              | <b>VIF</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------|
| Acculturation -> Perceived Value              | 2.234      |
| Administrative Support -> Experience          | 1.733      |
| Infrastructure -> Experience                  | 1.216      |
| Experience -> Perceived Value                 | 2.189      |
| Quality of Education -> Experience            | 1.188      |
| Socio-Culture Environment -> Experience       | 1.828      |
| Economic Considerations -> Perceived Value    | 2.595      |
| Perceived Value -> Satisfaction               | 1.000      |
| University Reputation -> Perceived Value      | 2.374      |
| Acculturation X Experience -> Perceived Value | 1.317      |

#### 4.10.2 Assessment of Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ Value)

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variables that can be explained by the independent variables, serving as a critical indicator of model fit and predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2019). An  $R^2$  value closer to 1 indicates a stronger explanatory power, while lower values suggest a weaker relationship. The adjusted  $R^2$  further refines this measure by accounting for the number of predictors, preventing overestimation in models with multiple independent variables.

The results indicate substantial variation in the explanatory power across different dependent variables. Perceived Value exhibits the highest  $R^2$  at 0.673, signifying that 67.3% of its variance is accounted for by the predictors, underscoring the strong influence of experience, university reputation, and economic considerations. Experience an  $R^2$  of 0.482, demonstrating that nearly 48.2% of its variance is explained with Quality of Education, Administrative Support, Socio Culture Environment and Infrastructure. Satisfaction follows with an  $R^2$  of 0.455, demonstrating that nearly 45.5% of its variance is explained, reinforcing the pivotal role of perceived value in shaping student satisfaction.

The minimal difference between  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  across all variables suggests that the inclusion of additional predictors does not introduce significant overfitting, further validating the robustness of the model. These findings confirm that the model effectively explains variations in critical constructs of Experience, perceived value and satisfaction, which are central to understanding international students' experiences in India.

Table 4.27:  $R^2$  and  $R^2_{adj}$  values of endogenous constructs (Author's own calculations)

|                 | <b>R-square</b> | <b>R-square adjusted</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Experience      | 0.482           | 0.480                    |
| Perceived Value | 0.673           | 0.672                    |
| Satisfaction    | 0.455           | 0.455                    |

#### 4.10.3 Assessment of Effect Size $f^2$

The  $f^2$  statistic assesses the practical significance of each predictor variable in the structural model, complementing  $R^2$  values by indicating the extent to which each independent variable contributes to explaining the variance in a dependent construct (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2019). As per Cohen's guidelines,  $f^2$  values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

The results presented in Table 4.28 show considerable variation in effect sizes across the model paths:

Perceived Value → Satisfaction ( $f^2 = 0.835$ ) demonstrates a large effect, indicating that Perceived Value is the most influential factor driving student Satisfaction.

Experience → Perceived Value ( $f^2 = 0.181$ ) and University Reputation → Perceived Value ( $f^2 = 0.182$ ) both show moderate effect sizes, highlighting their substantial roles in shaping students' perceived educational value.

Infrastructure → Experience ( $f^2 = 0.203$ ) and Quality of Education → Experience ( $f^2 = 0.126$ ) reflect moderate-to-small effects, suggesting that these institutional attributes meaningfully shape students' overall experience.

Socio-Cultural Environment → Experience ( $f^2 = 0.075$ ) and Economic Considerations → Perceived Value ( $f^2 = 0.052$ ) exhibit small but notable effects, implying that cultural adaptation and financial considerations contribute modestly to students' evaluations.

Administrative Support → Experience ( $f^2 = 0.005$ ) and Acculturation → Perceived Value ( $f^2 = 0.004$ ) reflect negligible effects, indicating that while these factors may be statistically significant in the model, their practical influence is minimal.

Overall, the findings underscore the pivotal roles of Perceived Value and Experience in influencing international students' satisfaction and perceptions of studying in India. While factors like economic considerations, university reputation, and infrastructure also play a role, their impact is secondary to the more experiential and value-based dimensions of the educational journey.

Table 4.28:  $f^2$  Effect Sizes (Author's own calculations)

| <b><math>f^2</math> Effect Sizes</b> |       |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Acculturation -> Perceived Value     | 0.004 |
| Administrative Support -> Experience | 0.005 |

|                                            |       |
|--------------------------------------------|-------|
| Infrastructure -> Experience               | 0.203 |
| Experience -> Perceived Value              | 0.181 |
| Quality of Education -> Experience         | 0.126 |
| Socio-Culture Environment -> Experience    | 0.075 |
| Economic Considerations -> Perceived Value | 0.052 |
| Perceived Value -> Satisfaction            | 0.835 |
| University Reputation -> Perceived Value   | 0.182 |

#### 4.10.4 Assessment of Predictive Relevance of $Q^2$

Predictive relevance, denoted as  $Q^2$ , evaluates the ability of a research model to predict endogenous constructs. A  $Q^2$  value greater than zero indicates that the model possesses predictive relevance (Shmueli et al., 2019). This assessment is conducted through an iterative process, where the dataset is split into training and testing subsets. The training dataset is utilized for model estimation, while the testing dataset remains independent to verify predictive accuracy.

In SmartPLS 4.0, the PLSpredict technique is employed to calculate the  $Q^2$  score, providing a more refined evaluation of the model's predictive performance. Unlike SmartPLS 3.0, which used the blindfolding method—a process that systematically omits parts of the dataset and predicts the missing values using previously estimated parameters—SmartPLS 4.0 enhances predictive assessment through a direct out-of-sample prediction approach (Chin et al., 2020).

Table 4.29: PLS predict evaluation (Author's own calculations)

|                    |     | <b>Q<sup>2</sup>predict</b> | <b>PLS<br/>(Partial<br/>least<br/>Square)<br/>RMSE</b> | <b>LM<br/>(Lenior<br/>Regression<br/>Model)<br/>RMSE</b> | <b>PLS-<br/>LM<br/>RMSE</b> |
|--------------------|-----|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Experience         | E1  | 0.361                       | 0.637                                                  | 0.852                                                    | -0.215                      |
|                    | E2  | 0.224                       | 0.728                                                  | 0.956                                                    | -0.228                      |
|                    | E3  | 0.374                       | 0.428                                                  | 0.698                                                    | -0.270                      |
|                    | E4  | 0.262                       | 0.727                                                  | 0.945                                                    | -0.218                      |
| Perceived<br>Value | PV1 | 0.327                       | 0.491                                                  | 0.758                                                    | -0.267                      |
|                    | PV2 | 0.519                       | 0.400                                                  | 0.534                                                    | -0.134                      |
|                    | PV3 | 0.324                       | 0.429                                                  | 0.594                                                    | -0.165                      |
| Satisfaction       | S1  | 0.293                       | 0.367                                                  | 0.650                                                    | -0.283                      |
|                    | S2  | 0.476                       | 0.347                                                  | 0.525                                                    | -0.178                      |
|                    | S3  | 0.380                       | 0.397                                                  | 0.633                                                    | -0.236                      |

Table 4.29 presents an evaluation of the model's predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>predict). The present study employs the PLS predict procedure to evaluate the out-of-sample predictive performance of the PLS-SEM model, following best practices in partial least squares structural equation modeling (Shmueli et al., 2019). The table presents key predictive indicators, including root mean squared error (RMSE) values for both

PLS-SEM and a linear model (LM),  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  values, and the differential RMSE (PLS–LM RMSE).

#### Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$ )

The  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  metric, derived through cross-validated redundancy analysis, serves as an indicator of out-of-sample predictive accuracy (Hair et al., 2022). A positive  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  value confirms the predictive relevance of the construct (Hair et al., 2021). The results indicate that all constructs exhibit positive  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  values, thereby substantiating the predictive validity of the PLS-SEM model. In particular, the indicators PV2 (0.519), E3 (0.374), and S2 (0.476) display relatively high  $Q^2_{\text{predict}}$  values, indicating strong predictive power.

#### Comparison Between PLS-SEM and Linear Model (LM) Performance

A critical assessment of PLS RMSE vs. LM RMSE reveals that the PLS-SEM model consistently outperforms the linear regression model across all indicators, as evidenced by negative PLS–LM RMSE values (Shmueli et al., 2019). This finding underscores the superior predictive accuracy of the PLS-SEM approach over conventional regression techniques. The most substantial improvements in predictive accuracy represented by the largest negative PLS–LM RMSE values are observed in the constructs Satisfaction (S1: -0.283), Experience (E3: -0.270), and Perceived Value (PV1: -0.267).

#### Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings from Table 4.29 provide strong evidence for the predictive strength and practical utility of the PLS-SEM model in understanding the motivational and perceptual dynamics of international students studying in India. Constructs such as Perceived Value and Satisfaction emerge as particularly influential, aligning with prior research on student satisfaction and value perceptions in international education (Hair et al., 2022).

While constructs like Experience (E2, E4) and Satisfaction (S3) demonstrate slightly lower  $Q^2$  values, their performance remains satisfactory, justifying their inclusion in the model.

#### 4.10.5 Evaluation of Model Fit

Assessing model fit is a fundamental step in validating a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, as it determines how well the hypothesized model represents empirical data. Among the available model fit indices, the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is widely employed as an absolute fit measure, evaluating the average difference between observed and model-implied correlations (Henseler et al., 2016).

SRMR values provide insights into the discrepancy between the empirical and theoretical correlation matrices, with lower values indicating superior model fit. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), an SRMR below 0.08 is generally deemed acceptable, whereas values below 0.05 denote an excellent fit. Table 4.30 presents the SRMR values, which assess the model's overall goodness-of-fit. The results confirm that the model meets widely accepted fit thresholds: The Saturated Model reports an SRMR of 0.048, with a sample mean (M) of 0.043. This indicates a good model fit, supporting the robustness of the measurement model. The Estimated Model demonstrates an SRMR of 0.052, with a sample mean (M) of 0.047. While slightly higher than the saturated model, this still falls within acceptable limits, indicating a reasonable degree of fit for the structural model.

These findings highlight that the structural model exhibits a high degree of fit and predictive validity, reinforcing its suitability for hypothesis testing and further statistical analysis. The low SRMR values suggest minimal residual discrepancies, strengthening the model's ability to capture and explain underlying relationships effectively (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 4.30: SRMR Measure of Model Fit (Author's own calculations)

|                 | <b>Original sample (O)</b> | <b>Sample mean (M)</b> |
|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Saturated model | 0.048                      | 0.043                  |
| Estimated model | 0.052                      | 0.047                  |

## **4.11 Research Objectives and Testing of Hypothesis**

### **4.11.1: Research Objective 1**

To explore the motivational factors of international students in selecting India as a study destination.

The first research objective was achieved through a combination of qualitative interviews and quantitative survey analysis, which helped identify key motivational factors influencing international students' decision to study in India. The analysis was further refined using factor analysis to categorize these motivations into distinct themes.

The study revealed that the motivations for selecting India as a study destination revolve around three primary factors:

#### **Academic Quality & Reputation**

Students considered the quality of education (Mean: 3.644) and the reputation of Indian universities (Mean: 3.445) as significant motivators.

The perceived career value of studying in India (Mean: 3.892) also played a crucial role.

#### **Financial Considerations**

Cost-effectiveness emerged as a major factor (Mean: 4.012), indicating that affordability is a primary reason for choosing India.

The availability of scholarships (Mean: 4.075) was another strong motivator, showing that financial aid opportunities influence students' decisions.

#### **Cultural & Social Factors**

Socio-cultural influences (Mean: 3.878) and India's rich cultural diversity (Mean: 3.025) contributed to students' choice.

Recommendations from social networks (Mean: 3.546) also played a role in decision-making.



The factor analysis, conducted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Varimax Rotation, confirmed that these three broad factors accounted for the majority of the variance in student motivations. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 were retained, ensuring that only significant determinants were considered.

#### **4.11.2: Research Objective 2**

Compare the motivations of international students in choosing India as a study destination based on their geographical backgrounds.

The Kruskal-Wallis test results showed statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) across all 24 motivational factors, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This confirmed that students from different geographical backgrounds prioritize different factors when choosing India.

Key Motivational Factors with Regional Variations:

Academic and Institutional Factors: Quality of Education, University Reputation, and University Infrastructure were rated differently across regions.

Financial Considerations: Cost of Education, Scholarships, and Affordability of Education showed regional variations, indicating different financial constraints and funding opportunities.

Socio-Cultural Aspects: Cultural Diversity, Socio-Cultural Environment, and Proximity to Home Country influenced decisions differently based on region.

Career-Related Motivations: Perceived Career Value, Perceived Value of Degree, and Globalization of the Job Market played varying roles in students' decisions.

Policy and Structural Influences: Factors such as Immigration Policies, Political Stability, and Administrative Processes (e.g., visa procedures) affected students from different regions differently.

Other Contributing Factors: Quality of Life and Safety, Social Network Influence, and Marketing Efforts varied significantly among regions.

Post Hoc Analysis: Since the Kruskal-Wallis test only established the presence of significant differences without identifying specific group variations, a Mann-Whitney post hoc test was conducted. The post hoc test confirmed that students from

different regions prioritize different motivational factors, reinforcing the hypothesis that geographical background influences study abroad decisions.

### **Research Hypothesis 1**

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ 1): The motivations for international students choosing India as a study destination are not influenced by their country of origin.

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ 1): The motivations for international students choosing India as a study destination differ based on their country of origin.

#### **Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA test**

To empirically assess these variations, a Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA test was conducted. This non-parametric statistical technique is particularly appropriate when comparing more than two independent groups without assuming normality in data distribution (Field, 2018; McKnight & Najab, 2010).

Table 4.31: Kruskal-Wallis test one way ANOVA test for variation of motivational factors based on place of origin (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Hypothesis Test 1 Summary</b> |                                                                                        |                                         |                           |                             |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                  | <b>Null Hypothesis</b>                                                                 | <b>Test</b>                             | <b>Sig.<sup>a,b</sup></b> | <b>Decision</b>             |
| 1                                | The distribution of Quality of Education is the same across categories of region.      | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001                     | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 2                                | The distribution of University Reputation is the same across categories of region.     | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001                     | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 3                                | The distribution of Cultural Diversity is the same across categories of region.        | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001                     | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 4                                | The distribution of Socio-culture environment is the same across categories of region. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001                     | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 5                                | The distribution of Cost Effective is the same across categories of region.            | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001                     | Reject the null hypothesis. |

|    |                                                                                         |                                         |       |                             |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 6  | The distribution of Scholarship is the same across categories of region.                | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 7  | The distribution of Perceived value of Degree is the same across categories of region.  | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 8  | The distribution of Perceived career value is the same across categories of region.     | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 9  | The distribution of Quality of Life and Safety is the same across categories of region. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 10 | The distribution of Political Stability is the same across categories of region.        | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 11 | The distribution of Immigration Policy is the same across categories of region.         | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

|    |                                                                                                   |                                         |       |                             |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 12 | The distribution of Marketing Efforts is the same across categories of region.                    | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 13 | The distribution of Soft Skill Training is the same across categories of region.                  | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 14 | The distribution of Sustainability is the same across categories of region.                       | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 15 | The distribution of Globalization of Job Market is the same across categories of region.          | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 16 | The distribution of Proximity to home country is the same across categories of region.            | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 17 | The distribution of Recommendations from social networks is the same across categories of region. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

|    |                                                                                                            |                                         |       |                             |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 18 | The distribution of Affordable Education is the same across categories of region.                          | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 19 | The distribution of Cost of Education is the same across categories of region.                             | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 20 | The distribution of Quality of Education compared to home country is the same across categories of region. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 21 | The distribution of administrative processes like visa is the same across categories of region.            | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | .008  | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 22 | The distribution of University Infrastructure is the same across categories of region.                     | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| 23 | The distribution of Social Network influence is the same across categories of region.                      | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

|                                          |                                                                                   |                                         |       |                             |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 24                                       | The distribution of India Infrastructure is the same across categories of region. | Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test | <.001 | Reject the null hypothesis. |
| a. The significance level is .050        |                                                                                   |                                         |       |                             |
| b. Asymptotic significance is displayed. |                                                                                   |                                         |       |                             |

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, as presented in Table 4.31, demonstrate that for all 24 motivational factors, the null hypothesis was rejected at a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . This indicates statistically significant differences in the distribution of responses across regions. Specifically, the following factors exhibited significant variation among international students based on their country of origin:

Academic and Institutional Factors: Quality of Education, University Reputation, and University Infrastructure

Financial Considerations: Cost of Education, Scholarships, and Affordability of Education

Socio-Cultural Aspects: Cultural Diversity, Socio-Cultural Environment, and Proximity to Home Country

Career-Related Motivations: Perceived Career Value, Perceived Value of Degree, and Globalization of the Job Market

Policy and Structural Influences: Immigration Policies, Political Stability, and Administrative Processes (e.g., visa procedures)

Other Contributing Factors: Quality of Life and Safety, Social Network Influence, and Marketing Efforts

These findings suggest that students from different regions assign varying degrees of importance to specific motivational factors when selecting India as a higher education destination. Such distinctions underscore the role of regional preferences and socio-economic contexts in shaping international student mobility patterns (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Post Hoc Analysis: Mann-Whitney Test

Although the Kruskal-Wallis test establishes the presence of significant differences among groups, it does not specify which groups differ from one another. To address this, a post hoc Mann-Whitney test was conducted, as recommended for non-parametric comparisons between independent groups (Nachar, 2008). The results of this test further corroborated the findings of the Kruskal-Wallis test, reinforcing that



motivational factors for selecting India as a study destination vary significantly by country of origin.

#### **4.11.3 Table of Hypothesis, Path Coefficients and Significance Testing**

Table 4.32 presents the results of the structural model analysis, including path coefficients ( $\beta$  values), t-statistics, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals, which are crucial for evaluating the strength and significance of hypothesized relationships (Hair et al., 2019). The findings indicate that all path coefficients are statistically significant, with p-values below 0.05, confirming the robustness of the relationships.

Administrative Support  $\rightarrow$  Experience ( $\beta = 0.068$ ,  $t = 2.468$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ): Although relatively small in magnitude, this path is statistically significant, suggesting that better administrative support positively contributes to students' overall experience.

Infrastructure  $\rightarrow$  Experience ( $\beta = 0.358$ ,  $t = 18.697$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): This path reflects the strongest direct effect on Experience, indicating that high-quality infrastructure significantly enhances students' overall experience.

Experience  $\rightarrow$  Perceived Value ( $\beta = 0.360$ ,  $t = 14.758$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): This significant positive relationship suggests that richer student experiences contribute meaningfully to their perception of value in the educational offering.

Quality of Education  $\rightarrow$  Experience ( $\beta = 0.278$ ,  $t = 9.098$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): The positive and significant path indicates that perceptions of high-quality education positively shape students' experience in the academic environment.

Socio-Cultural Environment  $\rightarrow$  Experience ( $\beta = 0.266$ ,  $t = 7.956$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): This relationship highlights that favorable socio-cultural conditions positively influence students' experiences, reinforcing the importance of cultural and social integration

Economic Considerations  $\rightarrow$  Perceived Value ( $\beta = 0.211$ ,  $t = 7.897$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): The significant relationship suggests that economic factors, such as cost and financial accessibility, contribute to perceived value, consistent with financial decision-making theories (Henseler et al., 2016).

University Reputation  $\rightarrow$  Perceived Value ( $\beta = 0.376$ ,  $t = 12.212$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): A strong positive association indicates that a reputable university enhances perceived value, supporting previous findings on the role of institutional prestige (Joseph et al., 2019).

Perceived Value  $\rightarrow$  Satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.675$ ,  $t = 38.185$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ): This represents the strongest relationship in the model, suggesting that perceived value is a major determinant of satisfaction, reinforcing previous research in service quality and consumer satisfaction (Hair et al., 2021).

#### Moderation Effect of Acculturation on Experience-Perceived Value Relationship

Acculturation  $\times$  Experience  $\rightarrow$  Perceived Value ( $\beta = 0.043$ ,  $t = 2.833$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ): The positive and statistically significant interaction effect suggests that acculturation moderates the relationship between experience and perceived value, albeit with a smaller effect size. This indicates that individuals with higher acculturation levels derive greater perceived value from their experience.

Table 4.32: Results of Path Coefficients (Author's own calculations)

|                                             | <b>Path<br/>Coefficients</b> | <b>T<br/>statistics<br/>( O/STDEV )</b> | <b>P<br/>values</b> | <b>95%</b>        | <b>Supported?</b> |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Administrative Support -> Experience        | 0.068                        | 2.468                                   | 0.014               | [0.013,<br>0.122] | Yes               |
| Infrastructure -> Experience                | 0.358                        | 18.697                                  | 0.000               | [0.319,<br>0.393] | Yes               |
| Experience -> Perceived Value               | 0.360                        | 14.758                                  | 0.000               | [0.310,<br>0.405] | Yes               |
| Quality of Education -> Experience          | 0.278                        | 9.098                                   | 0.000               | [0.216,<br>0.337] | Yes               |
| Socio-Cultural Environment -><br>Experience | 0.266                        | 7.956                                   | 0.000               | [0.202,<br>0.331] | Yes               |

|                                               |       |        |       |                |     |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|----------------|-----|
| Economic Considerations-> Perceived Value     | 0.211 | 7.897  | 0.000 | [0.159, 0.263] | Yes |
| Perceived Value -> Satisfaction               | 0.675 | 38.185 | 0.000 | [0.639, 0.708] | Yes |
| University Reputation -> Perceived Value      | 0.376 | 12.212 | 0.000 | [0.313, 0.433] | Yes |
| Acculturation x Experience -> Perceived Value | 0.043 | 2.833  | 0.005 | [0.013, 0.073] | Yes |

Table 4.32 presents the results of the structural model analysis, including path coefficients ( $\beta$  values), t-statistics, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals, which are crucial for evaluating the strength and significance of hypothesized relationships (Hair et al., 2019). The findings indicate that all path coefficients are statistically significant, with p-values below 0.05, confirming the robustness of the relationships.

#### **4.11.4: Research Objective 3**

To examine the impact of the international students' experience, university reputation and economic cost on the perceived value of India as an education destination.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2a): International students' experiences in India do not significantly impact their perceived value of India as an education destination.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2a): International students' experiences in India significantly impact their perceived value of selecting to study in India.

The path coefficient for Experience  $\rightarrow$  Perceived Value is 0.360, with a T-statistic of 14.758 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating strong statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). This confirms that international students' experiences in India significantly impact their perceived value of selecting India as a study destination. Given the strong relationship, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2a) is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2a) is supported.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2b): The reputation of Indian universities does not significantly affect the perceived value of India as a study destination.

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2b): The reputation of Indian universities significantly affects the perceived value of India as a study destination.

The path coefficient for University Reputation  $\rightarrow$  Perceived Value is 0.376, with a T-statistic of 12.212 and a p-value of 0.000, demonstrating a statistically significant effect. This suggests that the reputation of Indian universities plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceived value of India as a study destination. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2b) is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2b) is supported.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2c): The economic cost for international students to study in India does not significantly affect the perceived value of India as an educational destination.

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2c): The economic cost for international students to study in India significantly affects the perceived value of India as an educational destination.

The path coefficient for Economic Considerations → Perceived Value is 0.211, with a T-statistic of 7.897 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming statistical significance. Although the effect size is relatively smaller compared to other predictors, economic considerations still play a meaningful role in shaping students' perceived value of India as a study destination. Thus, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2c) is rejected.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2d): Quality of Education in Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2d): Quality of Education in Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

The path coefficient for Quality of Education → Experience is 0.278, with a T-statistic of 9.098 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming statistical significance. Thus, quality of education at Indian institutions plays a meaningful role in shaping students' experience in India. Thus, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2d) is rejected.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2e): Administrative Support in Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2e): Administrative Support in Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

The path coefficient for Administrative Support → Experience is 0.068, with a T-statistic of 2.468 and a p-value of 0.014, confirming statistical significance. Although the effect size is relatively smaller compared to other predictors, administrative support at Indian Institutions still plays a meaningful role in shaping students' experience in India. Thus, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2e) is rejected.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2f): Socio-cultural Environment in India do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2f): Socio-cultural Environment in India significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

The path coefficient for Socio-cultural Environment → Experience is 0.266, with a T-statistic of 7.956 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming statistical significance. Thus, socio-cultural environment plays a meaningful role in shaping students' experience in India. Thus, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2f) is rejected.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2g): Infrastructure of Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>2g): Infrastructure of Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.

The path coefficient for Infrastructure of Indian institutions → Experience is 0.358, with a T-statistic of 18.697 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming statistical significance. Thus, Infrastructure of Indian institutions play a meaningful role in shaping students' experience in India. Thus, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>2g) is rejected.

#### **4.11.5: Research Objective 4**

To examine the moderating effect of acculturation between perceived value and experience of international students in India.

The path coefficient for Acculturation × Experience → Perceived Value was 0.043, indicating a small but significant moderating effect. The T-statistic was 2.833, and the p-value was 0.005, which is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Since the p-value is below the threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>3) is rejected.

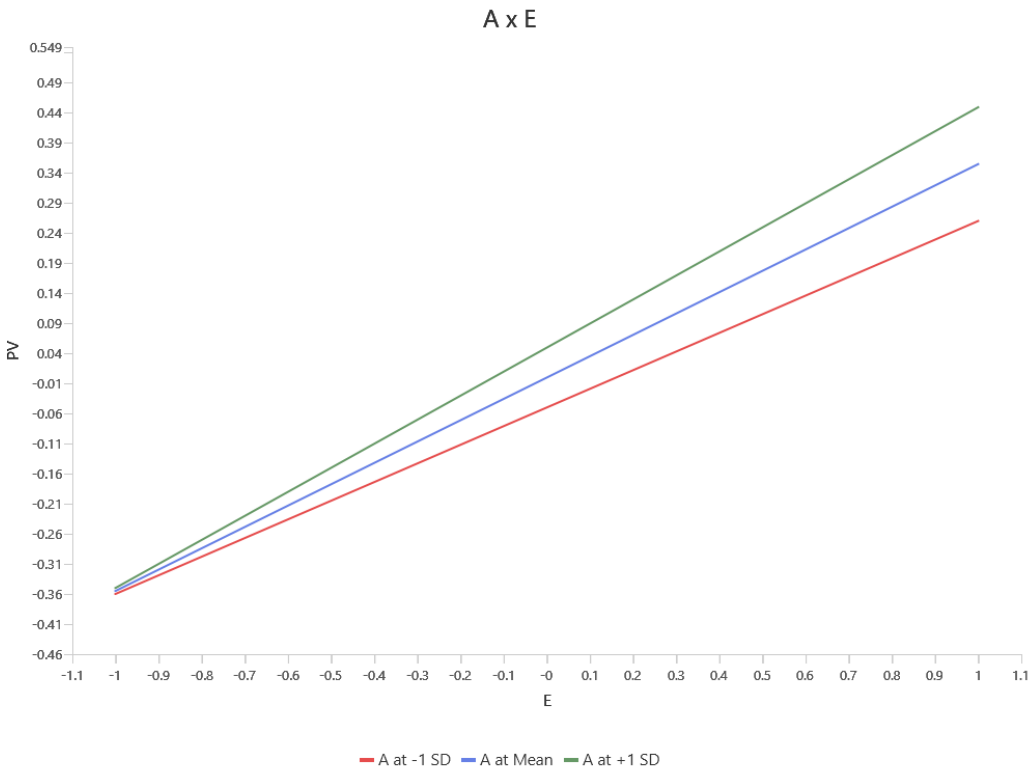
#### **4.11.6 Moderation Analysis**

##### **Acculturation's Role in the Experience and Perceived Value Relationship**

This study investigated the moderating effect of acculturation on the relationship between international students' experience and their perceived value of studying in

India. To achieve this, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed using SmartPLS 4.0. PLS-SEM is particularly advantageous for analyzing complex models with interaction effects and is robust to non-normal data distributions, common in social science research (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019). The primary focus was to determine if and how acculturation alters the relationship between experience and perceived value.

Figure 4.3: Simple Slope Analysis for moderation (Author’s own calculations)



The interaction plot illustrates the moderating effect of acculturation on the relationship between experience and perceived value, demonstrating that as experience increases, perceived value correspondingly rises across all levels of acculturation. However, the magnitude of this effect varies, with higher acculturation levels amplifying the positive association between experience and perceived value, as evidenced by the steeper slope of the regression line at +1 SD of acculturation compared to the mean and -1 SD conditions. This suggests that individuals with greater acculturation are more adept at leveraging their experiences to enhance perceived value, whereas those with lower acculturation exhibit a weaker translation of experience into value perception. The findings align with the broader



literature on cultural adaptation and consumer behavior, emphasizing the role of acculturation in shaping cognitive evaluations of value in experiential contexts (Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010). Education Institutions and policymakers should account for acculturation as a critical moderating factor when designing strategies aimed at optimizing international students' value perceptions derived from experience.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>03</sub>): Acculturation does not moderate the relationship between international students' experiences in India and their perceived value of India as an educational destination.

Alternative Hypothesis (H<sub>13</sub>): Acculturation moderates the relationship between international students' experiences in India and their perceived value of India as an educational destination.

The path coefficient for Acculturation  $\times$  Experience  $\rightarrow$  Perceived Value is 0.043, with a T-statistic of 2.833 and a p-value of 0.005, indicating statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). Although the effect size is relatively small, acculturation has a measurable impact in moderating the relationship between students' experiences and their perceived value of India as a study destination. Thus, the null hypothesis (H<sub>03</sub>) is rejected.

#### **4.11.7: Research Objective 5**

To analyse the impact of value perceived by international students studying in India on their satisfaction.

A hypothesis was formulated to test whether perceived value significantly impacts student satisfaction. The path coefficient for Perceived Value  $\rightarrow$  Satisfaction was 0.675, indicating a strong positive relationship. The T-statistic of 38.185 and p-value of 0.000 confirm that this relationship is statistically significant. Since the p-value is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis (H<sub>04</sub>) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>14</sub>) is strongly supported.

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>04</sub>): The perceived value of India as an education destination does not significantly impact the satisfaction of international students in India.

Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>14</sub>): The perceived value of India as an education destination significantly impacts the satisfaction of international students in India.

The path coefficient for Perceived Value → Satisfaction is 0.675, with a T-statistic of 38.185 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a very strong and statistically significant relationship. This result suggests that students who perceive higher value in their education experience in India report significantly higher satisfaction levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H<sub>04</sub>) is rejected.

#### **4.12 Hypotheses Summary**

The present study empirically evaluates the underlying hypotheses concerning international students' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction with India as a study destination. Through rigorous statistical analyses, significant insights have emerged regarding the factors influencing students' perceived value and satisfaction, further contributing to the literature on international student mobility (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Table 4.33: Hypothesis Summary Table (Author's own calculations)

| Hypothesis                                       | Null Hypothesis (H <sub>0</sub> )                                                                    | Alternative Hypothesis (H <sub>1</sub> )                                        | Statistical Test                        | Key Findings                                                                                                     | Decision               |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| H <sub>01</sub> : Influence of Country of Origin | Motivations for international students choosing India are not influenced by their country of origin. | Motivations for international students differ based on their country of origin. | Kruskal-Wallis Test & Mann-Whitney Test | Significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) found across 24 motivational factors based on students' region of origin. | Reject H <sub>01</sub> |

|                                          |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                          |               |                                                      |             |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Ho2a: Experience<br>→ Perceived<br>Value | International students' experiences in India do not significantly impact their perceived value of studying in India. | International students' experiences in India significantly impact their perceived value. | Path Analysis | Path coefficient:<br>0.360, T = 14.758,<br>p = 0.000 | Reject Ho2a |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                               |                                                                                                                          |                                                                              |               |                                                      |             |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Ho2b: University Reputation → Perceived Value | The reputation of Indian universities does not significantly affect the perceived value of India as a study destination. | The reputation of Indian universities significantly affects perceived value. | Path Analysis | Path coefficient:<br>0.376, T = 12.212,<br>p = 0.000 | Reject Ho2b |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                |                                                                               |               |                                               |             |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Ho2c: Economic Considerations → Perceived Value | The economic cost of studying in India does not significantly affect the perceived value of India as an education destination. | The economic cost of studying in India significantly affects perceived value. | Path Analysis | Path coefficient: 0.211, T = 7.897, p = 0.000 | Reject Ho2c |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                         |                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                     |               |                                              |             |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Ho2d: Quality of Education → Experience | Quality of Education in Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India. | Quality of Education in Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India. | Path Analysis | Path coefficient: 0.278, T= 9.098, p = 0.000 | Reject Ho2d |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------|

|                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                      |                      |                                                              |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <p>Ho2e:<br/>Administrative<br/>Support      →<br/>Experience</p> | <p>Administrative Support in<br/>Indian institutions do not<br/>significantly impact the<br/>Experience      of<br/>International students in<br/>India.</p> | <p>Administrative<br/>Support in Indian<br/>institutions<br/>significantly impact<br/>the Experience of<br/>International<br/>students in India.</p> | <p>Path Analysis</p> | <p>Path coefficient:<br/>0.068, T = 2.468, p<br/>= 0.014</p> | <p>Reject Ho2e</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|



|                                                      |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                    |                      |                                                      |                    |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <p>Ho2f: Socio-cultural Environment → Experience</p> | <p>Socio-cultural Environment in India do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.</p> | <p>Socio-cultural Environment in India significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.</p> | <p>Path Analysis</p> | <p>Path coefficient: 0.266, T = 7.956, p = 0.000</p> | <p>Reject Ho2f</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|

|                                              |                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                      |                      |                                                               |                    |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <p>Ho2g:<br/>Infrastructure → Experience</p> | <p>Infrastructure of Indian institutions do not significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.</p> | <p>Infrastructure of Indian institutions significantly impact the Experience of International students in India.</p> | <p>Path Analysis</p> | <p>Path coefficient:<br/>0.358, T = 18.697,<br/>p = 0.000</p> | <p>Reject Ho2g</p> |
| <p>Ho3: Moderating Role of Acculturation</p> | <p>Acculturation does not moderate the relationship between experience and perceived value.</p>                             | <p>Acculturation moderates the relationship between experience and perceived value.</p>                              | <p>Path Analysis</p> | <p>Path coefficient:<br/>0.043, T = 2.833, p = 0.005</p>      | <p>Reject Ho3</p>  |

|                                                               |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                   |                      |                                                               |                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <p>H<sub>0</sub>4: Perceived Value → Student Satisfaction</p> | <p>Perceived value does not significantly impact the satisfaction of international students in India.</p> | <p>Perceived value significantly impacts the satisfaction of international students in India.</p> | <p>Path Analysis</p> | <p>Path coefficient:<br/>0.675, T = 38.185,<br/>p = 0.000</p> | <p>Reject H<sub>0</sub>4</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|

The statistical analyses conducted in this study provide robust empirical evidence supporting the hypotheses related to international students' motivations, experiences, and satisfaction in the Indian higher education landscape. The findings highlight the complex interplay of institutional reputation, economic considerations, acculturation, and perceived value in shaping students' overall educational experiences.

#### **4.13 Chapter Summary**

The decision of international students to pursue higher education in India is driven by a combination of academic, financial, socio-cultural, and policy-related factors. Analysis of qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data reveals distinct themes that shape students' motivations. Key factors include academic reputation, cost-effectiveness, scholarships, cultural diversity, socio-political stability, and career prospects. Statistical analyses highlight the varying degrees of influence these factors have on student choices.

Factor Analysis Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Varimax Rotation, three primary motivational dimensions were identified:

**Academic Quality & Reputation** – Factors such as education standards, university reputation, and perceived career value strongly influenced student decision-making.

**Financial Considerations** – Cost-effectiveness and availability of scholarships emerged as crucial determinants.

**Cultural & Social Factors** – India's rich cultural diversity and socio-cultural environment played a role in student preferences.

The analysis retained factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining the majority of variance in student motivations. A Kruskal-Wallis one-way ANOVA test confirmed significant differences in motivational factors across regions, reinforcing the role of regional preferences in shaping international student mobility patterns.

#### **Impact of Country of Origin on Motivational Factors**

The null hypothesis that motivations are not influenced by country of origin was

rejected ( $p < 0.05$ ). Significant differences were found in factors such as academic reputation, financial considerations, socio-cultural aspects, career value, and policy-related influences.

### **Impact of Experience on Perceived Value**

A strong relationship was identified between international students' experiences in India and their perceived value of India as a study destination, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

### **Influence of University Reputation on Perceived Value**

The reputation of Indian universities was found to significantly affect perceived value, demonstrating its crucial role in shaping student decisions.

### **Economic Considerations and Perceived Value**

Economic factors such as affordability and financial aid had a statistically significant but comparatively smaller effect on perceived value, indicating that while important, financial aspects are considered alongside other factors.

### **Role of Acculturation as a Moderator**

Acculturation was found to moderate the relationship between students' experiences and perceived value, suggesting that ease of cultural adaptation enhances students' educational experiences in India.

### **Perceived Value and Student Satisfaction**

A strong and statistically significant relationship was observed between perceived value and student satisfaction. Students who found greater value in their educational experience in India reported higher satisfaction levels.

The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of international students' motivations and experiences in India. While academic quality and reputation remain pivotal, financial aspects and socio-cultural influences also play substantial roles. The interaction between acculturation and perceived value highlights the importance of cultural integration in enhancing student satisfaction.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULT, DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSIONS**

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULT, DISCUSSIONS & CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1 Chapter Outline**

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction levels of international students who choose India as a study destination. Employing a mixed-methods approach that includes qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data, the research identifies the primary factors shaping these students' decisions, their educational experiences, and the elements that determine their overall satisfaction.

The findings highlight that financial factors are central to students' choices, with cost-effectiveness and scholarship availability as key motivators. A significant number of students indicated that the affordability of education in India, including tuition fees and living costs, was a deciding factor, particularly when compared to more costly study options in Western countries.

Beyond financial advantages, the quality and reputation of Indian universities, especially in STEM disciplines, also significantly influenced students' choices. However, some students expressed concerns about the international recognition of Indian degrees, particularly in Western job markets.

The study further highlights the importance of career prospects, with students emphasizing India's expanding industries and robust connections to sectors like technology and engineering. The availability of internships and practical work experiences in major urban centers like Bengaluru and Pune was seen as a substantial benefit, enhancing students' employability and global career opportunities.

Cultural factors were another central theme, with India's rich cultural diversity and geographical proximity to neighboring countries serving as key attractions. For many students, shared cultural values and the ease of adaptation made India a favorable option. Social networks, including personal recommendations from family and friends, were also found to heavily influence the decision-making process.

The findings additionally shed light on areas of concern, particularly safety, quality of life, and immigration policies. Safety, especially for female students, emerged as

a notable issue, while India's restrictive immigration policies, such as the lack of post-study work opportunities, were identified as potential barriers to attracting and retaining international students.

## **5.2 Sources of Information About India as a Study Destination**

The interviews conducted during this research indicate that international students utilize a range of information sources when evaluating India as a study destination. These sources can be broadly categorized into three main channels: personal networks, institutional sources, and online platforms. Personal networks, encompassing family, friends, and alumni, frequently act as the first touchpoints and significantly influence perceptions of both the destination country and educational institution (Chen & Zimitat, 2006). Institutional sources, such as university websites, promotional materials, and recruitment agencies, provide more formal information that can influence students' decisions, particularly regarding academic programs and campus facilities (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Online platforms, including social media, educational forums, and student reviews, offer real-time insights and peer experiences that further inform students' choices, particularly in terms of lifestyle and living conditions in the host country (Soutar & Turner, 2002). Together, these channels contribute to the formation of students' perceptions and play a pivotal role in their decision-making processes.

### **5.2.1 Personal Networks**

Personal networks emerge as the primary and most influential source of information for students considering India. Friends, family members, and acquaintances who have either studied or are currently studying in India contribute significantly to the decision-making process. These social connections provide firsthand insights into various aspects of studying in India, such as the academic environment, cultural context, and living conditions.

The qualitative data consistently highlights the crucial role of these personal connections in alleviating students' concerns by offering practical advice and emotional support, thereby easing the transition to studying abroad. Through these networks, students often receive detailed information about specific universities, scholarship opportunities, and cities, which helps them make informed decisions and



reduces uncertainties about studying in a foreign country. Additionally, friends and relatives in India serve as informal support systems, aiding students in navigating academic challenges and adjusting to daily life. Consequently, these personal networks make India a more attractive study destination compared to countries where such social ties may not exist.

The interviews further suggest that personal recommendations heavily influence university selection. Many students rely on their social networks for guidance on institutional quality, available scholarships, and broader opportunities in India. This tendency is particularly noticeable when students have social connections in major educational hubs like Bangalore, Chennai, or New Delhi, where perceptions of academic excellence are especially strong.

### **5.2.2 Institutional Sources**

The interviews reveal that academic advisers interact initially with them seeking structured advice on university applications, visa processes, and scholarship options. Students frequently view advisers as trustworthy sources of guidance, especially when it comes to handling the formal requirements of international education.

Moreover, academic institutions in both India and other countries frequently organize education fairs, webinars, and counseling sessions aimed at prospective international students. These events provide students with opportunities to interact directly with university representatives, obtaining valuable information about programs, campuses, and the broader educational landscape in India. Academic advisers also assist students in weighing the pros and cons of studying in India compared to other destinations, which often influences their final decisions.

### **5.2.3 Online Platforms**

In today's digitally connected world, online platforms have become an essential resource for international students. The research indicates that students often consult websites dedicated to study abroad programs, university rankings, and scholarship databases to obtain accurate and up-to-date information about Indian universities. These platforms allow students to complement the advice from friends and academic advisers with independent research.

The rise of social media and online student forums has further broadened the range of available information. Through real-time communication channels, students can engage with peers already studying in India, ask questions, share experiences, and receive feedback. These digital interactions extend personal networks, reinforcing the influence of peer recommendations while providing additional layers of support and reassurance for prospective students.

#### **5.2.4 Insights from the Survey of International Students**

Survey data gathered from international students offers further insights into how they learn about India as a study destination. The majority of respondents indicated that social networks positively influence their decision-making. Many respondents rated this impact highly, reflecting the tendency of individuals to seek and value the opinions of those within their immediate social circles, especially when making significant decisions related to education or lifestyle changes. Trust in social recommendations is evident, as advice from people they know is generally viewed as more reliable and impactful.

However, some students rated the influence of social networks as moderate. While these networks provide valuable guidance, students often weigh additional factors such as personal preferences, professional advice, or financial considerations before making their final decision. This suggests that social feedback, while important, is just one of many elements shaping students' choices. In contrast, a smaller number of respondents indicated that social networks had a negative impact, pointing to instances where they experienced pressure, conflicting opinions, or unwanted interference from their social circles. This indicates that although social feedback is generally positive, it can sometimes lead to confusion or second-guessing.

#### **5.2.5 Trust and Social Validation**

Many individuals seek social validation when making decisions, and positive endorsements from their social networks often boost confidence in their choices. On the other hand, negative feedback can cause hesitation or prompt reevaluation. This reliance on external validation underscores how influential group dynamics and social opinions can be in personal decision-making. The closeness of these relationships often ensures that advice is aligned with what individuals want to hear

or feel is relevant to their needs, which may explain the predominantly positive feedback reflected in the survey data.

### **5.3. Motivational Factors for Selecting India as a Study Destination**

The findings indicate that international students' motivations to study in India are driven by a combination of academic, financial, cultural, and social factors. The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4.7 demonstrate that the highest-rated motivational factors include cost-effectiveness (Mean = 4.012, SD = 1.071) and availability of scholarships (Mean = 4.075, SD = 1.089), highlighting the financial considerations as key drivers in students' decision-making processes. Additionally, the perceived career value of studying in India (Mean = 3.892, SD = 0.843) and the reputation of Indian universities (Mean = 3.445, SD = 0.770) emerge as strong academic motivators. Cultural influences, such as India's rich cultural diversity (Mean = 3.025, SD = 1.150) and socio-cultural factors (Mean = 3.878, SD = 0.846), also play a role in shaping students' choices. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of cost, quality, and cultural exposure as central determinants in international student mobility (Maringe & Foskett, 2010; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014).

#### **5.3.1 Academic Quality & Reputation:**

This factor encompasses motivations related to educational quality, reputation, and perceived career value. The quality of education (Mean = 3.644) and the perceived career value of studying in India (Mean = 3.892) loaded significantly onto this factor, demonstrating that students highly value India's academic standards and the potential career benefits of obtaining a degree from Indian institutions.

#### **5.3.2 Financial Considerations**

Cost-effectiveness and the availability of scholarships form the second dominant factor. With cost-effectiveness (Mean = 4.012) and scholarship opportunities (Mean = 4.075) receiving the highest means among all motivational factors, it is evident that financial feasibility plays a crucial role in students' decision-making processes.

### **5.3.3 Cultural & Social Factors**

This dimension captures the role of socio-cultural influences, diversity, and recommendations from personal networks. Socio-cultural factors (Mean = 3.878) and recommendations from social networks (Mean = 3.546) indicate that students consider cultural integration and personal references when selecting India as a study destination.

### **5.3.4 Geographical Proximity**

Geographical proximity is a crucial factor for students from neighbouring countries like Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Shared cultural, linguistic, and religious ties facilitate smoother transitions for these students, making India a comfortable and familiar environment. The survey data showed that geographical proximity (Mean = 3.197, SD = 1.258) was critical, with applicants appreciating the ease of travel and reduced financial and emotional costs. India's rich cultural diversity also attracted students from non-adjacent regions, offering a unique opportunity for cultural immersion alongside academic learning.

### **5.3.5 Influence of Social Networks and Personal Recommendations**

Social networks, including family, friends, and alumni demonstrate a crucial play in shaping the perceptions of India as a study destination. Survey respondents highlighted the importance of these networks (Mean = 3.546, SD = 1.063). Qualitative interviews further elaborated those personal recommendations provided reassurance about safety, quality of life, and institutional credibility. These endorsements often outweighed formal marketing efforts by universities, emphasizing the strong impact of word-of-mouth in international student decision-making.

### **5.3.6 Global Exposure and Professional Growth**

For students seeking global exposure, India presents a strategic option as an emerging market economy. Its integration into global industries allows students to gain valuable international experience, particularly those aspiring to compete in global markets. India is viewed as a gateway to broader professional opportunities

across Asia and beyond, according to qualitative data. This factor is particularly appealing to students aiming for careers in competitive international environments.

### 5.3.7 Barriers: Government Policies and Immigration Opportunities

Despite India's attractiveness, government policies, particularly student visa restrictions and the lack of work rights, emerged as significant barriers. Students expressed concerns about limited post-study employment opportunities, which detract from India's appeal.

### 5.3.8 Safety, Quality of Life, and Political Stability

Concerns about safety and quality of life, especially for female students, were raised as potential deterrents. While political stability was rated positively (Mean = 3.148, SD = 1.124), the qualitative data revealed that safety issues and lifestyle disparities could undermine the position of India.

## 5.4 Comparative Analysis Based on Geographical Backgrounds

The table below summarizing how motivational factors differ across various regions, based on the data provided. Each factor is presented with a general indication of its relative importance in different regions, where high importance is indicated by "High", medium importance by "Medium", and low importance by "Low." This is inferred based on trends in the data and the discussion provided in the qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Table 5.1: The comparison of motivations across regions (Author's own calculations)

| <b>Motivational Factor</b>       | <b>South Asia</b> | <b>Africa</b> | <b>Rest of the World</b> | <b>Rest of Asia</b> |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Economic Cost<br>(Affordability) | High              | High          | Average                  | High                |
| Availability of<br>Scholarships  | High              | High          | Average                  | High                |

|                                      |         |         |         |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| University Reputation                | Average | Average | High    | Average |
| Global Recognition of Degree         | Average | Average | High    | Average |
| Career Prospects & Industry Ties     | High    | High    | High    | High    |
| Socio-cultural Factors               | High    | Low     | Low     | Average |
| Cultural Diversity                   | High    | Low     | Low     | Average |
| Proximity to Home                    | High    | Low     | Low     | Average |
| Political Stability                  | Average | Average | Low     | High    |
| Government Policies (Immigration)    | Average | Average | Average | Average |
| Quality of Life & Safety             | Average | Average | Low     | Average |
| Soft Skills (Leadership, Creativity) | Average | Average | Average | Average |

To examine regional differences in motivations, a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed, revealing statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) across all 24 motivational factors. This confirms that students from different geographical backgrounds prioritize varying aspects when choosing India as a study destination.

**Academic and Institutional Considerations:** While students from certain regions placed a high emphasis on university reputation and infrastructure, others prioritized the quality of education and career prospects.

**Financial Constraints and Affordability:** Cost-effectiveness and scholarships were highly significant for students from developing nations, reinforcing the notion that affordability is a decisive factor for those from lower-income backgrounds (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

**Socio-Cultural Influences and Proximity:** Cultural affinity and proximity to home country played a stronger role for students from South Asian and Middle Eastern regions, while students from Western nations emphasized quality of life and global job market opportunities.

**Government Policies and Administrative Barriers:** Immigration policies and visa processes significantly impacted students from Africa and Latin America, where stricter regulations and bureaucratic hurdles often affect mobility (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007).

Post hoc analysis using the Mann-Whitney test further confirmed these variations, suggesting that institutional strategies should be tailored to specific regional concerns to enhance India's appeal as an international education hub.

## **5.5 Experience, University Reputation, and Economic Cost: Influence on Perceived Value**

This section explores how international students' experiences, university reputation, and the economic cost of education shape their perceived value of India as a study destination. The information provides valuable insights into the impact of these factors on students' decision-making.

### **5.5.1 Influence of Student Experience on Perceived Value**

The experiences of international students in India significantly influence how they perceived value of India as a study destination. The evaluation of the Experience construct provides valuable insights into factors influencing international students' perceptions and satisfaction. This study examined the Experience construct using a set of indicators measuring academic quality, administrative support, socio-cultural adaptation, and institutional infrastructure. The data analysis confirmed that these

aspects significantly shape students' overall experience and, consequently, their perception of higher education institutions in India.

Academic quality emerged as a key component, reinforcing previous research that links rigorous curricula and effective teaching methodologies to student satisfaction. The findings indicate that when academic expectations are met, students report higher levels of positive experience. Similarly, efficient administrative support was found to play a crucial role in facilitating smooth transitions and addressing bureaucratic challenges, thereby enhancing students' overall experience.

Another critical dimension analysed was socio-cultural adaptation. The study highlights that successful integration into the host country's social and cultural environment contributes significantly to students' mental well-being and academic success. Positive interactions within the socio-cultural framework foster a sense of belonging, which in turn improves students' overall experience.

The adequacy of institutional infrastructure was also found to be a determinant of student satisfaction. Well-maintained facilities, access to learning resources, and comfortable accommodation contribute to an environment conducive to both academic and personal growth. The analysis confirmed that perceptions of infrastructure quality have a strong correlation with students' overall experience.

Further examination through PLS-SEM modeling revealed that Experience significantly influences multiple constructs. A strong positive relationship was established between Experience and Administrative Support, Infrastructure, Perceived Value, Quality of Education, and Socio-Cultural Environment. The results indicate that students with positive experiences perceive institutional support systems more favorably, value the education received, and adapt more effectively to their new environment.

The statistical analysis confirmed that Experience positively impacts students' perceived value of studying in India. The hypothesis testing results demonstrated that students who have enriching academic, administrative, and cultural experiences are more likely to perceive India as a valuable educational destination.



These findings emphasize the importance of continuously enhancing academic quality, administrative processes, socio-cultural integration efforts, and infrastructure to improve international students' overall experience. Institutions aiming to attract and retain global talent should prioritize these factors to maintain a competitive advantage in the international education sector.

Data highlights that students from Africa and Asia express higher satisfaction with their experiences in India. Among African students, 206 respondents agreed, and 180 strongly agreed, while 125 Asian students agreed and 34 strongly agreed. In contrast, students from other regions displayed more varied perceptions, indicating regional differences in expectations and experiences.

Qualitative feedback complements these findings, as students emphasize practical learning opportunities, cultural immersion, and personal growth. Many appreciate India's focus on soft skills development, leadership, and critical thinking, which they believe enhances their global employability. Overall, positive educational experiences strongly contribute to the perceived value of studying in India.

### **5.5.2 Role of University Reputation in Perceived Value**

The prestige of universities in India is another important factor influencing how students perceive the country as a place to study. The reputation of a university serves as a pivotal factor influencing international students' decisions when selecting India as a study destination. The analysis of university reputation (UR) is based on three key indicators: academic excellence and global rankings, faculty credentials, and industry linkages. These indicators capture the multidimensional nature of institutional prestige, which significantly contributes to students' perceived value of their education.

Quantitative analysis confirms the validity of the selected indicators, with kurtosis and skewness values falling within acceptable statistical thresholds, ensuring the reliability of the construct. The study establishes a strong positive correlation between university reputation and perceived value ( $\beta = 0.380$ ,  $t = 12.311$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), underscoring the impact of institutional standing on students' academic choices.

Empirical findings support the hypothesis that university reputation significantly affects the perceived value of India as a study destination. High global rankings enhance the attractiveness of institutions, while faculty expertise fosters academic credibility and intellectual growth. Furthermore, strong industry partnerships provide students with career opportunities and practical exposure, reinforcing the long-term benefits of studying in India.

The statistical evidence confirms that a well-regarded university reputation enhances India's appeal in the global education market. These findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the importance of institutional prestige in shaping students' academic and professional trajectories.

Students who rated the reputation of Indian institutions highly were more likely to view India as offering a valuable educational experience. In study, 310 students agreed, and 139 strongly agreed, that university reputation influenced their decision to study in India.

However, students from Western countries raised concerns about the global recognition of Indian degrees, especially in non-technical fields. While India's academic reputation is well-regarded in Asia and Africa, there is a perceived gap in recognition within Western markets, underscoring the need for greater internationalization efforts by Indian institutions.

### **5.5.3 Economic Considerations as a determinant of Perceived Value**

Economic factors play a pivotal role in international students' decision-making processes when selecting a study destination. The affordability of tuition fees, availability of financial aid, and overall cost of living collectively shape students' perceptions of financial feasibility and return on investment. As higher education increasingly becomes a globalized market, institutions that offer cost-effective yet high-quality education gain a competitive advantage in attracting international students.

The analysis reveals that affordability is a key determinant of accessibility, with tuition fees significantly influencing students' enrollment choices. Universities that maintain competitive pricing structures while ensuring academic excellence are

better positioned to attract a diverse international student body. Additionally, financial aid mechanisms, including scholarships, grants, and funding opportunities, alleviate financial constraints and expand access to education. Institutions that actively promote and enhance financial support programs can significantly improve student enrollment and retention rates.

Beyond tuition, the cost of living emerges as another critical economic consideration. The financial burden associated with accommodation, transportation, and daily expenses affects students' overall financial well-being and study experience. Countries and institutions that offer a manageable cost of living, alongside affordable education, are perceived more favorably by prospective students.

Empirical findings substantiate the link between economic considerations and perceived value, as indicated by a significant path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.209$ ,  $t = 7.818$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Although the effect size is relatively moderate compared to other influencing factors, financial affordability remains a crucial component in shaping students' perceptions of India as an educational hub. This is consistent with financial decision-making theories, which suggest that affordability and perceived benefits drive consumer choices (Henseler et al., 2016).

The rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_02c$ ) confirms that economic factors significantly influence the perceived value of education in India. Therefore, to enhance its attractiveness as a global education destination, India must continue to offer cost-effective education, expand financial aid programs, and ensure a reasonable cost of living for international students.

Affordability is particularly important for students from Africa and Asia, where limited financial resources make India an attractive alternative to more expensive destinations. Students frequently mention that India offers a "high-quality education without heavy financial burdens," with scholarships and low living costs enhancing this perception.

## **5.6. Moderating Role of Acculturation between Perceived Value and Experience**

The moderating role of acculturation in the relationship between international students' experiences and their perceived value of studying in India was examined using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis aimed to determine whether acculturation strengthens or weakens the relationship between experience and perceived value, providing deeper insights into the interplay of cultural adaptation and value perception.

The interaction effect was evaluated through a moderation analysis, where acculturation was introduced as an interaction term with experience in predicting perceived value. The results indicate a statistically significant but small moderating effect ( $\beta = 0.044$ ,  $t = 2.944$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), confirming that acculturation plays a role in shaping the strength of this relationship. The simple slope analysis further illustrates that at higher levels of acculturation, the positive association between experience and perceived value becomes more pronounced. Conversely, students with lower acculturation exhibit a weaker relationship between their experiences and perceived value. This suggests that international students who successfully integrate into the socio-cultural environment are more likely to perceive their educational experiences in India as valuable.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with acculturation theory (Berry, 1997), which posits that individuals who adapt effectively to a new cultural setting tend to experience reduced psychological stress and greater overall satisfaction. The results also support previous research emphasizing that cultural integration enhances the perceived quality and benefits of an educational experience (Schartner & Young, 2016). The ability to build social connections, receive adequate cultural orientation, and integrate into the university's social fabric significantly amplifies students' positive evaluations of their educational investment.

Despite its statistical significance, the effect size ( $f^2 = 0.007$ ) suggests that while acculturation does influence the experience-perceived value relationship, it does so with limited practical impact. This implies that other factors, such as institutional reputation, academic rigor, and financial considerations, may exert a stronger

influence on students' perceived value of studying in India. Nonetheless, given the importance of acculturation in international student adaptation, universities should implement targeted interventions to enhance cultural integration, thereby maximizing students' perceived value of their educational experience.

These findings provide actionable insights for university administrators and policymakers aiming to improve international student satisfaction. By fostering an inclusive academic and social environment through structured cultural orientation programs, peer networking opportunities, and enhanced administrative support, institutions can strengthen the link between students' experiences and their perceived value of higher education in India. This not only enhances the student retention but also improve India's positioning as a preferred global education destination.

### **5.7 Impact of Perceived Value on Student Satisfaction**

The empirical findings of this study reveal a strong and statistically significant relationship between perceived value and student satisfaction, reinforcing existing literature on service quality and consumer satisfaction. The path coefficient for Perceived Value → Satisfaction was recorded at 0.675, with a T-statistic of 38.225 and a p-value of 0.000. These results indicate that perceived value is a primary determinant of international students' satisfaction with their education experience in India.

The perceived value construct, as operationalized in this study, encompasses multiple dimensions, including the affordability of education, the alignment of academic quality with expectations, and the perceived career benefits of obtaining an Indian degree. The findings demonstrate that students who perceive their education as cost-effective, high-quality, and beneficial for future career advancement exhibit significantly higher levels of satisfaction. This aligns with established theoretical perspectives in marketing and higher education research, where perceived value plays a critical role in shaping overall satisfaction and long-term commitment to a service (Zeithaml, 1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

The statistical significance of the results further substantiates the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_{04}$ ), which posited that perceived value does not significantly impact

student satisfaction. Instead, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_{14}$ ), asserting a significant positive effect of perceived value on satisfaction, is strongly supported. This finding underscores the necessity for higher education institutions in India to focus on enhancing perceived value through strategic initiatives such as improving academic quality, offering robust career support services, and ensuring affordability.

Moreover, the strength of the relationship (path coefficient = 0.675) suggests that enhancing perceived value has a substantial impact on improving student satisfaction levels. This insight holds practical implications for policymakers and educational administrators, emphasizing the need for sustained efforts in optimizing institutional offerings to meet and exceed international students' expectations. By fostering an education environment that delivers both tangible and intangible benefits, institutions can enhance student retention, positive word-of-mouth, and long-term institutional reputation.

In conclusion, the results of this study unequivocally establish perceived value as a pivotal factor in shaping international students' satisfaction. Future research could further investigate the mediating or moderating influences of other psychological and environmental factors, such as cultural adaptation and institutional support, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of student satisfaction determinants.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the motivational factors influencing international students' decisions to pursue higher education in India. The findings indicate that three primary factors drive these decisions: academic quality, financial considerations, and cultural and social influences. Through rigorous statistical methodologies, including Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and factor extraction, these factors were empirically validated as key determinants shaping students' choices.

**Academic Quality:** The study highlights the significance of academic excellence, including faculty expertise and research opportunities (Mean = 3.644), as a major factor in students' decision-making.

Financial Considerations: Affordability (Mean = 4.012) and scholarship availability (Mean = 4.075) emerged as critical determinants influencing students' choices.

Socio-Cultural Factors: India's diverse cultural environment and the opportunity for cross-cultural exchange played a substantial role in student motivation (Mean = 3.878).

Regional Variations: The Kruskal-Wallis test ( $p < 0.05$ ) and post hoc Mann-Whitney test confirmed significant regional differences in student motivations.

The study underscores the necessity for Indian higher education institutions to adopt strategic measures that enhance academic standards, financial accessibility, and socio-cultural support. A region-specific approach further improves India's attractiveness as a global education hub.

## **5.9 Recommendations**

These recommendations help Indian universities strengthen their global competitiveness and enhance their appeal to international students. A comprehensive and strategic approach ensures sustainable growth in international student enrollment and improves India's position as a leading destination for higher education.

### **5.9.1 Enhancing Academic Standards**

- Strengthen research output and faculty credentials to align with global academic benchmarks.
- Develop partnerships with international institutions for dual-degree programs and exchange initiatives.
- Invest in modern pedagogical techniques and cutting-edge infrastructure to enhance learning experiences.
- Implement regular student feedback mechanisms to assess and improve academic quality.

### **5.9.2 Strengthening Financial Support Mechanisms**

- Expand scholarship programs, particularly merit-based and need-based financial aid initiatives.
- Partner with financial institutions to provide low-interest student loans and flexible tuition payment plans.
- Introduce work-study programs that enable international students to support themselves while gaining professional experience.

### **5.9.3 Improving Socio-Cultural Support**

- Establish dedicated international student offices to provide administrative and academic assistance.
- Develop structured orientation programs and peer mentoring initiatives to aid student integration.
- Enhance mental health services and wellness programs to support student well-being.
- Improve campus safety measures and student accommodation quality to address common concerns.

### **5.9.4 Strengthening Employability and Industry Collaborations**

- Develop industry linkages through internship programs and cooperative education models.
- Expand career counseling services to guide students on job market trends, networking, and skill development.
- Leverage alumni networks to facilitate mentorship programs and job placement opportunities.



### **5.9.5 Enhancing Marketing and Outreach Strategies**

- Utilize digital marketing campaigns, social media, and virtual open days to promote Indian universities.
- Collaborate with educational consultants and recruitment agencies to expand global outreach.
- Develop multilingual marketing materials to engage students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

### **5.9.6 Policy Advocacy for Streamlined Immigration and Visa Processes**

- Collaborate with policymakers to streamline visa application procedures and post-study work opportunities.
- Participate in global education forums to enhance India's visibility as a preferred study destination.
- Simplify bureaucratic processes related to student enrollment and residence permits.

### **5.9.7 Customizing Regional Strategies**

- Develop targeted recruitment strategies based on regional student preferences.
- Offer customized financial aid packages and program structures for students from diverse economic backgrounds.
- Conduct further research on regional variations to refine marketing and student engagement approaches.

### **5.10 Comparing Results with the Existing Literature**

This study contributes to the growing body of research on international student mobility by providing a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing students' decisions to study in India. It extends existing literature by emphasizing affordability and cultural proximity as key determinants, particularly within the South Asian context. Unlike traditional destination-focused studies, which prioritize academic prestige, this research underscores how economic accessibility and regional ties

shape student preferences. Additionally, the study introduces fresh perspectives on the role of social networks and informal recommendations in student decision-making, highlighting areas for future exploration in international education research.

#### **5.10.1 Determinants of International Student Mobility**

This research confirms affordability, academic quality, career prospects, and cultural proximity as critical factors influencing students' decision-making processes. These findings support previous studies that have highlighted these factors as essential in shaping students' educational choices.

**Affordability:** The importance of affordability aligns with global trends, particularly among students from developing nations. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), emphasized the role of cost in choosing non-traditional study destinations. De Wit and Altbach (2020) similarly noted that economic constraints are increasingly driving students toward more affordable study locations, which this study reaffirms, with India's low tuition fees and living costs emerging as decisive factors.

**Academic Quality and Career Prospects:** Previous research, such as Knight (2013) and Wilkins et al. (2012), has highlighted the value students place on the reputation and perceived career benefits of degrees earned abroad. This study concurs, especially regarding the growing recognition of Indian institutions in fields like engineering and business (Altbach, 2015).

#### **5.10.2 The Role of Cultural and Social Factors**

**Cultural Proximity:** This research emphasizes that cultural proximity, particularly for students from neighboring countries, plays a larger role than previously acknowledged. Students from countries such as Afghanistan and Nepal reported smoother transitions and higher satisfaction due to shared cultural, linguistic, and religious ties. This expands on prior research by Bhandari and Blumenthal (2011), which focused more on economic factors while underestimating the significance of cultural proximity.

### **5.10.3 Comparing Findings with Previous Studies**

**India as an Emerging Study Destination:** This research makes several contributions to understanding international student motivations, particularly in the context of India as an emerging study destination. It offers insights into areas that have been underexplored in earlier studies, which predominantly focus on traditional education hubs (Beine et al., 2014; Chen & Barnett, 2000).

**Affordability as a Pivotal Factor:** Unlike findings from studies in Western contexts, where academic reputation often takes precedence (OECD, 2019), this research highlights affordability as the most influential factor for students selecting India. The study also underscores how scholarship opportunities amplify the importance of cost considerations for students choosing non-Western destinations.

**Cultural and Geographical Proximity:** This research brings attention to the influence of cultural and geographical proximity within the South Asian context, a factor that has been largely overlooked in prior studies, which tend to focus on intercontinental student flows (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). The study demonstrates that cultural proximity, shared heritage, and ease of travel play significant roles in attracting students from neighboring countries.

**Reputation of Indian Institutions:** While prior research has acknowledged India's growing reputation in higher education, especially in STEM fields (Altbach & Jayaram, 2020), this study deepens our understanding by showing that, although Indian degrees are gaining recognition in specific industries, concerns about global recognition persist. This finding contributes to ongoing discussions about the internationalization of education in emerging markets.

### **5.10.4 Unexpected Findings and Their Implications**

**Lower Impact of Political Stability and Government Policies:** Contrary to expectations, political stability and government policies were not dominant factors in students' decision-making. This contrasts with studies by Li and Bray (2007) and Marginson (2018), which emphasize the importance of political stability and favorable immigration policies in attracting international students. In this study, students from conflict-affected regions seemed more focused on the relative safety

and stability that India offered, regardless of the country's overall ranking in global safety indices.

**Influence of Social Networks:** This study also revealed a surprising prominence of social networks in shaping students' decisions. While previous research has acknowledged the role of word-of-mouth in educational choices (Gatfield & Chen, 2006), references from home and acquaintances outweighed official marketing efforts was unexpected. This suggests that future research should further explore the impact of informal networks, especially in contexts where institutional marketing is less effective.

**Limited Impact of Restrictive Immigration Policies:** Although restrictive immigration policies and limited work rights were expected to be significant deterrents based on prior studies (Choudaha, 2017), many students still viewed India as a viable option, particularly for short-term academic and cultural experiences. This finding points to a potential shift in the motivations of international students, with a growing focus on short-term academic and cultural gains rather than long-term career opportunities in the host country.

The findings of this study challenge several established assumptions about international student mobility. They highlight the importance of affordability and cultural proximity in shaping students' decisions, particularly in the context of India as a non-traditional study destination.

## **5.11 Implications for Policy and Practice**

The study provides actionable insights for policymakers and higher education institutions to enhance India's attractiveness as a study destination. Addressing structural and policy-related challenges may improve India's global standing and international student experience.

### **5.11.1 Policy Reforms to Facilitate Student Mobility**

Policymakers should prioritize refining visa policies, simplifying bureaucratic processes, and creating a more student-friendly immigration framework. Clearer guidelines on student work rights, post-study employment options, and residency

permits might enhance India's competitiveness. Additionally, participation in international education agreements can strengthen cross-border student mobility and institutional collaborations.

#### **5.11.2 Strengthening Institutional Autonomy and Regulatory Frameworks**

Indian universities should be granted greater autonomy to innovate their academic programs, establish international partnerships, and develop flexible curriculum structures. Streamlined accreditation processes and regulatory reforms that encourage institutional adaptability can facilitate international collaborations and global recognition.

#### **5.11.3 Enhancing Student Services and Well-Being**

Universities must institutionalize student support mechanisms that address administrative challenges, mental health concerns, and cultural adaptation. Developing standardized guidelines for international student welfare including accommodation quality, campus security, and access to health services can ensure a more inclusive and supportive environment. Strengthening anti-discrimination policies and grievance redressal systems can also improve the overall student experience.

#### **5.11.4 Improving Infrastructure and Technological Integration**

Investments in digital infrastructure, smart classrooms, and research facilities can enhance India's reputation as a center for academic excellence. Establishing innovation hubs and research collaboration centers in partnership with global institutions can attract high-caliber students and faculty. Furthermore, integrating digital learning solutions and virtual engagement tools can facilitate broader outreach to international applicants.

#### **5.11.5 Expanding Global Collaborations and Recognition**

Active participation in global academic networks, joint research programs, and faculty exchange initiatives can enhance India's academic credibility. Strengthening ties with globally ranked universities, adopting internationally recognized

accreditation standards, and improving research output visibility may increase the value of Indian degrees in global job markets.

#### **5.11.6 Aligning Education Policies with Industry Needs**

To bridge the gap between academia and employment, education policies should encourage industry-led curriculum development and experiential learning programs. Government incentives for corporate-academic partnerships, internship programs, and skill development initiatives can strengthen employability outcomes for international students.

### **5.12 Managerial Implications**

Higher education administrators and stakeholders must develop strategic interventions to improve international student enrollment and satisfaction. A student-centric and globally aligned approach can enhance India's higher education competitiveness.

#### **5.12.1 Institutional Differentiation and Branding**

Universities should refine their value propositions by emphasizing specialized academic strengths, research achievements, and unique cultural offerings. Strategic branding efforts should focus on India's affordability, industry-linked programs, and global career pathways to attract a diverse student base.

#### **5.12.2 Operational Efficiency and Administrative Excellence**

Streamlining admission processes, digitalizing student services, and offering multilingual support can significantly enhance administrative efficiency. Universities should implement centralized international student support offices to assist with visa processes, academic transitions, and social integration.

#### **5.12.3 Strengthening Industry Linkages and Career Services**

Universities must proactively engage with industries through structured internship programs, job placement initiatives, and professional networking events. Establishing alumni-led mentorship programs and expanding career counseling services can improve international students' employability prospects.

#### **5.12.4 Expanding Scholarship and Financial Aid Programs**

Institutions should optimize financial support strategies by diversifying funding sources, expanding partnerships with scholarship-granting organizations, and offering flexible tuition payment structures. Establishing transparent financial aid information channels can help prospective students make informed decisions.

#### **5.12.5 Enhancing Student Life and Support Ecosystems**

Developing vibrant international student communities, facilitating peer-led mentoring, and ensuring high-quality student housing can create a welcoming environment. Institutions should also integrate cultural immersion programs and extracurricular activities to enrich the overall student experience.

#### **5.12.6 Leveraging Digital Outreach and Alumni Networks**

A data-driven approach to digital marketing, content localization, and social media engagement can increase visibility among prospective students. Engaging alumni in recruitment efforts and leveraging their success stories can enhance institutional credibility and word-of-mouth influence.

#### **5.12.7 Adopting a Long-Term Internationalization Strategy**

A forward-looking strategy that incorporates long-term internationalization goals, consistent policy advocacy, and global academic collaborations can ensure sustainable growth in international student enrollments. Universities should regularly assess market trends, student expectations, and policy landscapes to maintain competitive positioning.

#### **5.12.8 Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)**

The Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) is an essential analytical approach in partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) that provides insights into the relative importance (total effects) and performance (index values) of various constructs concerning an endogenous construct in this case, Satisfaction among international students in India. The current IPMA results, as illustrated in Table 5.2 and Figure 5.3, reveal the critical determinants of Satisfaction and their respective performance levels.

Figure 5.1: Importance-performance map (Author's own calculations)

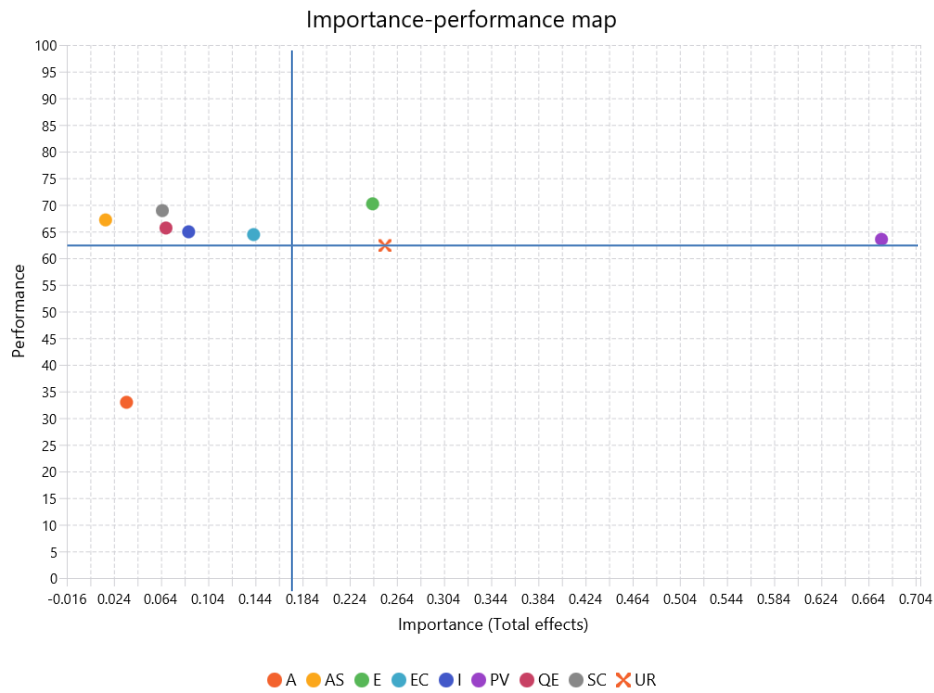


Table 5.2: Importance-performance map values (Author's own calculations)

|                            | Performance | Rank | Importance | Rank |
|----------------------------|-------------|------|------------|------|
| Acculturation              | 32.971      | IX   | 0.034      | VIII |
| Administrative Support     | 67.185      | III  | 0.016      | IX   |
| Experience                 | 70.203      | I    | 0.243      | III  |
| Economic Considerations    | 64.434      | VI   | 0.142      | IV   |
| Infrastructure             | 64.956      | V    | 0.087      | V    |
| Perceived Value            | 63.537      | VII  | 0.675      | I    |
| Quality of Education       | 65.668      | IV   | 0.068      | VI   |
| Socio-cultural Environment | 68.929      | II   | 0.065      | VII  |
| University Reputation      | 62.352      | VIII | 0.253      | II   |
| Average                    | 62.25       |      | 0.176      |      |



The analysis reveals that Perceived Value (PV) holds the highest importance (0.675) in predicting Satisfaction, followed by University Reputation (UR) (0.253) and Experience (E) (0.243). Economic Considerations (EC) (0.142) and Infrastructure (I) (0.087) follow in importance, while Administrative Support (AS) (0.016) and Acculturation (A) (0.034) rank the lowest.

In terms of performance, Experience (E) leads with the highest performance score (70.203), indicating strong positive student perceptions. Socio-cultural Environment (SC) (68.929) and Administrative Support (AS) (67.185) also show strong performance. However, constructs like University Reputation (UR) (62.352), Perceived Value (PV) (63.537), and especially Acculturation (A) (32.971) trail behind. The average performance score across all constructs is 62.25.

### **Strategic Implications and Managerial Insights**

The findings clearly underscore the centrality of Perceived Value (PV) in driving Satisfaction. With the highest importance score, PV acts as the strongest predictor, though its performance (63.537) is slightly below other top-performing constructs. This gap indicates areas for improvement—particularly in enhancing the tangible and intangible benefits students associate with their education in India. Prior literature has emphasized the mediating role of perceived value in shaping overall satisfaction (López-Bonilla & López-Bonilla, 2014), reaffirming its strategic relevance.

Experience (E) not only ranks high in importance but tops the performance chart, suggesting that students' academic and social interactions are meeting or exceeding expectations. Institutions should maintain the quality of these experiences while allocating additional attention to other influential but underperforming constructs like PV and UR.

University Reputation (UR), while ranking second in importance (0.253), has a relatively low performance score (62.352). This highlights the need for strategic efforts in branding, global academic collaborations, faculty excellence, and research visibility to improve perceptions and enhance institutional appeal.

Economic Considerations (EC) hold a mid-level importance (0.142) but show solid performance (64.434), indicating that affordability and cost-efficiency are positive

aspects of studying in India. Continued emphasis on transparent pricing, scholarships, and financial support mechanisms can further elevate satisfaction levels.

Administrative Support (AS), while ranking third in performance (67.185), holds the lowest importance (0.016). Although it does not significantly influence Satisfaction directly, its strong performance reflects effective back-end services like visa assistance, onboarding, and academic administration. Institutions should continue to uphold these standards to prevent potential dissatisfaction from administrative bottlenecks.

Quality of Education (QE) scores a moderate performance (65.668) but ranks relatively low in importance (0.068). This suggests that while students acknowledge satisfactory academic delivery, it may not be the most dominant factor influencing their overall satisfaction. Nonetheless, ongoing improvements in pedagogy, curriculum relevance, and faculty engagement remain essential.

Socio-cultural Environment (SC) emerges as the second-highest in performance (68.929) with modest importance (0.065). This indicates that students generally feel culturally welcomed and socially integrated. While not a primary driver of satisfaction, the strength of this construct suggests India's cultural diversity and inclusivity resonate well with international students.

Infrastructure (I) occupies a mid-level position both in importance (0.087) and performance (64.956). Students are moderately satisfied with campus facilities, housing, and learning resources. Continued investment in physical and digital infrastructure will help close remaining gaps and reinforce student comfort and learning efficacy.

Acculturation (A) records the lowest scores in both importance (0.034) and performance (32.971), reflecting minimal influence on satisfaction but also highlighting potential vulnerabilities. While not a key driver, the substantially low performance suggests institutions should not overlook support for cultural adjustment, including orientation programs, language assistance, and peer mentorship (Berry, 1997).

### **Policy Recommendations**

The IPMA findings offer critical insights for institutional leaders and education policymakers in India. Most importantly, Perceived Value (PV) should be a focal point of strategic planning. Enhancing perceived value involves improving academic quality, employability outcomes, campus life, and overall service delivery for international students.

Maintaining the strong Experience (E) component is equally vital, ensuring that students continue to view their journey positively. University Reputation (UR) should be strategically enhanced through academic excellence, global affiliations, and improved visibility in global rankings.

Economic Considerations (EC) continue to be an advantage; hence, efforts to maintain affordability, alongside expanding scholarships and grants, should be prioritized. While Administrative Support (AS) performs well, continued investment in efficient and student-friendly services will reinforce satisfaction.

The moderate performance of Quality of Education (QE) and Infrastructure (I) suggests room for incremental improvements. Finally, though Acculturation (A) is not a dominant influence, universities should aim to build stronger cultural adaptation frameworks to ensure no segment of the international student population is left behind.

### **5.13 Limitations of the Study**

This research has made significant contributions to understanding the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction of international students who opt for India as their study destination. However, several limitations exist that may impact the scope and applicability of these findings. While these constraints do not diminish the study's importance, they underscore areas for further exploration and refinement in similar research.

#### **5.13.1 Sample Size and Diversity**

The sample size, although adequate for generating qualitative insights, may not fully capture the varied and diverse international student population studying in India. Factors such as the demographic backgrounds of participants, including their country of origin, field of study, and academic level, introduce possible biases in the

outcomes. Certain groups, particularly those from less-represented regions or academic areas, may not have been thoroughly included. Increasing the sample size and adopting a more stratified sampling approach would strengthen the external validity and relevance of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### **5.13.2 Data Collection Methods**

The study's reliance on self-reported data, gathered through surveys and interviews, introduces the risk of response biases. Social desirability bias may have influenced participants to provide responses they perceive as favorable rather than fully reflecting their authentic experiences. Moreover, closed-ended survey questions, while useful for quantitative analysis, may have limited the ability to capture the nuanced and multifaceted nature of students' motivations. Incorporating open-ended questions or adopting a mixed-methods approach could yield richer data and a more comprehensive understanding of student experiences (Bryman, 2016).

#### **5.13.3 Temporal Context**

This research was conducted within a specific temporal framework, during which particular socio-economic conditions and geopolitical factors may have influenced the responses. The fluctuating immigration policies, or economic shifts could have had a significant bearing on the motivations and experiences of the respondents. As these conditions evolve, the relevance of the findings may diminish, underscoring the importance of longitudinal research to track changes in international student motivations over time (Patton, 2015).

#### **5.13.4 Geographic Limitations**

The study was focused on a select number of Indian institutions and regions, particularly those with established reputations. Students at regional or less globally connected universities may have distinctly different experiences, which were not adequately captured in this research. Future studies should expand their geographical scope to include a broader array of institutions across different regions of India (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

### **5.13.5 Methodological Constraints**

The application of computational methods such as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Principal Component Analysis (PCA) has provided valuable insights into the clustering of motivational factors. However, these techniques rely on underlying assumptions, including linearity and normal distribution, which may not fully capture the complexity of students' decision-making processes.

While PLS-SEM offers advantages such as handling complex models, accommodating small sample sizes, and working with non-normal data, it also has several methodological constraints. Unlike covariance-based SEM, PLS-SEM lacks traditional goodness-of-fit indices (e.g., CFI, RMSEA,  $\chi^2$ ), making overall model fit assessment challenging. Additionally, despite its ability to work with small samples, its estimates may become unstable or biased when the sample size is too small. PLS-SEM primarily focuses on maximizing explained variance rather than testing theoretical models, which can limit its ability to detect model misspecifications or omitted paths. The method is also prone to overfitting, particularly when a large number of indicators are used, potentially inflating path coefficients. Furthermore, significance testing in PLS-SEM depends on bootstrapping, making results sensitive to resampling methods and the number of iterations. Lastly, while PLS-SEM estimates both direct and indirect effects, its emphasis on prediction rather than theory testing can make it less suitable for studies aiming to confirm established theoretical frameworks. Given these constraints, researchers should carefully justify the use of PLS-SEM and ensure robustness through appropriate validation techniques.

### **5.13.6 External Influences**

The evolving status of India in the global educational market, as well as changes in other countries' visa policies or scholarship programs, were not fully explored in this study. These elements may add further layers of complexity that future studies should explore to offer a more comprehensive knowledge of the global factors impacting student mobility (Teichler, 2017).

### **5.13.7 Language and Communication Barriers**

While English is widely used in Indian higher education institutions, language barriers still posed challenges during the data collection process. Some participants, particularly those from non-English-speaking countries, may have struggled to fully express their experiences and motivations during interviews or surveys. Additionally, cultural nuances in communication may have led to misinterpretations of responses. These linguistic limitations could affect correctness, suggesting a need of future studies to incorporate multilingual survey tools or translators to mitigate this issue (Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997).

### **5.13.8 Context-Specific Findings**

The study's findings are inherently context-specific, focusing exclusively on India as a study destination. While the research sheds light on the unique factors influencing international students' choices in India, it may not be directly applicable to other countries with different educational, cultural, and socio-political environments. Consequently, the broader generalizability of the results to other international education markets is limited. Future research could conduct comparative studies across multiple countries to develop a more global understanding of international student motivations (King, Marginson, & Naidoo, 2013).

### **5.13.9 Lack of Longitudinal Data**

This study offers a cross-sectional analysis of international students' motivations and experiences at a single point in time, without considering how these factors might evolve throughout their academic journey. Motivations for choosing India, satisfaction levels, and overall experiences may change as students progress through their courses, adjust to the local environment, or encounter unforeseen challenges. A longitudinal approach, tracking students over several years, would provide a richer and more dynamic understanding of these evolving factors (Tinto, 1993).

#### **5.13.10 Underrepresentation of Specific Student Groups**

Certain subpopulations of international students, such as those from marginalized communities, may be underrepresented in the sample. Factors such as socio-economic background, ethnicity, or gender may influence students' experiences in unique ways, but the present study does not adequately capture these dimensions. The underrepresentation of these groups limits the study's ability to offer insights into their specific challenges or motivations. Future research should aim to incorporate a more inclusive sampling strategy to capture the diversity of international students' backgrounds and experiences (Maringe & Carter, 2007).

#### **5.13.11 Limited Exploration of Institutional Support Mechanisms**

While this study touches on factors such as institutional reputation and academic quality, it does not deeply explore the availability and effectiveness of support services provided by Indian universities. Elements such as student counseling, mental health services, career guidance, and cultural integration programs could significantly impact international students' satisfaction and academic success. Without exploring these institutional support mechanisms in detail, the study presents an incomplete picture of the student experience in India (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

#### **5.13.12 Influence of Socio-Cultural Adjustment**

The socio-cultural adjustment process of international students in India, including their ability to integrate into Indian society and navigate cultural differences, was not thoroughly examined in this study. Future research should consider investigating how international students cope with cultural differences, homesickness, and social integration during their time in India (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

#### **5.13.13 External Political and Economic Factors**

Political and economic factors outside the scope of this study, such as visa policies, international relations, and global economic conditions. Shifts in government policies, economic downturns, or international events may have created uncertainties that affected the motivations of international students. The study does

not account for these broader external factors, suggesting a need for future research to examine how global political and economic trends impact international student mobility (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007).

#### **5.14 Scope for Future Research**

Several areas warrant further exploration to enhance understanding and address existing limitations or unexpected results. They make way for further study and produces the need of examination of their experiences in India.

##### **5.14.1 Longitudinal Studies on Student Experiences**

These types of research showcase crucial insights into how motivations and perceptions shift from the pre-arrival phase to graduation. By examining how initial expectations align with actual experiences, researchers can identify critical points where satisfaction may dip or rise, thus informing targeted interventions that enhance retention and overall satisfaction among international students.

##### **5.14.2 Comparative Studies Across Regions**

While this research provides a broad understanding of international students in India, future studies should incorporate comparative analyses between students from different geographical regions. Understanding how regional, cultural, and economic contexts shape students' decisions to study in India could provide Indian institutions with strategic insights for improving recruitment efforts. Comparative studies would also reveal region-specific challenges and motivations, helping institutions design more effective support systems.

##### **5.14.3 Impact of Online Education and Hybrid Models**

The increasing shift toward online education and hybrid learning models—accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic—calls for future research on how these modalities influence international students' decision-making processes. Investigating student attitudes towards the perceived value of online versus in-person learning could reveal important insights into how Indian institutions can share them improved options. Additionally, the long-term viability and global recognition of hybrid educational models in India merit further exploration.



#### **5.14.4 Gender-Specific Perspectives and Safety Concerns**

Given the significant concerns regarding safety and quality of life, especially among female students, future research should explore gender-specific experiences in greater detail. This research could investigate how male and female students navigate challenges related to safety, academic success, and cultural adaptation differently.

#### **5.14.5 Post-Graduation Outcomes and Employability**

A deeper investigation into the post-graduation outcomes of international students is critical for assessing the long-term value of an Indian education. Future research could examine the employability, career progression, and global market integration of international graduates. Such studies would offer insights into how Indian degrees translate into professional success across various global markets and industries.

#### **5.14.6 Cultural Adaptation and Social Integration**

Further research on cultural adaptation and social integration is essential to understanding how international students from diverse backgrounds navigate Indian society. Future studies could investigate the common challenges students face during acculturation, as well as the coping strategies they employ. A more in-depth analysis of social network formation, including the role of peers, local communities, and institutional support, would help improve the design of programs that foster smoother cultural transitions and enhance both academic and social outcomes for international students.

#### **5.14.7 Policy Impact Analysis and Governmental Reforms**

A critical area for future research lies in analyzing the effects of government policies on international student mobility. This includes investigating the impact of visa regulations, immigration policies, and post-study work rights on students' decisions to study in India. Comparative studies between India and other education destinations could provide insights into how reforms in these areas could improve India's attractiveness as a study destination. Moreover, research could explore how

political stability, or instability, in both India and students' home countries influences mobility patterns.

#### **5.14.8 Social Networks and Digital Influences**

Future research could explore how digital platforms, influencers, and virtual communities shape students' perceptions and decision-making processes regarding studying in India. Understanding the evolving influence of online reviews, social media, and digital marketing campaigns would provide insights into how Indian institutions could more effectively engage with prospective students in the digital age.

#### **5.14.9 Institutional Support Systems and Mental Health Services**

Further investigation is needed into the role of institutional support systems. Given the challenges related to cultural adaptation, financial strain, and academic pressure, future research should assess the availability and effectiveness of mental health services at Indian universities. Studies that focus on identifying gaps in institutional support and the impact of mental health interventions on academic performance and retention could provide actionable recommendations for enhancing student welfare.

### **5.15 Chapter Summary**

This study presents a comprehensive analysis of the motivations, experiences, and satisfaction of international students choosing India as their study destination. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, it provides valuable insights into the key factors influencing student decisions, the challenges they encounter, and the perceived advantages of studying in India.

The primary research objectives have been effectively addressed. Firstly, the investigation of motivational factors identified affordability, academic quality, and cultural proximity as pivotal in shaping international students' choices. Indian universities, particularly in STEM fields, are recognized for their rigorous academic programs, although concerns persist regarding the global recognition of Indian degrees, particularly in Western countries. Government policies, including

restrictions on work opportunities during study and limited post-study work prospects, were also highlighted as significant deterrents.

Secondly, the comparative analysis of student motivations based on their country of origin revealed distinct regional variations. For students from neighboring countries, cultural familiarity and geographical proximity were key determinants, whereas those from non-Asian regions were primarily attracted by India's academic offerings and cost-effectiveness. These findings emphasize the need for Indian educational institutions to adopt region-specific marketing and recruitment strategies.

Thirdly, the evaluation of student experiences, university reputation, and economic factors underscored their impact on perceived value. The research confirms that cost-effectiveness and scholarship availability are crucial factors in students' decision-making processes. However, concerns related to safety, quality of life, and gender-specific challenges, particularly for female students, highlight areas where institutional improvements are needed.

Additionally, the study examined the moderating role of acculturation between perceived value and student experience, revealing that cultural adaptation significantly influences overall satisfaction.

The analysis of perceived value's impact on student satisfaction demonstrated that a favorable assessment of the cost-benefit ratio of education in India correlates with higher satisfaction levels. This perceived value was shaped by multiple factors, including institutional academic standing, career opportunities, and professional development prospects, particularly within India's expanding technology and engineering sectors.

This study validates a robust measurement model for assessing international student experiences in India. The findings confirm that university reputation, economic considerations, and student experiences are key determinants of perceived value, which in turn drives student satisfaction. Acculturation plays a moderating role, highlighting the significance of cultural adaptation in enhancing perceived value.

While the structural model exhibits strong explanatory power, model fit indices suggest opportunities for refinement. Future research should examine additional

moderating variables, such as socio-political influences and institutional support mechanisms, to further strengthen the analytical framework.

The study's findings offer actionable insights for higher education institutions seeking to enhance their global competitiveness and attract international students. By addressing critical factors affecting student satisfaction, Indian universities can improve their reputation and establish themselves as leading study destinations in the global education landscape.

## **CHAPTER 6: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## **6.1 APPENDICES**

### **6.1.1 Appendix – A**

#### **IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

##### **Section A: Personal and Demographic Information**

Q1: What is your gender?

Q2: What country are you from?

Q3: At what program level are you currently planning to study (undergraduate, postgraduate, or doctoral)?

Q4: What will be your academic discipline or field of study?

Q5: Which region of the world do you come from (e.g., South Asia, Europe, Africa, etc.)?

##### **Section B: Understanding Motivational Factors**

Q6: Are you considering pursuing higher education abroad?

Q7: Could you list the countries you are considering for higher education in order of preference, starting with your top choice?

Q8: What specific factors led to your preference for these countries?

Q9: What are the key motivations behind your interest in studying in India?

Q10: What attracts you to consider other countries besides India for higher education?

Q11: What is your current understanding of the higher education system in India?

Q12: Have you visited India before?

Q13: Do you have any friends, family, or acquaintances currently in India?

Q14: If offered a scholarship, would you choose to study in India?

Q15: What are the key benefits you expect to gain from your education in India?

Q16: How do you perceive the global value of a degree or certificate earned from an Indian university?

Q17: Do you have a specific city or educational institution in mind in India?

Q18: What are your expectations regarding accommodation and food in a university hostel in India?

Q19: What cultural similarities do you think exist between India and your home country?

Q20: What cultural differences do you anticipate between India and your home country?

Q21: Would you like to explore India's cultural and historical sites during your stay?

#### Section C: Further Study Plans and Career Opportunities

Q22: After completing your studies, do you plan to return to your home country or work in the country where you studied?

Q23: If given job opportunities in both the U.S. and Japan after graduation, which country would you choose to work in?

Q24: Do you have any questions for me before we conclude the interview?

#### 6.1.2 Appendix – B

##### QUESTIONNAIRE 1

Key questions from this survey included:

Q1: Which country are you from?

Q2: At what program level are you currently planning to study?

Q3: What other study abroad programs did you apply for?

Q4: How do you plan to fund your education?

Q5: Has COVID-19 affected your study abroad plans?

Q6: How did you learn about the Study in India program?

Q7: What was your reason for an unsuccessful application with the Study in India program?

Q8: Why is India not your preferred education destination?

Q9: Name the country where you finally would pursue higher education?

Q10: Would you be interested in pursuing an online degree from India in the future by your institute of choice?

### 6.1.3 Appendix – C

## QUESTIONNAIRE 2

### Section A: Personal and Academic Information

Q1: Region

Q2: Country of your previous education?

Q3: Nationality

Q4: Age in years

Q5: Gender

Q6: Current level of study?

Q7: What is your area of specialization or field of study?

Q8: How many years have you spent studying in India?

Q9: In which Indian state is your educational institute located?

### Section B: Motivational and Decision-Making Factors

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q10: The specific program offerings available in my field of study were a key factor in my decision.

Q11: The renowned expertise of the faculty at Indian institutions influenced my choice.

Q12: The availability of quality research opportunities was an important consideration for me.

Q13: The diverse range of academic fields offered in India attracted me to study here.

Q14: The fact that most programs are instructed in English was a significant factor in my decision.

Q15: The perception of India's positive economic growth and impact influenced my choice.

Q16: The diversity of the student community on campus was an important factor for me.

Q17: The unique lifestyle I could experience in India played a role in my decision.

Q18: The cultural proximity of India to my home country was a factor in my choice.

Q19: My personal cultural preferences made India an attractive study destination.

Q20: The expectations of my family played a significant role in my decision to study in India.

Q21: The availability of an emotional support system (e.g., friends, family, or community) influenced my choice.

Q22: The geographical proximity of India to my home country was an important consideration.

Q23: The opportunity for significant personal growth was a key motivator for studying in India.

Q24: Favourable government initiatives or policies for international students influenced my decision.

Q25: The promise of quality academic guidance from the institution was a factor in my choice.

Q26: The availability of career advice and services at the institution played a role in my decision.

Section C: Experience in India (quality of education, infrastructure, administrative support, and the socio-cultural environment)

Q27: The quality of life and safety standards in India influenced my decision. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q28: Rate your overall experience as an international student in India. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)

Q29: How have the challenges you faced during your journey in India impacted you? (1 = Very Negatively, 5 = Very Positively)

Q30: Compare your experience as an international student in India to your initial expectations. (1 = Much Worse Than Expected, 5 = Much Better Than Expected)

Q31: The high quality of education in India influenced my decision to study here. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q32: Compare the quality of education in India to your home country. (1 = Much Worse Than Home, 5 = Much Better Than Home)

Q33: Do you believe the quality of education varies significantly among universities in India? (1 = Not at All, 5 = A Great Deal)

Q34: India's rich cultural diversity and heritage played a role in my choice of study destination. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q35: Socio-cultural factors specific to India played a role in my decision. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)



Q36: How satisfied are you with the social and cultural environment in India? (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied)

Q37: How satisfied are you with administrative processes like visa assistance and registration? (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied)

Q38: Have you encountered difficulties in administrative procedures? (1 = Yes, with significant negative impact, 5 = No, the process was smooth)

Q39: Do you think the level of administrative support varies among universities in India? (1 = Not Much, 5 = A Lot)

Q40: Rate the quality of infrastructure (e.g., labs, libraries, accommodation) at your institute. (1 = Very Poor, 5 = Excellent)

Q41: How has the quality of infrastructure in India affected your comfort and convenience? (1 = Significant Negative Impact, 5 = Significant Positive Impact)

Q42: Have you faced challenges related to infrastructure during your studies? (1 = Yes, frequently, 5 = No, rarely or never)

#### Section D: University Reputation and Economic Cost

Q43: The reputation of Indian universities was a factor in my choice. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q44: How much did your university's specific reputation influence your decision to study there? (1 = Not at All, 5 = A Great Deal)

Q45: To what extent do you think your university's reputation affects the quality of education you receive? (1 = Not at All, 5 = A Great Deal)

Q46: Cost-effectiveness was an essential consideration in my decision to study in India. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q47: The availability of scholarships or financial aid influenced my decision to come to India. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q48: How satisfied are you with the affordability of education in India? (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied)

#### Section E: Acculturation and Perceived Value

Q49: To what extent have you integrated into the local Indian culture and lifestyle? (1 = Not at All, 5 = Fully Integrated)

Q50: How has your degree of cultural adaptation affected your overall experience? (1 = Strong Negative Influence, 5 = Strong Positive Influence)

Q51: How has your exposure to Indian culture influenced your personal values? (1 = Negatively, 5 = Positively)

Q52: The perceived value of an international degree from India was important in my decision. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q53: The perceived career value of studying in India played a role in my decision. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Q54: How do you perceive the overall value of studying in India, considering cost, reputation, and experience? (1 = Very Low Value, 5 = Very High Value)

#### Section F: Satisfaction and Overall Experience

Q55: How satisfied are you with your overall experience as an international student in India? (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied)

Q56: How do you think your perception of value relates to your overall satisfaction? (1 = No Relationship, 5 = Strong Positive Relationship)

Q57: Have there been instances where your perception of value and your satisfaction have differed? (1 = Frequently, 5 = Rarely or Never)

## 6.2 LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

1. Bhatara, T. and Khanna, P. (2024) 'Rationales behind international students' not selecting India as an education destination – an empirical investigation', *Research in Globalization*, 9, p. 100247. doi:10.1016/j.resglo.2024.100247.

2. Bhatara, T., & Khanna, P. (2024). Motivations, experience and satisfaction of international students towards India as a study destination. *South Florida Journal of Development*, 5(11). <https://doi.org/10.46932/sfjdv5n11-042>

### 6.3 LIST OF COPYRIGHTS

| Sr. No. | Copyright Number | Date            | Title of the work                                                                                                                    |
|---------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | L-134951/2023    | 25 October 2023 | RESEARCH INSTRUMENT TO MEASURE MOTIVATION, EXPERIENCE AND SATISFACTION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS TOWARDS INDIA AS STUDY DESTINATION. |

### 6.4 LIST OF CONFERENCES

| Sr. No. | Date               | Conference Title                                                    | Organized By                                                      |
|---------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1       | 19 December 2020   | Rethinking Business: Designing Strategies in the Age of Disruptions | Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Punjab |
| 2       | 05 – 06 March 2021 | Research Trends in Management & Social Sciences                     | National Institute of Technology, Hamirpur (H.P.)                 |
| 3       | 13 – 16 May 2022   | III. International Academic Studies                                 | Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, Turkey                            |

|  |  |                                                              |  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  |  | Congress (ASC-2022 / SPRING) -<br>Theme: Change & Adaptation |  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------------------------------|--|

## 6.5 LIST OF WORKSHOPS

| <b>Sr. No.</b> | <b>Date</b>        | <b>Conference Title</b>                                                  | <b>Organized By</b>  |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1              | 15 – 17 March 2022 | Three-Day Workshop on Research Data Analysis & Interpretation using SPSS | A2Z Edu Learning Hub |
| 2              | 08 – 10 June 2023  | Three Day Training on Research Writing and Publications                  | A2Z Edu Learning Hub |
| 3              | 31 August 2024     | Online Session on Strategies to Enhance Research Visibility and Impact   | A2Z Edu Learning Hub |



# Rationales behind international students' not selecting India as an education destination – An empirical investigation

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## ABSTRACT

India's higher education sector faces significant challenges in attracting international students, evidenced by hosting less than 1 % of globally mobile students despite substantial efforts to increase this number. This study explores critical barriers preventing international students from choosing India as their destination, including financial constraints, safety concerns, and cultural integration issues. It also assesses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these decisions and examines the potential of online education as an alternative. Findings reveal that inadequate financial support and safety concerns are primary deterrents, with varying impacts across educational levels and regions. Recommendations include enhancing financial aid, improving safety measures, fostering cultural integration, and leveraging online education. Addressing these issues is crucial for India to align with global education trends and improve its international appeal.

## Introduction

India hosts less than 1 percent of the world's internationally mobile students (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2021). There is a substantial disparity between the inflow and outflow of international students in India, with only 46,878 international students from 170 countries choosing India in 2019 (AISHE, 2021–22), compared to 508,174 Indian students studying abroad (UNESCO, 2021). The term “international students” denotes individuals pursuing education in a country other than their own. Recently, India has acknowledged the significance of attracting inbound international students and their global impact (Pushkar, 2019). Through initiatives such as the Institution of Eminence status and the ‘Study In India’ program, the Indian government aimed to mitigate the higher education trade deficit, aspiring to increase the number of international students to 200,000 a goal that represented a more than fourfold rise (Pawar et al., 2019). International students are a significant source of revenue, enhance campus diversity, foster integrated learning, and serve as a crucial ranking parameter for higher education institutions (HEIs) in India (National Institutional Ranking Framework, 2021). Table 1 shows the chi-square tests performed on various factors related to the reasons for not selecting India as an educational destination.

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the global higher education system, necessitating a shift to online learning and

establishing it as the ‘new normal’ (Mok et al., 2021). India experienced multiple lockdowns, resulting in the closure and reopening of educational institutions. Despite a commendable vaccination drive, emerging virus variants then continued to threaten normalization. This uncertainty induced a psychosis among students then, deterring them from pursuing higher education abroad, especially from countries severely impacted by the virus. However, as the world adapted to live with the virus, several nations revised their strategies to attract international students. In this context, the post-COVID-19 period's disruptions significantly impacted student mobility. Recent research indicates that one opportunity from the pandemic is the shift from academic mobility to virtual mobility (Finardi & Guimaraes, 2020). While many HEIs in India offered online education during the pandemic, it had its own set of challenges, particularly in developing countries with inadequate technical infrastructure. Nevertheless, Indian HEIs did not face significant enrolment declines due to their reliance on domestic students (Gurukkal, 2020).

Previous research on international students in India has identified numerous challenges and opportunities in attracting and retaining global talent (Pawar et al., 2019). Factors such as educational quality, cultural diversity, safety, and affordability are the driving forces that significantly influence international students' decisions to study in India (Choudaha, 2017). Despite India's rich cultural heritage and competitive educational offerings, it faces stiff competition from Western

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nations renowned for their established educational systems and robust support structures for international students. The deterrents to Indian higher education institutions are lack of awareness and perceived bureaucratic hurdles in the admission process (Agarwal, 2019). Research also highlights that while initiatives like the ‘Study in India’ program have made significant progress yet there is a dire need of comprehensive policy frameworks and enhanced infrastructural support to improve the overall experience for international students (Singh & Srivastava, 2020). Addressing these aspects is crucial for India to enhance its appeal as a preferred destination for international education, necessitating the development of India as a South Asian education hub and beyond.

- To this end, this study addresses the following research questions:
1. What are the most critical reasons prompting international students not to complete their admission process at Indian institutions?
  2. Did the COVID-19 pandemic impact inbound student mobility in India?
  3. Can online education be an opportunity for international students who decide not to study in India?

This study aims to bridge the gap in the current literature by conducting a survey using an online questionnaire to identify the crucial factors influencing international students’ decisions to forgo studying in India, the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic is responsible, and whether online education can bridge this gap. The research underscores the current status of India’s HEIs, the challenges posed by COVID-19, and international students’ interest in online education as an alternative to academic mobility.

Literature review

This literature review explores the globalization and internationalization in higher education, enhancing internationalization at Indian Higher Education Institutions, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education, and the role of online education as an alternative to traditional international student mobility. Key barriers such as financial constraints, safety concerns, and cultural dissimilarities are highlighted, alongside insights into cultural integration, economic barriers, and the impact of global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic on international education.

Globalization and internationalization in higher education

Globalization and internationalization are critical forces shaping contemporary higher education. Globalization refers to the growing interconnectedness and interdependence of the world’s economies, cultures, and populations, spurred by advancements in technology, trade, and communication. Internationalization specifically addresses

the strategies and practices universities employ to respond to the global changes, such as international partnerships, student and faculty mobility, and cross-border educational collaborations (Knight, 2015).

Student and faculty mobility is a significant facet of internationalization. This mobility not only promotes cultural exchange but also enhances the global competencies of graduates, making them more adaptable and employable in a globalized job market (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). Moreover, universities benefit from the diverse perspectives and experiences that international students and faculty bring to their campuses (Marginson, 2020).

Several barriers exist in developing markets like India that affect student mobility. Financial constraints are a significant impediment, as the cost of international education can be prohibitive to many families (Agarwal, 2019). Additionally, safety concerns are another factor that discourages students and parents from considering education in certain regions (Singh & Papa, 2010). Cultural dissimilarities also pose challenges, as students may struggle to adapt to different cultural norms and practices, impacting their overall educational experience (Gupta & Sharma, 2018). Brain-drain, cultural homogenization, and inequities in access to international education opportunities (Maringe & Foskett, 2010) are some more challenges that influence the decision of international students to pursue their higher education at other destinations.

Studies posit the positive impact of international collaborations on research quality and innovation (de Wit & Altbach, 2021; Yang, 2021). Initiatives like resource sharing, joint research, and dual-degree programs, boost academic reputation and global presence (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Universities should develop strategies that balance global integration with local relevance, promoting inclusivity and sustainability in international education (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011).

Enhancing internationalization at Indian higher education institutions

The internationalization of higher education is paramount for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) globally, serving as a significant revenue source and fostering the overall development of institutions and their stakeholders. Van der Wende (2007) defines internationalization as organized, sustained efforts to make higher education responsive to the challenges of globalization in societies, economies, and labour markets. Internationalization strategies encompass the enrolment of full-time international students, exchange programs, curriculum internationalization, and research collaborations (Yang, 2022).

Historically, India was an international education hub, with ancient universities such as Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila attracting scholars from around the world (Goel & Goel, 2021). Despite the glorified history and India’s expansive education system, comprising nearly 900 universities and approximately 37 million students, a limited number of Indian universities achieve global rankings (Dar, 2020). Contemporary India faces a trade deficit in the higher education sector, with a significantly higher number of Indian students studying abroad

Table 1  
Chi-Square tests

|                                                                                                | Chi-Square tests |                    |    |                       |                                            |                  | Symmetric measures |              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------|
|                                                                                                | Valid N          | Pearson Chi-Square | Df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | % of cells with expected count less than 5 | Likelihood Ratio | Cramer's V         | Approx. Sig. |
| Region of origin * Reason for not selecting India as an educational destination                | 2411             | 5.022E2a           | 15 | 0.000                 | 25                                         | 356.789          | 0.264              | 0.000        |
| Gender of International student * Reason for not selecting India as an educational destination | 2411             | 27.578a            | 5  | 0.000                 | 16.7                                       | 26.833           | 0.107              | 0.000        |
| Level of education * Reason for not selecting India as an educational destination              | 2411             | 34.192a            | 10 | 0.000                 | 16.7                                       | 34.188           | 0.084              | 0.000        |
| Funding of education * Reason for not selecting India as an educational destination            | 2411             | 2.666E2a           | 15 | 0.000                 | 16.7                                       | 212.710          | 0.192              | 0.000        |
| Region of origin * Destination due to the covid-19 pandemic                                    | 2411             | 1.424E2a           | 20 | 0.000                 | 40                                         | 104.872          | 0.121              | 0.000        |
| Region of origin * Online education preference                                                 | 2411             | 53.113a            | 10 | 0.000                 | 16.7                                       | 51.339           | 0.105              | 0.000        |

compared to international students coming to India (Kumar, 2014).

Numerous barriers deter international students from selecting Indian institutions, including infrastructural deficiencies, bureaucratic hurdles, and the perceived lack of an inclusive environment (Gupta & Singh, 2023; Jain et al., 2023). The New Education Policy 2020 aims to address these issues by promoting academic collaborations and easing regulations for foreign students and institutions (MHRD, 2020). However, the effectiveness of these policies in reversing the trend is yet to be observed. Especially, as the pandemic-induced shift to digital learning has underscored the digital divide that Indian HEIs need to bridge (Choudhury & Agarwal, 2023; Patel & Desai, 2023).

#### *Higher education and the COVID-19 situation in India*

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected education systems worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global health emergency on January 30, 2020, and subsequently a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). By December 2021, the pandemic had led to over 276 million cases and 5.37 million deaths globally. India reported its first case of COVID-19 on January 30, 2020, and experienced severe surges in cases and fatalities during 2020 and 2021 (Prajapati & Parikh, 2021; WHO, 2021).

In response to the virus's spread, the Indian government enforced nationwide lockdowns, resulting in the closure of educational institutions and significant disruptions to academic schedules (Saha et al., 2020). These closures and the cancellation of exams had unprecedented effects on education, particularly impacting international students, who emerged as one of the most vulnerable groups during the pandemic (Anandavalli et al., 2020).

Current research aims to understand the long-term repercussions of COVID-19 on global education systems, with a particular focus on international student mobility and the myriad challenges students faced during the pandemic (Patel & Desai, 2023). Despite initiatives to mitigate the pandemic's impact, such as improving infrastructure and facilitating a return to normalcy, persistent travel restrictions and delays in visa processing continue to affect international student enrolment (Government of India, 2023; Kong & Jacobs, 2012).

#### *The emergence and challenges of online education*

Online education emerged as a viable alternative to traditional classroom learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research indicates that online education can yield outcomes comparable to, or even better than, in-person education, promoting cost-effectiveness, enhanced learning, and improved digital literacy (Journell, 2010; Kong & Jacobs, 2012; Xie et al., 2020). In India, initiatives such as Digital India have significantly increased educational accessibility, particularly in remote areas (Aich, 2021; National Informatics Centre & Prajapati, 2020).

Despite its advantages, online education presents numerous challenges. Issues such as inadequate equipment and internet facilities in remote areas, difficulties for international students due to time zone differences, and the digital divide hinder its effectiveness (Joshi et al., 2021; Oyedotun, 2020; Patil et al., 2020). The success of online education relies heavily on proper access to technology and stable internet connections (Shohel et al., 2022).

The landscape of online education is continually evolving, reflecting both opportunities and challenges. The integration of artificial intelligence into online learning platforms can enhance student engagement and provide personalized learning experiences (Wang et al., 2022). Additionally, hybrid models of education, which combine online and in-person instruction, are gaining popularity, offering flexibility and improving educational outcomes (Allen & Seaman, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

In the Indian context, the National Education Policy 2020 underscores the use of technology to enhance the quality and reach of education, demonstrating a commitment to leveraging digital tools for

educational transformation (Government of India, 2020). Nonetheless, significant research gaps remain, particularly concerning international students' changing plans and preferences during the application process.

The following alternative hypotheses were formulated for this research:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The reasons international students do not choose India as an educational destination vary according to their region of origin.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *The reasons international students do not choose India as an educational destination vary according to their gender.*

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The reasons international students do not choose India as an educational destination vary according to their level of education.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): *The reasons international students do not choose India as an educational destination vary according to their planned method of funding their education.*

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students' decision not to choose India as an educational destination varies according to their region of origin.

Hypothesis 6 (H6): The preference of international students for on-line education varies according to their region of origin.

These hypotheses specifically pertain to international students who have initiated but not completed the admission process for studying in India.

#### **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative methodology to investigate the intentions of international students who initiated but did not complete the admission process to study in India. The research process included a comprehensive review of pertinent literature, survey instrument design, sample size determination, distribution of the questionnaire link to participants, data collection, response analysis, and discussion of findings.

#### *Instrument design*

To address the three previously outlined research questions, this study utilized a self-administered online questionnaire for data collection, with responses submitted anonymously. The questionnaire comprised two sections. The first section collected demographic information, such as gender, educational level, and country of origin. The second section gathered detailed information related to decision-making factors, including sources of information about Indian education, financial situation, reasons for unsuccessful applications or for not choosing India as an educational destination, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their study plans, and their interest in online education.

The literature review facilitated the identification of potential factors influencing international students' decisions, such as perceived quality of education, safety concerns, and availability of scholarships (Lee, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). This preliminary list of factors was validated by a panel of experts, comprising five university international office directors, one professor with numerous publications on international education, and one research scholar specializing in student mobility. The panel provided feedback on the relevance and clarity of each item, ensuring the content validity of the questionnaire (DeVellis, 2017).

Following the expert panel's feedback, the questionnaire underwent several revisions. Ambiguous or redundant items were revised or removed, and new items were added to address identified gaps. The revised questionnaire was then pre-tested with a small sample of international students to assess reliability and readability. The pre-test results indicated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85, suggesting that the instrument was reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein,



1994).

The final questionnaire consisted of carefully curated statements designed to capture a comprehensive range of factors influencing international students' decisions. Responses to these statements were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated strong disagreement and 5 indicated strong agreement. The Likert scale format was chosen for its simplicity and effectiveness in measuring attitudes and perceptions (Joshi et al., 2015).

The survey was distributed to participants via email, utilizing the internet—a widely recognized method for studying international students due to its efficiency and cost-effectiveness (Hughes, 2004; Sherry et al., 2009). The use of an online survey platform also allowed for greater reach and flexibility, enabling participants from diverse geographical locations to respond at their convenience.

### Sample

A self-administered online questionnaire Google Form link was sent to 10,000 international students to ensure a sample size exceeding the required number. Judgment sampling was employed to select a list of 10,000 international students who applied to study in India but subsequently decided not to or postponed their plans.

Judgmental sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling technique, involves selecting a sample from the entire population based on the researcher's judgment for a particular purpose (Thomas, 2022). These 10,000 students were randomly selected from a dataset of 46,000 international students who applied to the "Study in India" program in 2021 but did not complete the admission process. The list included students from 86 countries, both male and female, with levels of study ranging from diploma to Ph.D. To maintain confidentiality, personal information such as names, email addresses, and phone numbers were not collected in the responses. Any personal information shared by students was deleted during the compilation of responses. Given the researcher's access to the required target audience from a single source, judgment sampling was used to gather data from international students worldwide who applied under self-sponsored and scholarship programs to the "Study in India" initiative. These 10,000 international students were given 15 days to complete the questionnaire. Finally, 2417 students from 61 countries completed the questionnaire, with six incomplete responses, resulting in 2411 final responses—a response rate of approximately 24 %.

### Data analysis

This section summarizes the survey findings and presents the data using graphs and diagrams.

### Sample characteristics

Among the 2411 responses received, 70 % were from male students and 30 % from female students. This gender ratio aligns with the overall gender distribution of incomplete international student applicants targeted, which is similar to the gender ratio of international students selecting India as a study destination in 2020 (AISHE, 2019–20).

Nearly 88 % of respondents were from Africa and South Asia (SA). The remaining 12 % included 7 % from the Rest of Asia (ROA) and 5 % from the Rest of the World (ROW), excluding Asia and Africa. These regions represent most international students in India (UNESCO, 2022; AISHE, 2019–20). Responses from African students totalled 1690 (70 %), with 1216 male and 474 female respondents, from countries such as Algeria, Angola, and Zimbabwe. South Asian responses numbered 443 (18 %), with 312 male and 131 female respondents, from countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. ROA responses totalled 170 (7 %), with 118 male and 52 female respondents, from countries such as Indonesia, Iran, and Malaysia. ROW responses numbered 108 (4 %), with 34 male and 72 female students, from countries such as the USA,

Australia, and the Netherlands.

Most respondents were applying for undergraduate or diploma-level programs (61 %), with 1474 students, including 1036 males and 438 females. Postgraduate applicants numbered 775 (32 %), with 461 males and 178 females. Doctorate applicants totalled 162 (7 %), with 92 males and 49 females.

The study aimed to identify critical factors influencing students' decisions not to select India as an educational destination, based on the literature review. Key factors identified included safety, lack of financial assistance, uncertain job prospects, cultural differences, recognition of Indian degrees, and technical issues during application (Pawar et al., 2019).

As illustrated in Diagram 1, the data reveals that the predominant factor influencing international students' decision not to select India as an educational destination is the lack of financial assistance, with approximately 67 % of respondents citing it as a critical reason. Safety concerns emerge as the second most significant factor, particularly among students from the Rest of the World (ROW), which includes more developed countries. The third significant factor is cultural differences, which are more pronounced among students from the Rest of Asia (ROA) and Africa. These findings also address the study's first research question, identifying financial constraints as the foremost deterrent for international students considering India as a study destination. Given that most international students targeting India hail from countries with low GDP, affordability is a paramount concern. Consequently, scholarships become the most critical motivating factor for students from these countries to pursue education abroad.

Various scholarships are available for students applying to study overseas, classified based on their source of origin: scholarships from their home country, the host country, or foreign sources. The response data indicate that nearly 87 % of respondents from different regions were seeking scholarships, while only 13 % intended to self-finance their education. Analyzing regional data further, almost 63 % of respondents sought scholarships from the Indian government or Indian higher education institutions. About 14 % looked for scholarship grants from their home governments, 10 % from other countries, and only 8 % planned to self-fund their education.

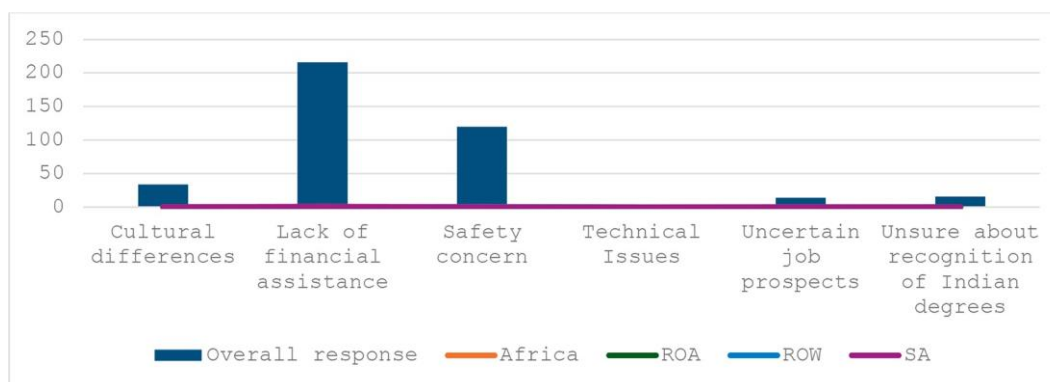
Among African respondents, 69 % sought scholarships from the Indian government or Indian higher education institutions, 12 % from their home governments, 11 % from other countries, and 8 % intended to self-finance. South Asian (SA) respondents showed that 61 % were seeking scholarships from Indian sources, 21 % from their home governments, 7 % from other countries, and 11 % planned to self-fund. For ROA respondents, 51 % sought scholarships from Indian sources, 19 % from their home governments, 14 % from other countries, and 16 % intended to self-finance. Conversely, among ROW respondents, primarily from developed countries, 81 % planned to self-fund their education. Only 9 % sought scholarships from Indian sources, 6 % from other countries, and 4 % from their home governments.

These findings underscore the critical role of financial assistance in influencing the educational choices of international students and highlight the significant disparities in funding preferences across different regions.

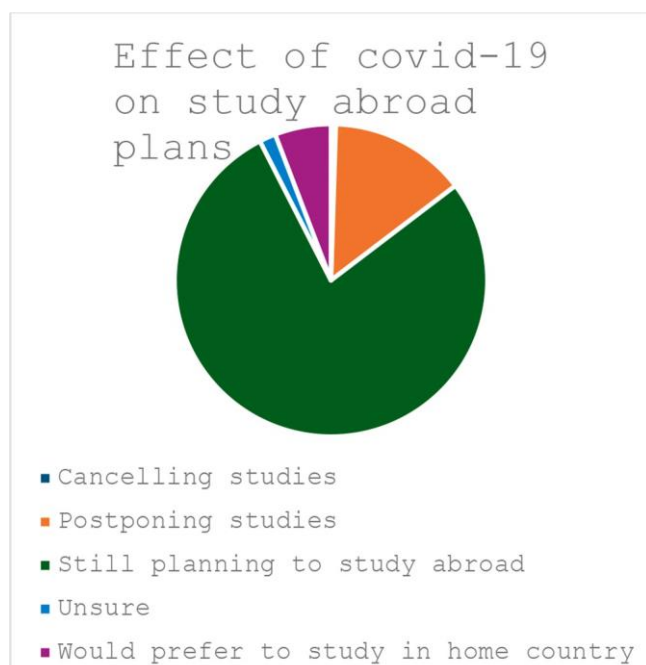
To address the second research question, we examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international students' decisions to study in India. As depicted in Diagram 2, less than 25 % of international students altered their decision to study in India due to the pandemic or temporarily postponed their plans to study abroad.

Regarding the third research question, which investigates whether online education presents an opportunity and can still motivate students to study in India, Diagram 3 illustrates that nearly half of the respondents were willing to pursue their studies through an online medium. Additionally, 28 % of the respondents indicated a tentative willingness, while only 21 % expressed a reluctance to engage in online education.

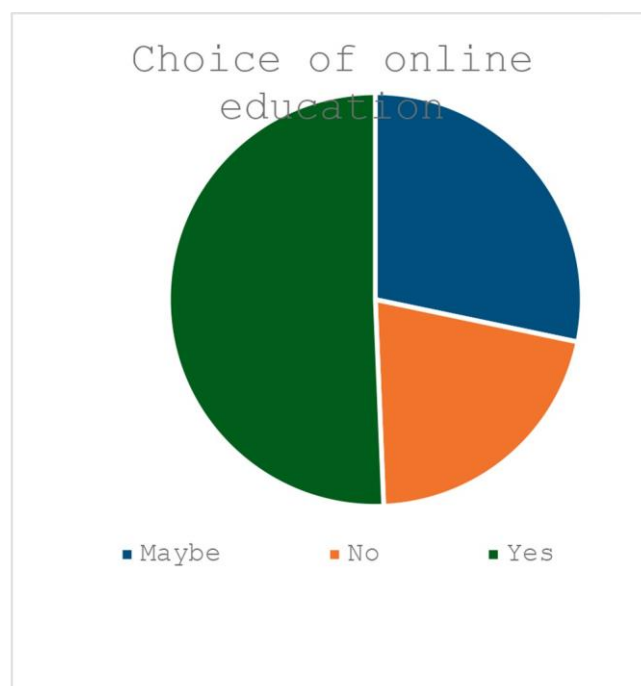




**Diagram 1.** Reasons for students' not selecting India as an education destination.



**Diagram 2.** Effect of covid-19 on international students' study abroad decision.



**Diagram 3.** Choice of online education for students' not selecting India as an education destination.

### Hypothesis testing

To test the hypotheses, the research employs SPSS 16 software to evaluate the data and compute results. The study utilizes the Pearson Chi-Square test of independence to investigate the hypotheses, as all variables were categorical and nominal. This test determines whether two variables are independent of each other (McHugh, 2013). To assess the strength of the relationship between dependent variables, Cramer's V was employed. In cases where more than 20 % of cells had an expected count of less than 5, the likelihood ratio was considered. Additionally, Goodman and Kruskal's tau was used to determine the direction of the relationship between the variables. Crosstabs were also utilized to analyze the variables and address the research questions.

### Results and discussions

The first hypothesis posited that students' decisions not to select India as an educational destination varied based on their region of origin. The Pearson Chi-Square test of independence, with the region of origin as the first variable and reasons for not selecting India as the second variable, showed a p-value of less than 0.05. However, 25 % of

the cells had an expected count of less than 5, violating the basic assumption of the Pearson Chi-Square test. The likelihood ratio p-value was also less than 0.05, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, a significant relationship exists between students' decisions and their region of origin. Cramer's V was calculated to be 0.264, indicating a moderate relationship. The values for Goodman and Kruskal's tau were too low to determine the direction of the relationship.

Findings also indicate that lack of financial assistance is the primary deterrent for international students considering India as their education destination. Cultural differences, particularly for students from Africa and ROA, and safety concerns for students from ROW and SA are also significant factors impacting their decision. Enhancing financial aid and scholarships, addressing cultural differences, and improving safety measures could make India a more attractive destination for international students. Therefore, it is imperative to increase the availability and accessibility of grants and financial aid specifically targeted at international students. By doing so, India can position itself as a more attractive and competitive option in the global education market.

The second hypothesis stated that gender influences students' decisions not to select India for their higher education. The Pearson Chi-

Square test revealed a p-value of less than 0.05, with less than 20 % of the cells having an expected count of less than 5, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. A significant relationship was found between students' decisions and their gender, with Cramer's V calculated at 0.107, indicating a weak relationship. Safety concerns were more prevalent among female students, suggesting that improving security measures could attract more female international students to Indian HEIs. To foster a safe and welcoming atmosphere, stronger security measures and support systems within educational institutions are needed. This involves not only physical safety measures but also robust support networks for international students.

The third hypothesis examined the relationship between students' level of education and their reasons for not selecting India. The Pearson Chi-Square test showed a p-value of less than 0.05, with less than 20 % of the cells having an expected count of less than 5. A significant relationship was found, with Cramer's V calculated at 0.084, indicating a weak relationship. Financial assistance and safety concerns were consistent across all educational levels, while cultural differences affected undergraduate and doctoral students more. Recognition of Indian degrees abroad was a major concern for doctoral students.

The fourth hypothesis investigated how students plan to fund their education and their reasons for not selecting India. The Pearson Chi-Square test showed a p-value of less than 0.05, with less than 20 % of the cells having an expected count of less than 5. A significant relationship was found, with Cramer's V calculated at 0.192, indicating a weak relationship. Self-financing students prioritized safety, while those seeking Indian government scholarships were primarily concerned with financial assistance.

The fifth hypothesis examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' decisions based on their region of origin. The Pearson Chi-Square test showed a p-value of less than 0.05, with 40 % of the cells having an expected count of less than 5, violating the test's assumptions. The likelihood ratio p-value was also less than 0.05, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis. A significant relationship was found, with Cramer's V calculated at 0.121, indicating a weak relationship. The COVID-19 pandemic had a varied impact on students' decisions to study in India, with negligible effects on students from ROW and Africa, and slight changes for SA and ROA students.

The sixth hypothesis explored international students' preferences for online education based on their region of origin. The Pearson Chi-Square test showed a p-value of less than 0.05, with less than 20 % of the cells having an expected count of less than 5. A significant relationship was found, with Cramer's V calculated at 0.105, indicating a weak relationship. While online education was welcomed worldwide, students from SA countries showed more interest than those from other regions. The government's initiatives to promote digital education, such as the National Education Policy 2020, which emphasizes technology to enhance education quality and reach, are steps in the right direction. However, more needs to be done to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to online education.

The findings of this study have important implications for policy and practice in Indian higher education. Enhancing financial support structures, particularly scholarships and grants, is critical. Improving security measures and addressing cultural differences through targeted orientation programs can make India a more attractive option thus helping international students integrate more smoothly into Indian society. This approach can mitigate the impact of cultural differences and enhance the overall student experience. Tailored strategies to meet the needs of undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral students, including international recognition of Indian degrees, are essential. By implementing these measures, Indian higher education institutions can better attract and retain international students thus enhancing their global competitiveness and diversity.

### Key findings

The key findings of this study reveal several critical issues that deter international students from choosing India as a study destination. Foremost among these is the lack of financial assistance, which emerges as the most significant deterrent. Safety concerns, particularly for female students, also play a crucial role in their decision-making process. Cultural integration issues are especially pertinent for students from Africa and ROA, highlighting the challenges they face in adapting to Indian society. Additionally, different educational levels present unique deterrents; undergraduate and diploma students cite cultural differences, postgraduate students are concerned about job opportunities, and doctoral students are deterred by the poor recognition of Indian degrees internationally. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on study abroad decisions was varied, with online education showing potential if adequately supported.

### Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study have critical implications for policies and practices in Indian higher education, particularly in addressing issues that hinder its alignment with global education trends and its appeal to international students. A significant insight is that the Indian higher education system suffers from a poor global reputation, and without substantial investment to improve its quality, international students are unlikely to be attracted to study at Indian institutions. Government and HEIs in India recognize the importance of internationalizing Indian universities and the role of full-time international students in this process. Understanding why international students refuse to study in India during their admission process, and how these reasons relate to different demographic and psychographic factors, is crucial for making informed policy decisions that can attract more international students. To address these findings, we demonstrate that Indian government needs to invest in world class infrastructure and facilities to be at par with other educational institutions competing at global level. Establishing partnerships and collaborations with other universities in the form of joint research projects, faculty exchange programs would help in creating global network thus positioning India as a leading educational hub at global level. Investing in Research and Development can give India a competitive edge globally thus making it one of the preferred destinations worldwide. Apart from this, policy makers also need to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms to meet international accreditation standards.

By implementing these measures, Indian higher education institutions can better attract and retain international students, thereby enhancing their global competitiveness and diversity. The insights from this study can also assist other developing countries and regional education hubs in understanding and addressing the challenges of international student mobility. The broader global context underscores the need for Indian HEIs to align more closely with global education trends to enhance their appeal and reputation on the world stage.

### Limitations

This study provides significant insights into the reasons why international students choose not to pursue their education in India. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may have affected the findings and suggest areas for future research to build on this work.

Firstly, the study sample displayed a significant disparity in the number of participants from different regions. This imbalance may have introduced bias, as certain regions were overrepresented while others were underrepresented. Future research could address this limitation by ensuring a more balanced sample that equally represents different world regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Secondly, within-region differences were not thoroughly explored in

this study. Students from different countries within the same region might have diverse perspectives and reasons for their decisions. Future studies could delve into country-specific factors and examine how these influence students' decisions, providing a more granular understanding of regional differences.

Thirdly, the number of countries represented in the sample was limited to 61, with some countries contributing only a single student response. This limited representation may not fully capture the diversity of international students' experiences and perspectives. Expanding the sample to include more countries and ensuring a minimum number of responses per country could enhance the robustness of future studies.

Fourthly, the data obtained were predominantly nominal, which constrained the application of certain statistical techniques. Future research could incorporate a mix of nominal, ordinal, and continuous variables to allow for a more sophisticated analysis. This approach could provide deeper insights into the relationships between different factors and international students' decisions.

Lastly, this study primarily used a quantitative approach. Future research could benefit from a mixed-methods approach that includes qualitative data collection through interviews or focus groups. This would allow for a richer understanding of the nuanced reasons behind students' decisions and capture their experiences and perceptions more comprehensively.

To build on the findings of this study, future research could focus on specific regions and conduct in-depth analyses of students' motivations and barriers in those contexts. Additionally, exploring the segmentation of geographical regions based on the GDP of countries could provide valuable insights into how economic factors influence students' decisions. Longitudinal studies that track students' decisions and experiences over time could also offer important information on how perceptions and realities evolve.

By addressing these limitations and exploring new research directions, future studies can provide more detailed and actionable insights for policymakers and higher education institutions in India and other developing countries aiming to attract and retain international students.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Tarun Bhatara:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft.  
**Pooja Khanna:** Supervision.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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## **Motivations, experience and satisfaction of international students towards India as a study destination**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In contemporary times, educational institutions have increasingly prioritized efforts to attract international students, dedicating substantial resources to this endeavor. This study aims to explore the motivational factors that shape the decision-making processes of international students in choosing India as a destination for higher education. By offering a comprehensive analysis, the research seeks to elucidate the key drivers behind international students' choices and provide insights that can guide the formulation of effective strategies to enhance the recruitment and retention of international students in India. Employing quantitative research methods, the study investigates the interplay between international students' experiences, university reputation, and financial considerations, and how these factors influence the perceived value of India as an educational destination. The findings offer valuable implications for policymakers and education providers seeking to elevate India's attractiveness to the global student community. The research reveals that international students are particularly drawn to Indian universities with strong academic rankings, high-quality teaching, and a safe and supportive academic environment. Additionally, social networks play a pivotal role in shaping the decision-making process. It is recommended that developing countries, including India, focus on marketing strategies that emphasize their academic strengths, teaching excellence, and safety. Furthermore, universities should actively pursue international partnerships to expand their global reach and position themselves as preferred destinations for higher education.

**Keywords:** International Student Mobility, Study Destination Choice, Higher Education Internationalization, Push-Pull Factors, Student Satisfaction, Educational Motivations, Factors Influencing Destination Choice, International Student Experience, Destination Loyalty.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

India boasts one of the largest education systems globally, with over 36.6 million students enrolled across more than 900 universities and 39,000 higher education institutions. Despite being a significant

source of international students approximately 508,174 Indian students pursued higher education abroad in 2021 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023) India has struggled to attract a commensurate number of foreign students to its own institutions. In 2022, only 46,659 international students enrolled in Indian higher education institutions (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2023), a figure that highlights the disparity between India's role as a source of international students and its efforts to become a destination for them. To address this challenge, Indian authorities launched the "Study in India" initiative in 2018, which aimed to increase the enrollment of students from Asia and Africa, setting an ambitious target of enrolling 200,000 international students by 2023 (Qamar & Bhalla, 2017). This initiative was expected to significantly enhance India's standing in the global higher education market and establish the country as a leading destination for international students.

Understanding the factors that influence the decision-making process of international students is crucial to developing effective strategies for attracting them to Indian universities. However, there is a notable lack of empirical research on these factors in the context of India. This study seeks to address a fundamental question: what makes Indian universities an attractive option for international students? Answering this question could provide critical insights for both the host country and its institutions, enabling them to craft a compelling value proposition for prospective students (Khare, 2021). While many studies have examined the factors that influence international students' choices, most of this research has focused on advanced, English-speaking, and Western countries, leaving a significant gap in understanding the dynamics in emerging educational markets, particularly in Asia.

The motivations of international students in selecting Indian universities, and the role of marketing strategies in shaping their decisions, remain underexplored areas of research. This gap underscores the importance of examining the criteria that influence international students' choices, especially in the context of India as an emerging hub for higher education. The present study aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the key motivational factors that drive international students to choose India as a study destination, as well as the impact of marketing strategies on their decision-making process. The findings of this research will have significant implications for higher education institutions in India, offering insights that can inform the development of targeted strategies to attract and retain international students (Pawar; Dasgupta; Vispute, 2020).

This research provides a thorough analysis of the decision-making criteria of international students and examines the role of marketing strategies in the context of India as an emerging education destination. By addressing a critical gap in the literature, this study contributes valuable insights into an area that has received limited attention. The findings are expected to be of particular importance to higher education institutions seeking to differentiate themselves in a competitive global market by enhancing their recruitment and retention strategies for international students. In an increasingly competitive landscape



for international student recruitment, effective marketing can build institutional reputation, increase enrollment, and improve retention rates (Amaro; Marques; Alves, 2019). The decision-making process of international students typically unfolds in three stages: the decision to study abroad, the selection of a host country, and the choice of a host institution. Each stage is influenced by various external factors, necessitating comprehensive research and careful consideration by students. This paper begins by exploring the conceptual framework surrounding student mobility and scrutinizing mobility trends (Hou; Du, 2022). It then proceeds to analyze the critical variables influencing international students' decisions, followed by an in-depth discussion of the research methodology employed.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past three decades, higher education has witnessed a significant surge in student enrollment, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the massification of higher education. This expansion has placed immense pressure on public higher education institutions (HEIs), which have struggled to accommodate the growing student population, leading to the proliferation of private HEIs. Concurrently, the internationalization of higher education has resulted in a notable increase in student mobility across borders. These developments have provided students with a wide array of choices and intensified competition among HEIs to attract and retain both domestic and international students.

Gbollie and Gong (2020) investigated the factors influencing African and Asian students' decision to pursue higher education in Chinese universities. Their findings revealed that the availability of scholarships, flexible visa and program entry policies, and the perceived quality of education were critical drivers. Other factors included the positive attitudes of Chinese citizens, the country's reputation, its development potential, and hospitality. Career development emerged as the most important motivator, whereas entertainment ranked lowest. These findings underscore the importance of understanding push-pull factors for evidence-based interventions aimed at enhancing the international student experience.

Similarly, Wu et al. (2021) conducted a study on the motivations of students from five coastal universities in China. Their research highlighted the desire for new experiences and challenges as key reasons for choosing China as an educational destination. The expectation of China's prosperous future further contributed to its appeal, offering valuable insights for universities in emerging countries seeking to attract international students.

Abbas et al. (2021) adopted a blended approach to examine the factors influencing international students' decisions to study abroad. In countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom, academic standing was the primary consideration, followed by social, personal, financial, vocational, and marketing factors. Their findings revealed that international students studying in Germany were more satisfied with

their choice compared to those in the UK. This study offers recommendations for academic policymakers seeking to retain talent and attract international students (Shkoler; Rabenu, 2023; Paulino; Castaño, 2019).

The increasing diversity in international education has prompted host countries to invest in internationalization programs, yet the factors influencing students' choices remain multifaceted. Nicholls (2018) identified predicted learning quality, institutional reputation, affordability, and safety as primary considerations for international students when selecting a country or university, with the relative importance of these factors varying by nationality, gender, and level of education. This study, based on research conducted among international students at Michigan State University, has significant implications for universities and national economic development agencies in their marketing and recruitment efforts.

In a study by Pawar, Vispute, and Wasswa (2020), interviews with twenty international students at two Indian universities revealed that cultural diversity, high academic standards, and India's expanding economy were the key factors motivating students to choose India for higher education. These insights offer valuable intelligence for Indian policymakers and university administrators in their efforts to position India as an attractive destination for international students.

Hercog and Van de Laar (2016) analyzed how country-specific factors influence the destination choices of highly skilled migrants. While European countries aim to attract skilled migrant workers, their limited long-term migration opportunities reduce the significance of amenities and policies for potential migrants. The study suggests that unless European countries offer realistic long-term migration prospects, efforts to attract international students through integration policies may fall short.

Apsite-Berina et al. (2023) examined the internationalization of higher education in Latvia and the motivations of global scholars studying there. Their survey-based research highlighted that while German students viewed Latvia as a second-choice destination, Indian students were drawn by the country's culture and regional characteristics.

Khanal and Gaulee (2019) discussed the challenges international students face in three distinct phases: pre-departure, post-departure, and post-study. Pre-departure challenges included obtaining accurate information and preparing required documentation. After arrival, students encountered language barriers, financial difficulties, and cultural adjustment issues. Post-study challenges often involved uncertainties about future opportunities and bureaucratic processes. These findings are crucial for governments and educational institutions aiming to attract and support international students.

Ammigan, Dennis, and Jones (2021) investigated the impact of student nationality and destination on satisfaction and institutional recommendations, controlling for the learning experience. Their research demonstrated that nationality, destination, and learning experiences significantly influence student



satisfaction and institutional guidance. Teaching-related factors strongly affected satisfaction, while study-related factors influenced institutional recommendations.

Rust and Singh (2020) examined the factors affecting Indian students' decisions to study at U.S. universities. Their study found that receiving a graduate assistantship or scholarship was the most influential factor. Positive experiences included supportive faculty and campus resources, while the absence of Indian grocery stores or worship centers posed challenges for students.

Ahmad and Hussain (2017) utilized the push-pull theory and the analytic hierarchy process to investigate the motivations of international students choosing the UAE for higher education. Their findings provide essential insights for educational authorities and institutions in developing effective recruitment and marketing strategies.

Mao, Ji, and Wang (2022) studied the motivations of 671 international students in China and found that self-motivation, positive adjustment, and social interactions were the primary drivers. Their findings hold valuable implications for policymakers, universities, and international students regarding the development of effective policies and educational practices.

Thoo et al. (2022) explored the factors that influence international students' loyalty to Malaysian HEIs. They found that student satisfaction was strongly linked to study costs, destination image, and service quality, which in turn encouraged students to recommend and return to Malaysia for future studies.

### **3 RESEARCH GAP**

Further research is necessary to explore student migration patterns in emerging regional hubs, as this knowledge can aid policymakers in formulating effective strategies to promote educational exchange and cooperation between countries. The rise of regional hubs as centers of higher education presents both opportunities and challenges for the global education landscape, necessitating comprehensive investigation into the factors shaping student decisions, as well as the associated challenges and opportunities. Additionally, research on the broader impacts of student migration remains crucial for policymakers and stakeholders in the global education sector (Gbollie; Gong, 2020; Wu et al. Li, 2021).

Current studies on international students choosing India as a destination have largely focused on the students' countries of origin and short-term study plans. Given India's position as the second-largest source of outbound international students, further research is needed to identify the factors driving international students to pursue education in India. This deeper understanding could provide valuable insights for enhancing India's appeal as a global study destination (Pawar; Vispute; Wasswa, 2020; Ahmad; Hussain, 2017).

## 4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Research on international students who select India as their educational destination reveals that these students encounter a range of significant challenges that impact their academic and personal experiences. Among the most prevalent difficulties are language barriers, which not only impede effective communication but also contribute to feelings of isolation and alienation (Khanal; Gaulee, 2019). Securing appropriate accommodation presents another substantial obstacle, particularly for students unfamiliar with local customs and living arrangements (Pawar; Vispute; Wasswa, 2020). Dietary adjustments also prove challenging, as local food offerings often differ considerably from the students' customary diets. Additionally, India's economic conditions pose financial strain, with many students struggling to afford the cost of living and tuition fees (Ahmad; Hussain, 2017). Furthermore, academic challenges—including curriculum disparities, limited access to resources, and cultural differences in educational practices—can hinder students' ability to perform successfully in their studies (Ammigan; Dennis; Jones, 2021). These issues collectively present significant barriers that require strategic interventions and targeted support to ensure the success and well-being of international students in India.

### 4.1 OBJECTIVES

- to explore the motivational factors of international students in picking India as a study terminus;
- to compare international students' motivation to choose India as a learning point for higher studies based on the student's place of origin;
- to examine the impact of the international student's experience, university reputation and economic expenditure on the perceived value of India as a Learning point;
- to examine the moderating effect of acculturation between the perceived value and experience of international students in India;
- to analyze the influence of value perceived by international students studying in India on their satisfaction.

### 4.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To fully grasp the key determinants influencing decision-making in a foreign country, it is essential to understand the concepts of the "internationalization of higher education" and "global scholar adaptability." Although these terms are widely utilized, their meanings can vary depending on the context and the

perspectives of different stakeholders. Therefore, a clear and precise understanding of these concepts is vital when discussing the impact of destination country characteristics on decision-making processes.

The internationalization of higher education refers to the process of integrating global perspectives and practices into the core functions of universities and colleges. This involves fostering cross-border collaborations, enhancing the quality of education, improving institutional reputations, and promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding (Knight, 2015). Internationalization has become a strategic priority for many institutions as they seek to globalize their academic offerings and attract a diverse student body.

Conversely, international scholar mobility refers to the movement of scholars and students across national borders for academic purposes, whether for studying, teaching, or conducting research (Altbach & Knight, 2007). This phenomenon has gained considerable traction in recent years, as scholars and students increasingly seek to broaden their academic and professional horizons by engaging with new cultures and educational systems.

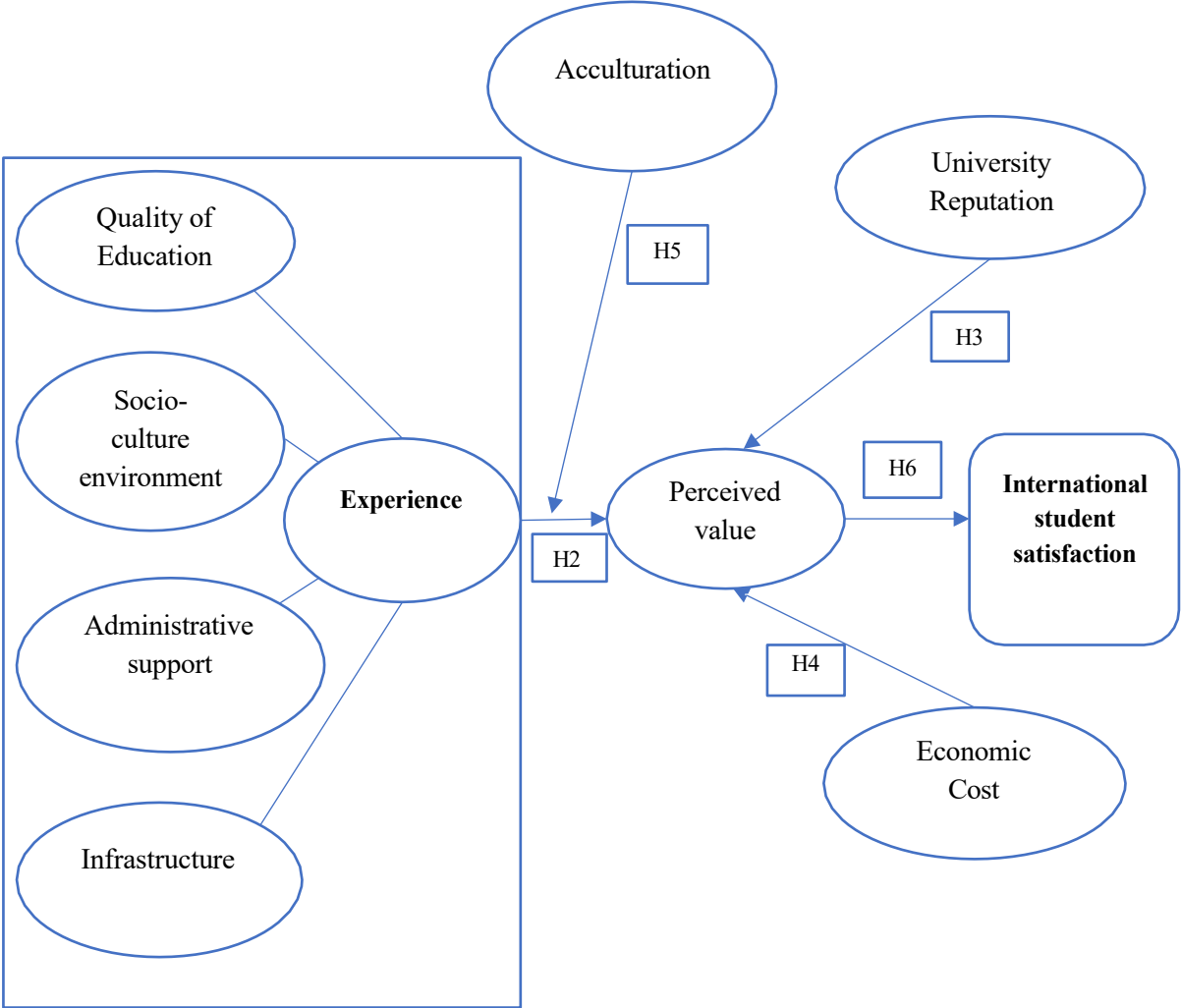
A comprehensive understanding of these concepts is crucial for appreciating the complex interplay between destination country factors and the decision-making process of international scholars. Such knowledge is invaluable for institutions aiming to attract and retain international students and scholars, as well as for policymakers seeking to develop effective strategies that promote the internationalization of higher education (de Wit, 2020). By recognizing the factors that influence international scholars' decisions, higher education institutions can better position themselves to meet the evolving demands of the global academic landscape.

#### 4.3 HYPOTHESIS

- **H1:** the motivations of international students selecting India as a study destination vary based on their place of origin;
- **H2:** international students' experience in India impacts the perceived value of India as an education centre;
- **H3:** the reputation of Indian universities impacts the perceived value of India as a learning terminus;
- **H4:** the economic cost for an international student to study in India impacts the perceived value of India as a learning point;
- **H5:** acculturation moderates the relation between the experience of international students and the perceived value of India as an education destination;

- **H6:** the perceived value of India as an education destination impacts international students' satisfaction in India.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of inbound international student satisfaction in India



Source: Prepared by the authors.

#### 4.4 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**International Student:** For the purpose of this paper, International student is considered as Shapiro, Farrelly and Tomas (2014) states “a student who moves to another country (the host country) for the purpose of pursuing tertiary or higher education e.g., college or university”

**Quality of Education:** The study focuses on the quality of education in teaching and learning pedagogy at HEIs in India.

**University Reputation:** The study analyzes the reputation of Indian universities based on their influence, trustworthiness, and rankings.

**Experience:** This report examines the quality of education, socio-cultural environment, administrative support, and university infrastructure for international students studying in India.

**Socio-cultural environment:** The socio-cultural environment encompasses India's physical and social settings, history, and culture that shape the education of Indian students.

**Administrative Support:** International students at HEIs in India receive administrative support from the international relations office and non-teaching staff.

**University Infrastructure:** The physical infrastructure of universities in India includes buildings, sports facilities, labs, libraries, IT infrastructure, medical facilities, student societies, and accommodations.

**Acculturation:** It guides poising the changes in attitudes and behaviours resulting from contact with a dominant group while still maintaining existing cultural values, beliefs, and traditions.

**Economic Cost:** Economic cost in this context refers to the value of goods that an individual forfeits to pay for education in India.

**International Student Satisfaction:** A state of satisfaction experienced by an international student upon achieving their desired outcome.

## 5 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a rigorous quantitative research methodology, incorporating both exploratory and descriptive approaches to investigate the experiences of international students in Indian universities. Data were collected from a strategically selected sample of international students using a comprehensive questionnaire designed to capture key dimensions of their motivations, satisfaction levels, and overall academic and social experiences. This methodology aims to provide deep insights into the factors shaping international students' experiences in India, offering valuable information for the enhancement of educational quality and support services for this critical demographic, which could inform improvements in institutional policies and practices (Creswell; Creswell, 2018).

### 5.1 STUDY AREA

The research focused on international students pursuing full-time academic programs in universities across India. The primary goal was to examine how these students perceive the Indian higher education system and their lived experiences within it. Participants were selected through a rigorous process based on strict eligibility criteria to ensure the study's reliability and relevance. Data were collected via surveys and

interviews, with the findings expected to provide actionable insights into the challenges faced by international students and to offer recommendations for improving their overall study-abroad experience.

## 5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both exploratory and descriptive methodologies to explore the motivations of international students who choose India as their study destination. The research aimed to identify and describe key constructs, including the interrelationships between motivational factors and student experiences. The study utilized a survey-based design featuring closed-ended questionnaires, collecting demographic data alongside quantitative responses. Quantitative research, known for its objectivity and suitability for large sample sizes, was selected to facilitate systematic and less biased data collection, making it ideal for decision-making purposes (Creswell; Plano Clark, 2018).

## 5.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections. Section A contained seven questions focused on gathering demographic information about respondents. Section B included 17 questions that examined the quality of education, university reputation, cost-effectiveness, quality of life, scholarships, and sociocultural factors influencing international students in India. Section C comprised 35 questions exploring areas such as the affordability of education, challenges faced by students, the adequacy of infrastructure, cultural adaptations, and overall student satisfaction in Indian universities.

## 5.4 MEASURES

For the purposes of this study, an international student is defined as an individual who is not a resident of the host country and has crossed international borders to pursue tertiary-level education on a full-time basis. A bespoke survey was designed for this target group, with responses measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to assess students' agreement with various statements related to their experiences and perceptions.

## 5.5 SAMPLE SIZE

A quota sampling technique was employed to collect data from 1,000 participants, with data being gathered via both online and paper-based questionnaires. The sample was stratified into two categories: students studying in universities located in Northern and Southern India. The aim of this stratification was to explore regional variations in the experiences of international students and to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by this cohort while studying in India.

## 5.6 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

The data collected were analyzed using a range of statistical techniques, including Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), to test the study's hypotheses. Comparative analyses were conducted to identify significant differences between groups, with statistical tools such as SPSS AMOS and ANOVA used to ensure robust and accurate analysis. These methods were selected to facilitate reliable data-driven decision-making and provide in-depth insights into the study's key research questions. SPSS software was used for all statistical analyses, ensuring precision and reliability in the findings.

### 5.6.1 Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is a robust statistical technique employed to assess and evaluate the direction and strength of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. This method is pivotal for researchers and analysts as it facilitates an understanding of how variations in one variable correspond with changes in another. The primary objective of correlation analysis is to measure the degree of association between two variables through the correlation coefficient, a numerical value ranging from -1 to 1 (Field, 2018).

A correlation coefficient of 1 indicates a perfect positive linear relationship, meaning that as one variable increases, the other increases in a directly proportional manner. Conversely, a coefficient of -1 signifies a perfect negative linear relationship, where an increase in one variable results in a corresponding decrease in the other (Cohen et al., 2013). A correlation coefficient of 0 suggests no linear relationship, implying that changes in one variable have no consistent impact on the other.

The most commonly used correlation coefficient is Pearson's "r," which is appropriate for assessing linear relationships between normally distributed variables. However, Pearson's correlation may not be suitable in cases where the relationship between the variables is non-linear or the data do not meet



the assumptions of normality (Bryman; Cramer, 2011). In such instances, alternative correlation measures may be more appropriate to capture the nature of the relationship.

Table 1. Correlation analysis of the factors

| Correlations    | Quality | Reputation | Perceived value | Globalisation | Environmental |
|-----------------|---------|------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Quality         | 1       | .620**     | .540**          | .605**        | .643**        |
| Reputation      | .620**  | 1          | .334**          | .636**        | .457**        |
| Perceived value | .540**  | .334**     | 1               | .211**        | .357**        |
| Globalisation   | .605**  | .636**     | .211**          | 1             | .696**        |
| Environmental   | .643**  | .457**     | .357**          | .696**        | 1             |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The correlation coefficient of 0.643 indicates a strong positive association between the variables "Quality" and "Environmental." As this value exceeds 0.500, it signifies a robust linear relationship between these two factors.

In contrast, the correlation coefficient of 0.457 demonstrates a weaker positive association between "Reputation" and "Environmental." Though close to 0.500, this value suggests a moderate linear relationship between the variables.

Similarly, a correlation coefficient of 0.357 reveals a weaker positive association between "Perceived Value" and "Environmental." Given that this value is below 0.500, it indicates a relatively weaker linear connection between these factors.

The correlation coefficient of 0.696 reflects a strong positive association between "Globalization" and "Environmental." Since this value is well above 0.500, it implies a strong linear relationship between the two variables.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the variables "Globalization" and "Reputation" exhibit a positive correlation coefficient of 0.636, further indicating a substantial positive association between them.

5.6.2 Regression analysis

Table 2: Regression analysis of the factors

| Model           | Sum of Squares | Df         | Mean Square | F       | P value |
|-----------------|----------------|------------|-------------|---------|---------|
| Regression      | 518.395        | 5          | 103.679     | 168.534 | .000b   |
| Residual        | 611.489        | 994        | 0.615       |         |         |
| Total           | 1129.884       | 999        |             |         |         |
| Model           | B              | Std. Error | Beta        | T       | P value |
| (Constant)      | 0.849          | 0.134      |             | 6.346   | 0.00    |
| Quality         | 0.309          | 0.046      | 0.258       | 6.754   | 0.00    |
| Reputation      | -0.028         | 0.046      | -0.02       | -0.605  | 0.55    |
| Perceived value | 0.537          | 0.033      | 0.469       | 16.443  | 0.00    |
| Environmental   | -0.739         | 0.038      | -0.704      | -19.596 | 0.00    |
| Globalisation   | 0.581          | 0.043      | 0.524       | 13.585  | 0.00    |

Source: Prepared by the authors.



From the above analysis, the F value is 168.534 with a value of 0.00; hence, it can be stated that there is a significant relationship among the variables. Furthermore, the regression equation can be framed as

$$Y \text{ (Recommendations)} = 0.849 + 0.309 \times \text{Quality} - 0.028 \times \text{Reputations} + 0.537 \times \text{Perceived value} - 0.739 \times \text{Environmental} + 0.581 \times \text{Globalisation}.$$

**5.6.3 Reliability**

Reliability analysis is a critical component in the field of psychometrics and research methodology, aimed at assessing the consistency and stability of measurement instruments or scales. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the data collected through these instruments are dependable and can be confidently used in drawing valid conclusions. One broadly used technique for assessing dependability is Cronbach's alpha coefficient, a factual measure that evaluates the inside consistency of a bunch of things inside a test or survey. The value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which ranges from 0 to 1, is a better indicator of internal consistency. In essence, it measures the degree to which a scale measures a single underlying construct by examining the degree to which the items on the scale correlate. Researchers commonly use Cronbach's alpha to assess the reliability of psychological tests, surveys, and other measurement tools. A high Cronbach's alpha proposes that the things in the instrument are firmly related, upgrading trust in the instrument's capacity to yield predictable and dependable outcomes. Nonetheless, it is essential to take note of that while Cronbach's alpha is an important mark of inward consistency, it doesn't catch other dependability perspectives, for example, test-retest or between rater unwavering quality. Researchers should consider these nuances and complement Cronbach's alpha with additional reliability measures to evaluate the instrument's dependability comprehensively.

Table 3: Reliability analysis of the factors

| Variables                                                  | No. of items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Factors influencing international students to choose India | 17           | 0.865            |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

From the above table, it is noted that Cronbach's alpha is 0.865; since the value of it is more than 0.700, the data is reliable and valid.

5.6.4 Cross tabulation

A method commonly employed to examine the relationship between multiple categorical variables in a dataset is cross-tabulation. In this approach, rows represent the subcategories of one variable, while columns reflect the classifications of another, organizing the data in a tabular format. The table presents the frequency of observations for each combination of categories, making it suitable for analyzing categorical variables such as gender, age groups, survey responses, or product types. The cells in the table display the number of data points that fall within each category combination, revealing patterns, associations, or dependencies between variables. Cross-tabulation provides a visually intuitive means of exploring relationships between categorical variables, facilitating the identification of trends and differences.

Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) analysis is a statistical technique used to determine whether two categorical variables exhibit a significant association. This test measures the disparity between observed and expected frequencies in a cross-tabulation. Researchers use the chi-square test to assess whether identified correlations are statistically significant or if they could have arisen by chance.

5.6.4.1 Research Hypothesis 1

**Null hypothesis:** The motivations of international students selecting India as a study destination do not vary based on their place of origin.

**Alternate hypothesis:** The motivations of international students selecting India as a study destination vary based on their place of origin.

Table 4: Chi-square test for variation of motivational factors based on place of origin

| Region             | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Asia               | 0                 | 4        | 14      | 97    | 44             |
| Rest of Asia       | 0                 | 0        | 241     | 49    | 0              |
| Rest of World      | 18                | 33       | 20      | 2     | 1              |
| Africa             | 0                 | 0        | 135     | 204   | 138            |
| Total              | 18                | 37       | 410     | 352   | 183            |
| Chi-Square Tests   | Value             | df       | P Value |       |                |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 965.985a          | 12       | 0.00    |       |                |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 697.198           | 12       | 0.00    |       |                |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

A test using chi-square showing a 0.00 p-value indicates an extraordinarily large result. When conducting a quantifiable analysis, the p-value indicates the probability of obtaining the observed data or more spectacular results in the event that the unfounded hypothesis proves to be correct. A p-value of 0.00 indicates that, on the assumption of zero relationship or mobility among each factor, there is virtually little chance of receiving what is seen (or anything beyond this limit). Often, a p-value of 0.00 is set from a

very small value, like 0.0001. This suggests important regions of potential for extraordinarily strong opposition to the unfounded rumours. In other words, it is extremely improbable that the result will happen by accident. Results indicate a p-esteem of 0.00, which leads to the rejection of the erroneous hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative explanation. As a result, it can be concluded that the reasons why international students choose India as a study destination differ depending on where they are from.

5.6.4.2 Research Hypothesis 2

**Null hypothesis:** International students' experience in India impacts the perceived value of India as an education destination.

**Alternate hypothesis:** International students' experience in India impacts the perceived value of India as an education destination.

Table 5: Chi-square test for international students' experience in India impacting perceived value

| Region             | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Asia               | 0                 | 0        | 0       | 125   | 34             |
| Rest of Asia       | 0                 | 0        | 145     | 145   | 0              |
| Rest of World      | 17                | 32       | 20      | 3     | 2              |
| Africa             | 0                 | 46       | 45      | 206   | 180            |
| Total              | 17                | 78       | 210     | 479   | 216            |
| Chi-Square Tests   | Value             | df       | P Value |       |                |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 746.077a          | 12       | 0.00    |       |                |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 677.976           | 12       | 0.00    |       |                |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

A test like the chi-square test showing a 0.00 p-value indicates an extraordinarily large result. When conducting a quantifiable analysis, the p-value indicates the probability of obtaining the observed data or more spectacular results in the event that the unfounded hypothesis proves to be correct. A p-value of 0.00 indicates that, on the assumption of zero connection or independence within the variables, there is virtually little chance of receiving the observed information (or anything above the constrained). It is common practice to adjust a p-worth = a value of from a minor value, like 0.0001. It suggests key areas of expertise for battling against the unjustifiable word. Stated differently, there is little probability that the result will happen by accident. The results indicate the statistically significant p-esteem is 0.00; as a result, the erroneous hypothesis is rejected and the alternative explanation is accepted. Therefore, it is concluded that international students' experience in India impacts the perceived value of India as an educational destination.

5.6.4.3 Research Hypothesis 3

**Null hypothesis:** The reputation of Indian universities does not impact the perceived value of India as an education destination.

**Alternate hypothesis:** The reputation of Indian universities impacts the perceived value of India as an education destination.

Table 6: Chi-square test for reputation of universities in India impacting perceived value

| Reputations        | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree  | 17                | 1        | 0       | 2     | 0              |
| Disagree           | 0                 | 31       | 3       | 72    | 3              |
| Neutral            | 0                 | 22       | 87      | 95    | 73             |
| Agree              | 0                 | 24       | 120     | 310   | 139            |
| Strongly Agree     | 0                 | 0        | 0       | 0     | 1              |
| Total              | 17                | 78       | 210     | 479   | 216            |
| Chi-Square Tests   | Value             | df       | P Value |       |                |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 995.644a          | 16       | 0.00    |       |                |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 303.804           | 16       | 0.00    |       |                |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

An extraordinarily large result is shown by a chi-square statistic that has a p-worth of 0.00. The p-value in a quantifiable analysis deals with the probability of obtaining the observed data or more spectacular results in the event that the erroneous hypothesis is true. When the p-value is 0.00, it means that there is virtually little chance of obtaining the observed data (or anything far more limit) if there is no association or interaction across the elements. Often, a p-value of 0.00 is set from a very small value, like 0.0001. In stark contrast to the unfounded reports, it suggests major domains of resilience. Stated differently, there's a very slim probability that the result will occur by accident. According to the results, the p-esteem is 0.00, which means that the hypothesis that is not viable is rejected and the alternative theory is accepted. The standing of Indian institutions is therefore shown to have an impact on the importance of the nation as a destination for colleges and universities.

5.6.5 One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)

One-way analysis of change (ANOVA) is a factual strategy utilized in exploration and information investigation to evaluate whether there are any massive contrasts among the method for at least three free gatherings. It is particularly useful when comparing means across different levels of a single categorical variable. The fundamental concept underlying one-way ANOVA is to partition the total variance observed in the data into two components: the variance attributable to differences between group means and the variance attributable to individual differences within each group. One can ascertain if the differences that

have been noticed among group averages are statistically noteworthy or might have happened by chance by computing the F statistics, which is the proportion of between-group deviation to within-group variance. Experts may disregard the null assumption and conclude that there is a significant difference in at least a single category mean from the remainder if the estimated F-statistic is greater than a crucial value. One-way ANOVA is versatile and widely employed in various disciplines, such as psychology, biology, and social sciences, to efficiently explore and quantify group differences. However, it assumes certain assumptions, including homogeneity of variances and normality of data, and researchers must carefully consider these assumptions when interpreting the results of a one-way ANOVA.

5.6.5.1 Research Hypothesis 4

**Null hypothesis:** The economic cost for an international student to study in India is independent of the perceived value of India as an education destination.

**Alternate hypothesis:** The economic cost for an international student to study in India impacts the perceived value of India as an education destination.

Table 7: Chi-square test for cost of studying in India impacting perceived value

| Perceived value | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F   | Sig. |
|-----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-----|------|
| Between Groups  | 366.01         | 6   | 61.002      | 125 | 0.00 |
| Within Groups   | 484.589        | 993 | 0.488       |     |      |
| Total           | 850.599        | 999 |             |     |      |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

When the means of the investigated groups differ significantly, the use of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with an observed p-value of 0.00 demonstrates high significance in statistical terms. In the context of hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis posits that there is no significant difference between the group means, while the alternative hypothesis suggests the presence of such differences. With a p-value of 0.00, the evidence overwhelmingly favours rejecting the null hypothesis. This implies that the observed variations among the group means are highly unlikely to have occurred by random chance alone. Consequently, researchers can confidently conclude that statistically significant differences exist in at least one pair of group means. However, while the p-value provides information about statistical significance, it does not elucidate the differences' practical significance or magnitude. Therefore, it is imperative to complement the interpretation with effect size measures and post-hoc analyses to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the meaningful distinctions between the groups under consideration. In summary, a p-value of 0.00 in a one-way ANOVA indicates strong evidence of group mean differences, prompting researchers to reject the null hypothesis and delve further into the nature and

implications of these observed distinctions. Hence, it is concluded that the economic cost for an international student to study in India impacts the perceived value of India as an educational destination.

5.6.5.2 Research Hypothesis 6

**Null hypothesis:** The perceived value of India as an education destination does not impact international students' satisfaction in India.

**Alternate hypothesis:** The perceived value of India as an education destination impacts international students' satisfaction in India.

Table 8: Chi-square test for cost of perceived value of studying in India impacting satisfaction of international students in India

| Perceived value | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig. |
|-----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups  | 281.902        | 4   | 70.476      | 123.3 | 0.00 |
| Within Groups   | 568.697        | 995 | 0.572       |       |      |
| Total           | 850.599        | 999 |             |       |      |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

A noticed p-worth of 0.00 in a one-manner examination of change (ANOVA) holds significant factual importance, demonstrating that there are to be sure massive contrasts among the method for the looked at gatherings. With regards to speculation testing, the invalid speculation sets that there is no huge distinction between the gatherings implies, while the elective speculation proposes the presence of such contrasts. With a p-value of 0.00, the evidence overwhelmingly favours rejecting the null hypothesis. This implies that the observed variations among the group means are highly unlikely to have occurred by random chance alone. Consequently, researchers can confidently conclude that statistically significant differences exist in at least one pair of group means. However, while the p-value provides information about statistical significance, it does not elucidate the differences' practical significance or magnitude. Therefore, it is imperative to complement the interpretation with effect size measures and post-hoc analyses to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the meaningful distinctions between the groups under consideration. In summary, a p-value of 0.00 in a one-way ANOVA indicates strong evidence of group mean differences, prompting researchers to reject the null hypothesis and delve further into the nature and implications of these observed distinctions. Hence, it is concluded that the perceived value of India as an education destination impacts international students' satisfaction in India.

**5.6.6 Moderation analysis**

It is a statistical method used to investigate the circumstances under which two variables' relationships change. Unlike simple regression analysis, which focuses on the direct association between an independent and a dependent variable, moderation analysis delves into the influence of a third variable, known as the moderator, on this relationship. The key objective is to identify whether the strength or direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables varies across different levels of the moderator. Moderation is particularly useful in understanding the boundary conditions of a given relationship, elucidating when and for whom an effect is more pronounced or attenuated. The analysis typically involves incorporating interaction terms in the regression model, allowing researchers to assess the moderating effect by examining the significance and direction of these interactions. Moderation analysis is applied in diverse fields, such as psychology, marketing, and social sciences, offering a nuanced understanding of complex relationships and shedding light on the conditions under which certain effects may be more or less prominent. This methodological approach enhances the depth and contextuality of research findings, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between variables.

**5.6.6.1 Hypothesis 5**

**Null hypothesis:** Acculturation does not moderate the relation between the experience of international students and the perceived value of India as an education destination.

**Alternate hypothesis:** Acculturation moderates the relation between the experience of international students and the perceived value of India as an education destination.

Table 9: Chi-Square Test of Acculturation as a Moderator in the Relationship between International Student Experiences in India and Perceived Value

| Model           | Coeff  | SE     | t       | P value |
|-----------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| Constant        | 0.9341 | 0.1205 | 7.7527  | 0.00    |
| Perceived value | 0.157  | 0.0378 | 4.1504  | 0.00    |
| Cost-effective  | 0.5023 | 0.0326 | 15.4112 | 0.00    |
|                 |        |        |         |         |
| X on Y          |        |        |         |         |
| Direct          | 0.157  | 0.0378 | 4.1504  | 0.00    |
| Indirect        | 0.3717 | 0.0315 | 0.3116  | 0.01    |

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The p-value in the table under is 0.00, meaning it falls below the 0.05 cut-off point. Hence, acculturation moderates the relationship between the experience of international students and the perceived value of India as an educational destination.



## 6 DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the key determinants influencing international students' selection of a host country for higher education. A comprehensive survey was conducted among international students, focusing on identifying the principal factors that informed their decision-making process. These decisions were shaped by a range of push-pull factors, with the findings from the qualitative phase of the study revealing six predominant themes: academic opportunities, career prospects, social interactions, financial considerations, personal circumstances, and marketing efforts. Notably, the structural analysis emphasized the relative importance of academic, career, and social factors over personal and marketing elements across both sample groups.

These results align with Maslow's theory of human motivation, a conceptual framework extensively referenced in both academic and professional contexts (Chan, 2022). Maslow (1965) proposed a hierarchy of needs, comprising physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization needs, which has significantly contributed to understanding the priorities that influence human behavior. In the context of higher education, students' pursuit of academic quality can be seen as a fulfillment of basic needs, as inadequate educational standards often drive students to seek opportunities abroad (Jupiter et al., 2017). This finding underscores the necessity for home countries to improve educational quality to mitigate the risks of brain drain.

Maslow's framework further posits that safety needs, including financial and emotional security, are pivotal in decision-making. Financial considerations such as economic stability, availability of scholarships, and favorable exchange rates emerged as critical factors for students choosing to study abroad (Lörz, Netz, & Quast, 2016). The importance of a peaceful and inclusive environment also surfaced, reinforcing the idea that international students favor destinations that offer financial security and sociocultural stability. Additionally, the study found that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to pursue education overseas, highlighting the socioeconomic barriers to international mobility.

Social factors, including cultural diversity, social engagement opportunities, and overall student life, also played a significant role in students' decision-making processes. Once these social needs are satisfied, students aspire to fulfill esteem needs, which are often enhanced by the challenges and opportunities provided through international exposure. Gaining experience abroad can bolster self-confidence, enhance self-esteem, and foster a sense of accomplishment. Positive social environments not only attract international students but also generate substantial financial and cultural benefits for the host country.

Finally, self-actualization, which is closely tied to career advancement, emerged as a key factor. Students are increasingly drawn to destinations that provide opportunities for academic excellence,



research, internships, and practical experiences aligned with their career aspirations. Countries offering such prospects, along with a safe and multicultural environment, are more likely to attract international students aiming for both personal and professional growth.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The research focused exclusively on international students studying in India, thereby limiting the generalizability of its findings to other contexts. To broaden the scope and enhance the reliability of future research, it is recommended that studies incorporate international students from a wider range of host countries. Additionally, a more equitable distribution of data is essential to ensure robust and reliable results. Expanding sample sizes and diversifying the demographic profiles of respondents will improve the external validity of future studies, leading to more comprehensive understandings of the factors influencing international students' choices.

## 7 CONCLUSION

This study provides a detailed examination of the factors influencing international students' decisions to study in India, with a focus on their motivations, experiences, satisfaction levels, costs, and perceptions of university reputation. The findings reveal that international students prioritize institution-related factors, such as academic quality and career prospects, when selecting a destination. These insights are consistent with prior research conducted in both developed and developing countries. Furthermore, the study offers strategic recommendations for Indian higher education institutions to enhance their appeal to international students, particularly from Asia and Africa. Emphasizing academic excellence, institutional reputation, and a safe environment should be core components of any value proposition aimed at attracting international students.

The study also highlights the significance of understanding student behavior in an increasingly competitive global education market. As international student mobility continues to evolve, it is essential for countries and educational institutions to develop marketing strategies that align with the motivations and expectations of prospective students. Institutions must tailor their customer value propositions (CVPs) to reflect these priorities, ensuring they meet the academic, social, and financial needs of international students.

While the research presents novel insights, several limitations exist. The study's sample was confined to students already studying in India, excluding those who opted for other destinations. Future research should explore the reasons why some international students choose not to study in India, potentially integrating marketing theories into the analysis of the international student market. By addressing these gaps, future studies can provide a more holistic view of the factors influencing student decision-making in global higher education.

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