

## THE IMPACT OF PRICE ON STUDENTS' UNIVERSITY CHOICES IN TASHKENT

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### 1. Abstract

In an era where mankind struggles with more than ever threatening phenomena and global problems that jeopardizes the future of humanity, education should be one of the most important master-keys capable of offering solutions as it always has in the past. With this comes the importance of making quality education accessible or at least affordable for all who are passionate and strive to have it. This study investigates the impact of price factor on students' choice of university employing a mixed method approach. Key findings reveal the significance of price and its immense potential to overweight interestingly the institutional reputation. Insights offered by this research reflects the need for aligning educational costs by universities for all segments of the society and emphasizes the significance of equal opportunities for obtaining high quality education for all.

**Keywords:** educational costs, university choice, financial barriers, student perspectives, academic reputation, affordability

### 2. Introduction

It is widely recognized that choosing a university where students obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for their future has become a pressing issue all over the world for the young generation, in addition to their guardians. Current applicants and their sponsors are heavily influenced by tuition fees when choosing a university. This issue not only concerns many students in Tashkent, the Uzbek capital but throughout the world. The younger generation of today's society are driven by curiosity, keen to

explore new ideas and passionate about learning and obtaining knowledge and furthermore prefer to study at top universities, however the cost of studying in their desired institutions is believed to be high. A crystal clear example of this can be seen in the experience of the Co-authors of this particular article who once had the dream of studying at Westminster International University in Tashkent, one of Uzbekistan's top private institutions. However it was a wish that did not come true due to the high tuition fees at the British accredited institution and led the co-authors choose a another university that offered lower tuition fees. It is widely seen in Tashkent that many students irrespective of how dedicated and passionate they are to obtain knowledge, have no other option but to either change their options or rather discontinue their studies and join the working segment of the society very early on, this article aimed to investigate the significance of "Price Factor" in regards to students choice of university. The article highlights the influence of "Price" when choosing a higher education institutions in Tashkent and is aimed to build a solid foundation for future researchers and shares invaluable insights for the institutions to get a better understanding of their prospective students enabling them to align their pricing strategies accordingly.

### **3. Literature Review:**

The cost of education can profoundly pressurize families and university students, which signals more focus and understanding of this subject in the academia, in addition the lack of knowledge related to the subject focusing on Tashkent and Uzbekistan creates a need and the urgency of conducting multiple research projects that can give more insights about the influencing factors on students choice of University, particularly "Price". Existing literature is limited to researches about the importance of price in other geographical locations and suggests that while the cost of education is a crucial factor in university selection, students may consider the quality and reputation of the universities as well, specifically in communises where cultural values and perceived advantages play a crucial role in decision-making. The literature also suggests that prominent institutions are appealing to students irrespective of the tuitions costs.

#### **3.1 Factors Influencing University Choice**

According to Xiaoping (2002) and Zane and Nick Jacob (1995), students who choose the exact university are influenced by various factors, including cost and quality of education. This has been documented in the literature of higher education (HE) research. During the study, they realized that most students focus on the quality of higher education and, of course, on its cost.

### 3.2 Perspectives on Education Costs

(Primadini, Rizky, & Bangun, 2019) expanded their research on this topic, stating that when choosing a university, not only low or high cost is important but also the ability, perception, and touch of the costs incurred, as well as the expediency and convenience of admission to certain higher educational institutions. Students attach great importance to different points of view when choosing a university. This study emphasizes that the ability, perception and touch of the costs incurred, as well as the expediency and ease of admission to certain higher education institutions are crucial, but did not take into account the cultural values of the university. There are the same universities where it is fashionable, the British dress up, speak English. Some students cannot study at a university where values belong to another nationality because culture and values do not coincide. This is also the reason why students make a decision when choosing a university.

### 3.3 Academic Reputation and Student Choices

When choosing universities, high school juniors from different schools were studied by Sevier (1993) and found that cost was the most important factor in choosing universities. Another research study by Carter (1999) indicated that students limited by their financial status studied closer to their homes and attended universities that suited their lower economic status. National academic reputation, the quality of available educational specialities, and the prestige of the university are the three main factors in student admission to the university (1998), as investigated recently by Austin and Williams at the University of Texas in the Department of Student Affairs Research. Other scholars have noted that family budgets are low as students choose high schools located closer to their homes, as students incur significant expenses if the universities they attend are far away. On the way to the university, there may be transportation fees, meal fees, and rental house fees to stay closer to the high school. According to these studies, it is clear that when choosing an institute, academic reputation affects students' decisions more than costs.

### 3.4 Pricing Policies and Student Behaviour

A fixed tuition fee has little impact on the average number of credits but encourages a small percentage (7%) of students to try to earn a few more credits. However, students with lower average scores are more likely to drop at least one course, according to research at the University of Michigan and a full-time study among students (Flint Hemelt and Stange, 2015). The articles states that students are encouraged to take out loans, but how do they pay for their studies on credit if they become students. In other states, due to high tuition fees, students are forced to study on credit and, in addition, they say that they can also skip 1 course. But these values



will not be in another state. The environment of private universities in Nigeria does not correspond at all to Tashkent University.

### 3.5 Reputation vs. Cost in University Selection

Another study suggests that when choosing a university, the reputation of the university is more important for students than its cost. The more prestigious the university, the less its price matters. This is also the principle students follow when selecting a university. However it has correlation with students financial ability.

### Research gap and limitations

While the existing literature offers valuable insights about the preferences of students when choosing a university, it can be concluded from these researches that irrespective of the importance of cost in choosing the university, however the reputation factor has played a key role and over-weighed the price. Yet there is a need for a Tashkent-based research as the socio-economic factors might be very much different here and irrespective of students' desire to select a university due to its high reputations, financial constraints may restrict them. To conclude the geographical gap reflects highly, what this research is firmly intended to fill by conduction of a primary research that reveals interesting and valuable insights from realities on the ground here in Tashkent.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

This study determined the significance of tuition costs for students when choosing a university employing a mixed method approach that offers comprehension of the price component in university choice.

### 4.2 Participants

There were twenty-two students in the sample who were in the process of choosing a university. Convenience sampling was used in the recruitment of participants to ensure accessibility and pertinence to the research objectives.

### 4.3 Data Collection

**Quantitative Data Collection:** A Google Surveys survey was created to facilitate participation and quick access, where respondents were asked to rank academic reputation, campus amenities, tuition costs, and other variables in the form of multiple questions.

**Qualitative Data Collection:** Along with survey answers, a group of participants also participated in semi-structured interviews. The financial concerns of students and their particular viewpoints on the impact of tuition fees were better understood thanks to these interviews.

#### 4.4 Data Analysis

**Quantitative Analysis:** Manual analysis and supplementary AI tools were used to analyse and compute important statistical patterns from Google Survey responses. With the dataset's manageable size, this strategy allowed for a faster and more effective analysis than more conventional techniques like SPSS. The AI analysis allowed for a thorough grasp of the data by highlighting linkages between tuition costs and other factors impacting institution choice.

**Qualitative Analysis:** To comprehend and illustrate the recurring themes on price sensitivity and other related issues about decision-making, interview responses were ordered to be tested in a thematic coding setting. The quantitative results were developed by the fuller context that this qualitative study offered, enabling a more in-depth understanding of how cost affects students' decisions when choosing a university.

#### 4.5 Ethical Considerations

With guarantees of privacy and and transparency about how responses will be used, each participant had the choice to withdraw the survey at any intended time, clarifying the purpose of data use. Throughout the study, participant rights and privacy were upheld in accordance with ethical norms.

### 5. Findings

#### 5.1. Quantitative Analysis

The survey was completed by twenty-two individuals, who shared information on the factors that influenced their choice of university, especially the effect of tuition costs. According to the demographic statistics, the majority of participants were enrolled in undergraduate programs and were between the ages of 18 and 24.

#### 5.2 Importance of Price

When asked about the importance of price in choosing a university, responses varied:

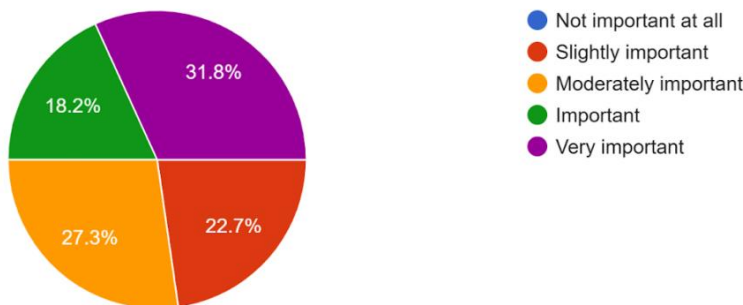
Extremely vital: 10 respondents (45%)

Important: 5 respondents (23%)

Moderately Important: 4 respondents (18%)

Slightly Important: 3 respondents (14%)

5. How important is the price (e.g., tuition fees, accommodation) when choosing a university?  
22 responses



This research suggests that a considerable proportion of students view cost as a crucial consideration when choosing an institution.

### 5.3 Tuition Fee Range Consideration

Enquiries concerning the participants' acceptable tuition cost range were made. The findings indicated that people preferred cheaper tuition:

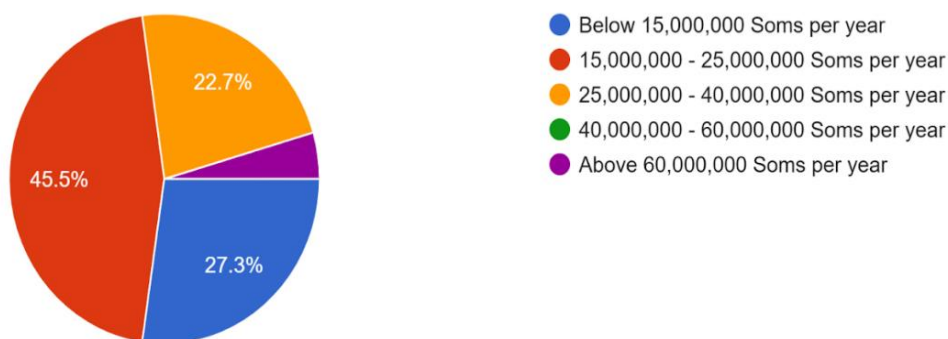
Below 15,000,000 Soms per year: 8 respondents (36%)

15,000,000 - 25,000,000 Soms per year: 7 respondents (32%)

25,000,000 - 40,000,000 Soms per year: 5 respondents (23%)

Above 60,000,000 Soms per year: 2 respondents (9%)

6. What range of tuition fees are you willing to consider for a university in Tashkent?  
22 responses

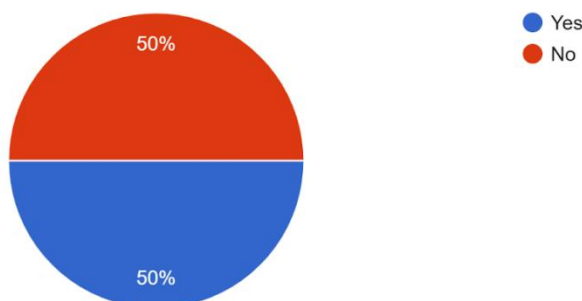


These figures support the earlier finding that price matters by indicating that the majority of respondents are likely to explore universities with lower tuition costs.

### 5.4 Decision-Making Influences

Further highlighting the substantial influence of tuition fees on respondents' decision-making processes, fourteen participants (64 percent) acknowledged that they had ever chosen not to apply to an institution because of its cost.

7. Have you ever decided not to apply to a university because of its price?  
22 responses



### 5.5 Qualitative Analysis

Participants were given the opportunity to expound on how tuition costs and other expenses affected their institution selections by means of open-ended questions that collected qualitative replies. A thematic analysis of these answers identified a number of recurrent themes:

### 5.6 Academic Reputation

Academic reputation was mentioned by many respondents as the main consideration when selecting an institution. "First of all, we choose a university according to its reputation and its facilities," for example, said one participant.

### 5.7 Availability of Preferred Programs

The accessibility of requested programs was another recurring problem. Many students stated that, regardless of cost, they would not consider attending a university if it did not provide their desired topic of study. A participant stated, "the first thing that I pay attention to is the availability of my desired field of study."

### 5.8 Location

Another important aspect was location. Respondents voiced worries about the distances they had to commute and if it was desirable to study in particular places. A



participant said, "it depends on universities such as private and government universities; typically, government universities have lower tuition fees."

### 5.9 Impact of Financial Constraints

The difficulties presented by financial limitations were expressed by the respondents. Someone commented, "If university fees cost me a lot, I'll have to find a suitable job or I will have to work two jobs to support myself." This statement emphasises how much of a financial hardship tuition costs students.

### 6. Results:

The results of the survey demonstrated that tuition cost are a decisive factor in university selection process by students. A third of respondents (64%) reflected that they hadn't applied to a number of universities due to the high cost the institutions. When asked to rank the importance of a variety of factors, 45 percent indicated the attendance cost as extremely important' and another 23 percent called it important. A clear trend towards the affordability emerges in the preferred tuition fees amongst the participants: 36% of students stated that they would have considered universities with a tuition fee less than 15,000,000 Soms per year. The fact that students are considering educational decisions based on financial feasibility underscores a very serious concern regarding financial feasibility of such decisions. However among other qualitative responses, some of these are academic reputation and availability of desired courses, while others put cost above these factors. For instance, some participants clarified that they would not attend the university of powerful reputation which is too expensive for them to afford. Moreover, many of the respondents, expressed their concerns about their financial ability to bear the cumulative costs of higher education, including transportation and other living expenses relevant to university life which can remarkably increase the burden.

### Conclusion:

The research in summary suggests that, tuition costs are of more power and impact when considering a university, indeed outweighing other considerations ranging from the academic reputation of the university and the availability of specific programmes. With 64% of participants indicating their reluctance and declining admissions to certain universities solely due to the fact that fees were high for them to afford, and roughly half of the respondents highlighting the fees as extremely important, influencing and decisive factor. It's crystal clear that for the sample size covered in the research, financial constraints influence their' educational choices significantly. Moreover the extent of the emphasis though both qualitative and quantitative regarding financial pressure indicates how price factor can change the game and the direction for students in the long run. The author of this research along with the co-authors suggest further research to examine the efficacy of financial aid programmes and scholarships



out of relieving the responsibility to pay tuition costs and redoing the same research topic with a higher sample size to develop and further enhance our understanding of the impacts of price factor in the context of Tashkent. Further enriching the understanding of university selection dynamics might be invested in the investigation of how cultural and economic factors differ across regions in Uzbekistan. Ultimately, eliminating financial barriers is of high importance and value as every human being, and every Uzbek youth deserves to have access to high quality and affordable educational opportunities as education is the only way for prosperity of any nation and the mankind in the whole.

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