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**Analysis of the Factors Influencing the Decision of  
Myanmar Students to Choose Finland for Higher  
Education**

School of Technology and Innovations  
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Industrial Systems Analytics

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**ABSTRACT:**

In recent years, Finland has emerged as an increasingly attractive destination for international students. Following the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, many students began seeking stable and secure environments for higher education. This study explores the central research question: What are the most influential push and pull factors for Myanmar students when choosing Finland for higher education? The research examines how political, financial, social and cultural shape this migration decision. To address this question, a mixed-methods approach was utilized, with emphasis on quantitative analysis. Data was collected through an online survey distributed over three weeks to Myanmar students currently studying in Finland, yielding 39 valid responses. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to reach this niche population. The findings revealed that major push factors include Myanmar's political instability and lack of quality educational opportunities, while the pull factors include Finland's reputation for safety, affordability, and high-quality education. Financial considerations, especially tuition affordability and cost of living significantly impacted decision-making, with younger students showing pattern of reliance on family support. Social and cultural challenges, including language barriers and adaptation to Finnish society, were moderate but manageable through institutional support. The study provides practical implications for Finnish institutions and policymakers by emphasizing the financial and socio-cultural needs of Myanmar students. It highlights the significance of targeted support services, and culturally inclusive integration programs to ease adaptation. However, this study is limited by the relatively small sample size and rely on self-reported data, which may affect overall generalization. Furthermore, the high number of students enrolled in vocational pathways suggests the need for future research that more deeply examines the motivations and outcomes of vocational education among international students.

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**KEYWORDS:** International student mobility, Push-pull factors, Higher education destination choice, Myanmar students, Finland education system, Study abroad decision-making

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the study

The mobility of both skilled workers and international students has become one of the crucial factors in addressing global labor shortages and supporting economic growth. As countries seek to attract top global talent, understanding the factors that drive student migration is critical for policymakers and higher education institutions (Chevalier, 2022). Finland, recognizing the need for talent to meet its labor market demands, has introduced policies to attract skilled workers and international students. For skilled professionals, Finland has streamlined immigration processes through fast-track systems and national residence permits, aiming to fill labor gaps in critical sectors (Valtioneuvosto, 2024).

Being international student mobility one of a key components of internationalization strategies of European higher education institutions (Perez-Encinas, Rodriguez-Pomeda, & Wit, 2020), Finland's higher education policies reflect this proactive stance by making it easier for international students to study and work in the country, including offering residence permits for the full duration of studies and a two-year post-graduation work permit to allow graduates to seek employment (Finnish Immigration Services, 2022). These policies are part of Finland's broader efforts to position itself as a competitive destination for higher education and skilled migration, contributing to the country's economic growth and innovation capacity. These efforts are the reflections of Finland's commitment to building a robust workforce, essential for its long-term economic development.

## 1.2 Research gap, question and objectives

Although international student mobility has been widely studied in various contexts, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific factors influencing students from Myanmar in choosing Finland as their higher education destination. Much of the

existing literature has focused on major source countries such as China and India and the Middle East, while the decision-making process of students from smaller economies like Myanmar has been relatively underexplored. Moreover, the aftermath of the 2021 military coup in Myanmar and the resulting political instability and economic turmoil have led to a surge in student migration from the country, further emphasizing the need to investigate the motivations and experiences of these students in selecting Finland as their study destination (Chevalier, 2022).

The aim of this study is to fill the gap mentioned above by studying the decision-making processes of Myanmar students by focusing on three main areas: the push-pull factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) which influence for the choice of Finland, the financial aspects of studying in Finland which will include the role of scholarships, tuition fees and cost of living and the social and cultural considerations such as safety, quality of life and language barriers. These factors have not been widely studied in relation to Myanmar students specifically, making this research valuable in providing new insights into the motivations behind their decisions. This study will contribute to a better understanding of the factors driving international student mobility from smaller, politically complex countries to Finland, informing policymakers and higher education institutions on the development of recruitment and integration strategies (Jokila, Kallo, & Mikkil-Erdmann, 2019).

The findings of this research will have significant practical implications for policymakers, particularly in refining strategies to attract and retain international students. A comprehensive understanding of the motivations and challenges faced by Myanmar students will help in crafting policies that not only draw students to Finland but also facilitate their successful transition into the workforce. By aligning educational and labor market goals, Finland can continue to leverage the contributions of both skilled workers and international students, ensuring sustainable economic growth and addressing the country's demographic challenges.

The research question of the thesis is “What are the most influential push and pull factors for students from Myanmar when choosing Finland for higher education?” In order to achieve a qualified answer to the research question, the following objectives have been identified:

- To identify and categorize the primary push and pull factors that affect Myanmar students' choices when selecting Finland as their study destination.
- To assess the financial aspects, including scholarships, tuition, and living costs, that contribute to the decision-making process.
- To examine the role of social, cultural, and safety factors, such as language, quality of life, and perceived security, in the choice of Finland as a higher education destination.

### **1.3 Definitions and Scope of the Study**

International student mobility refers to the movement of students across national borders for educational purposes, driven by a range of financial, cultural, academic, and social factors. This phenomenon is closely linked to globalization, as students look out for quality education, international exposure, and enhanced career opportunities in host countries. Key influences on international student mobility include global economic trends, scholarship availability, and the reputation of host countries' educational systems (King & Raghuram, 2013). International student mobility has been studied both as an individual quest for personal development and a global trend reflecting broader migration influenced by education policies of each country.

The push-pull framework is broadly utilized in migration and international education research to explain mobility trends because the model provides a comprehensive framework to understand international migration. Push factors are considered unfavorable conditions in the home country, such as political instability, financial difficulties, or limited educational opportunities, which drive people to seek opportunities abroad. In contrast, pull factors are the characteristics of the destination country that attract students, such as high-quality education, affordable tuition fees, and attractive future career

prospects. The interaction of these factors shapes the decision-making process of international students (Mathies & Karhunen, 2020).

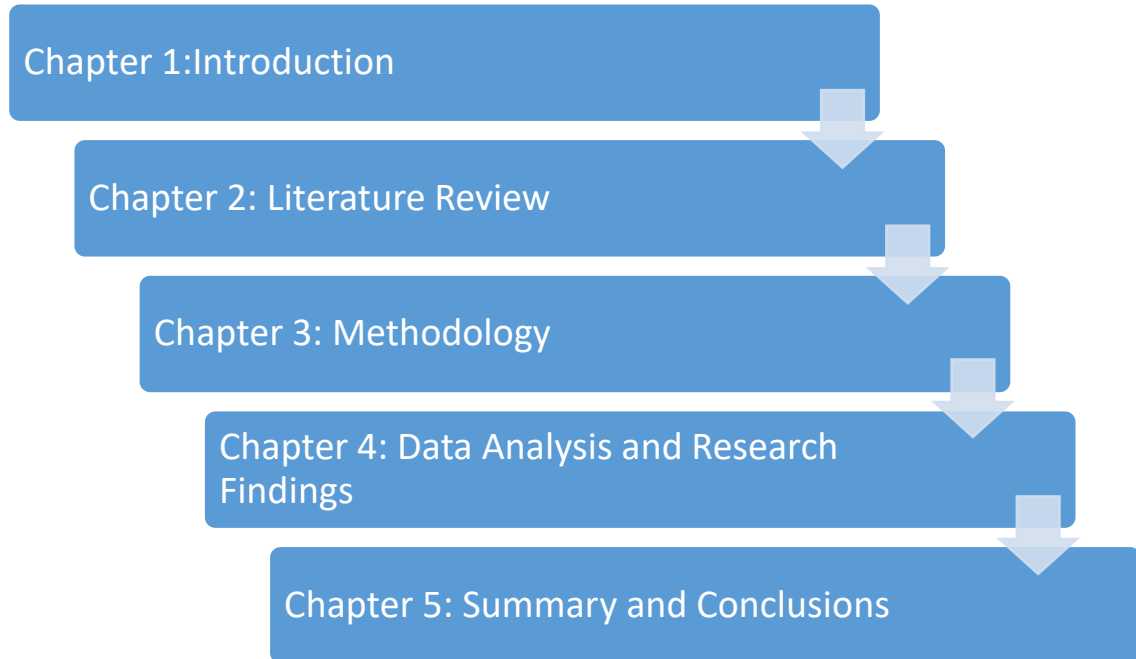
Study abroad decision-making refers to the complex process which is carried out by students to evaluate and choose to pursue education in a foreign country. This process involves assessing various aspects such as personal aspirations and inspirations, financial feasibility, quality of education, and post-graduation opportunities. External influences, such as socio-political stability in the home country and trends in the global education, also play a significant role in making decisions (Branco Oliveira & Soares, 2016). Decision-making is influenced by both individual preferences and external circumstances.

The scope of this research is limited to Myanmar students, either who are currently pursuing higher education in Finland or who have already graduated from higher education of Finnish institutions. The study focuses specifically onto these groups in order to explore their decision-making process, and the factors influencing their choice to study in Finland. By narrowing the scope to these students, the research aims to provide targeted insights into the educational migration patterns from Myanmar to Finland. Additionally, the study considers the political instability refer only to the political situation in Myanmar following the 2021 military coup as a significant factor. The mobility of students before the timeframe of the political instability in Myanmar is also outside the scope.

In this study, international student mobility specifically focuses on Myanmar students who have chosen Finland as their study destination excluding exchange students. Finland's higher education system in this study, focus on Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS). Universities emphasize scientific research and academic education, while UAS focus on practical, professional training aligned with labor market needs (StudyInfo, 2024). The research covers both bachelor's and master's programs, including those offered in English.

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters: Introduction, Literature review, Research methodology, Result and Analysis, Summary and recommendations.



**Figure 1 Illustration of Thesis Structure**

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study, including the background, research objectives, research question, and the rationale and significance of the research. This chapter will also outline the scope of the study and highlights the limitations encountered during the research process.

Chapter 2 offers a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework, focusing on the push-pull model of international student mobility. It includes a review of relevant literature on factors influencing student decisions to study abroad, particularly in Finland.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in this study. It covers the research design, including the mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. The chapter also addresses the population and sample size, the survey

instrument, pilot testing, and the process of data collection. In addition, it outlines the data analysis techniques and acknowledges any corresponding methodological limitations.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the data collected and discusses the research findings in detail. Quantitative data from the surveys are analyzed statistically, while qualitative responses are examined through thematic analysis. The findings are then interpreted in relation to the research question, objectives and existing literature.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by summarizing the key findings and discussing their implications. Additionally, the limitations of the study will be acknowledged, and suggestions for future research are provided.

## **2 Literature Review**

In this chapter, theories and concepts surrounding international student mobility, decision-making processes, and the push-pull model will be explored based on previous studies, covering both theoretical and empirical perspectives. A detailed review of these concepts provides essential context for understanding the factors influencing Myanmar students' choice of Finland as their higher education destination. The literature review is a crucial component of this study, offering a comprehensive examination of past research and enabling the identification of existing findings, research gaps, and contradictions within the field. This study aims to investigate the motivational factors driving Myanmar students to select Finland, with particular attention to educational quality, financial aspects, and socio-cultural considerations. By examining these factors, this chapter will inform the theoretical model that guides the research and contextualize the study within existing research.

### **2.1 International Student Mobility**

The phenomenon of student mobility has gained prominence in global educational research, particularly as countries and institutions recognize the economic and cultural benefits of attracting international students. As globalization continues to influence various sectors, education has increasingly become a transnational phenomenon. The movement of students across borders is facilitated by the growing internationalization of higher education institutions, advancements in technology, and the widespread availability of English-taught programs. International student mobility involves the movement of students across borders for educational purposes, driven by a range of personal, academic, social, and economic factors (Lee, 2014).

The motivations driving international student mobility are multilayered. On an individual level, students often seek to improve their academic credentials, access better educational facilities, or immerse themselves in culturally diverse environments. On a broader scale, the phenomenon is shaped by structural factors such as globalization of labor

markets, which emphasizes skills that go beyond national borders, and government policies that prioritize internationalization to attract global talent. For example, countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have long been popular destinations due to their established reputations for high-quality education and their emphasis on fostering global student communities (King & Raghuram, 2013).

The benefits of international student mobility extend beyond individual gains. Host countries benefit significantly as international students contribute to cultural diversity and provide an economic boost through tuition fees, living expenses, and long-term contributions to the labor market. For example, in 2018, international students contributed approximately \$45 billion to the U.S. economy, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce (Economic impact of international students, 2021). While countries that send students abroad may face challenges such as brain drain, where highly skilled graduates choose to stay in their host countries, they also benefit from the return of these students. Returning students often bring back valuable skills, knowledge, and global connections that can contribute to the economic and social development of their home countries (Shin & Moon, 2018).

In addition to its socio-economic implications, international student mobility can also be seen as a reflection of broader geopolitical trends. For instance, political relationships between countries, visa regulations, and regional conflicts can significantly influence the flow of international students (Barnett, Lee, Jiang, & Park, 2015). The emergence of non-traditional study destination such as United Arab Emirates reflects a shift in global educational landscapes, characterized by efforts to balance accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity (Johnson, 2020). Given this dynamic and multifaceted nature of international student mobility, it is essential to understand how both local and global factors influence student decisions and experiences.

### **2.1.1 Historical Perspectives on Student Mobility**

The concept of international student mobility has deep historical roots, dating back to ancient civilizations where knowledge centers attracted scholars from across regions. Nalanda University in India and Al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco established themselves as educational centers which attracted students from different backgrounds to exchange ideas and cultural and philosophical knowledge (Misra, 2012). These movements were often motivated by a desire for intellectual enrichment, spiritual enlightenment, and the accumulation of prestige (Rozaimie, 2018). For instance, Islamic madrasas and Christian monastic schools served as early examples of cross-border educational networks.

During the medieval and early modern times Europe emerged as the main destination for intellectual migration because of universities like Bologna Paris and Oxford (Kim, 2009). Students from every corner of the world traveled to these centers of learning, contributing to the development of a shared academic culture while spreading knowledge throughout the continent. The Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, characterized by scientific inquiry and cultural exploration, drove an increase in student movement between nations. This era highlighted the strong relationship between education and social transformations (Wit, 2002).

The 20th century, especially after World War II period, can be marked as the period of significant shifts in international student mobility. The Cold War and decolonization influenced student movement, since developing nations sought after overseas education to develop their own human capital (Burton, 2020). The establishment of global organizations, such as UNESCO, and scholarship programs like the Fulbright Scholarship, enabled more opportunities to international education for a broader coverage (Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley, 2012). These historical developments established foundation for modern day student mobility pattern, emphasizing its role in promoting global knowledge networks.

### **2.1.2 Global Trends in Student Migration**

In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in international student mobility, becoming a defining feature of global higher education. By 2020, the number of students pursuing education abroad had exceeded 5.6 million, reflecting a significant increase from 2 million compared to year 2000 (UNESCO, 2021). This growth has been driven by several factors such as globalization, technological developments and advancements in transportation and communication, and the increasing internationalization of universities.

Traditional host countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada continue to dominate global student flows, owing to their established academic reputation, research infrastructure, and English-taught programs. However, the landscape is gradually shifting, with non-traditional destinations such as United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and China emerging as attractive alternatives (Johnson, 2020). These countries appeal to students due to affordable tuition, scholarship opportunities, and the growing prevalence of English-medium programs.

Moreover, the demographics of international students have evolved, with a significant rise in outbound mobility from Asia, particularly China and India. These countries are the largest contributors to international student populations worldwide, which indicates the growing demand for high-quality education and international exposure and experience (Aggarwal, 2019). However, this trend also underscores disparities in access to quality education within home countries, necessitating further research into the socio-economic and political factors influencing these migration patterns (Yang, 2022).

### **2.1.3 Opportunities and Barriers in Student Mobility**

International student mobility offers numerous benefits to both students and host countries. For students, studying abroad provides access to superior educational resources, global networking opportunities, and enhanced employability in international markets.

Exposure to diverse cultures and environments also contributes to personal development, fostering critical thinking, adaptability, and cross-cultural competence (Hachtmann, 2012). In the same manner, host countries also benefit economically from sources such as tuition fees and living expenses of international students. Additionally, international students contribute to cultural enrichment and can foster innovations both academically and professionally by their diverse background.

However, there are various barriers which can hinder the smooth flow of international students. Financial constraint is one of the most significant hindrances, particularly for students from developing countries. Tuition fees, living expenses, and currency fluctuations can make studying abroad unachievable dream for many students (Bilas, 2016). Moreover, visa restrictions, complicated bureaucratic steps, and language barriers further complicate the process. For example, students often find it relatively challenging to adapt to new environment with newfound language and cultural norms of their host countries, which can affect their academic performance and overall well-being (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015).

Political and social factors are also important factors influencing student mobility. Policies regarding immigration and international education, as well as the socio-political situation in both home and host countries, significantly impact migration decisions (Bhandari & Belyavina, 2012). For instance, political instability in a student's home country may encourage him to seek education abroad, while stringent immigration policies in host countries may discourage prospective students. Addressing these barriers requires collaboration and cooperations between governments, institutions, and stakeholders to set up welcoming and supportive environments for international students.

#### **2.1.4 Future Directions in Student Mobility**

The future of international student mobility is influenced by the upcoming technological, social, and environmental trends. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has accelerated the adoption of online and hybrid style education models, which complement or even

replace traditional mobility patterns. Virtual exchange programs and online learning platforms have the potential to make international education more accessible, especially for students who are facing financial or geographical constraints (Ruiz-Corbella & Álvarez-González, 2014).

Sustainability and climate concerns are also emerging as critical considerations. Institutions are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of international travel and are exploring ways to balance mobility with sustainable practices (Long, Vogelaar, & Hale, 2013). For instance, some universities are promoting regional mobility or encouraging longer stays to reduce the frequency of international travel. These initiatives align with the broader goal of integrating sustainability into global higher education.

Additionally, the demographic and geopolitical developments of recent changes will affect student mobility patterns. As the global middle class expands, particularly in Asia and Africa, demand for international education is expected to grow. However, political uncertainties, such as immigration policies and regional conflicts, may introduce challenges (Bhandari & Belyavina, 2012). For countries such as Finland, the focus on inclusivity, affordability, and innovation will be crucial in maintaining their appeal as a destination for international students (Jokila, Kallo, & Mikkil-Erdmann, 2019).

## **2.2 Push-Pull Factors in International Student Migration**

The push-pull model is a fundamental framework used to analyze international student migration. Derived from migration theory, it provides insight into the motivations that drive students to pursue education abroad (Hussain, Usman, Gillani, & Amjad, 2020). This model categorizes influences into push factors; the adverse conditions in the home country that encourage students to leave and pull factors; the favorable conditions in host countries that attract students. These factors collectively shape decision-making processes and provide a structured lens to understand global trends in student mobility (Lauermaann, 2012).

Push factors are conditions in the home country that create a compelling need for students to seek education abroad. These factors often stem from systemic issues in education, socio-political instability, or economic hardship (Lauermann, 2012). In countries like Myanmar, significant barriers within the domestic education system serve as key push factors. Limited access to modern facilities, outdated curricula, and the lack of globally competitive degree programs weaken the confidence of students in local institutions (Tun, 2022). For instance, the political crisis following Myanmar's 2021 military coup disrupted public services, including education, leading to frequent school closures resulting in a poor quality of education (World Bank, 2022). Such instability intensifies the challenges faced by students, particularly those aspiring to careers in global industries where credentials from local universities are undervalued.

Additionally, socio-economic constraints are significant drivers of outward student mobility. Myanmar's constrained job market and underemployment rates further incentivize students to look abroad for both education and potential employment opportunities post-graduation (Tun, 2022). Limited opportunities for academic research and development in Myanmar further push students toward countries with advanced academic infrastructure and opportunities for professional growth.

Pull factors are the attributes of host countries that make them appealing destinations for international students (Lauermann, 2012). For Finland, these factors include its globally recognized high standards of education, availability of English-taught academic programs, and well-structured policies for international students. Finnish higher education is characterized by its focus on innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability, attracting students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds (Schatz, 2015). The availability of fully funded scholarships or reduced tuition fees for students from developing countries, including Myanmar, acts as a strong incentive, particularly for those who face economic constraints at home country (StudyInfo, 2024).

Another critical pull factor is Finland's immigration policies which are in the favour of international students and post-graduation work opportunities is one of the favorable ones. For instance, international students are granted residence permits for the duration of their studies and are eligible for a two-year post-graduation permit to seek employment (Finnish Immigration Services, 2022). This is particularly appealing for students from countries like Myanmar, where the local job market offers limited opportunities. Finland's emphasis on work-life balance and its supportive environment for research and professional development further boost its attraction for international students. The presence of multicultural campuses and dedicated support services for international students, such as language programs, integration courses, and career counseling also contribute to students' positive experiences, encouraging a sense of belonging and community (Chevalier, 2022).

The interaction between push and pull factors provides a comprehensive view on the reason why students make specific migration decisions (Lauermann, 2012). For Myanmar students, the push factors of political instability and economic challenges are compounded by the pull factors of Finland's welcoming and well-structured education policies. For example, Finland's work-study balance allows students to gain practical experience alongside their studies, offering a pathway to both academic achievement and career growth (Chevalier, 2022). Additionally, Finland's global rankings in education quality and its strong emphasis on sustainability and innovation provide profounding reasons for international students to prioritize their choice on Finland over other destinations (Jokila, Kallo, & Mikkil-Erdmann, 2019).

Understanding push-pull relationships has practical implications for policymakers and educational institutions. For host countries like Finland, aligning education and immigration policies with the requirement of prospective international students can improve their appeal to attract talent. For instance, simplifying visa processes, offering competitive scholarships, and providing strong career support services can improve satisfaction and retention rates among international students. For students from Myanmar, where

push factors are deeply rooted in systemic challenges, the ability to secure financial support and the opportunity to integrate into a stable, inclusive education system often becomes decisive factor in selecting a destination (Sun & Zhang, 2020).

The push-pull framework offers a systematic approach to better understanding of international student migration, revealing the challenges faced in the home country and the opportunities presented by host nations. By identifying these factors, educational institutions and policymakers can develop targeted strategies to attract and retain international talents, contributing not only to academic success but also to broader socio-economic achievements for both home and host countries.

### **2.3 Decision-Making in Student Mobility**

The decision to pursue education in a foreign country is a multi-layered process influenced by a wide range of personal, social, financial, and cultural factors. It involves a complex interaction of individual aspirations, familial expectations, and external circumstances such as international mobility trends, host-country policies and home country conditions. Decision-making in student mobility does not occur by itself alone; it is deeply contextual and influenced by both "push" factors in the home country and "pull" factors in the destination country (Lauermann, 2012). Understanding the dynamics of this process requires a closer examination of proper theoretical frameworks, financial considerations, social and cultural influences, and the challenges faced by students in making such life changing decisions.

Students who are to consider studying abroad often try to balance the costs and benefits of such a decision. Therefore, the push-pull model is considered as a key theoretical framework, examines both the factors driving students away from their home countries which are push factors, and those attracting them to host countries which are pull factors. Financial theories highlight the role of financial factors, such as tuition fees and potential earnings, while behavioral theories emphasize the influence of psychological factors, such as personal aspirations and family expectations (Hussain, Usman, Gillani, & Amjad,

2020). By considering these numerous factors, students can make informed decisions regarding the decision whether they should pursue after international education.

Moreover, the cultural and social aspects of decision-making have a major impact on shaping students' preferences and choices. Cultural norms, family expectations, peer influences, and perceptions of host-country societies are powerful contributing factors that affect not only where students decide to study but also how they prepare for and formulate to encounter the challenges of living abroad (Lauermaun, 2012). At the same time, students are often confronted with uncertainties and challenges, such as adapting to unfamiliar academic environments, navigating visa policies, or managing their mental health during the transition and adaptation period. These obstacles highlight the importance of holistic decision-making models that put into consideration of both rational and emotional factors.

This section dives into the theoretical framework of decision-making in student mobility, followed by an exploration of the specific financial, social, and cultural considerations that influence the students' decisions. Additionally, this literature review reveal the uncertainties and challenges that arise in the decision-making process, providing a thorough overview of the factors influencing students' mobility decisions. By examining these dimensions, this section aims to provide a better understanding of the complications involved in international student migration.

### **2.3.1 Decision-making model in Migration**

The decision to study abroad is a complex process which requires multiple aspects of considerations that extends beyond the simple push-pull dynamics. This complexity can be comprehended through decision-making frameworks that involves behavioral and rational perspectives, such as the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and rational choice theory (RCT). The TPB emphasizes the role of intention in pivoting behavior, suggesting that students' decisions are shaped by their attitudes toward studying abroad, the influence of social norms, such as family or societal expectations, and their control over the

process, such as financial feasibility and availability of transportation (Presley, Damron-Martinez, & Zhang, 2010). This framework underscores the interaction between personal characteristics and external influences, providing a better understanding of how motivations and constraints influence decision-making.

In parallel, the RCT suggests that students approach their decisions and choice of study by systematically weighing the costs and benefits associated with various possibilities, ultimately selecting the one that maximizes their perceived utility (Lee, 2014). For example, a prospective student evaluating Finland as a study destination may consider factors such as affordability, the availability of English-language programs, and the cultural adaptability of the host country environment as considerable factors. The rational evaluation of these factors against potential challenges, such as moving expenses, adaptation to a new environment and cultural setting, determines the final decision.

By combining these theories, provide a solid framework to analyze the decision-making process for international students since it has been highlighted how both internal motivations such as career aspirations and personal growth and external pressures like societal expectations and host country policies interact to influence student mobility patterns. This integrative approach not only deepens the understanding of the reasons why students choose certain countries as study destinations but also offers actionable insights for institutions and policymakers aiming to attract international talent.

### **2.3.2 Financial Considerations in Decision-Making**

The decision-making process related to pursuing international education is inherently complicated, and financial considerations are considered as one of the critical components. Theories of consumer behavior and financial decision-making offer a good framework for understanding how financial factors influence international student mobility (Beine, Noël, & Ragot, 2014). Students including their families often perceive studying abroad as a long-term investment since they have to weigh the potential benefits of enhanced career opportunities and socio-economic advancement against the financial

costs involved. This section thoroughly examines the theoretical and empirical literature on the financial aspects of decision-making, highlighting its significance to international education.

### **2.3.2.1 Cost-Benefit Analysis in Educational Investment**

The cost-benefit analysis (CBA) framework is widely renowned as a foundational theory in understanding financial decision-making in education. According to this approach, individuals evaluate the anticipated benefits of an educational investment, such as better-quality career prospects and increased earning potential, against the associated costs, including tuition fees, living cost and accommodation expenses (Catsiapis, 1987). For international students, these costs are exaggerated by additional expenditures, such as travel, visa application fees, and expenses which involve culture adaptation.

In the context of Myanmar students considering higher education in Finland, financial evaluations are particularly significant. While Finland is renowned for its affordable tuition fees and extensive scholarship opportunities, living costs such as accommodation, healthcare, and daily expenses remain substantial. Consequently, students nevertheless have to assess whether the long-term benefits, such as acquiring globally recognized qualifications and enhanced employment prospects, substantiate for the immediate financial burdens.

### **2.3.2.2 Financial Aid and Scholarship Opportunities**

Financial aid and scholarships are instrumental in mitigating the financial challenges associated with studying abroad. Rational choice theory suggests that students are more likely to pursue education abroad when financial constraints are alleviated through external support mechanisms (Todua, 2017). For students from developing countries such as Myanmar, the availability of scholarships and other financial aid options often serves as a decisive factor in selecting a study destination.

Empirical studies underscore the critical role of scholarships in influencing international student mobility. Students are more inclined to choose countries that offer robust scholarship programs, reduced tuition fees, or opportunities for part-time employment to offset living expenses (Chevalier, 2022). Finland's scholarship programs, offered by both governmental entities and individual universities, substantially increase the country's attractiveness as a hub for international education (Kaisa house Student Advice, 2024). These programs are strategically crafted to draw in students of exceptional talent from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, thereby playing a crucial role in alleviating financial obstacles (Study in Finland, 2024).

### **2.3.2.3 Household Income and Economic Context**

Household income and the broader economic context in the home country are significant factors shaping decisions regarding international education (Pimpa, 2003). Families often view funding higher education abroad as a collective investment in the future. For Myanmar families, savings, remittances, and community support are frequently utilized to finance such aspirations. However, the economic instability in Myanmar is exacerbated by the 2021 military coup and due to that, the financial capacity of many families has become tightened, limiting their ability to support international education.

The relative income hypothesis (Alvarez-Cuadrado & Long, 2011) also serves as a useful lens through which to examine these dynamics. The theory suggests that households make financial decisions based on their expected long-term income rather than immediate earnings. Middle-income families in Myanmar may prioritize saving for education abroad, hoping to secure better opportunities abroad for their future generation. Conversely, lower-income families face significant financial barriers, making international education an unattainable goal for many individuals and households.

#### **2.3.2.4 Opportunity Costs and Employment Prospects**

The concept of opportunity cost is another important financial aspect of decision-making for pursuing international education abroad. By choosing to study abroad, students often have to sacrifice immediate income opportunities available through full-time employment in their home country. This trade-off is particularly prominent for students from middle-income or lower-income backgrounds, who are held responsible for contributing to household finances. Therefore, students also consider the ability to work part-time while studying to be a vital consideration, as it offsets living expenses and reduces the financial risk associated with studying abroad (Lee, 2014). Finland's policies of allowing international students to engage in part-time work during their studies address this concern effectively, offering partial financial relief and enhancing its attractiveness as a study destination.

#### **2.3.3 Social and Cultural Influences on Decision-making**

Social and cultural factors are considered one of the pivotal roles in influencing international students' decisions to pursue education abroad (Lee, 2014). The consideration factors include language, cultural compatibility and adaptability, societal values, quality of life, perceived safety and security, and the presence of social support networks. Theoretical frameworks, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory and Berry's acculturation model, provide a good foundation for understanding how students adapt to and interact with the host country's socio-cultural environment (Hofstede, 1984) (Berry, 2008). Analysis of these factors is essential to comprehending how social and cultural dynamics influence education related migration decisions and experiences.

##### **2.3.3.1 Role of Language Proficiency**

Language proficiency of the host country is one of the most significant factors influencing the academic and social experiences of international students. The ability to communicate effectively in the host country's language is not only essential for academic

achievement but also for everyday interactions such as carrying out administrative processes, engaging with peers, and participating in local events. Poor language skills often result in feelings of isolation, lack of confidence, and reduced participation in academic and social activities which can negatively impact international students' overall experience, physical and mental well-being (Ackah & Kuranchie, 2015).

Research highlights that host countries offering English-taught programs attract more international students, as English serves as the common ground for education and communication (Llurda, 2013). For instance, Finland has strategically positioned itself as a desirable destination by providing a wide range of degree programs offered in English, enabling students from non-Finnish-speaking countries to access high-quality education without much language barriers (Study in Finland, 2024). Additionally, initiatives such as free or subsidized Finnish language courses further enhance students' ability to integrate into society and improve the ability to find employment in Finland for post-graduation period. Provision of these language programs reflect the host country's commitment to fostering inclusivity and integration.

### **2.3.3.2 Cultural Adaptability and Compatibility**

Cultural adaptability is another critical factor influencing the experiences of international students. Cultural distance, defined as the extent of difference between the student's home and host cultures, plays a pivotal role in determining the ease of adaptation. The greater the cultural distance, the more likely students are to experience challenges such as cultural shock, misunderstandings, or a sense of alienation (Xiaoqiong, 2008). For example, students from Myanmar who are moving to culturally distinct countries like Finland may face difficulties adapting sudden changes in communication styles, social norms, and academic expectations.

Berry's (2008) acculturation model offers a good theoretical explanation to examine how students adapt to a new culture. According to the model, students adopt one of four strategies:

- Assimilation: embracing the host culture while relinquishing their own,
- Integration: maintaining their cultural identity while engaging with the host culture,
- Separation: retaining their culture and avoiding the host culture, or
- Marginalization: rejecting both cultures.

Host institutions that encourage integration through multicultural events, and support services significantly enhance students' adaptation. For instance, Finland's emphasis on equality and cultural respect creates an environment ease to integration, allowing students to feel more welcomed and valued.

### **2.3.3.3 Safety and quality of life**

Safety and quality of life are universally recognized as critical considerations in students' choice of study destination. Perceived safety involves factors such as political stability, low crime rates, and social harmony, while quality of life includes aspects like healthcare, environmental cleanliness, public infrastructure, and overall well-being (Ahmad, Buchanan, & Ahmad, 2016). International students often prioritize these factors, as they contribute significantly to their overall experience and long-term adjustment in the host country.

Finland being consistently ranks as one of the safest and most livable countries globally, offering a strong appeal to students from politically or economically unstable regions like Myanmar (OECD, 2024). Safety concerns are particularly prominent for students and their families, as studying abroad involves not only significant financial investment but also the challenges of living alongside with unfamiliar environment. In addition, Finland's well established social welfare system, including affordable healthcare and subsidized transportation for students, enhances its reputation as a student-friendly destination. These factors collectively contribute to a supportive and welcoming environment where students can focus on their academic and personal development without additional stress or insecurity.

#### **2.3.3.4 Importance of Social Networks**

Social networks of both formal and informal are important for the well-being and success of international students. Formal networks include institutional support arrangements such as orientation programs, international student offices, and cultural exchange initiatives, while informal networks consist of friendships, peer groups, and connections within migration communities and international communities. Research by Bilecen (2014) emphasizes that social networks help students alleviate the challenges of living abroad, from understanding newfound academic expectations to managing homesickness and cultural adaptation.

The presence of an established student community or alumni network in the host country often plays an important role in attracting new students (Brown & Brown., 2012). Students who struggle to build good networks often experience greater challenges with loneliness, depression and academic adjustment. For example, students from Myanmar who have successfully navigated the Finnish education system can provide useful guidance to prospective students by sharing experiences through certain social media platforms or mentorship. Host institutions that actively cultivate a sense of belonging through social and cultural initiatives enhance students' overall satisfaction and retention. Events such as cultural events, language exchange programs, and collaborative group projects not only encourage international students' inclusivity but also provide opportunities toward meaningful relationships with local and international peers (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009).

Social and cultural factors are integral factors to understanding international student mobility. Elements such as language, cultural adaptability, safety, quality of life, and social networks significantly influence students' choices and experiences. Countries like Finland that address these factors comprehensively are better positioned to attract and retain international students, since the efforts contribute to international students' academic and personal growth while supporting the host nation's educational and economic goals (Jokila, Kallo, & Mikkil-Erdmann, 2019).

### **2.3.4 Challenges and Uncertainties in Decision Making**

The decision-making process for international students is filled with challenges and uncertainties that can affect their confidence and ability to make well-informed decisions. One of the challenges lies in filtering relevant information from the abundance of information about study-abroad options. Students often face difficulty in accessing reliable and comprehensive guidance, particularly in countries where educational counseling services are underdeveloped or not accessible (Lauer mann, 2012). This can lead to lack of information, where students are unable to compare options effectively or make decisions aligned with their long-term goals.

Another uncertainty comes from the evolving geopolitical and policy environments of both home and host countries. Changes, especially short-term changes in immigration rules, visa regulations, and employment rights for international students can introduce significant risks (Calonge, et al., 2023). To give an example, students may invest heavily in their education abroad, only to face restrictive post-graduation work policies or unfavorable shifts in host-country labor markets. These external uncertainties can be particularly discouraging for students from politically or economically unstable nations, such as Myanmar, where the additional burden of handling complicated bureaucratic steps intensify the challenge.

Lastly, students may encounter psychological challenges, such as fear of failure or the stress of continuous reliance on family support. These emotional barriers, coupled with uncertainties such as securing proper accommodation or managing suitable health insurance abroad, can create significant concern and anxiety (McKenna, Robinson, Penman, & Hills, 2017). Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions from both host institutions and policymakers, including transparent communication about study-abroad processes, orientation programs before departure, and supportive frameworks to help students adapt in short periods. By mitigating these uncertainties, stakeholders can establish a better inclusive and welcoming environment for international student mobility.

## **2.4 Socio-Political Context of Myanmar**

Myanmar's socio-political landscape has been shaped by its unique position as a culturally diverse nation with a chaotic history. The country is situated strategically between South and Southeast Asia, Myanmar has experienced significant historical, political, and social transitions that continue to influence its development. The country's legacy of colonial rule, prolonged military governance, and repetitive attempts at democratization have left lasting impacts on its institutional and socio-economic structures (Steinberg, 2009). In addition, Myanmar's rich ethnic diversity, although it is a source of cultural wealth, has often been accompanied by tensions and conflicts over autonomy and representation.

Recent years the challenges have been intensified due to the 2021 military coup, which disrupted political stability and exacerbated socio-economic difficulties (Horse, 2023). The ripple effects of these challenges are particularly obvious in critical sectors such as education and healthcare, where progress has been slowed down by ongoing unrest (World Bank, 2022). Understanding these dynamics enables us to understand the factors driving key societal outcomes, including student mobility and educational aspirations. The following subsections below provide a in-depth analysis of Myanmar's geopolitical and historical background, its current challenges, and the evolution of its education system, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the socio-political environment in which the study is situated.

### **2.4.1 Geopolitical and Historical Background**

Myanmar, officially the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and previously known as Burma, holds a strategic position in Southeast Asia, bridging South and East Asia. Its geographical location is significant, sharing borders with five countries—India and Bangladesh to the west, China to the north, and Thailand and Laos to the east—while its southern coastline stretches along the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. Spanning an area

of approximately 676,578 square kilometers, it is the second-largest country in South-east Asia. With a population exceeding 54 million, Myanmar is a demographically diverse nation with over 135 officially recognized ethnic groups (World Bank, 2022). The Bamar ethnic majority constitutes about 68% of the population, while ethnic groups such as the Shan, Karen, Rakhine, and Chin represent significant minorities (Myanmar Ministry of Immigration and Population, 2024).

Historically, Myanmar's strategic location made it a crucial player in regional geopolitics. During the British colonial era (1824–1948), the country served as a vital part of British India, facilitating trade and serving as a cultural and economic bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia (Findlay, 2013). However, this colonial history also fostered ethnic and social divisions that persist to this day. The post-independence period in 1948 was marked by aspirations for unity and development, but these were quickly overshadowed by ethnic conflicts and political instability (Kramer, 2010). A pivotal moment in its modern history was the 1962 military coup, which established a military-dominated regime which change the socio-political and economic trajectory of the nation for decades.

Myanmar's location and diverse resources, including oil, gas, and timber, have also drawn external interest, particularly from regional powers like China and India. The country's membership in ASEAN has further elevated its geopolitical relevance, although internal conflicts have certain constraints to fully engage in regional diplomacy (Haacke, 2006).

#### **2.4.2 Current Challenges and Impacts**

The modern political, social, and economic fabric of Myanmar has been profoundly shaped by the February 2021 military coup, which ended a decade-long experiment with quasi-democracy. This coup reversed key political reforms initiated in 2011, dragging down the nation back into authoritarian rule. Widespread protests and civil disobedience campaigns followed the coup, disrupting daily life and creating an environment of political unrest. International sanctions and diplomatic isolation further exacerbated the

situation, leaving Myanmar increasingly dependent on regionally powerful and influential country like China for economic and political support (Oo & Kawai, 2023).

The economic consequences of the coup have been devastating. Myanmar's GDP shrink significantly in 2021, and the country continues to struggle with inflation, reduced foreign investment, and disruptions to key industries such as manufacturing and agriculture (World Bank, 2022). Many citizens face worsening poverty, with rural and ethnic minority communities suffered more severely. This economic decline has been compounded by corruption and mismanagement, which have hindered development efforts and contributed to growing inequalities across the country (Findlay, Park, & Verbiest, Myanmar: building economic foundations, 2016).

Socially, the ongoing crisis has widened the gap in access to essential services, particularly education and healthcare. Schools and universities have faced prolonged closures due to political unrest, while healthcare infrastructure has been overwhelmed by economic instability and conflict. Ethnic tensions have also been intensified, with armed conflicts in border regions continuing to displace thousands of people (Horsey, 2023). Despite these challenges, Myanmar's youth and civil society remain resilient, advocating for a return to democracy and reasonable development. Addressing these interlinked challenges is essential for Myanmar's long-term stability and growth.

### **2.4.3 Overview of Myanmar's Education System**

Myanmar's education system is rooted in its Buddhist cultural and religious traditions, where monasteries serve as the primary form of education for centuries. These institutions provided accessible education to a wide area of population, particularly in rural areas, emphasizing moral teachings, literacy, and community values (Tipton, 1981). Through this egalitarian system the population received equal educational opportunities without regard to their socio-economic status.

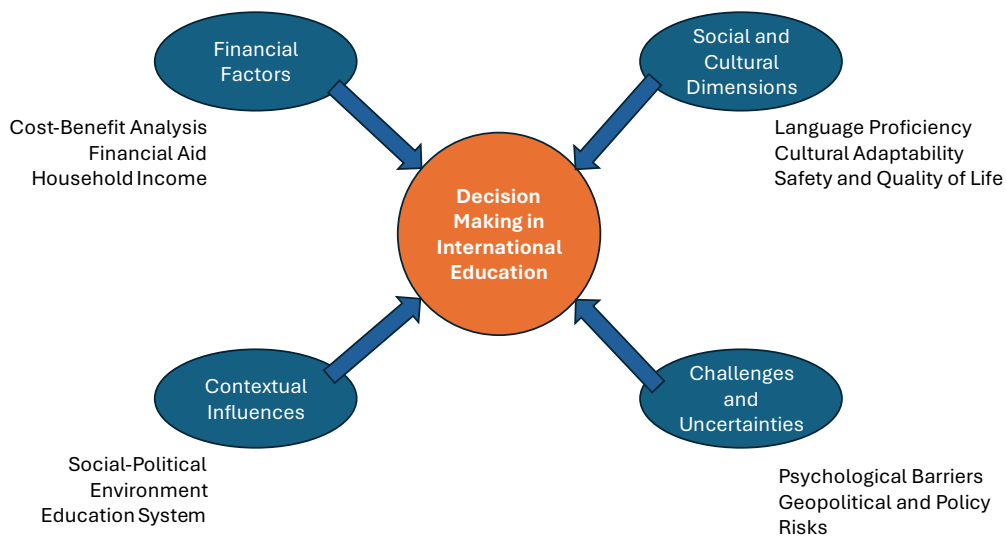
The arrival of British colonial power during the 19th century established a Western education framework that focused on teaching English language together with scientific and mathematical subjects. The new educational system raised academic standards, but its benefits mainly reached urban high society while rural areas maintained their traditional monastic education system. The coexistence of these systems reflected broader socio-economic disparities, which were further worsened by colonial policies (Steinberg, 2009).

Post-independence, the government sought to create a unified education system which would expand to fulfill the requirements of nation-building. Universities such as the University of Rangoon emerged as a leading institution in Southeast Asia, producing skilled professionals to drive development (Fen, 2005). However, political instability and economic challenges hindered these efforts. The 1962 military coup resulted in a shift in priorities, with the regime prioritizing political control over educational development. This led to frequent university closures during periods of unrest and a decline in educational quality due to reduced resources (Silverstein & Wohl, 1964).

Reform efforts between 2011 and 2020 aimed to modernize the system, introducing policies to improve teacher training, updating curricula, and expanding access to higher education. However, these advancements were uneven, and the 2021 coup severely disrupted progress. Schools and universities faced closures, and access to education became increasingly limited, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas (World Bank, 2022). Despite these setbacks, Myanmar's students continue to view education as a pathway to socio-economic mobility, with growing interest in pursuing studies abroad.

## **2.5 Summary of the Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for understanding the decision-making processes of international students, particularly Myanmar students pursuing education in Finland, integrates several interconnected concepts. These concepts include financial, social, cultural, and psychological dimensions, reflecting the complex nature of international education choices.



**Figure 2 Illustration of the summarize framework**

The theoretical framework for understanding the decision-making processes of international students is built upon several key components, including financial decision-making, social and cultural factors, challenges and uncertainties, and external influences. Financial decision-making are the cornerstone of this framework, with students evaluating the feasibility of studying abroad through cost-benefit analysis. This involves assessing direct expenses such as tuition and living costs against long-term benefits, including career prospects and socio-economic mobility. The availability of financial aid and scholarships serves as a critical factor since they alleviate financial barriers and influence destination choices. Students from politically or economically unstable countries face significant challenges because of their household income and economic differences. Additionally, opportunity costs, such as the trade-off between immediate income potential and future prospects, significantly impact students' decisions.

Social and cultural factors equally influence the patterns of international student mobility. Language proficiency is crucial for academic success and social integration and English-taught programs make education more accessible for non-native speakers. The ability of students to adapt to new cultures and their compatibility with their host

environment determines their success in adjusting to their new environment. Safety and quality of life, particularly in destinations like Finland that rank highly in these areas, are key influencing factors of attractiveness for international students.

The decision-making process becomes more complicated because of the existing challenges and uncertainties. The combination of geopolitical and policy risks which produce unstable visa policies and unpredictable labor market conditions makes the situation worse. The emotional burden of studying abroad becomes apparent through homesickness and fear of failure which demonstrate the need for specific support systems. The socio-political environment of Myanmar serves as a major contextual influence. The combination of economic instability with political unrest creates additional financial and logistical challenges while the dual educational systems of traditional and colonial heritage demonstrate why modern quality education must be accessible to all as a driver of socio-economic aspirations. Multiple factors work together to create a complete framework for studying international student decision-making.

## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research uses a mixed-method design which follows Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhi's (2019) Research Onion framework, to investigate comprehensively regarding with the factors influencing Myanmar students' decisions to pursue higher education in Finland. The research design uses quantitative and qualitative methods within the pragmatic paradigm to measure trends objectively while exploring lived experiences subjectively (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhi, 2019). This study uses an explanatory sequential approach, which starts with collection of quantitative data through closed-ended survey questions to identify patterns, followed by qualitative insights from open-ended responses to contextualize findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This dual-phase design ensures methodological rigor while addressing the complex nature of international student mobility.

#### **3.1.1 Mixed-Method Approach and Justification**

The mixed-method approach follows the principles of the Research Onion, which emphasizes methodological coherence across philosophical, strategic, and ethical layers (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhi, 2019). The quantitative phase uses structured closed-ended questions to systematically measure:

1. Demographic trends (e.g., age, educational background).
2. Decision-making priorities (e.g., financial considerations).
3. Challenges (e.g., cultural adaptation, visa processes).

The qualitative phase incorporates open-ended questions to explore subjective narratives, such as personal aspirations and socio-cultural influences. These responses enhance understanding on statistical analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how macro-level factors interact with individual levels.

The mixed-method design is justified by its ability to address the complexity of international student mobility, which involves interconnected personal, financial, and geopolitical factors. A mono-method approach would lead to oversimplification:

- Quantitative limitations: Quantitative methods, while effective in identifying trends and patterns, are limited in their ability to explore the underlying reasons or contextual factors behind those trends
- Qualitative limitations: Open-ended responses offer depth but lack generalizability

By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study strengthens its findings through triangulation, a process that cross-verifies results to enhance their validity (Denzin, 2017). For example, if quantitative data reveals that 80% of students prioritize Finland's safe environment as a key factor in their decision, qualitative responses might explain this trend by describing how Finland's reputation for safety provides a sense of security compared to the political instability in Myanmar. This mixed-methods approach helps to provide the results that are not only statistically reliable but also contextually meaningful. Additionally, the design of the study is in line with the pragmatic approach of the Research Onion, making the results practical and actionable for stakeholders like Finnish universities and policymakers (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhi, 2019)

## **3.2 Population and Sampling**

This section explains how the participants were selected in order to ensure that the sample was representative of the population of Myanmar students in Finland. The selection process was designed alongside the theoretical and contextual considerations established during the literature review section.

### **3.2.1 Target Population**

The target population comprises of Myanmar students currently studying or who have recently completed higher education programs in Finland. These students are particularly important for understanding decision-making processes in international education,

as they are experiencing challenges related to financial constraints, cultural adaptation, and the socio-political context of Myanmar.

The following are the characteristics of the target population:

- Students who are enrolled in undergraduate, postgraduate, or doctoral programs in Finnish institutions which are universities or Universities of Applied Science (UAS).

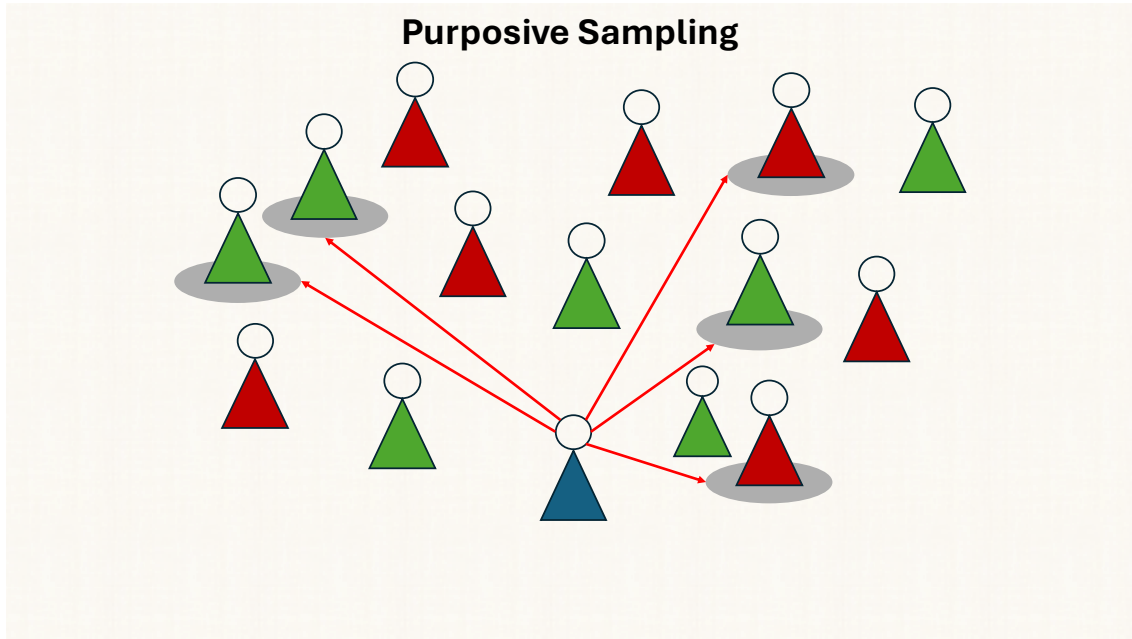
### **3.2.2 Sampling Strategy**

This study adopts a combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling in order to achieve the objectives of the study and to overcome potential challenges in identifying eligible respondents.

Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method where participants are selected based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the research question (Denzin, 2017). In this study, the primary criteria include individuals who are:

- Myanmar students who are currently studying or who have studied in Finland.
- Students with experiences who can understand decision-making processes for international education.

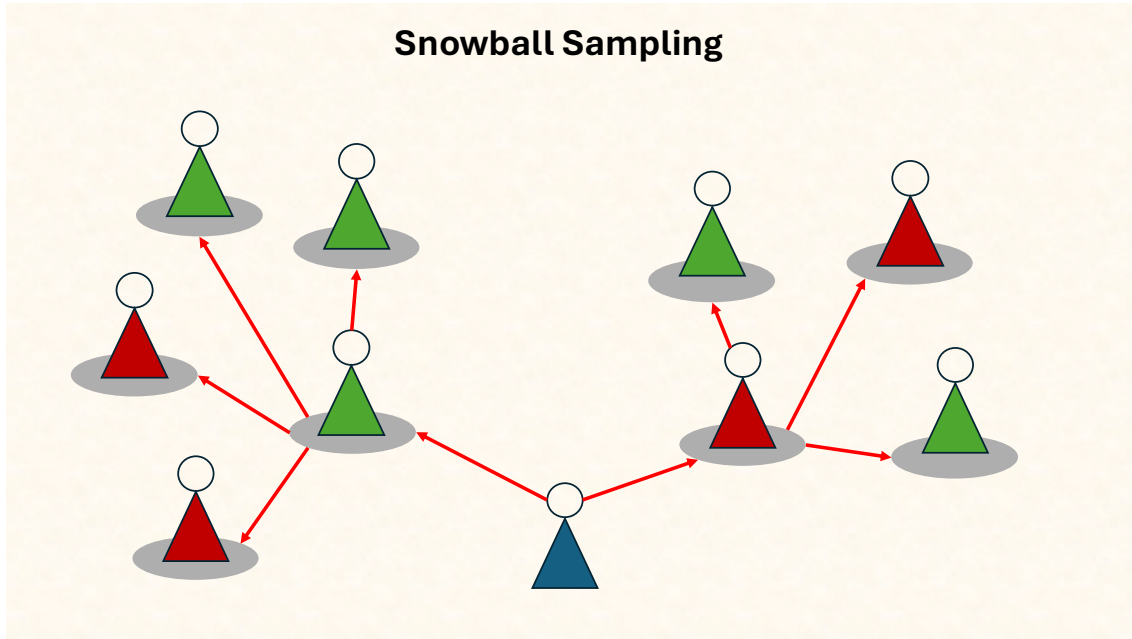
This approach ensures that the sample includes participants who possess the most relevant information for the study. It is particularly useful when studying a particular phenomenon within a niche group of the population.



**Figure 3 Illustration of Purposive sampling**

Snowball sampling complements purposive sampling as it uses the existing networks to bring in more participants (Denzin, 2017). Initial participants identified through purposive sampling are asked to recommend other students who meet the study criteria. This technique is particularly useful to access hard-to-reach populations, such as international students from Myanmar in Finland, who may not be easily located through traditional means of recruitment.

By using these approaches, the study was able to secure a proper sampling method that included variety of participants and addressed the problems of accessing and recruiting participants. This combination of methods increased the quality and quantity of the data obtained.



**Figure 4 Illustration of Snowball Sampling**

### 3.3 Research Instruments

A well-defined set of instruments was used in the study to ensure comprehensive data collection to align with the study's objectives. These instruments were developed to capture the multiple aspects which influence the decision-making processes of Myanmar students pursuing education in Finland. This section provides an overview of the survey design, data collection methods, and the pilot testing procedures that were undertaken to improve the internal and external validity of the study.

#### 3.3.1 Survey Design and Data Collection Method

The survey design, served as an important tool for data collection, is structured to capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study's research questions. Although majority of the questions are closed-ended, certain open-ended questions are included to achieve a balance between measurable, comparable data and deeper, contextual data. Closed-ended questions were used to measure variables such as financial considerations, social networks, and cultural adaptability, enabling quantitative analysis. Open-ended questions allowed participants to express their personal experiences and

perceptions, which brought more detailed and richer information to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To improve content validity, the survey questions were developed in relation to the theoretical constructs outlined in the framework, such as financial decision-making, social and cultural influences, and contextual challenges. Multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and dichotomous questions were used to gather standardized responses, while open-text fields provide a way of elaborating on complex themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This mixed-methods approach provided a holistic understanding of the factors influencing Myanmar students' decisions to study in Finland.

### **3.3.2 Data Collection and sample size**

Data collection was carried out over a defined period using online methods across various platforms. The digital version was hosted on a secure platform, allowing participants to participate in it at their time of convenience. Online surveys were distributed via email and social media platforms to increase participation and reach. The survey started on 07-Feb-2025 and ended on 28-Feb-2025 for a 3-week period with a total of 40 responds were collected. Ethical considerations were prioritized and addressed, by ensuring that participants provide informed consent and assured of confidentiality before participation.

#### **3.3.2.1 Limitations**

The relatively small number of survey responses ( $n = 40$ ) can be explained by several key factors that align with the niche characteristics of the target population. First, Myanmar students in Finland represent a small and dispersed demographic, which make the process of data collection in large-scale exponentially challenging. Unlike other international student communities, Myanmar students are a minority group that makes the overall number of potential participants small. According to previous studies on international

student mobility, niche populations tend to have sample sizes due to limited accessibility and lower visibility within broader academic networks (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Secondly, the use of online survey distribution create additional constraints. While digital methods ensured wider accessibility, participation was voluntary and therefore the response rates were influenced by individual willingness and internet accessibility. Moreover, some of the factors that may have contributed to the low participation rates include cultural and social factors, such as hesitancy toward online surveys, concerns over data privacy, and unfamiliarity with research participation.

However, the responses obtained are very useful in understanding the decision-making processes of the Myanmar students in Finland. Thus, while a larger sample could enhance generalizability, the findings remain highly informative within the specific context of Myanmar students in Finland. Future research could expand upon this study by incorporating alternative recruitment strategies, such as collaborations with student associations and institutional databases, to improve participation rates.

### **3.3.3 Pilot Testing**

Before the full-scale data collection, a pilot study was conducted with a small subset of participants between 6 to 12 participants who shared similar characteristics to the target population, especially the participants in close proximity so that richer interaction can be facilitated, and clarification can be provided where necessary. The aim was to evaluate the clarity, coherence, and relevance of the survey questions, as well as to identify potential logistical or technical issues. Feedback from the pilot test was instrumental in refining the research instruments. This process ensured that the survey questions were clear, unbiased, and effectively captured the intended data. Furthermore, the pilot test provided valuable insights for optimizing data collection procedures, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the study.

### **3.3.4 Data Analysis Techniques**

The data collected from the online survey will be analyzed using the Real Statistics Add-in for Microsoft Excel, a statistical software tool that provides robust analytical capabilities, which is also utilized during the course of Probability and Statistics, University of Vaasa. Descriptive analysis, including frequency distribution, means, and standard deviations, will be conducted for the comprehensive overview of demographic information and assess the importance of various push-pull factors influencing Myanmar students' decision to study in Finland. Cross-tabulations will be deployed to explore relationships between categorical variables, such as the impact of scholarships on students' financial decision-making or the influence of cultural adaptability on students' overall satisfaction.

For statistical analysis, correlation techniques will be applied to assess the strength and direction of relationships between key variables, such as the link between financial factors and the decision to choose Finland. Logistic regression analysis will further identify significant predictors of decision-making, offering insights into the relative importance of financial, cultural, and social factors. Qualitative data from open-ended survey responses will undergo thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring themes and deeper insights into personal motivations and challenges.

The results of these analyses will be presented through proper and appropriate visually engaging and informative tables, charts, and graphs to ensure clarity and enhance understanding. This mixed-methods approach integrates quantitative precision with qualitative depth, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing international student mobility decisions.

### **3.3.5 Methodological Limitations**

The methodological limitations of this study stem from several factors that impacted the data collection process. First, the reliance on an online survey for data collection posed challenges in reaching the target population of Myanmar students currently studying in

Finland or those who have recently graduated. Due to the limitations of online distribution methods, the researcher was unable to provide detailed, in-person explanations of the research objectives to participants, which might have influenced the response rate and the depth of engagement with the survey.

Additionally, the ongoing political instability in Myanmar has led to periodic internet disruptions and restrictions on social media usage in certain regions, could create delays in distributing the survey and receiving responses especially for the students who are currently studying through online. These challenges were intensified by the dispersed nature of the target population, as the participants are located across Finland and Myanmar, making it difficult to ensure equal representation of diverse backgrounds and fields of study.

Finally, the study's reliance on voluntary participation and snowball sampling introduced potential biases because respondents who are more motivated or connected to the research network may have been overrepresented.

## 4 Data Analysis and Research Findings

This section describes the analytical procedures and results of the study to meet the research objectives through statistical evaluation. The analysis follows a systematic approach, ensuring the reliability and validity of the results by implementing different statistical methods.

The reliability assessment of collected data verifies the consistency and accuracy in measurement processes. Statistical tests, such as Cronbach's alpha, are employed to evaluate the internal consistency of survey responses, verifying the reliability of the dataset for further analysis.

The demographic profile section will display an extensive analysis of participant characteristics by showing their age distribution together with gender breakdown, academic disciplines and duration of residence in Finland. This information can provide useful insights based upon the composition of the survey participants and their background.

The one-sample t-test is conducted to figure out the statistical significance of various push and pull factors affecting students' decisions. Key variables such as safety, tuition affordability, and educational quality were tested against a neutral benchmark to reveal their significant impact which will help understanding of respondents' priorities and concerns.

Relationships between categorical variables, such as funding sources and age groups, were explored using cross-tabulation. The analysis could revealed important connections between demographic variables and financial and social factors such as older students tend to on personal savings. These findings highlight key trends and dependencies within the surveyed data.

The final section combines the results related to push and pull factors influencing Myanmar students' choice of Finland, identifying the most influential factors.

#### 4.1 Data Reliability

Reliability denotes the extent to which a measurement tool generates consistent and stable outcomes when applied repeatedly. Instruments that are reliable help in reducing random errors during data collection, thus ensuring that results can be replicated (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

**Table 1 Interpretation of Cronbach's Alpha**

<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>Internal Consistency</b>
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), a common measure of internal consistency, assesses how closely related items within a scale are and whether they measure the same construct. Higher values of Cronbach's alpha denote increased reliability, with a threshold of 0.70 or higher generally regarded as acceptable as shown in the Table 1.

The reliability test is performed on the following Likert questions of Q9, "*How important were the following factors in your decision to choose Finland?*", Q16, "*How did financial factors influence your decision to study in Finland?*" and Q23, "*How important were the following social and cultural factors in your decision to study in Finland?*". The results are shown in the following tables.

**Table 2 Reliability Test Result Q9**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha with missing item	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal consistency
Quality of education	0.790821	0.810062	Good
Reputation of Finnish universities	0.799031		
Availability of scholarships	0.811278		
Living expenses and cost of living	0.791951		
Safety and Security	0.798645		
Opportunities to work while studying	0.787955		
Cultural and social environment	0.787493		
Post-graduation job opportunities	0.768044		
Support services for international students	0.781635		

**Table 3 Reliability Test Result Q16**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha with missing item	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal consistency
Affordability of tuition fees	0.669573	0.67555	Questionable
Availability of scholarships2	0.625999		
Ability to work after graduation	0.607274		
Cost of living in Finland	0.596285		
Availability of part-time work	0.55385		
Financial support from family	0.722758		

As per the Table 3 result, the variable “*Financial support from family*” is removed to improve the Cronbach’s Alpha value to acceptable condition and the modified table is as below.

**Table 4 Reliability Test Result Q16, modified**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha with missing item	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal consistency
Affordability of tuition fees	0.727262	0.722758	Acceptable
Availability of scholarships2	0.673997		
Ability to work after graduation	0.683643		
Cost of living in Finland	0.661202		
Availability of part-time work	0.615511		

**Table 5 Reliability Test Result Q23**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha with missing item	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal consistency
Language barrier (English as a medium)	0.79026	0.80367	Good
Finnish culture and lifestyle	0.76660		
Student life and Community	0.78426		
Diversity and Inclusiveness	0.74846		
Perceived safety of Finland	0.78726		
Support services for international students <sup>2</sup>	0.75964		

As per the results in above tables, Cronbach's alpha values of all the variables have become above 0.7 which indicates that the data collected from the survey is now reliable, and the model has a high internal consistency to proceed further analysis.

## 4.2 Demographic Profiles

The section provides the demographic profile data analysis of the respondents in terms of gender, age, highest level of Education before coming to Finland, current level of study in Finland, Field of study and duration in Finland.

**Table 6 Age Distribution**

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
<18 years	2	5%	5%
18–25 years	12	31%	36%
26–30 years	16	41%	77%
31–40 years	5	13%	90%
>40 years	4	10%	100%

The majority of participants appear to be in the "18–25" and "26–30" age groups with percentage of 31% and 41%, indicating that most respondents are young adults.

**Table 7 Gender Distribution**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Woman	21	54%	54%
Man	18	46%	100%

The response of females slightly outnumber males in the sample with near balanced distribution between males and females.

**Table 8 Distribution of Highest level of Study before Finland**

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
High School	11	28%	28%
Bachelor's Degree	22	56%	85%
Master's Degree	3	8%	92%
PhD	1	3%	95%
Diploma	2	5%	100%

A mix of respondents reported various levels of education prior to coming to Finland, ranging from high school to PhD, with majority of the respondents holding a bachelor's degree.

**Table 9 Distribution of Current level of Study in Finland**

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
High School	1	3%	3%
Bachelor's Degree	12	30%	33%
Master's Degree	8	20%	53%
PhD	1	3%	55%
Vocational	18	45%	100%

Nearly half of the respondents 45% are enrolled in vocational programs, and 53% of the respondents are studying in higher education with 30% in bachelor's degree 20% in master's degree and 3% in PhD program.

**Table 10 Distribution of Field of Study**

Field of Study	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Business and Economics	15	38%	38%
Science and Technology	9	23%	62%
Social Sciences	5	13%	74%
Health and Social Care	6	15%	90%
Art and Humanities	1	3%	92%
Tourism/Hospitality	2	5%	97%
Restaurant and catering	1	3%	100%

Business and Economics is the most popular field with 38%, followed by Science and Technology with 23% and Health and Social Care sector in third place with 15%.

**Table 11 Distribution of duration in Finland**

Duration	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Less than 1 year	13	33%	33%
1–2 years	22	56%	90%
3–4 years	2	5%	95%
More than 4 years	2	5%	100%

Over half of the respondents (56%) have been studying in Finland for 1-2 years and 33% is less than 1 year, therefore the analysis of the survey will be influenced greatly by the respondents who have arrive in Finland after the covid19 pandemic and military coup in Myanmar which occurred in 2021.

### 4.3 One Sample T-Test

A one-sample t-test is a parametric statistical procedure used to determine whether the mean of a single sample significantly differs from a known or hypothesized population mean when the population standard deviation is unknown (Ross, 2021). This statistical test is especially valuable in research settings where the objective is to assess whether the observed data correspond to theoretical predictions or normative values. The null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) asserts that there is no significant difference between the sample mean

and the population mean ( $\mu$ ), whereas the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) indicates the presence of a statistically significant discrepancy (Ross, 2021).

Therefore, one sample t-test will be performed on following list of Likert questions Q9, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q23 and Q30 along with each listed factor.

**Table 12 One sample t-test, Q9, Quality of Education**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.923077	0.983672	0.157514	5.860298	38	0.9383	0.6890
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	4.43E-07	1.68595				yes	
Two Tail	8.85E-07	2.02439		3.60420	4.2419	yes	

The sample mean score for the importance of “Quality of Education” in choosing Finland is 3.92, which is significantly higher than the hypothesized neutral midpoint of 3. The resultant p-value also indicates the presence of strong statistical evidence that the mean importance rating differs significantly from 3. Therefore, “Quality of Education” can be considered as an important factor in their decision to choose Finland.

**Table 13 One sample t-test, Q9, Reputation of Finnish universities**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.435897	1.095322	0.175392	2.485277	38	0.397963	0.37392
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	0.008731	1.685954				yes	
Two Tail	0.017462	2.024394		3.080835	3.79096	yes	

The mean score for the importance of “Reputation of Finnish universities” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is 3.44, which is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3. With p-value lower than alpha level of 0.05, it indicates strong statistical evidence that the mean importance rating differs significantly from 3. Cohen’s d

value of 0.40, indicates a small to moderate effect size and therefore the results suggest that respondents consider the “*Reputation of Finnish Universities*” somewhat important when choosing Finland, but the effect size is smaller compared to the Quality of Education factor.

**Table 14 One sample t-test, Q9, Availability of scholarships**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39	3.358974	1.366655	0.21884	1.640351	38	0.262666	0.257151
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig		
One Tail	0.054593	1.685954			no		
Two Tail	0.109185	2.024394	2.915956	3.801993	no		

The mean score for the importance of “*Availability of scholarships*” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is **3.36**, which is not statistically significantly different from the neutral midpoint of 3, Moreover, p-value greater than 0.05 shows that the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, the results suggest that “*Availability of Scholarships*” were not strongly perceived as a significant factor in the decision to choose Finland as study destination.

**Table 15 One sample t-test, Q9, Cost of Living**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39	3.461538	1.210614	0.193853	2.380863	38	0.381243	0.360288
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig		
One Tail	0.011194	1.685954			yes		
Two Tail	0.022389	2.024394	3.069103	3.853974	yes		

The mean score for the importance of “*Cost of Living*” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is 3.46, which is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3 along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0.38, indicates a small to moderate effect size and therefore the results suggest that

respondents consider “*Cost of Living*” is somewhat important when choosing Finland as a study destination.

**Table 16 One sample t-test, Q9, Safety and Security**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	4.358974	1.012739	0.162168	8.380036	38	1.34188	0.805531
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>	<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>		
One Tail	1.82E-10	1.685954			yes		
Two Tail	3.64E-10	2.024394	4.030682	4.687266	yes		

The mean score for the importance of “*Safety and Security*” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is 4,36, which is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3 along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 1.34, indicates a very large effect size and therefore the results suggest that respondents consider “*Safety and Security*” to be major consideration when choosing Finland as a study destination.

**Table 17 One sample t-test, Q9, Opportunities to work while studying**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.487179	1.553803	0.248808	1.958057	38	0.31354	0.302734
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>	<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>		
One Tail	0.028798	1.685954			yes		
Two Tail	0.057595	2.024394	2.983495	3.990864	no		

The mean score for the importance of “*Opportunities to work while studying*” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is 3.49, which is marginally above the neutral midpoint of 3 with two-tailed p-value of 0.057 which is above alpha value of 0.05, the result is not significant for two-tailed test. Overall, while there are some indications

that “*Opportunities to work while studying*” is an influencing factor, its impact is relatively weak compared to other factors.

**Table 18 One sample t-test, Q9, Cultural and social environment**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.435897	1.07102	0.17150	2.54165	38	0.40699	0.3811
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3.000		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>	<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>		
One Tail	0.008	1.686				yes	
Two Tail	0.015	2.024	3.089	3.783		yes	

The mean score for the importance of “*Cultural and social environment*” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is 3.44, which is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3 along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0.407, indicates a small to moderate effect size and therefore the results suggest that respondents consider “*Cultural and Social Environment*” somewhat important when choosing Finland as a study destination.

**Table 19 One sample t-test, Q9, post-graduation job opportunities**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39.0000	3.3333	1.4749	0.2362	1.4114	38.0000	0.2260	0.2232
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3.0000		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>	<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>		
One Tail	0.0831	1.6860				no	
Two Tail	0.1663	2.0244	2.8552	3.8115		no	

The mean score for the importance of “*post-graduation job opportunities*” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is 3.33, which does not significantly differ from the neutral midpoint of 3. Moreover, p-value greater than 0.05 shows that the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, the results suggest that “*post-graduation job opportunities*” were not strongly perceived as a significant factor in the decision to choose Finland as study destination.

**Table 20 One sample t-test, Q9, Support services for international students**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.0500			
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39.0000	3.4103	1.3122	0.2101	1.9524	38.0000	0.3126	0.3019
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3.0000		
	p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig		
One Tail	0.0291	1.6860			yes		
Two Tail	0.0583	2.0244	2.9849	3.8356	no		

The mean score for the importance of “*Support services for international students*” in respondents' decision to choose Finland is 3.41, which is marginally above the neutral midpoint of 3 with two-tailed p-value of 0.058 which is above alpha value of 0.05, the result is not significant for two-tailed test. Overall, while there are some indications that “*Support services for international students*” is an influencing factor, its impact is relatively weak compared to other factors.

Therefore, Q9 factors for choosing Finland as study destination, can be ranked as follows.

**Table 21 Q9 Factors Ranking**

Rank	Variable	Mean	Interpretation
1	Safety and security	4.36	Most critical factor
2	Quality of education	3.92	Highly important
3	Opportunities to work while studying	3.49	Marginally important, high variability
4	Cost of living	3.46	Moderately important
5	Cultural and social environment	3.44	Moderately important
6	Reputation of Finnish universities	3.44	Moderately important
7	Availability of scholarships	3.44	Moderately important
8	Support services for international students	3.41	Weak evidence of importance
9	Post-graduation job opportunities	3.33	Not significant

**Table 22 One sample t-test, Q16, Affordability of tuition fees**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.948718	1.122702	0.179776	5.277219	38	0.845031	0.650325
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>		<i>sig</i>
One Tail	2.78E-06	1.685954					yes
Two Tail	5.57E-06	2.024394		3.58478	4.312656		yes

The mean score for the importance of “*affordability of tuition fees*” in respondents' decision-making is 3.95. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3 along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0.845, indicates a large effect size and therefore the This result indicates that “*affordability of tuition fees*” is considered a relatively important factor by respondents in their decision-making process, with a strong positive perception of the affordability.

**Table 23 One sample t-test, Q16, Availability of scholarships**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.589744	1.271509	0.203604	2.896518	38	0.463814	0.42527
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>		<i>sig</i>
One Tail	0.003114	1.685954					yes
Two Tail	0.006227	2.024394		3.177568	4.001919		yes

The mean score for the importance of “*availability of scholarships*” in respondents' decision-making is 3.59, which is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0.46 indicates a moderate effect size and therefore the result indicates that “*availability of scholarships*” is considered an important factor by respondents in their decision-making process.

**Table 24 One sample t-test, Q16, Cost of living in Finland**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.846154	1.288378	0.206306	4.101457	38	0.656759	0.553938
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	0.000104	1.685954				yes	
Two Tail	0.000209	2.024394		3.42851	4.263798	yes	

The mean score for the importance of “*Cost of living in Finland*” in respondents' decision-making is 3.84, which is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0.65 indicates a moderate to large effect size and therefore the result indicates that “*Cost of Living*” is considered an important factor by respondents in their decision-making process.

**Table 25 One sample t-test, Q16, Ability to work after graduation**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.820513	1.166908	0.186855	4.39118	38	0.703151	0.58019
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	4.35E-05	1.685954				yes	
Two Tail	8.7E-05	2.024394		3.442245	4.198781	yes	

The mean score for the importance of “*Ability to work after graduation*” in respondents' decision-making is 3.82, which is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0.7 indicates a moderate to large effect size and therefore the result indicates that “*Ability to work after graduation*” is considered an important factor by respondents in their decision-making process.

**Table 26 Q16 Factors Ranking**

Rank	Factor	Mean	Interpretation
1	Affordability of tuition fees	3.95	Very important factor with a strong positive perception.
2	Cost of living in Finland	3.85	Very important factor with a positive perception.
3	Ability to work after graduation	3.82	Important factor with a strong positive perception.
4	Availability of scholarships	3.59	Moderately important factor with a positive perception.

**Table 27 One sample t-test, Q17, Perception of Tuition fees in Finland**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39.0000	2.9744	1.1807	0.1891	-0.1356	38.0000	0.0217	0.0220
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig		
One Tail	0.4464	1.6860			no		
Two Tail	0.8928	2.0244	2.5916	3.3571	no		

The results indicate that the “*perception of tuition fees in Finland*” does not differ significantly from the neutral value of 3 with mean value of 2.97. The small t-value, large p-values, and negligible effect size with Cohen’s d value of 0.022 indicate that respondents do not perceive a meaningful difference from the neutral point. Therefore, the results suggest that respondents view “*tuition fees in Finland*” as neither particularly affordable nor expensive.

**Table 28 One sample t-test, Q18, Rating of Cost of Living**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39.0000	3.6667	0.9551	0.1529	4.3589	38.0000	0.6980	0.5774
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3.0000		
	p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig		
One Tail	0.0000	1.6860			yes		
Two Tail	0.0001	2.0244	3.3570	3.9763	yes		

The mean score for respondents' "*perception of the cost of living in Finland*" is 3.67. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen's d value of 0.7 indicates a moderate to large effect size and therefore the result indicates that "*Cost of Living*" is considered higher than neutral.

**Table 29 One sample t-test, Q23, Language barrier (English as a medium)**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.615385	1.114861	0.178521	3.447134	38	0.551983	0.488071
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	0.000699	1.685954				yes	
Two Tail	0.001399	2.024394		3.253988	3.976781	yes	

The mean score for the perceived "*language barrier*" in Finland, with English as the medium of instruction, is 3.62. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3 along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen's value of 0,56 indicates a moderate effect size, showing that the perceived "*language barrier*" has a meaningful impact. Therefore, the language barrier is considered a moderately important factor.

**Table 30 One sample t-test, Q23, Finnish culture and lifestyle**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.05			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39	3.1538	1.1818	0.1892	0.8129	38.0000	0.1302	0.1307
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	0.2107	1.6860				no	
Two Tail	0.4213	2.0244		2.7707	3.5370	no	

The mean score for the perceived challenge of adapting to "*Finnish culture and lifestyle*" is 3.15. This result is not statistically significantly different from the neutral midpoint of 3. The small t-value, large p-values, and negligible effect size with Cohen's d value of

0.022 indicate that respondents do not perceive a meaningful difference from the neutral point. Therefore, the results suggest that respondents view “*Finnish culture and life-style*” as a neutral factor.

**Table 31 One sample t-test, Q23, Student life and Community**

SUMMARY		Alpha	0.05				
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39.0000	3.4103	1.2078	0.1934	2.1212	38.0000	0.3397	0.3254
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig		
One Tail	0.0202	1.6860			yes		
Two Tail	0.0405	2.0244	3.0187	3.8018	yes		

The mean score for the perceived challenge of “*student life and community*” integration is 3.41. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0,34 indicates a moderate effect size, suggesting a limited practical impact. Therefore, “*Student life and community*” is considered a moderately important factor.

**Table 32 One sample t-test, Q23, Diversity and Inclusiveness**

SUMMARY		Alpha	0.05				
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39	3.4103	1.2078	0.1934	2.1212	38.0000	0.3397	0.3254
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3.0000		
	p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig		
One Tail	0.0202	1.6860			yes		
Two Tail	0.0405	2.0244	3.0187	3.8018	yes		

The mean score for the “*Diversity and Inclusiveness*” is 3.41. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0,34 indicates a moderate effect size, suggesting a limited practical impact. Therefore, “*Diversity and Inclusiveness*” is considered a moderately important factor.

**Table 33 One sample t-test, Q23, Perceived safety of Finland**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.0500			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39.0000	4.1538	1.1364	0.1820	6.3406	38.0000	1.0153	0.7170
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3.0000		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	0.0000	1.6860				yes	
Two Tail	0.0000	2.0244		3.7855	4.5222	yes	

The mean score for the “*Perceived safety of Finland*” is 4,15. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 1,02 indicates a large effect size, suggesting a practical importance. Therefore, the “*perceived safety of Finland*” is regarded as a very important factor.

**Table 34 One sample t-test, Q23, Support services for international students**

SUMMARY			Alpha	0.0500			
<i>Count</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Std Err</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Cohen d</i>	<i>Effect r</i>
39.0000	3.4615	1.0966	0.1756	2.6285	38.0000	0.4209	0.3922
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3		
	<i>p-value</i>	<i>t-crit</i>		<i>lower</i>	<i>upper</i>	<i>sig</i>	
One Tail	0.0062	1.6860				yes	
Two Tail	0.0123	2.0244		3.1061	3.8170	yes	

The mean score for the “*Support services for international students*” is 3.46. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0,34 indicates a moderate effect size, suggesting a moderate importance. Therefore, “*Support services for international students*” can be considered as an important factor.

**Table 35 Ranking of Q23 factors**

Rank	Variable	Mean	Interpretation
1	Perceived safety of Finland	4.15	Overwhelmingly positive perception
2	Language barrier (English as a medium)	3.62	Moderate challenge
3	Support services for international students	3.46	Moderately adequate
4	Student life and community	3.41	Moderate challenge
4	Diversity and inclusiveness	3.41	Moderate challenge
5	Finnish culture and lifestyle	3.15	Neutral perception

**Table 36 One sample t-test, Q23, Overall Satisfaction**

SUMMARY		Alpha	0.05				
Count	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	df	Cohen d	Effect r
39.0000	3.7692	0.7767	0.1244	6.1851	38.0000	0.9904	0.7083
T TEST				Hyp Mean	3.0000		
		p-value	t-crit	lower	upper	sig	
One Tail		0.0000	1.6860			yes	
Two Tail		0.0000	2.0244	3.5175	4.0210	yes	

The mean score for “overall satisfaction” among international students in Finland is 3.77. This result is statistically significantly above the neutral midpoint of 3, along with the strong statistical evidence of p-value lower than alpha 0.05. Cohen’s d value of 0,99 indicates a large effect size, suggesting an exceptional practical importance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents are very satisfied overall.

#### 4.4 Cross Tabulation

Cross-tabulation, also known as contingency table analysis, is a statistical method used to examine relationships between two or more categorical variables by organizing observed frequencies into a matrix format. It can reveal whether a respondent’s demographic characteristics correlate with their choices, attitudes, or challenges in a given context (Moore, McCabe, & Craig, 2021).

The following cross tabulation will be performed from the survey

**Table 37 Cross tabulation List**

<b>Cross Tabulation Variables</b>	<b>Insight</b>
Gender (Q2) x Field of Study (Q6)	To identify potential gender imbalances in academic preferences.
Current level of study (Q4) Vs Age group (Q1)	To identify level of study is differ between different age groups
Duration in Finland (Q6) Vs Overall satisfaction (Q30)	To identify potential trends, whether satisfaction increase with longer stay
Type of Funding (Q15) vs age group (Q1)	To identify potential patterns on funding based on age grouping
Primary reason to study abroad (Q7) vs Safety and Security (Q9)	To identify the relation between primary reason to study abroad and consideration on Finland's Safety and Security
Duration in Finland (Q6) Vs Language Barrier, English as medium (Q23)	To identify the relation whether duration in Finland improve any language barrier
Affordability of Tuition Fees (Q16) Vs Safety and Security (Q9)	To identify the trend whether the respondents who prioritize tuition fees affordability also emphasized safety as a critical factor.

**Table 38 Cross Tabulation Gender (Q2) x Field of Study (Q6)**

<b>Field of Study</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>Woman</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Art and Humanities</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Business and Economics</b>	6	9	<b>15</b>
<b>Health and Social Care</b>	1	5	<b>6</b>
<b>International Hospitality Management</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Restaurant &amp; Catering</b>		1	<b>1</b>
<b>Science and Technology</b>	7	2	<b>9</b>
<b>Social Sciences</b>	2	3	<b>5</b>
<b>Tourism</b>		1	<b>1</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>39</b>

**Table 39 Chi-square test, Gender (Q2) x Field of Study (Q6)**

	<i>chi-sq</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>x-crit</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Cramer V</i>
Pearson's	10.0733	0.1845	14.0671	no	0.5082
Max likelihood	11.9726	0.1015	14.0671	no	0.5541

Business and Economic is the most popular field with total of 15 enrollment. The field of Science and Technology shows a male-dominant trend, and the Health and Social sector is dominated by females. However, as the chi-square test result, there is no statistically significant to conclude the strong association based on gender although there are some existences of gendered trends.

**Table 40 Cross Tabulation, Current level of study (Q4) Vs Age group (Q1)**

Current lvl of study (Q4)Vs Age group (Q1)	<18	18-25	26-30	31-40	>40	Grand Total
Bachelor (University/UAS)	1	6	4	1	0	12
Master (University/UAS)	0	1	7	0	0	8
PhD	0	0	1	0	0	1
Vocational	1	5	4	4	4	18
Grand Total	2	12	16	5	4	39

**Table 41 Chi-square test, Current level of study (Q4) Vs Age group (Q1)**

	<i>chi-sq</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>x-crit</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Cramer V</i>
Pearson's	17.4123	0.1347	21.0261	no	0.3858
Max likelihood	19.6773	0.0734	21.0261	no	0.4101

As per the cross tabulation, it can be observed that older students are more likely to pursue vocational schools as both the group of >40 and 31-40 are enrolled in vocational programs and none of them pursuing any other degree programs. Bachelor's degrees are more popular among younger students with 6 in 18-25 group and 4 in 26-30 group indicating a traditional academic progression. As per the chi-square result, there is no strong statistical association found at the alpha value of 0.05. Since Cramer V has a value of 0.386 indicating possibility of meaningful association and with alpha value of 0.1, indicates that a weak to moderate relationship could exist.

**Table 42 Cross Tabulation, Duration in Finland (Q6) Vs Overall satisfaction (Q30)**

<b>Duration in Finland (Q6)Vs Overall satisfaction (Q30)</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
<b>Less than 1 year</b>	3	6	4	<b>13</b>
<b>1-2 years</b>	13	5	4	<b>22</b>
<b>3-4 years</b>	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
<b>More than 4 years</b>	0	2	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>39</b>

**Table 43 Chi-square test, Duration in Finland (Q6) Vs Overall satisfaction (Q30)**

	<i>chi-sq</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>x-crit</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Cramer V</i>
Pearson's	8.7479	0.1883	12.5916	no	0.3349
Max likelihood	9.8533	0.1310	12.5916	no	0.3554

As per the table data, newer arrivals (< 1 year) report higher satisfaction 77% (> 3 satisfaction grade) which can possibly be due to initial enthusiasm. On the other hand, long-term residents (> 4 years) also report high satisfaction, which suggest Finland retains appeal over time, but the sample size is small to support this. The chi-square analysis suggest that there is no statistically significant association between duration in Finland and overall satisfaction since p-values are greater than alpha level 0.05. Cramer V value of 0.33 indicate that students staying longer may develop slightly different levels of satisfaction, but more data is needed for conclusion.

**Table 44 Cross Tabulation, Type of Funding (Q15) vs age group (Q1)**

<b>Type of Funding (Q15) vs age group (Q1)</b>	<b>&lt;18</b>	<b>18-25</b>	<b>26-30</b>	<b>31-40</b>	<b>&gt;40</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>
Family Support	1	12	9	3	1	<b>26</b>
Part-time work	1	0	3	1	0	<b>5</b>
Personal savings	1	0	10	3	3	<b>17</b>
Scholarship	0	2	1	1	0	<b>4</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>52</b>

**Table 45 Chi-square test, Type of Funding (Q15) vs age group (Q1)**

	<i>chi-sq</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>x-crit</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Cramer V</i>
Pearson's	18.4147	0.1037	21.0261	no	0.3436
Max likelihood	23.2937	0.0253	21.0261	yes	0.3864

From the result of the table, family support is the most common source of funding across all age groups but particularly high for younger students. Part/time work is rarely considered as primary source of funding with only 5 students and older students (>40) rely more on personal savings. Although Maximum likelihood p-value indicates that there is a significant association between funding type and age, Pearson's test does not support that the relationship is not strong enough to be conclusive and require larger sample to be definitive.

**Table 46 Cross Tabulation, Primary reason to study abroad (Q7) vs Safety and Security (Q9)**

Primary reason to study abroad (Q7) vs Safety and Security (Q9)	1	3	4	5	Grand Total
Better career prospects	0	1	0	9	10
Desire for international exposure	0	0	3	1	4
Family/peer influence	1	0	0	1	2
Limited opportunities for quality education in Myanmar	0	0	1	3	4
Myanmar political instability	1	2	7	9	19
Grand Total	2	3	11	23	39

**Table 47 Chi-square test, Primary reason to study abroad (Q7) vs Safety and Security (Q9)**

	<i>chi-sq</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>x-crit</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Cramer V</i>
Pearson's	19.8709	0.0696	21.0261	no	0.4121
Max likelihood	18.8122	0.0932	21.0261	no	0.4010

From the result of the table, 16 out of 19 give safety consideration of rating 4 and 5 who chose Myanmar political instability as the primary for studying abroad. As per the chi-square result, although both Pearson and Maximum likelihood both don't show statistical significance at alpha 0.05, both of the tests indicate that the result is considered

significant at alpha 0.1 indication the association between the primary reason for studying abroad and perceived safety and security of Finland.

**Table 48 Cross Tabulation, Duration in Finland (Q6) Vs Language Barrier, English as medium (Q23)**

Duration in Finland (Q6) vs Language Barrier (Q23)	1	2	3	4	5	Grand Total
Less than 1 year	0	2	6	2	3	13
1-2 years	0	3	6	6	7	22
3-4 years	0	0	1	0	1	2
More than 4 years	1	0	0	1	0	2
Grand Total	1	5	13	9	11	39

**Table 49 Chi-square Test, Duration in Finland (Q6) Vs Language Barrier, English as medium (Q23)**

	<i>chi-sq</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>x-crit</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Cramer V</i>
Pearson's	23.5226	0.0236	21.0261	yes	0.4484
Max likelihood	12.9059	0.3759	21.0261	no	0.3321

From the result of the table, it can be seen that new arrivals (<1 year) report moderate language barriers. As per the chi-square analysis, Pearson test show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the duration of in Finland the experience with language barrier. Students who have stayed for a shorter period tend to report greater language difficulties. The maximum likelihood test, however, does not confirm the relationship indicating requirement of further validation of the association.

**Table 50 Cross Tabulation, Affordability of Tuition Fees (Q16) Vs Safety and Security (Q9)**

Affordability of Tuition Fees (Q16) Vs Safety and Security (Q9)	1	3	4	5	Grand Total
1	0	0	0	1	1
2	1	1	0	1	3
3	1	0	2	7	10
4	0	2	4	2	8
5	0	0	5	12	17
Grand Total	2	3	11	23	39

**Table 51 Chi-square Test, Affordability of Tuition Fees (Q16) Vs Safety and Security (Q9)**

	<i>chi-sq</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>x-crit</i>	<i>sig</i>	<i>Cramer V</i>
Pearson's	19.7869	0.0712	21.0261	no	0.4112
Max likelihood	19.5464	0.0762	21.0261	no	0.4087

The chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between students' perceptions of tuition fee affordability (Q16) and their perceived safety and security in Finland (Q9). The Pearson's chi-square value of 19.79 with p-value 0.0712 and the likelihood-ratio chi-square value of 19.55 with p-value 0.0762 indicate that the relationship between these two variables is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. However, the p-values are close to the 0.1 threshold, suggesting a weak association that may warrant further exploration.

#### **4.5 Findings on push-pull factors**

The decision-making process is driven by a combination of push factors which are unfavorable conditions in home country and pull factors which are the attributes of the destination country that attract students.

As per the data and analysis performed, Political instability in Myanmar is the most influential push factor, and nearly half of the respondents cite it as their primary reason for seeking education abroad. This factor is also supported by the cross tabulation finding of association between primary reason for studying abroad and perceived view of Finland's Safety and Security. The other major push factor would be Limited Career prospects since this is the second most common vote after Political Instability in Myanmar that the respondents cited for the primary reason for the decision to study abroad.

In contrast to push factors, there are quite a number of pull factors and the major pull factors would be safety and security since this get the highest rating in both Q9, the

section for decision of Study Abroad and in Q23, the section for Social and Cultural Considerations. The quality of Education is also another significant motivator with high average score following the safety and security factor, aligning with Finland's high-ranking in academic reputation. Although other factors such as affordable tuition fees, ease of visa process and work opportunities also contribute, they play a secondary role relative to the perceived safety and educational quality. Financial Aspects and Social and Cultural considerations will be summarized separately.

#### **4.5.1 Findings on Financial Aspects**

The data indicate that family support is the predominant funding source, with over 50% of respondents relying on it, reflecting the importance of familial resources in mitigating financial constraints. This suggests that for many students, the decision to study abroad is not solely based on individual financial planning but is strongly influenced by the financial capacity and support provided by their families. Chi-square analysis further revealed the association in funding strategies across age groups, which indicate that older students predominantly relied on personal savings, suggesting that many had prior employment earnings to finance their education and younger students are more likely to depend on family support.

The affordability of tuition fees was also a significant factor with respondents rating it highly influential and this suggests that Finland's relatively lower tuition fees, compared to other Western destinations, enhance its attractiveness to students from Myanmar. Furthermore, cross-tabulation analysis reveal that respondents who prioritized tuition fees affordability also emphasized safety and security as a critical factor. This correlation suggests that financial and security concerns are interlinked in the decision-making process which is in line with the facts that majority of respondents primary reason of studying abroad which is due to Myanmar Political Instability making young respondents looking forward to both affordability and security.

Another important financial factor is the cost of living, which was rated as a substantial concern. While students generally perceive Finland's living expenses as manageable, the impact is still recognized particularly on long-term financial planning. Findings from one sample t-test indicate that perceived cost of living higher than neutral is statistically significant, reinforcing the notion that students need to carefully assess their financial assessment before choosing Finland. Despite Finland's relatively affordable tuition fees, living cost remain a substantial challenge, necessitating strategic financial planning among students.

#### **4.5.2 Findings on Social and Cultural Considerations**

Social and cultural factors play a critical role in shaping Myanmar students' decision to study in Finland, as well as their overall experience during their studies. Key aspects such as language proficiency, cultural adaptability, safety, quality of life, and social networks significantly impact both the initial decision-making process and the ease of integration into Finnish society. The findings reveal a complex interplay between these elements, with varying levels of influence across different student demographics.

Language emerged as one of the most pressing concerns for Myanmar students, with 56% of respondents citing language as the most significant social challenge. Although English-taught programs are widely available in Finland, daily interactions and bureaucratic processes often require some knowledge of Finnish. This finding is reinforced by chi-square analysis, which shows a significant association between language barrier challenges and students' duration in Finland. Notably, students who had been in Finland for less than two years reported the highest levels of difficulty, indicating that early-stage adaptation is particularly challenging.

Cultural adaptation was another notable challenge, with 21% of respondents struggling to adjust to Finnish social norms and behaviors. Myanmar students, coming from a predominantly collectivist society, often face difficulties in adapting to Finland's highly individualistic culture, where social interactions are generally more reserved. Additionally,

lifestyle differences, particularly dietary habits and food availability, were reported as a significant issue by 28% of students. This highlights the importance of social and institutional support in helping international students navigate cultural differences and establish a sense of belonging.

One of the strongest pull factors identified was Finland's safe and peaceful environment, this aligns with cross-tabulation findings, where students who prioritized safety as a deciding factor also ranked Finland highly in terms of financial affordability. This suggests that students perceive Finland not only as an academically and financially viable option but also as a socially stable and secure destination.

Weather and climate emerged as one of the most significant cultural adaptation challenges faced by Myanmar students in Finland. With 37% of respondents identifying weather and climate as their most difficult adjustment factor, it was the single most frequently cited challenge in the survey. Given Myanmar's tropical climate, where temperatures typically range between 25°C and 40°C year-round, the contrast to Finland's long, dark winters and sub-zero temperatures presents a substantial challenge for students.

The findings suggest that student life, community engagement, and diversity and inclusiveness present moderate challenges for Myanmar students in Finland. One-sample t-test results indicate that while these aspects are not overwhelmingly difficult, they still pose noticeable barriers to social adaptation. Support services for international students are perceived as moderately adequate, offering assistance but not always fully addressing integration challenges. Therefore, enhancing mentorship initiatives, fostering more inclusive student events, and strengthening university-led cultural exchange programs could improve the overall integration experience for Myanmar students in Finland.

## **5 Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter provides a holistic view of the research findings, the key insights derived from the study and summarizing their implications for stakeholders, including policymakers, educational institutions, and prospective students. The summary will begin with the study's major findings, highlighting the most significant push and pull factors identified through statistical analysis. The main conclusions drawn from the study will be presented by, interpreting the findings to address the research question, highlighting Finland's unique value proposition as a study destination for Myanmar students and outlining recommendations which can be acted upon. Lastly, this section will address the study's limitations and provides recommendations for future research, suggesting areas that require further exploration to deepen the understanding of international student mobility.

### **5.1 Summary of Findings and Conclusions**

The study identified key push and pull factors influencing Myanmar students' decisions to pursue higher education in Finland. The findings reveal a complex interplay of economic, social, and political factors shaping student mobility. The most significant push factors is deeply rooted in Myanmar's socio-political landscape, which is Myanmar's political instability, combined with limited access to quality education, all of which motivated students to seek stable and globally recognized academic opportunities abroad. Many respondents viewed Finland as a promising alternative due to its perceived Safety and Security, strong education system, research opportunities, and better career prospects compared to the constrained options available in Myanmar. Furthermore, economic uncertainty in Myanmar due to socio-political landscape also played a role, as students expressed concerns over long-term career prospects and financial stability in their home country. These findings align with established student mobility theories, particularly the push-pull framework, highlighting how external socio-political challenges drive migration for education.

Financial factors served as the principal drivers among pull factors that influenced student decision-making. Finland's pull factors are anchored in its global reputation for safety, consistently ranked among the safest countries worldwide, and this safety factor is prioritized above all else by the responding students. This perception of security is compounded by Finland's high-quality education system, which is known for its teaching methods and research-based curriculum thus making Finland an attractive location for students who want both academic excellence and personal wellness. Finland's attractiveness is also boosted by its affordability, with tuition fees perceived as competitive relative to other Western nations, making it a logical option for students looking for cost saving. However, financial constraints remained a challenge, as students relied on various funding sources, including family support, personal savings, and part-time employment. Additionally, safety and security were strongly associated with financial considerations, strengthening Finland's reputation as a stable and secure environment for education.

Social and cultural elements also shaped students' experiences, particularly language barriers and social integration challenges. The findings suggested that while Finland offers a diverse and inclusive academic environment for international students, especially newcomers reported that they encountered moderate difficulties in adapting to the language and integrating into local communities. The support services for international students are found to be satisfactory and perceived as moderately adequate, indicating room for improvement. Post-graduation career prospects served as a primary factor in students' long-term plans since some students planned to remain in Finland, yet others preferred to move based on job availability and personal ambitions.

In conclusion, the research demonstrated that Myanmar students' decision to study in Finland is influenced by a combination of political, economic, financial, and social factors. Finland's appeal as a study destination is largely due to its high-quality education system, affordable tuition fees, and safe environment. However, there are still challenges such as financial sustainability, language difficulties, and limited job prospects after

graduation. By improving access to scholarships, offering stronger support services for students, and creating better pathways to employment can further solidify Finland's position as an attractive study destination for students from Myanmar and beyond.

## **5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

While this study provides valuable insights into the push and pull factors influencing Myanmar students' decision to study in Finland, certain limitations must be acknowledged. One of the primary constraints was the sample size, which reflect the factor of Myanmar people being a niche population in Finland, limits the generalizability of the findings. With only 39 respondents, the study may not fully capture the diverse experiences and perspectives of all Myanmar students in Finland. The relatively small sample size is a common challenge in migration research involving specific nationality groups, particularly those with a limited presence in the host country. Future studies could benefit from a larger and more diverse dataset, incorporating responses from multiple universities and academic programs including vocational institutions to enhance the reliability of findings.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported survey data, which is subject to response bias. Participants may have provided socially desirable answers or may not be able to recall their motivations and experiences accurately. Although this study employed a mixed-methods approach by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, further research could strengthen the qualitative component by conducting longitudinal studies. Tracking students' experiences over time would provide deeper insights into how their perceptions evolve throughout their academic study and post-graduation period. Additionally, ethnographic approaches, such as participant observations or in-depth case studies, could capture live experiences that are difficult to express in survey responses.

Additionally, while the study examined various financial, social, and cultural factors, it did not extensively explore the role of post-graduation employment policies and

integration challenges. Findings suggest that career prospects play a crucial role in students' long-term decisions, yet the study did not delve into the specific barriers students face when transitioning from education to employment. Further research could investigate the extent to which international graduates secure jobs in Finland, the challenges they encounter in the labor market, and how government policies or university career services support their integration.

Moreover, language barriers and social inclusion were identified as moderate challenges for Myanmar students, yet their broader implications on academic performance, well-being, and career opportunities remain unexplored. Future research could examine how language support services impact students' academic experiences and whether targeted social integration programs could enhance student satisfaction and retention rates. Comparative analyses with other Nordic countries could highlight Finland's unique advantages, while investigations into institutional practices (e.g., visa support, language training) would identify systemic barriers to inclusivity.

One significant finding of the study was that 45% of respondents were enrolled in vocational education, highlighting the importance of vocational pathways for Myanmar students in Finland. However, this study is primarily focused on higher education institutions, with limited emphasis on the vocational sector. Future research should explore vocational students' motivations and career paths because of rising global interest in skills-based education and employability. Understanding their specific challenges, such as industry placements, skill recognition, and employment opportunities, would provide a more holistic perspective on Myanmar students' educational mobility. Additionally, comparing vocational education with university-level education in terms of financial burden, career prospects, and integration experiences could offer valuable insights for policymakers and educational institutions.

In summary, while this study contributes to the understanding of Myanmar students' mobility to Finland, expanding the research scope through larger sample sizes,

qualitative insights, and a deeper exploration of post-study career trajectories could provide more actionable findings. Addressing these limitations through future research would help policymakers, universities, and support organizations refine their strategies to enhance the international student experience in Finland. Additionally, placing greater emphasis on vocational education within the broader discussion of student mobility could provide critical insights into the evolving role of skills-based learning in current global education trend.

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