



University Selection Determinants in Vietnam: A Case Study of Thai Nguyen University of Information Technology and Communication

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Abstract

This study examines the factors influencing students' decisions to choose the Thai Nguyen University of Information and Communication Technology (ICTU). The research helps universities understand the key factors that students consider, leading to more effective admission policies and strategies. Data was collected from a random sample of first-year students at the university in 2022 using questionnaires and both qualitative and quantitative methods with SPSS 20 software. The integration of these two methods was carried out through the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), allowing a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the influencing factors. Factor analysis indicated that a multiple regression model was suitable for assessing the factors influencing enrollment decisions. Important variables included adequate classrooms, a well-equipped library, generous scholarships, supportive employment policies during studies, a curriculum aligned with social needs, high-earning graduates, and highly qualified faculty. The SEM model demonstrated a good fit with high compatibility and accuracy indices, supporting the model's validity and explanatory power. The article recommends enhancing faculty quality, improving infrastructure, diversifying programs, and increasing the dissemination of university information.

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INTRODUCTION

The decision of high school students to choose a university is influenced by a dynamic mix of factors, including cutting-edge training programs and distinguished faculty (Leppard et al., 2021). State-of-the-art facilities, affordable tuition, and comprehensive financial aid also play crucial roles in their selection process (Jarpa-Arriagada & Rodríguez-Garcós, 2021). Additionally, promising job opportunities post-graduation and innovative career counseling services further guide students toward institutions that align with their aspirations. Ultimately, these modern elements not only help students achieve their career goals but also foster their personal and professional development in a rapidly evolving world.

Faculty factors play a significant role in students' university selection decisions. Studies have shown that teaching quality, the reputation and prestige of faculty members, and the relationship between faculty and students can strongly influence these decisions. Teaching quality, particularly in academic fields of interest, often leaves a lasting impression on students. In this context, Misbah et al. (2022) it demonstrated that the development of blended learning materials can significantly improve the educational experience, thereby affecting students' choices based on perceived quality and engagement. Similarly, the reputation and prestige of faculty members are crucial for those who seek to learn from renowned experts. For example, research by Kargić & Poturak (2014)

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evaluated teaching quality, curriculum, and university reputation. Trahar et al. (2020) Assessed factors affecting rural students' decisions to pursue higher education while Gibson et al. (2022) focusing on diverse emotional and material realities influencing aspirations in remote areas of Australia. Kazi & Akhlaq (2017) Also addressed challenges in students' choice of field of study and Ürer-Erdil et al. (2021) explored similar issues affecting Malaysian students' selection of academic disciplines.

In addition to faculty factors, the training programs offered by universities also significantly impact students' decisions. Research by Hai et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of training program factors in the university selection process of students in An Giang Province, Vietnam. Similarly, Ming (2010) examined this influence on Malaysian students while Hossler & Gallagher (1987) focusing on the university selection process through a three-stage model and its implications for policymakers. Also emphasized the influence of training programs on students' choices, reinforcing that the quality of education and the reputation of universities are crucial elements (Purohit et al., 2021). Hieu et al. (2020) Studied factors affecting high school students in Lam Dong Province, Vietnam, and Kazi & Akhlaq (2017) explored how educational quality, training programs, and career support from schools shape students' career decisions. Overall, training programs play a pivotal role in university selection, influencing aspects such as educational quality, personal development, and alignment with career goals (Widayanti, 2021).

Not only academic programs but physical facilities can significantly impact students' university selection decisions. Facilities include physical amenities, infrastructure, and the learning environment of the institution. Research by Ariffin et al. (2014) focused on factors determining students' choice of higher education institutions in Malaysia, highlighting modern equipment, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities as important elements. Gibson et al. (2022) Examined diverse emotional and material realities affecting higher education aspirations in remote areas of Australia, assessing access to learning resources, information technology, and support services. Kargić & Poturak (2014) Studied factors influencing the choice between public and private universities, emphasizing the modernity and convenience of facilities, learning equipment, and research. Tuan et al. (2018) studied factors influencing the career choices of students in Da Nang, Vietnam.

In addition, Tuition fees and financial support are crucial factors in students' decisions, including family financial capacity, financial aid from the university, educational quality and costs, personal finances, and loans. Research by Purohit et al. (2021) exploring financial factors and personal aspects. Indicated that economic factors, tuition costs, and financial support influence students' career choices (Thuy, 2020). Huang (2022) studied factors affecting the career decisions of college students in Canada, including financial support from institutions. LE (2020) researched factors influencing students' choices in private universities in Vietnam, including tuition fees and financial support. Also examined tuition fees and financial support for students in Canada (Huang, 2022).

No less important, Employment prospects after graduation are a significant factor affecting students' university selection decisions, including educational quality and career preparation, employment rates after graduation, relationships with businesses and industries, and evaluations from alumni and working professionals. Positive evaluations can strongly motivate students to choose a particular institution. Research by Liên et al. (2015) examined factors influencing university selection decisions at VNU-IS, including economic, social, and family factors. Gibson et al. (2022) explored factors influencing students' university choices, evaluating economic, social, and family factors. Kazi & Akhlaq (2017) provided recommendations to support students in choosing suitable careers, highlighting expected salaries, job opportunities, and current economic conditions. Students often consider these factors to ensure career stability and growth. Factors determining students' choice of higher education institutions in Malaysia, indicating job opportunities after graduation, job search capabilities, and career prospects as crucial factors (Ariffin et al., 2014). Hanh et al. (2020) and Gibson et al. (2022) also highlighted the importance of employment prospects after graduation.

Counseling and career guidance play a vital role in students' decisions when selecting schools. Quality career counseling and effective guidance systems help students understand various fields and programs offered by different universities, leading to well-informed decisions. Career

orientation support, schools with career orientation programs often attract students by providing support in developing career and study plans. Strong relationships with businesses and industries allow institutions to provide real-world information on labor market needs and career opportunities, helping students choose schools based on job prospects and future career development. Feedback from alumni and working professionals can also be a decisive factor in students' choices. Special support programs, such as scholarships, international exchange programs, or extracurricular and cultural activities, contribute to students' overall development. Factors such as geographical distance, economic conditions, and lack of information significantly affect rural students' decisions and abilities to pursue higher education (Trahar et al., 2020). Sharif (2019) highlighted the influence of parents and family on career decisions. James-MacEachern & Yun (2017) identified impacts from friends, family, and community. Hieu et al. (2020) studied factors affecting high school students' decisions to choose a university in Lam Dong Province, Vietnam. Rudhumbu et al. (2017) and Walsh et al. (2015) identified the influence of family counseling factors.

The novelty of this study lies in exploring and analyzing the factors influencing students' decisions to choose Thai Nguyen University of Information and Communication Technology (ICTU), one of the prominent institutions in the field of information technology in Vietnam. The research focuses specifically on ICTU, offering a unique perspective in a rapidly advancing technological context. It is one of the few studies that delve deeply into understanding the factors affecting students' choices in this field. This study specifically aims to analyze the main factors that influence students' decisions in choosing ICTU

METHOD

The research methods employed in this study encompassed several analytical techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' career choices. Reliability testing of the scales was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, assessing reliability concerning personal factors, family influence, social needs, university resources, and career counseling (Aziz et al., 2022). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized to examine the convergence of the scales and identify the primary factor groups affecting students' career decisions (Adli et al., 2024). Additionally, Pearson Correlation Analysis was performed to explore the relationships between independent variables such as social needs, career counseling, family influence, and university factors and the dependent variable of career choice. Linear regression analysis was conducted through Multiple Regression Analysis to evaluate the impact of the identified factor groups on students' career choices. Data collection was primarily achieved through structured questionnaires administered to first-year students, designed to assess various factors, including personal preferences, family influence, social needs, university facilities, career prospects, and academic programs. Likert scales were incorporated into the questionnaires to gauge respondents' attitudes and opinions on different factors influencing their university selection, allowing students to rate aspects like faculty quality, campus facilities, and scholarship opportunities on a scale from 1 to 5. The data analysis was performed using SPSS 20 software, which facilitated quantitative analysis, including reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha), EFA, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Additionally, qualitative insights were gathered through structured interviews with students or staff to enrich the understanding of the decision-making process. Together, these instruments provided a systematic approach to gathering and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data for the study.

Proposed Research Model

Based on related studies and theoretical foundations, the author proposes the research model as shown in Figure 1, comprising 6 independent factors and one dependent factor.

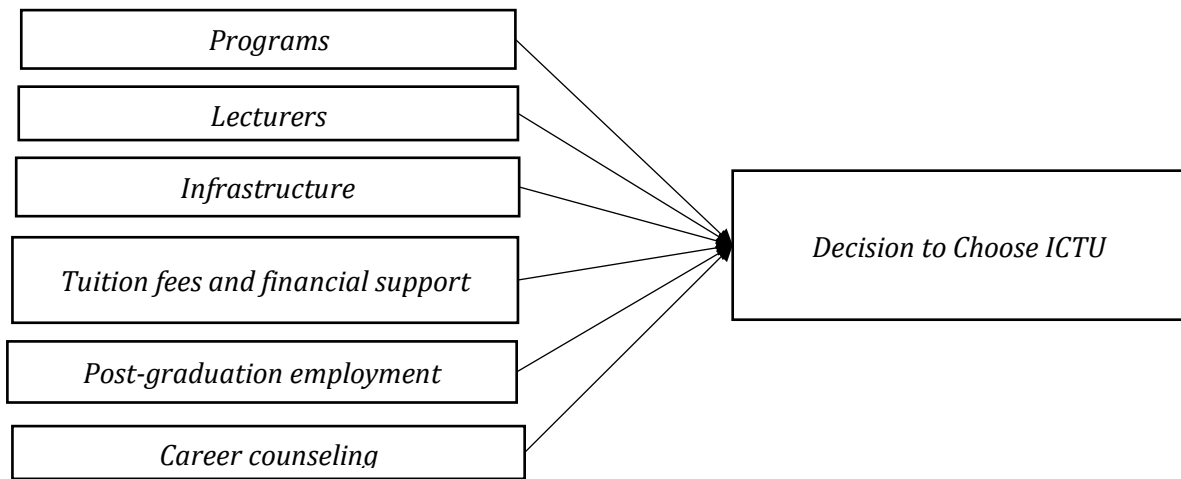


Figure 1. Research Model

Research Hypotheses

- Hypothesis H0: The lecturer factor does not influence students' university choice decisions.
- Hypothesis H1: The infrastructure factor influences students' university choice decisions.
- Hypothesis H2: The tuition fee factor affects students' university choice decisions.
- Hypothesis H3: The career potential factor influences students' university choice decisions.
- Hypothesis H4: The career counseling factor has a significant impact on students' university

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results of admissions at Thai Nguyen University of Information Technology and Communication (ICTU) over the past three years, categorized by major groups. This data provides insights into enrollment trends and preferences among prospective students, reflecting the university's appeal across different academic disciplines.

Table 1. Admissions Results of ICTU for the Past 3 Years.

Major Groups	Year 2020	Year 2021	Year 2022
Information Technology	883	1047	1100
Economy and Digital Management	229	250	365
Arts and Journalism-Communication	341	362	416
Engineering and Digital Technology	224	278	278
Total	1781	1937	2159

The research results ensured the representativeness of the survey sample. With a sample size of 1,578 students enrolled in 2022, this size far exceeds the minimum requirement of 115 samples for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) as recommended by Hair et al. (2006). This ensures that the results accurately reflect students' opinions regarding the factors influencing their university choice. Conducting the survey online also enhanced accessibility to a broader audience and facilitated data collection within a short period.

The reliability of the measurement scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, an important step to evaluate the internal consistency of the observed variables (Kinel et al., 2021). A high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient indicates that the indicators used in the scale are well-correlated, ensuring that the concepts are measured reliably (Sözen et al., 2023; Taber, 2018). This further supports the quality of the observed variables before proceeding with EFA. The use of EFA and CFA was essential. EFA helps group related indicators into common factors, simplifying the observed variables and generating a more coherent model. After conducting EFA, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied to test the validity of the measurement model and determine whether the factors identified in EFA align with the actual data. Combining both EFA and CFA ensures that the research model not only explores but also confirms the accuracy and fit of the model with the data.

The use of a 5-point Likert scale to measure the observed variables makes it easier for survey participants to understand and provide feedback (Abdelwahid et al., 2024). This can help reduce data dispersion and focus on the most critical factors in the model. However, one issue to note is that the Likert scale may introduce bias if respondents tend to choose mid-range values rather than extreme ones. The application of SPSS 20.0 for data analysis was a common and suitable choice for this research. This software effectively supports reliability testing, EFA, and CFA. The use of SPSS also saves time and ensures high accuracy in the data analysis process (Rahman & Muktadir, 2021).

The analysis methods applied in the research fully meet the statistical conditions and requirements, ensuring that the results provide valuable insights for evaluating the factors influencing students' university selection decisions. The characteristics of the survey participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Some characteristics of the survey sample

Participant Group		Number of Observations	Percentage (%)
Place of Family Residence	Special difficult areas	16	1.1
	Highland areas	147	9.3
	Rural areas	903	57.15
	Town areas	362	22.91
	City areas	152	9.62
Family Economic Condition	Poor households	71	4.49
	Near-poor households	78	4.94
	Average households	1137	71.96
	Wealthy households	201	12.72
	Affluent households	93	2.89
Gender	Male	985	62.34
	Female	595	37.66

Source: Compiled by the author from the research results

Most of the surveyed students reside in rural areas (57.15%), which may indicate that the Thai Nguyen University of Information Technology and Communication (ICTU) attracts students from communities with potentially limited access to higher education resources. Additionally, 71.96% of students come from families with average economic conditions, suggesting that the institution is accessible to students from diverse economic backgrounds, though it also highlights challenges for those from financially disadvantaged families (Andrews et al., 2020). The majority of participants are male (62.34%).

Testing the reliability of the measurement scales using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

All measurement scales were evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). To ensure the reliability of the measurement scales in the study, the observed variables must meet the requirement of having a Corrected item – Total Correlation greater than or equal to 0.3 and a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than or equal to 0.6. If the observed variables do not meet these requirements, they will be excluded. The final step is to test the model using the multivariate regression method with a significance level of 5%.

Table 3. Results of Cronbach's Alpha analysis

No	Variable Group	Number of Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Program	9	0.947
2	Lecturers	4	0.903
3	Infrastructure	4	0.908
4	Tuition Fees and Financial Support	4	0.839
5	Post-Graduation Employment	4	0.894
6	Career Counseling	8	0.914
7	Decision-Making	4	0.885

From the results in Table 3, it can be seen that the measurement scales meet the standard as all variable groups have Cronbach's Alpha coefficients that satisfy the condition of being greater than 0.6.

Suitability Test of EFA

The KMO value is 0.882, indicating that the data is highly suitable for factor analysis. KMO values range from 0 to 1, and the closer the value is to 1, the more appropriate the data is. A KMO value between 0.8 and 1 is considered excellent.

Bartlett's Test has a Chi-Square value of approximately 4310.630 with 1578 degrees of freedom (df) and a Sig. (p-value) of 0.000. This indicates that the test is statistically significant, meaning the variables are correlated and suitable for further factor analysis. If Sig. < 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, confirming the variables have significant correlations. These results show that the data is appropriate for conducting factor analysis due to high sample adequacy (KMO) and significant correlations between variables (Bartlett's Test Sig. = 0.000).

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.882
Approx. Chi-Square	4310.630
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	df
	1578
	Sig.
	.000

Rotated Component Matrix Results

Table 5. The rotated matrix results

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
LE1				.783		
LE2				.746		
LE3				.821		
LE4				.768		
INF1			.745			
INF2			.818			
INF3			.821			
NNF4			.853			
TUI1						.628
TUI2						.733
TUI3						.831
TUI4						.730
DEC1					.731	
DEC2					.835	
DEC3					.879	
DEC4					.872	
CaC1		.737				
CaC2		.771				
CaC3		.808				
CaC4		.877				
CaC5		.863				
CaC6		.889				
CaC7		.826				
CaC8		.798				
POG1	.607					
POG2	.723					
POG3	.726					
POG4	.828					
POG5	.808					
POG6	.859					
POG7	.873					
POG8	.856					
POG9	.701					

The rotated matrix results identified 5 specific factors. Factor 1 includes the variables: CaC1 (.737), CaC2 (.771), CaC3 (.808), CaC4 (.877), CaC5 (.863), CaC6 (.889), CaC7 (.826), CaC8 (.798). All these variables load highly on Component 1, indicating a common factor related to the CaC group. Factor 2 includes the variables: POG1 (.607), POG2 (.723), POG3 (.726), POG4 (.828), POG5 (.808), POG6 (.859), POG7 (.873), POG8 (.856), POG9 (.701). These variables load highly on Component 2, reflecting a distinct factor related to the POG group. Factor 3 includes the variables: LE1 (.783), LE2 (.746), LE3 (.821), LE4 (.768). These load highly on Component 3, showing a strong correlation and representing a separate factor related to the LE group. Factor 4 includes the variables: DEC1 (.731), DEC2 (.835), DEC3 (.879), DEC4 (.872). These load highly on Component 4, indicating a common factor related to the DEC group. Factor 5 includes the variables: TUI1 (.628), TUI2 (.733), TUI3 (.831), TUI4 (.730). These load highly on Component 5, representing a distinct factor related to the TUI group.

The analysis identified five main components, labeled Component 1 through Component 5. Each variable shows a high loading on only one component, with values above 0.6, which suggests a clear factor structure and minimal overlap between variables. The components represent distinct groups: Factor 1 corresponds to the CaC group (CaC1 to CaC8), Factor 2 to the POG group (POG1 to POG9), Factor 3 to the LE group (LE1 to LE4), Factor 4 to the DEC group (DEC1 to DEC4), and Factor 5 to the TUI group (TUI1 to TUI4).

Test of the Explained Variance of the Observed Variables for the Factors

Table 6. Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.476	26.983	26.983	6.476	26.983	26.983	5.492	22.885	22.885
2	5.476	22.818	49.801	5.476	22.818	49.801	3.236	13.482	36.367
3	2.942	12.257	62.058	2.942	12.257	62.058	3.171	13.213	49.580
4	1.508	6.283	68.341	1.508	6.283	68.341	3.117	12.986	62.565
5	1.283	5.345	73.686	1.283	5.345	73.686	2.669	11.121	73.686

Based on the Cumulative column of Table 6, we can see that the extracted variance value is 73.69%. This indicates that 73.69% of the variation in the factors is explained by the observed variables. Through the assessment of the measurement scale's quality and the EFA model, four latent factors influencing the career choices of high school students in Thai Nguyen province have been identified. Variance explained by each component:

- Component 1 has an Eigenvalue of 6.476, explaining 26.983% of the variance.
- Component 2 has an Eigenvalue of 5.476, explaining 22.818% of the variance.
- Component 3 has an Eigenvalue of 2.942, explaining 12.257% of the variance.
- Component 4 has an Eigenvalue of 1.508, explaining 6.283% of the variance.
- Component 5 has an Eigenvalue of 1.283, explaining 5.345% of the variance.

The five components together account for 73.686% of the total variance, indicating that they sufficiently capture the primary information in the data. This allows for dimensionality reduction while retaining most of the dataset's original details. After applying rotation techniques to clarify the structure, the cumulative variance remains the same, reinforcing that these five components explain nearly 74% of the total variance. This redistribution of variance among the components simplifies interpretation. Therefore, it can be concluded that these five components effectively represent the original data.

Multivariate Regression

The results of the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) table for the multivariate regression model are presented. The Model Summary table provides information about the performance of the multivariate regression model, including the model's explanatory power and the degree of discrepancy between predicted values and actual values of the dependent variable.

Table 7. Results of the regression on factors influencing the choices ICTU

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		Durbin-Watson
1	,849	,721	,718	,34279		1,851
ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	705,509	21	33,596	285,914	,000b
	Residual	273,311	2326	,118		
	Total	978,820	2347			
Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	,239	,086		2,787	,005
	LEC	,485	,039	,448	12,489	,000
	INF	,213	,042	,179	5,052	,000
	TUI	,273	,044	,214	6,157	,000
	POG	,395	,073	,076	1,300	,000
	CaC	,447	,099	,352	4,518	,000

Based on the results in Table 7, there is a significant linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, as indicated by an R Square of 0.721. This means that 72.1% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the variation in the independent variables. The Adjusted R Square (0.718) is very close to the R Square, suggesting minimal redundancy in the model. The F-Statistic of 285.914, with a p-value of 0.000b, confirms the model's reliability and statistical significance, indicating that the independent variables have a substantial impact on the dependent variable. The Durbin-Watson statistic (1.851) shows that there is no autocorrelation in the model's residuals, further supporting the model's validity. From the Coefficients table, the most significant independent variables influencing the dependent variable are LEC (coefficient = 0.485, $p < 0.001$), INF (coefficient = 0.213, $p < 0.001$), TUI (coefficient = 0.273, $p < 0.001$), and CaC (coefficient = 0.447, $p < 0.001$). These variables have strong Beta values and a significant effect on students' choice of ICTU.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results

The results of the CFA analysis in Figure 2 show that the standardized loadings of all variables are greater than 0.5, indicating that the model achieves convergent validity. Common indices used to assess the model's compatibility with the data, including χ^2 (Chi-square), χ^2/df (Chi-square/degrees of freedom), GFI, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and PCLOSE, are considered.

The results indicate that χ^2 is 634.2 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, and χ^2/df is 2.62, which is less than 3. The values for CFI, TLI, GFI are 0.916, 0.905, and 0.824, respectively, while RMSEA is 0.8. These results indicate the unidirectional nature of the influence and decision-making factors' measurement scales. According to the standards of Hu & Bentler (1999), after

standardizing the values, the GFI is 0.834, CFI is 0.922, TLI is 0.909, and RMSEA is 0.078, which are all below 0.8.

Based on the results in the table, the following conclusions can be made regarding the research hypotheses:

- Hypothesis related to lecturers (LEC): The coefficient for LEC is 0.485 with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating a significant positive impact. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H0) and confirm that lecturers influence students' university choices.
- Hypothesis related to infrastructure (INF): The coefficient for INF is 0.213 with a p-value of 0.000, showing a significant effect. Thus, we accept H1, confirming that infrastructure impacts students' university choices.
- Hypothesis related to tuition fees (TUI): The coefficient for TUI is 0.273 with a p-value of 0.000, demonstrating a significant positive effect. We accept H2, affirming that tuition fees influence students' choices.
- Hypothesis related to career potential (POG): The coefficient for POG is 0.395 with a p-value of 0.000, showing a significant impact. We accept H3, confirming that career potential affects students' decisions.
- Hypothesis related to career counseling and student services (CaC): The coefficient for CaC is 0.447 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong influence. Therefore, we accept H4, confirming that career counseling significantly impacts students' university choices.

In conclusion, all factors (LEC, INF, TUI, POG, CaC) show significant effects with p-values less than 0.05, reaffirming their critical role in students' decision-making when selecting a university. The regression results in Table 7 are as follows:

$$DEC = 0.239 + 0.485 * LEC + 0.213 * INF + 0.273 * TUI + 0.395 * POG + 0.447 * CaC + \epsilon$$

Where:

DEC: is the dependent variable (students' university choice).

LEC: is the lecturer factor.

INF: is the infrastructure factor.

TUI: is the tuition fee factor.

POG: is the potential job factor

CaC: is the career counseling factor.

ϵ : is the residual.

Results of the Structural Equation Model (SEM)

The results of the CFA analysis presented in Figure 3 demonstrate that the standardized loadings for all variables exceed 0.5, confirming that the model achieves convergent validity. Common fit indices used to evaluate the model's adequacy include χ^2 (Chi-square), χ^2/df (Chi-square/degrees of freedom), GFI, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and PCLOSE. The analysis reveals a χ^2 value of 1118 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000, and a χ^2/df ratio of 2.329, which is below the threshold of 3. The fit indices show CFI at 0.904, TLI at 0.894, and GFI at 0.778, while RMSEA is reported at 0.073. These findings suggest a unidirectional relationship among the influence and decision-making factors measured in the model. According to the criteria set by Hu & Bentler (1999), GFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA values indicate that the model fit is acceptable, with GFI at 0.778, CFI at 0.904, TLI at 0.894, and RMSEA at 0.073, all of which are within the recommended thresholds.

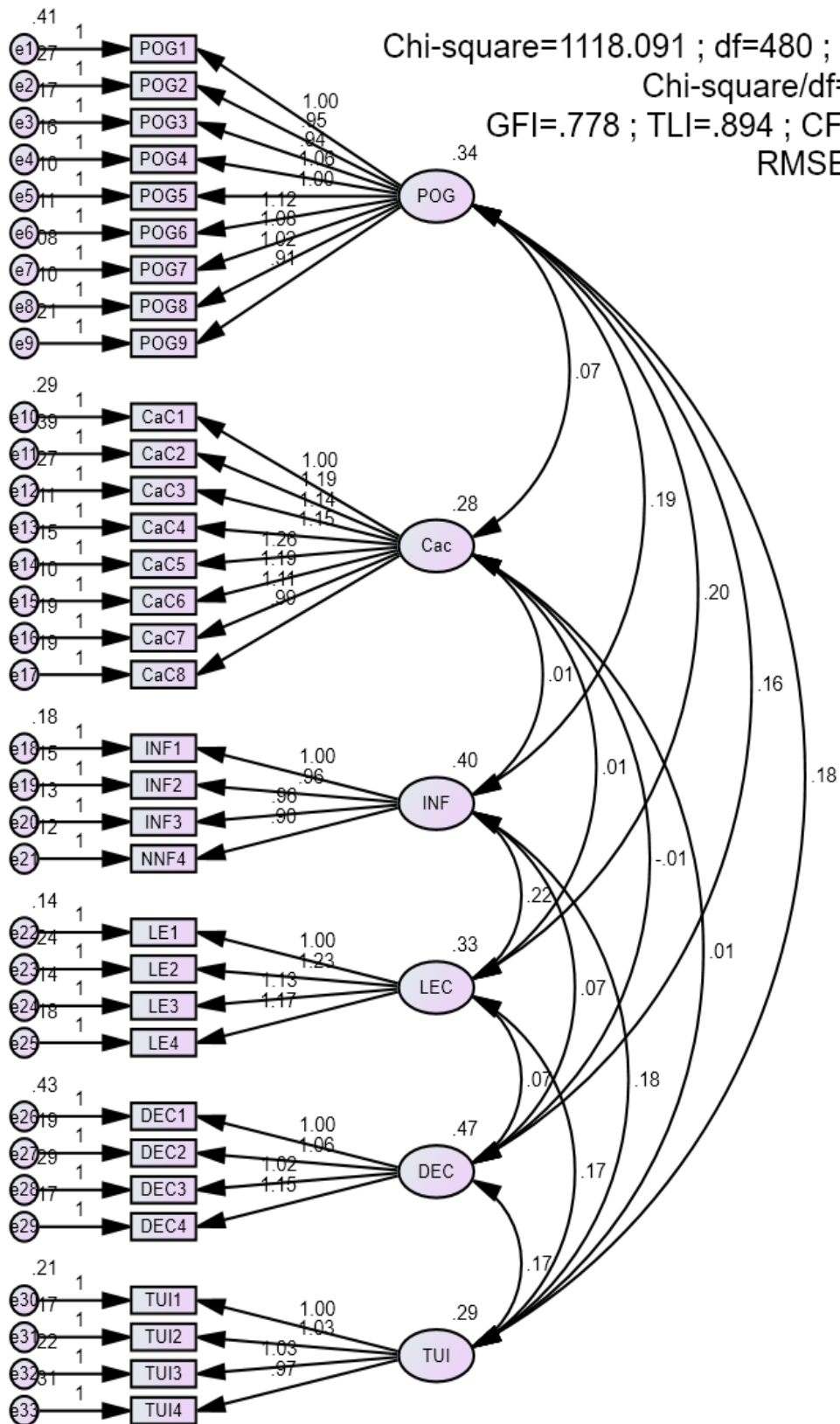


Figure 2. Unnormalized CFA analysis results

Chi-square=1291.209 ; df=481 ; P=.000;
 Chi-square/df=2.684 ;
 GFI=.754 ; TLI=.866 ; CFI=.878 ;
 RMSEA=.082

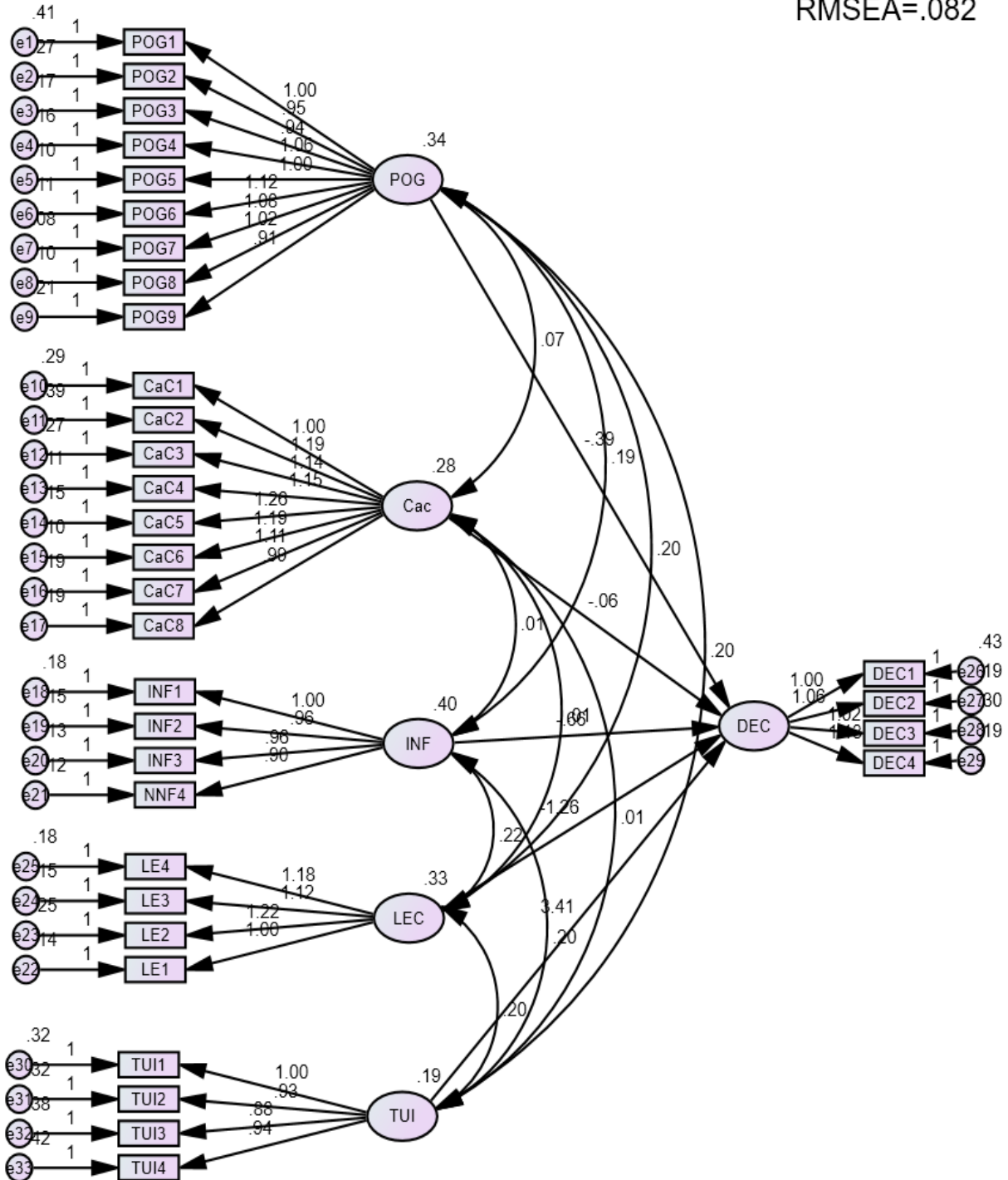


Figure 3. Results of the SEM model

Based on the results, The default model has a CMIN (Chi-square) value of 1291.209 with 481 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, indicating it is not a perfect fit. However, the CMIN/DF ratio of 2.684 is below the threshold of 3, suggesting a reasonable fit. In comparison to other

models, the saturated model shows a CMIN of 0, indicating a perfect fit with the data, while the independence model presents a significantly high CMIN value of 7148.099, suggesting a poor fit.

The RMR value of the default model is 0.039, which is less than 0.05 and indicates a good fit. The GFI, though not optimal at 0.754 (as it should ideally be ≥ 0.90), still reflects a reasonable fit. Regarding parsimony indices, the PRATIO is 0.911, PNFI is 0.746, and PCFI is 0.799, which suggests relatively good parsimony, though there remains room for improvement.

When comparing fit indices, the NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI values of the default model are relatively high (NFI: 0.819, CFI: 0.878), indicating a better fit than the independence model but still requiring improvement. Overall, while the default model fits the data reasonably well, some indices like GFI are below optimal levels, and further improvements are necessary for an ideal fit.

Based on the research results, it shows various suggestions for the future. Enhancing career counseling services is essential to providing students with accurate information about career paths and educational requirements. Numerous studies have shown that well-structured career counseling plays a crucial role in significantly boosting students' career maturity, decision-making capabilities, and overall readiness to enter the workforce. For example, Bae's study emphasizes that various forms of career counseling, such as individual and group sessions, have a positive impact on career maturity in young people. This suggests that organized counseling can help youths make more informed career decisions (Bae, 2017). Likewise, research conducted in Uganda revealed that greater involvement in career guidance programs enhanced students' ability to make decisions about their education and career paths (Otwine et al., 2022).

Improving the quality and engagement of lecturers should be a top priority, achieved by hiring qualified faculty and offering professional development programs to enhance student interaction. Henkel & Haley (2020) emphasize that actively involved adjunct faculty can significantly enrich the educational experience, as their engagement is closely tied to student achievement and satisfaction. In addition, upgrading infrastructure such as classrooms and laboratories is essential for improving the student experience and attracting prospective students (Islam & Khan, 2023). Making education more accessible can be achieved by adjusting tuition fees to include financial aid or flexible payment options, as suggested by Bell et al. (2020). Lastly, strengthening partnerships with industries to provide internships and job opportunities through career fairs and networking events will ensure that students are better prepared for the workforce.

CONCLUSION

The analysis utilizing Cronbach's Alpha and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) confirmed the reliability of the measurement scales. With a KMO value of 0.882 and significant results from Bartlett's Test, the data was deemed suitable for factor analysis, leading to the identification of five distinct factors: Career Counseling (CaC), Potential Job Opportunities (POG), Lecturers (LEC), Infrastructure (INF), and Tuition Fees (TUI). The extracted factors accounted for 73.69% of the total variance, indicating that these components capture essential information from the data, facilitating a clearer understanding of the influencing factors. The multivariate regression model demonstrated a strong linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables, with an R Square value of 0.721. Significant coefficients were found for all factors, affirming their impact on students' university choices. The CFA results confirmed convergent validity, with all standardized loadings exceeding 0.5. The model fit indices were within acceptable limits, further validating the relationships among the factors. All hypotheses were supported, confirming that lecturers, infrastructure, tuition fees, career potential, and career counseling significantly influence students' decision-making processes regarding university selection.

In summary, this study highlights the importance of these factors in shaping students' choices. It suggests that universities should focus on enhancing these areas to attract and support prospective students. Regularly assessing the effectiveness of these strategies through feedback and surveys is important to ensure continuous improvement. Additionally, clear communication of the university's strengths in career counseling, faculty expertise, and job placement rates will help attract more prospective students. Addressing these key areas will not only influence students' decision-making but also improve overall enrollment and satisfaction.

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