

Factors influencing Students' Preferences for Colleges Affiliated with Foreign Universities Compared to Nepalese Universities

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Abstract

This study examines factors influencing Nepalese students' preferences for Colleges affiliated with foreign universities compared to Nepalese universities. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, 27 students from foreign universities affiliated colleges in Lalitpur district were interviewed to explore their motivations and experiences. Findings reveal that students prioritize colleges affiliated to foreign universities over national universities due to their internationally recognized degrees, rigorous curricula, and faculty expertise, alongside access to global internships and alumni networks. In contrast, national universities are criticized for outdated infrastructure, limited resources, and weak industry linkages. While cost remains a consideration, scholarships and family support enable students to justify higher tuition fees for long-term career benefits. This study recommends that Nepalese universities modernize curricula, strengthen industry partnerships, and improve student services to remain competitive.

Keywords: Higher education, Student preferences, Foreign-affiliated colleges, National universities, International exposure, Academic quality

Introduction

The choice of where to study is one of the most important decisions a young person can make. In Nepal, this decision is increasingly clear for many. Students are actively choosing colleges affiliated with foreign universities over Nepalese universities. This is not a random trend. It is a direct response to the different qualities of education on offer (Khadka, 2022). Foreign-affiliated colleges are seen as a gateway. They provide a globally recognized qualification without always requiring

students to leave home. This is a powerful draw. In today's competitive world, a degree with international value is a strong currency (Chhetri, 2023). It signals to employers that a graduate has met certain global standards.

The teaching and learning environment are major factors. These colleges often use modern teaching methods. They focus on practical application, case studies, and student participation. Rote memorization is less common. The goal is to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Sapkota, 2020). This is what modern workplaces demand.

Furthermore, the curriculum is frequently updated. It is often designed in partnership with international industry experts. This means students learn current, relevant knowledge and skills. They are not studying outdated material from old textbooks. This alignment with global industry needs is a huge advantage. The physical environment also matters. Foreign-affiliated colleges often have better infrastructure. This includes well-equipped labs, modern libraries with digital resources, and reliable internet access. These facilities create a more effective and engaging learning experience. They are simply more conducive to learning.

In contrast, national universities face significant challenges. Students and parents often perceive them as outdated. Common complaints include old curricula, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient resources. Bureaucratic delays and frequent strikes disrupt the academic calendar. This creates uncertainty and frustration (Rai, 2021). Many feel these institutions are not preparing them for the modern economy.

The faculty is another point of comparison. Foreign-affiliated colleges often bring in international lecturers. They also invest in training their local faculty. This exposure to different teaching styles and global perspectives enriches the learning experience. It is less common in the traditional university system (Joshi, 2024).

There is, of course, an economic aspect. Foreign-affiliated programs are more expensive. But for many families, this is seen as a worthwhile investment. They are paying for better quality, better opportunities, and a more secure future. The high demand shows that many believe the return on investment is justified (Sharma & Bhandari, 2021).

This trend has serious implications for Nepal. It risks creating a two-tier education system. One tier is for those who can afford a global education. The other is for those who cannot. This could increase social inequality. It also represents a form of brain drain within the country's own borders (Yadav, 2022). The nation's top talent is siphoned away from its national institutions.

Ultimately, the student shift is a market response. It is a clear signal that national universities are not meeting student expectations. Students are voting with their feet. They are choosing institutions that offer global recognition, modern skills, and a clear path to a career. For Nepal's higher education system, this is a critical wake-up call.

This study aims to investigate the precise factors driving student preference for colleges with foreign-affiliated universities over national universities in Nepal. Findings of the study will be synthesized into a set of actionable recommendations for educators. These evidence-based insights are intended to provide a clear roadmap for reform. The ultimate goal is to provide a framework for national universities to bridge the competitive gap, retain do-

mestic talent, and better align their offerings with the aspirations of Nepalese youth and the demands of the global economy.

Literature review

National universities traditionally serve as the foundation of higher education systems, providing accessible education and fostering national identity. However, in many nations, they often face challenges related to outdated infrastructure and bureaucratic inefficiencies (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In response, colleges affiliated with foreign universities have emerged, offering internationally recognized degrees and curricula aligned with global standards without requiring students to study abroad (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012; Healey, 2015). Key factors influencing student preference for these institutions include perceptions of superior academic quality, enhanced career opportunities, international exposure, and stronger industry connections, which are often perceived as lacking in national universities (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Bodycott, 2009).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) emphasize that perceived quality of education plays a vital role in influencing students' decisions to pursue studies abroad. They found that international institutions are frequently regarded as offering better academic rigor, exemplary faculty, and enhanced learning environments compared to national universities.

Waters (2006) explores diaspora influences, showing that migrant families disproportionately favor foreign-affiliated colleges due to perceived migration advantages. Degrees from these institutions are seen as easing visa approvals or employment abroad, whereas national university degrees may not carry the same weight internationally.

Altbach and Knight (2007) highlight that institutional reputation and global recognition significantly shape students' preferences for foreign-affiliated colleges over national universities. They argue that students associate foreign collaborations with higher academic standards, modern curricula, and greater exposure to international perspectives, making them more attractive for career advancement.

Chen (2007) highlights that scholarship availability and financial incentives significantly influence student perceptions. Many foreign-affiliated colleges provide merit-based aid and partnerships with multinational corporations, making them more appealing despite higher tuition fees than national universities.

Yang (2008) points out that cultural exposure and global networking opportunities make foreign-affiliated colleges more appealing. Students believe that studying in such environments enhances their intercultural competence, language skills, and adaptability—qualities highly valued in today's globalized workforce.

Bodycott (2009) highlights that improved career prospects are a significant motivation for students choosing foreign universities. The study reveals that graduates from international institutions often experience better job placement rates and higher starting salaries, attributed to the global exposure and networking opportunities during their studies. This factor is critical in swaying students toward foreign universities in pursuit of enhanced professional opportunities.

Agarwal (2009) identifies a critical advantage for foreign colleges: strong industry links. These institutions maintain close ties with the global job market. Their curricula are frequently updated to reflect current trends. This focus provides students with practical, specialized skills. National universities often lack this responsiveness. Bureaucratic processes slow their adaptation to change.

Lim (2010) directly compares the student experience. Foreign-affiliated colleges consistently achieve higher satisfaction scores. This is due to superior campus facilities and digital resources. Their student support services are also more robust. National universities face different challenges. Overcrowding and chronic underfunding are common problems. These issues directly create negative perceptions among students.

Brooks and Waters (2011) examine the power of reputation. A university's image is heavily influenced by its alumni. Successful graduates create a compelling narrative for an institution. Their achievements make the school appear attractive and effective. This positive perception drives prospective students to apply. Reputation becomes a key factor in the decision-making process.

Wilkins and Huisman (2012) focus on employability. This is a decisive factor for many students. Graduates from foreign colleges are perceived to have an edge. They are thought to access better job opportunities and higher salaries. Their professional networks are also considered stronger. This perceived return on investment justifies the choice for many.

Beine, Noël, and Ragot (2014) analyze the financial aspect. Studying abroad is a significant financial undertaking. Students carefully weigh the high costs against potential benefits. The possibility of lucrative scholarships is a major draw. The long-term financial payoff is a powerful motivator. This cost-benefit analysis strongly influences the final decision.

Perkins and Neumayer (2014) look beyond academics. The desire for cultural experience is a significant driver. Students seek personal growth through international exposure. Living in a new culture fosters adaptability and broadens perspectives. This quest for development is a key reason for choosing a foreign institution.

Wu and Garza (2014) highlight the role of language. English proficiency is a highly valued global skill. Many students specifically seek out English-taught programs. This enhances their learning and future career prospects. For non-native speakers, this availability is a major attraction. It significantly boosts a university's appeal.

Healey (2015) contrasts teaching methodologies. Foreign-linked colleges are seen as more interactive. Their approach is student-centered and focused on engagement. The education is perceived as directly relevant to industry needs. This modern teaching style is a preferred choice for many learners.

Ziguras and McBurnie (2015) discuss regulatory environments. Foreign colleges are often viewed as more transparent. Their grading and accreditation processes seem clearer and fairer. National universities can face opposite perceptions. Some are seen as having politicized administration or outdated systems. These views can deter potential applicants.

Liu (2017) identifies social influence as a key factor. Choices are rarely made in a vacu-

um. Recommendations from peers and family carry immense weight. First-hand experiences shared by others are particularly persuasive. This social validation makes international education pathways seem safer and more attractive.

Zhai (2020) emphasizes the importance of support systems. The transition to university is challenging, especially abroad. Institutions that provide robust support are more attractive. This includes orientation programs and academic guidance. The perceived level of care can sway a student's final choice.

Naidoo (2020) highlights how the post-pandemic shift has made foreign-affiliated colleges more attractive. Students now prioritize hybrid learning, international accreditation, and flexible mobility. Traditional national universities often lack these features, making them less appealing.

Hou et al. (2020) examine quality assurance mechanisms. They find that students trust foreign-affiliated colleges more. This is largely due to dual accreditation from both home and host countries. This "double validation" signals higher academic standards. National universities, with only local accreditation, are seen as less rigorous.

Lau and Lin (2021) focus on graduate outcomes. Alumni from foreign-affiliated institutions report faster career progression. The study credits this to strong alumni networks and global brand recognition. These benefits outweigh the higher cost for many students.

Sapkota (2020) explores financial considerations. Scholarships and grants play a key role in student decision-making. Foreign-affiliated colleges often offer better financial incentives, such as reduced tuition and merit-based aid. In contrast, national universities can be more expensive with fewer funding options. This makes them less attractive to cost-conscious students.

Rai (2021) finds that students often view national universities as outdated. Weak infrastructure, limited curriculum innovation, and fewer academic resources create a negative image. Foreign-affiliated programs appear more modern and progressive, attracting students who value quality and relevance.

Sharma and Bhandari (2021) emphasize perceived academic superiority. International institutions are seen to offer better standards, top-tier resources, and advanced research opportunities. These features appeal to students aiming for competitive careers. Their global reputation adds to their desirability.

Marginson (2022) introduces a geopolitical dimension. In regions with diplomatic tensions, students may avoid Western-linked colleges due to visa concerns. In such cases, national universities seem like safer, more politically stable options.

Jon et al. (2023) study online narratives. Social media often portrays foreign-affiliated colleges as "innovative" and forward-thinking. In contrast, national universities are seen as "rigid" or "traditional." These perceptions strongly shape student attitudes, especially among younger generations.

De Wit and Altbach (2023) raise concerns about degree inflation. Employers increas-

ingly favor foreign-linked qualifications. This creates pressure on students to choose affiliation over substance. National degrees are often perceived as less valuable, regardless of actual learning outcomes.

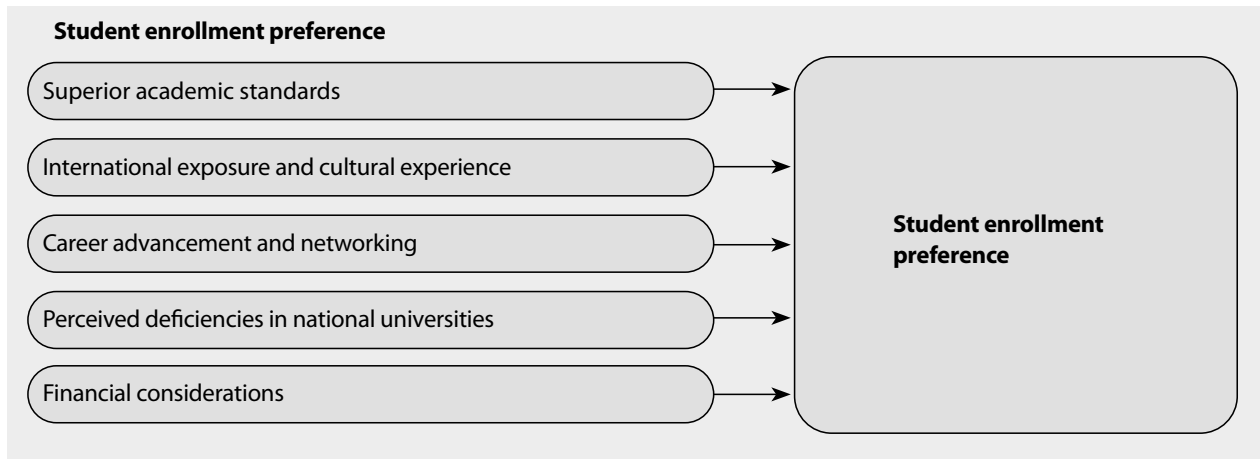
Chhetri (2023) focuses on career preparation. Foreign-affiliated colleges offer strong industry links and global networks. These connections lead to better internships and job opportunities. Students see them as essential for long-term success in the global job market.

Joshi (2024) highlights the value of cultural exposure. Foreign-affiliated institutions provide international experiences and diverse learning environments. These are seen as enriching and professionally valuable. Students believe such exposure boosts employability and support personal growth.

Many studies examined at why students choose to study abroad (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Altbach & Knight, 2007). But there is very little research on how students in Nepal choose between foreign-affiliated colleges and national universities within the country. A few studies talk about Nepalese students' interest in going overseas (Sharma & Bhandari, 2021; Khadka, 2022), but they don't focus on local options. This gap matters. Foreign-affiliated colleges are becoming more popular in Nepal, and they are changing how students make decisions. This study examines at why students are choosing these colleges over local universities. The conceptual framework guiding this study is grounded in an extensive empirical review of determinants that shape students' enrollment decisions. It integrates multiple dimensions identified in prior research, including perceptions of superior academic standards, access to international exposure, enhanced career advancement opportunities, and recognized deficiencies within national universities. By synthesizing these elements, the framework aims to capture the complex motivations and perceptions driving students' preferences.

Table 1: Operational definitions of the study

Constructs	Description based on the study
Superior academic standards	Refers to the perception that foreign universities affiliated colleges offer higher-quality education, internationally recognized degrees, experienced faculty, modern teaching methods, and updated curricula aligned with global trends.
International exposure and cultural experience	Encompasses opportunities for virtual interaction with international faculty and peers, participation in global classrooms, development of cross-cultural competencies, and access to worldwide academic and professional perspectives.
Career advancement and networking	Includes better internship placements, job opportunities, industry connections, career support services, and professional networking advantages linked to global recognition and institutional reputation.
Perceived deficiencies in national universities	Relates to student perceptions of outdated infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, weak industry links, and insufficient academic or student support services.
Financial considerations	Involves the evaluation of tuition costs, availability of scholarships and financial aid, family support, and the perceived return on investment in terms of education quality and career prospects.
Student enrolment preferences	The ultimate choice to enroll in a foreign-affiliated college, resulting from the positive evaluation of its attributes such as academic quality, international exposure, career prospects, etc.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Methods and Materials

This study used a qualitative research approach. It sought to understand why Nepalese students choose foreign universities affiliated college in Nepal. A phenomenological research design was used. This helped explore students' personal experiences and decisions.

The study focused on foreign universities affiliated Colleges in Lalitpur district, Nepal. According to Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Nepal has 59 foreign universities affiliated Colleges (MoEST, 2022). Out of these, 9 are in Lalitpur District (MoEST, 2022). These 9 Colleges were chosen as the research sites.

The sample included 27 students (9 Colleges * 3 students = 27 students). 3 students were selected from each of the 9 Colleges using quota sampling. This small size was enough for qualitative research. The goal was to get detailed insights, not broad generalizations. To justify, similar studies used the same approach with small sample sizes. Ghimire (2020) included 25 students from five universities. Khadka (2022) involved students from foreign-affiliated colleges. These studies showed that small groups can still provide meaningful and detailed insights.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. These were recorded and then written down word for word. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and themes. This method helped identify common ideas and experiences among the students. To ensure reliability, member checking was employed, allowing participants to verify their responses. Similarly, validity was strengthened through peer debriefing and member checking. The study's conceptual framework integrated factors such as academic standards, international exposure, career prospects, perceived deficiencies in national universities, and financial considerations. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining neutrality during interviews to uphold research integrity.

Results

Demographic information of respondents

Table 1 shows basic information about the 27 students in the study. More female students (59.26%) took part than male students (40.74%). This shows a slight gender imbalance in the sample. Most students were between 20 and 22 years old. The largest age group was 21 (33.33%), followed by 22 (29.63%) and 20 (18.52%). Only a few students were 19 or over 23. This suggests that most participants were typical university-age students in their early twenties. In terms of study programs, most students were enrolled in Business (40.74%) followed by IT (33.33%) and Art (25.93%) respectively. This distribution provided the diverse range of academic interests among the students. Of the 27 participants in the study, the majority (66.7%) were enrolled in Bachelor's degree programs.

Table 2: Demographic information of respondents

Title	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	40.74
	Female	16	59.26
	Total	27	100
Age	19	2	7.41
	20	5	18.52
	21	9	33.33
	22	8	29.63
	23 and above	3	11.11
	Total	27	100
Program	IT	9	33.33
	Business	11	40.74
	Arts	7	25.93
	Total	27	100
Level	Bachelor	18	66.7
	Master	9	33.3
	Total	27	100

Source: Field survey report, 2024

Qualitative analysis

Theme 1

In Nepal, students perceive foreign universities affiliated colleges offer better academic standards than colleges affiliated to national universities. These institutions are seen as more reputable because of their international recognition. The teachers often have global experience. Degrees from these Colleges are valued worldwide. Students think this helps with jobs abroad. Even in Nepal, such degrees stand out. National universities seem less appealing.

Foreign affiliated colleges feel more modern and global. Tuition fee is high, but seems as worth it. Better careers and global change matter more. Students want quality and recognition. That's why they prefer these colleges. The brand and network help too. In the end, it's about future success. One participant stated, *"Foreign-affiliated colleges are highly respected because their degrees are internationally recognized. The faculty often have international experience, which makes the education quality stand out."* Another noted, *"I chose a foreign-affiliated college for its global perspective and connections abroad, which I believe will give me a competitive job advantage."* A third shared, *"In Nepal, foreign degrees are seen as superior. Many friends from such colleges have secured good jobs locally and internationally, so I think it's worth the investment."* These responses highlight that perceived academic excellence, prestige, and global recognition are central reasons why students prefer foreign-affiliated colleges over national universities.

Theme 2

For students in Nepalese foreign-affiliated colleges, international exposure through virtual connections with foreign students and faculty is a key part of their education. While most classmates are Nepalese, these virtual interactions broaden cultural awareness and help build global networks, offering advantages for future careers and further studies. Compared to national universities, foreign-affiliated colleges provide more opportunities to engage globally. One participant said, *"Though most classmates are Nepali, we interact with international students and faculty online. It's not just about a degree but gaining a wider perspective, which Nepalese universities can't offer."* Another noted, *"My college lets me connect virtually with students from abroad, opening doors to jobs, internships, and collaborations. It feels like being part of a global network."* A third shared, *"Interacting with the main campus overseas helps me develop a global mindset, which is crucial for my future. I get much more international exposure than I would at national universities."* These responses demonstrate that international exposure and global networking are key advantages motivating students to choose foreign-affiliated colleges over national universities.

Theme 3

Students at foreign-affiliated colleges value career services highly. They seem them as better than in national universities. These colleges have global ties and strong reputations. This helps students find good internships. Job placement also seems more promising. Career support feels more organized and helpful. Students connect with global networks. They hear about jobs abroad more often. These links boost their confidence. Students believe they stand out in the job market. National universities don't offer the same support. That's why many prefer foreign-affiliated colleges. One participant shared, *"The career services at my foreign-affiliated college connect us with international companies for internships, something national universities don't offer. These internships build our resumes and open doors to global jobs."* Another said, *"My internships are with companies that have a global presence, which I couldn't get at a local university. This will help me when applying for jobs"*

after graduation.” A third noted, *“I chose a foreign-affiliated college for its network of international professionals. Alumni connections and virtual events with students abroad are invaluable for job opportunities.”* These responses show that career support, internships, and global networking are key reasons students prefer foreign-affiliated colleges, as these factors enhance their employability and access to international job markets.

Theme 4

Students opting for foreign-affiliated colleges often cite several shortcomings in Nepalese national universities. They point to outdated buildings and equipment. Classrooms are often overcrowded. Facilities are not well maintained. This makes learning hard and uncomfortable. There’s little access to modern tools. Students feel left behind in such settings. It hurts their motivation and focus. In contrast, foreign-affiliated colleges look more modern. They offer better spaces and resources. Students feel more supported there. The poor infrastructure in national universities is a central reason for the shift. One participant said, *“The infrastructure at national universities is outdated, with overcrowded classrooms and less-equipped libraries and labs compared to foreign-affiliated colleges.”* Another added, *“I visited a national university and was shocked by the poor maintenance. Foreign-affiliated colleges are much more modern, which influenced my choice.”* Students also point to outdated curricula that lack practical learning and global perspectives. A participant noted, *“The curriculum at national universities feels old-fashioned and doesn’t prepare us for global job markets like foreign-affiliated colleges do.”* Limited academic resources and less qualified faculty are further issues. One student mentioned, *“At national universities, it’s hard to access research materials or get academic guidance. Foreign-affiliated colleges offer better resources and more engaged faculty.”* Inadequate student support services, such as career counseling and extracurricular activities, are also criticized. A participant shared, *“There were no proper career services or counseling at my national university, unlike the comprehensive support in foreign-affiliated colleges.”* Lastly, students report faculty disengagement and administrative inefficiency, leading to low motivation and confidence. One remarked, *“Professors at national universities seem disconnected, and administration is slow, which made me lose confidence in the education quality.”* These perspectives underline that perceived deficiencies in infrastructure, curriculum, academic resources, and student support heavily influence students’ preference for foreign-affiliated colleges over national universities.

Theme 5

Students weigh both quality and cost when choosing between foreign-affiliated colleges and national universities in Nepal. Although tuition at foreign-affiliated colleges is higher, many see the investment as worthwhile due to better education quality, infrastructure, international exposure, and improved job prospects. One participant said, *“The fees are higher, but the education quality and career opportunities justify the cost.”* Another added, *“Graduates from foreign-affiliated colleges are more competitive, so despite higher fees, the degree is worth it.”* Scholarships also help reduce financial burdens. A student shared, *“Merit-based*

scholarships made the costs more affordable and encouraged me to enroll." Family support plays a key role. One noted, *"My parents' financial help made attending a foreign-affiliated college possible, which I believe will benefit my future career."* While national universities are cheaper, students often feel they offer fewer opportunities. As one said, *"Though less expensive, national universities don't provide the same chances for growth and exposure."* This highlights that financial considerations—including tuition, scholarships, and family support—interact with perceptions of educational quality to shape students' preferences for foreign-affiliated colleges despite their higher costs.

Discussion

This study supports extensive literatures that shows perceived academic quality as a major in students' educational choices (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Altbach & Knight, 2007). In Nepal, this is especially clear. Students prefer foreign universities affiliated colleges because of their international recognition, structured programs, and well-qualified faculty. These factors create a strong sense of trust in the value of the degree. Even with higher tuition fees, students believe the long-term benefits are worth it. This matches findings by Sharma and Bhandari (2021) and Rai (2021), who note that Nepalese students see foreign universities affiliated colleges as more reliable and globally relevant.

International exposure also plays a key role. Students value the chance to interact with foreign faculty and peers virtually. These virtual experiences help build global awareness and create valuable networks. Yang (2008) and Joshi (2024) highlighted the growing importance of intercultural competence in higher education. Respondents in this study shared similar views. They responded such exposure made them feel more connected to the global community and better prepared to future opportunities abroad.

Career support services were another strong research behind students' preferences. Students felt foreign universities affiliated colleges provided better internship, job placements, and networking opportunities. This reflects Bodycott's (2009) and Chhetri (2023) findings that career-oriented services can shape institutional choices. Students in this study clearly valued these opportunities. They believed that these services helped them feel more confident about their career paths after graduation.

In contrast, national universities were often viewed less favorably. Students raised concerns about outdated infrastructure, crowded classrooms, and weak academic support. These issues align with critiques by Lim (2010) and Rai (2021). Poor learning environments and lack of student-focused services made these institutions less attractive, especially when compared to more modern and better-managed foreign universities affiliated colleges.

Cost, while important, was not seen as a barrier for most. Students acknowledged the high tuition fees of foreign universities affiliated colleges, but many still analyzed the cost as justified. They believed the education, exposure, and career prospects offered real value. Some relied on scholarship or family support, as noted in Sapkota's (2020) work. This confirms that cost is just one part of a more complex decision-making process (Chen, 2007; Beine et al., 2014).

In general, these discussions show that Nepalese students weigh academic quality, global exposure, career outcomes, infrastructure, and cost when choosing where to study. Foreign universities affiliated colleges meet more of these expectations which explains their growing appeal.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Nepalese students' preference for foreign-affiliated colleges over national universities is driven by a combination of perceived academic superiority, international exposure, career advantages, and dissatisfaction with domestic institutions. Students see foreign universities affiliated colleges as offering higher standards. They trust the degree more because they are globally recognized. The courses are more structured. The teachers often have international experience. This builds a sense of prestige and value.

Students also like the global exposure these colleges provide. They get to connect with international teachers and students virtually. These experiences help them understand other cultures. They also build networks that can help later in their careers. National universities rarely offer such chances, which makes them less appealing.

Career opportunities are another strong reason. Students responded foreign universities affiliated colleges help with internships, job placements, and industry links. Many believe these chances improve their future job prospects – both in Nepal and abroad. Even though tuition is higher, students feel it's worth the cost. They see it as an investment. In contrast, national universities are seen as outdated. Poor infrastructure and weak student services push students away.

The study also highlights the role of financial considerations, revealing that while cost is a concern, scholarships and family support often enable students to pursue foreign-affiliated education, as they anticipate long-term returns in terms of employability and earning potential.

These findings highlight the need for change in Nepal's higher education system. National universities must improve. They need better classrooms, updated courses, and stronger ties with employers. Policy makers should prioritize academic quality assurance and encourage international collaborations to enhance the global standing of domestic institutions. At the same time, students and families should make informed decisions by carefully evaluating institutional strengths, financial feasibility, and long-term career outcomes. Ultimately, addressing these challenges will be crucial in retaining Nepal's talent and ensuring that its higher education system meets both local and global demands. Future research could further explore the long-term career paths of graduates from both types of institutions to provide deeper insights into the actual benefits of foreign universities affiliated education. By bridging existing gaps, Nepal can build a more robust and equitable higher education system that aligns with the aspirations of its students.

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Authors' contribution statement

Mr. Mahesh Aryal Chhetri drafted the outline, abstract, and introduction. Rojina Ranjitkar authored the literature review and performed grammar checking. Supriya Shrestha developed the methods and materials section. Sunny Tandukar analyzed the data. Manuska Upreti prepared the results. Nirajan Joshi wrote the discussion. Anushka Mahat formulated the conclusion.

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Declaration of conflicting interest

Authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Appendix 1: Plagiarism and AI detection test report

Mahesh Aryal Chhetri

Factors influencing Students' Preferences for Colleges Affiliated with Foreign Universities Compared to Nepalese uni...

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