STUDENTS' AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PREFERENCES IN CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Gabriel PETREA[ID], National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest
Roxana – Adriana PUIU[ID], National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest

- Petrea Gabriel: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6691-6360
- Puiu Roxana: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6072-3700

gabriel.petrea@gmail.com
mechnoroxana@yahoo.com

Abstract: The process of selecting a university holds significant importance for students as it shapes their forthcoming endeavors. Within this article, an examination of student preferences is undertaken through sociological research. The research methodology encompasses an analysis of the factors impacting the decision-making process related to university selection. Moreover, an emphasis is placed on illuminating the inclinations and priorities of students. Furthermore, the article combines literary research with surveying a number of students to achieve the desired results, alongside an exploration of the ramifications inferred from the research outcomes. As a culmination, practical guidance is furnished to aid students navigating the university selection journey, grounded in the insights derived from the conducted sociological study.

Keywords: student, high school student, sociological research, university, educational decision.

1. INTRODUCTION

The process of choosing a university is a crucial and often a challenging step in every student's life. With a multitude of options available, determining the right educational institution can be a complex task, influenced by a variety of factors. In this context, sociological research offers a valuable approach to understanding the preferences and choices of students when it comes to universities.

Every year, numerous secondary school graduates make decisions about their preferred university to attend. Extensive research has been conducted to explore the decision-making process of high school graduates when it comes to selecting a university. Factors that have been identified to influence students' university choices in prior studies encompass family, friends, course availability, university reputation, proximity to home, and career prospects [1]. Researchers have also identified university entry requirements and tuition fees as crucial determinants in this decision-making process [2]. Nonetheless, there may be additional considerations influencing university selection in the digital age. The objective of this study was to pinpoint the pivotal factors involved in the process of choosing a higher education institution.

In the digital era, online comments could potentially fulfill the information needs of secondary school graduates when making university choices [3]. These graduates, aged 15 to 18, belong to Generation Z, a cohort that was born into and has grown up in a world characterized by computers and the internet. This generation dedicates more than 10 hours each day to accessing and sharing online content [4].

Online comments often originate from unfamiliar individuals. While these opinions hold significance due to the absence of conflicts of interest, one might question the reliability of opinions from strangers. Consequently, opinions from friends play a crucial role and carry higher credibility due to the familiarity of the source. Drawing from the theory of needs, once individuals'

requirements are met, their behavior tends to align with advice encountered online or provided by friends [3].

Over the past two decades, extensive research has been conducted worldwide on the university choices of high school graduates. Many of these studies have employed quantitative methods, utilizing survey data [1, 2]. Some studies employed focus groups to identify key factors for questionnaire development or to further explore survey outcomes [5, 6]. Regarding sampling techniques, most studies targeted prospective university students, with some also including high school students or first-year university attendees [7]. Geographically, most studies have been confined to a single country, while a few have encompassed multiple countries within the same region. Almost all these studies have adopted a cross-sectional design, although a limited number have employed a longitudinal approach [8, 9]. This offers an opportunity to analyze how high school students simultaneously consider a range of factors. In this study, a conjoint analysis was utilized to bridge gaps in the existing literature.

In this article, there are highlighted the results of sociological research conducted through sampling, analyzing the preferences of students in their university selection. Various relevant topics will be delved into for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of this complex process and investigating the influence of these findings on universities and educational institutions in general.

The first section will provide a detailed overview of the methodology used in sociological research, examining the stages and techniques employed to conduct the study [10]. In this sense, the significance of sampling and data collection in acquiring pertinent and representative information will be examined.

Subsequently, an investigation will be conducted into why students perceive the university selection as a pivotal choice, highlighting its long-term effects on their academic and professional prospects. Also, there will be examined the underlying motivations that steer the selection of an educational institution and how personal aspirations and expectations shape this process.

The following segment will delve into the influential factors in university selection. Diverse aspects such as location, academic programs, reputation, costs, and career opportunities will be analyzed, providing a comprehensive perspective on the factors influencing the ultimate decision [11, 12, 13, 14].

Next, a comparative analysis of university preferences and choices among various student groups will be conducted. Also, variables such as gender, geographical region, and socio-economic status will be examined, with the aim of identifying trends and potential significant differences according to these criteria [15].

In the concluding section of the article, the emphasis will be placed on the implications of sociological research findings for universities and educational institutions in general. An analysis will be conducted to assess how these findings could contribute to adapting recruitment and marketing strategies, enhancing educational services, and catering to students' needs. Furthermore, practical tips and guidelines, based on the research results, will be provided to assist students in making informed and inspired decisions during the university selection process. By exploring these aspects, our aim is to offer a comprehensive perspective on students' preferences and choices and underscore the importance of sociological research in making a fundamental decision for their academic and professional future.

2. EXPERIMENTAL

This article presents a multifaceted research approach that integrates a comprehensive literature review with an extensive survey conducted among students. The study involved distributing 100,000 questionnaires and successfully collecting and centralizing responses from 56,000 participants.
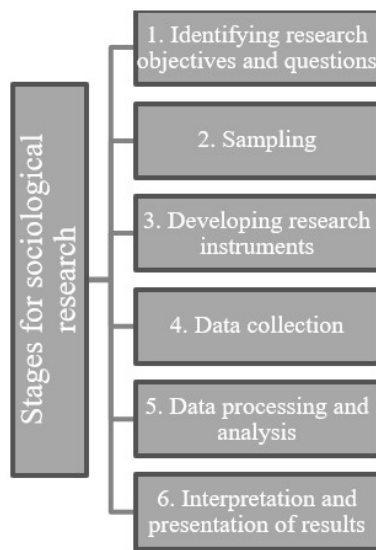
Source: Own creation

Figure 1: Stages for sociological research

This unique combination of methods allows us to gain a holistic understanding of the research topic, providing valuable insights and enriching the depth of analysis. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the extensive dataset collected through this survey will serve as a cornerstone for in-depth analysis in forthcoming articles, all with the objective of providing tips and guidelines for individuals seeking to apply to universities.

The methodology of sociological research is a crucial aspect in obtaining and interpreting data in a study concerning students' and pupils' preferences in choosing a university. The following presents the stages and techniques used within this methodology (Fig. 1) [16], presented above.

The first component of our research methodology involves an in-depth literature review. We embarked on an exhaustive examination of existing academic and professional literature to explore the various facets of our research subject. This step enabled us to build a strong foundation of knowledge, identify gaps in existing research, and formulate hypotheses for our survey. The second component of our research involved the distribution of 100,000 questionnaires to students across diverse backgrounds and regions. This large-scale survey was meticulously designed to gather data on critical aspects related to our research objectives. The survey encompassed a wide range of questions and variables, allowing us to explore nuanced details and trends within our target population. In this case, the objectives could focus on understanding the factors that influence students' and pupils' choices in selecting a university.

For the developing research instruments step, the necessary instruments for data collection are created. These may include questionnaires, structured or unstructured interviews, participant observations, or analysis of relevant documents. Research instruments must be valid and reliable to obtain trustworthy data.

Out of the 100,000 questionnaires distributed, we successfully collected and centralized responses from 56,000 participants. This extensive dataset forms the core of our research analysis. The data centralization process involved thorough quality checks and validation procedures to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the information collected. After data collection, the data must be processed and analyzed. This process may involve coding and entering the data into a statistical analysis program, using quantitative or qualitative analysis methods, identifying patterns, and interpreting the results.

By combining a rigorous literature review with a large-scale student survey, our study capitalizes on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The literature review helps us contextualize our findings within the existing body of knowledge, while the survey data provides empirical evidence and real-world insights.

This article serves as an introduction to our comprehensive research study, which seamlessly integrates a literature review with student surveys. The collection of 56,000 survey responses from

a pool of 100,000 questionnaires underscores the scale and depth of our investigation. Through this multifaceted approach, we aim to contribute valuable insights to the field, shedding light on our research topic from various angles and enriching the discourse in academia and beyond. Furthermore, the extensive dataset gathered through this study will be thoroughly examined and analyzed in subsequent articles, all with the objective of providing practical tips and guidelines for individuals aspiring to apply to universities or providing other information in this sense.

Additionally, the article mentions the use of conjoint analysis as a specific analytical technique. Conjoint analysis is a statistical method used to understand how people make choices when faced with multiple attributes or factors. In the context of the article, it may have been employed to analyze the relative importance of various factors (such as location, academic programs, reputation, costs, and career opportunities) in students' university selection decisions.

In summary, the methodology involves a systematic approach to collecting, processing, and analyzing data to gain insights into the factors influencing students' choices when selecting a university. It encompasses clear research objectives, sampling, development of research instruments, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and presentation of findings. Conjoint analysis may have been used as a specialized analytical technique to delve deeper into the decision-making process.

The process of choosing a university is influenced by a multitude of factors, and the preferences and choices of students can vary significantly based on various socio-demographic factors. In this article, the objective is to carry out a comparative analysis among distinct student groups, encompassing variables like gender, geographical location, socio-economic status, etc., with the goal of identifying trends and noteworthy disparities pertaining to their university preferences. An in-depth analysis will be conducted on aspects like academic priorities, preferences concerning the social environment, the importance of costs, and the impact of socio-economic factors on university choices. This effort will bring to light innovative findings that have the potential to contribute to the enhancement of recruitment strategies and the educational experience for diverse student groups.

The methodology of sociological research is essential for obtaining valid and relevant data in studying the preferences of students in choosing a university. By applying these stages and techniques, researchers can gain understanding and insight into the factors influencing their decisions.

3. RESULTS
3.1. CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY - GATEWAY TO FUTURE SUCCESS

Choosing a university is a significant moment in students'/pupils' lives, with a profound influence on their academic and professional trajectory. This strategic decision largely shapes their educational experience and can have a considerable impact on their personal and career future. In this article, the significance of university selection from the students' perspective and its potential to define their trajectory towards success will be examined.

Building an Academic Foundation

One of the most critical reasons why students pay special attention to choosing a university is to develop a strong academic foundation. Universities offer the opportunity to access specialized academic programs in various fields, from sciences and engineering to arts and social sciences. By selecting a university with a solid reputation and a well-structured curriculum, students can gain relevant knowledge and skills that prepare them for the demands of their future careers.

Building a Professional Network

Another crucial aspect of university selection is the opportunity to build valuable professional networks. Renowned universities provide access to distinguished professors, prominent researchers, and other talented student peers. Through interactions with these individuals, students can gain mentoring, support, and relevant industry connections. These relationships can play an essential role in finding employment, professional development, and career advancement.

Exploring Career Opportunities

The university is a fertile ground for exploring students' career interests and aspirations. Specialization choices and internship programs can offer insights into the fields in which they wish to build their careers. With well-planned choices, students can benefit from more diverse career opportunities and make informed decisions about their professional future.

Developing Key Competencies

University not only offers theoretical knowledge but also opportunities to develop key competencies. Skills such as communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration are cultivated in academic programs and extracurricular activities. University choices and engagement in various activities can help develop a diverse set of competencies essential for long-term success.

Impact on Personal Growth

The choice of university can have a significant impact on students' personal growth. Students encounter new challenges, experiences, and cultures, leading to profound personal development and a broader understanding of the world. This personal growth and self-development can influence how students approach their careers, relationships, and life's purpose.

The methodology for conducting a comparative analysis of university preferences among student groups involves a research design aimed at examining various socio-demographic factors. This includes a study scope covering gender, geographical location, socio-economic status, and age, with data collected through surveys, questionnaires, and interviews from a representative sample of diverse students. The subsequent data analysis comprises quantitative and qualitative approaches to uncover trends and correlations, focusing on academic priorities, social and cultural environment preferences, socio-economic influences, and perceptions of teaching methods and technology. Ethical considerations ensure participant consent, anonymity, and data security, with validation procedures to enhance research instrument validity and reliability. The findings, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative insights, will inform recommendations for universities and undergo peer review for credibility and rigor.

3.2. FACTORS INFLUENCING UNIVERSITY SELECTION

The decision regarding the choice of a university is a highly significant moment in the lives of students, having a profound impact on their academic and professional trajectory. This decision-making process involves complex and diverse aspects, ranging from personal preferences and academic expectations to long-term career opportunities. In this article, an exploration will be undertaken into the factors of influence that underlie university selection. Essential aspects, including location, academic programs, reputation, costs, and career opportunities, which hold a pivotal role in facilitating an informed and inspired decision, will be identified (Fig. 2).
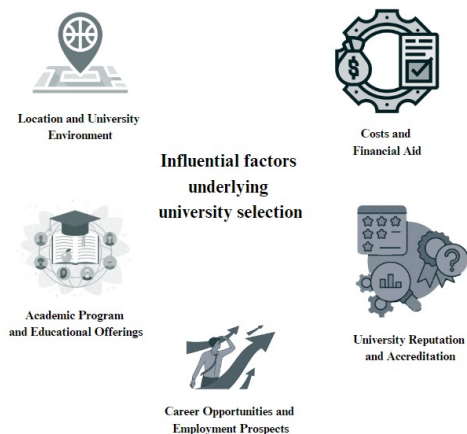
Source: Own creation

Figure 2: Influential factors underlying university selection

A significant influencing factor in choosing a university is its location and the environment in which it is situated. For many students, the decision regarding the location is based on personal preferences related to climate, urbanization, or accessibility to their home. Some may prefer a university in a city, offering a dynamic life and numerous cultural activities, while others might seek a more rural experience, with a quieter and campus-focused environment.

The quality and variety of academic programs offered by a university are a key factor in the

decision-making process for students. They analyze specific programs, specialization opportunities, and courses they can take. The importance of the academic program is reflected in the development of knowledge and skills relevant to their careers and personal aspirations.

The reputation and prestige of a university play a significant role in the decision-making process. Students may seek recognized universities with a solid history of academic performance and high-quality research. The accreditation of the university, confirming the educational quality and standards, can influence the trust of students in the institution and the diploma they obtain.

University expenses and possibilities for financial aid are crucial aspects in decision-making. Students analyze the costs of tuition, accommodation, meals, and other expenses associated with student life. The availability of financial aid, such as scholarships or student loans, can have a significant impact on university accessibility and choice.

Employment prospects and career opportunities associated with the university are vital considerations for many students. They examine the employment rates of graduates, industry partnerships, internship programs, and student professional placements to shape their career expectations and plans.

3.3. THE IMPACT OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS ON UNIVERSITIES AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The impact of sociological research findings on universities and educational institutions can be significant and can bring opportunities for improving student experiences and institutional effectiveness. Analyzing data from recent research related to the preferences, priorities, and choices of students can lead to a series of actions and strategies for universities to adapt to their ever-changing needs. Here are some major implications of sociological research in the university context:

Adapting recruitment and marketing strategies: Research on academic preferences and preferred specializations of students can help universities tailor their recruitment and marketing strategies. Identifying areas of interest and trends in the academic choices of young individuals can guide universities to offer academic programs and extracurricular services that better attract and respond to the needs of potential students. One of the primary benefits of sociological research is that it can assist universities in adjusting their recruitment and marketing strategies. By analyzing students' academic preferences and preferred specializations, institutions can customize their educational offerings and extracurricular services to better attract and meet the needs of potential students. For example, if research shows an increased interest in certain fields, universities can develop relevant academic programs in those areas.

Improving educational services: Analyzing preferences related to the social and cultural environment can highlight specific needs of students. Universities can use this data to enhance campus infrastructure and services, creating a more student-friendly and accommodating environment for different student groups. For example, improving learning spaces and social activities can contribute to creating a more cohesive and supportive university community. Or, for instance, if studies indicate that students value learning spaces and social activities more, universities can invest in these areas to support a more cohesive and supportive university community.

Supporting the needs of students: The impact of socio-economic status on university choices can reveal inequalities in access to education or reveal the impact of socio-economic status on university choices, highlighting inequalities in access to education. Research findings can be used to develop more efficient financial aid programs and offer additional support to students with limited resources. Universities can implement policies and programs that facilitate the success and integration of all students, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Integrating technology in the teaching process: Preferences regarding teaching methods and technology can influence how universities deliver educational content. Integrating innovative technology in the teaching process can enhance the learning experience and engagement of students. Research can help universities identify suitable technologies and tools to support the teaching and learning process. Preferences regarding teaching methods and technology are integral to modern education. Research serves as a valuable tool for universities to navigate the ever-changing landscape of educational technology. By staying informed about emerging technologies, understanding student preferences, and investing in faculty development, universities can create

more engaging and effective learning environments that prepare students for success in a digital age.

Promoting diversity and inclusion: Analyzing university preferences and choices based on diverse student groups can highlight the need to promote diversity and inclusion on campus. Universities can create policies and programs that support cultural, gender, and socio-economic diversity, providing an environment where all students feel included and represented. Analyzing university preferences and choices within diverse student groups serves as a catalyst for positive change on campuses. It highlights the imperative of creating an inclusive and representative educational environment. By taking proactive measures, including policy development, program tailoring, and fostering a culture of inclusion, universities can cultivate an environment where all students, regardless of their background, feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed. Such an environment not only benefits individual students but also enriches the overall educational experience and contributes to a more equitable society.

By utilizing sociological research, universities can take concrete measures to adapt to the changing needs of students and create more efficient, inclusive, and relevant educational environments for society. This demonstrates how sociological research can positively influence decision-making processes and strategies at institutions of higher education.

3.4. GUIDELINES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS
Based on the analysis presented in this article, here are 10 practical tips and guidelines for high school students and college students in choosing a university. They are based on the findings of sociological research and identified trends:

1. **Self-reflect on interests and aspirations**: One should commence by exploring their academic passions and interests. Sociological research has shown that choosing a university that aligns with your areas of interest can contribute to academic success and personal satisfaction.
2. **Investigate reputation and accreditation**: Research the reputation of universities and their accreditation status. Well-ranked and accredited universities offer more robust academic programs and greater recognition in the job market.
3. **Explore the social and cultural environment of the campus**: Learn more about the social and cultural environment of the campus. Research indicates that a suitable university environment can contribute to student integration and success.
4. **Check out career opportunities**: Look for universities that offer relevant career opportunities in your areas of interest. Analyze the employment rates of graduates and internship and practice programs to prepare for your career.
5. **Evaluate costs and financial assistance**: Calculate the costs of education and investigate financial assistance options, such as scholarships and student loans. Choose an option that fits your budget and does not burden you financially.
6. **Attend recruitment events and visit campuses**: Participate in university recruitment events and visit campuses in person or online. These experiences can provide you with a direct perspective on student life and the facilities offered.
7. **Talk to current students and alumni**: Try to communicate with current students and alumni of the universities you are considering. They can offer an authentic perspective on their experience and how the university has helped them in their careers.
8. **Analyze academic programs and specializations**: Examine the academic programs and specializations offered by universities. Research shows that a good fit with the study program can enhance academic interest and success.
9. **Prioritize your personal needs**: Be honest with yourself and identify your personal needs in choosing a university. Choose an institution that offers a balance between academic, social, and personal needs.
10. **Compare pros and cons**: Carefully evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Use sociological research and collected information to make an informed and inspired choice.

4. DISCUSSION
The results of the article introduces a comprehensive exploration of student preferences in

university selection through sociological research. The article aims to analyze factors impacting decision-making, highlight student inclinations, compare various student groups, and provide practical guidance. Let's delve into the discussions surrounding the key components of the article:

Importance of University Selection: The article aptly emphasizes the crucial significance of selecting a university for students' future endeavors. This point is well-founded as university selection shapes academic trajectories, career paths, and personal growth. By recognizing the impact of this decision, the article sets the stage for understanding the underlying factors that influence students' choices.

Sociological Research Methodology: The article emphasizes the importance of sociological research methodology in uncovering students' university preferences. This discussion highlights the systematic process involved in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. The use of various research instruments and data collection techniques is critical to ensure the validity and reliability of the results.

Factors Influencing University Selection: The article appropriately examines a range of factors influencing university selection, such as location, academic programs, reputation, costs, and career opportunities. These factors resonate with the complex decision-making process that students undertake. This discussion acknowledges the multifaceted nature of students' considerations and sets the stage for exploring their varying priorities.

Comparative Analysis and Trends: By undertaking a comparative analysis of different student groups, the article enhances its comprehensiveness. The examination of trends based on gender, geographical region, and socio-economic status adds depth to the understanding of university preferences. This discussion recognizes the diverse perspectives that students from different backgrounds bring to the decision-making process.

Impact on Universities and Educational Institutions: The article intelligently connects sociological research findings to practical implications for universities and educational institutions. The discussions on adapting recruitment strategies, enhancing services, and promoting diversity underline the actionable insights derived from research. This section showcases the transformative potential of sociological research in shaping educational institutions.

Practical Tips and Guidelines: The article concludes with practical tips and guidelines for high school and college students when selecting a university. These tips are derived from the research findings and offer valuable advice for prospective students. This section ensures that the academic discourse is translated into actionable advice for individuals navigating the complex decision-making process.

Culmination of the Article: The article concludes by reiterating the central theme of university selection's impact on students' lives. It eloquently summarizes the discussions and presents the central message that informed decision-making, based on sociological research, contributes to students' academic and professional success.

Depending on their respective groups, students may have different preferences regarding academic fields and specializations. For instance, it might be found that women show a greater inclination towards social sciences and humanities, while men tend to lean more towards exact sciences and technology [17]. Analyzing academic preferences can reveal how education and social culture influence university choices [18].

Different groups of students may exhibit distinct preferences regarding the social and cultural environment of universities. For example, students from urban areas may be more drawn to universities situated in large cities, offering an active student life and diverse cultural opportunities. On the other hand, students from rural areas may seek a more serene and campus-focused environment [19].

The socio-economic level of students can play a significant role in university selection. Students from lower-income families may be more concerned about the costs of education and may search for universities that provide financial aid or scholarships. Conversely, students from higher-income families may place greater importance on the reputation and prestige of universities [20].

Different groups of students may have varying preferences regarding teaching methods and technology in education. For instance, younger generations may be more receptive to using technology in the learning process, while older generations may prefer traditional teaching methods [21].

As it is presented below, the article presents a comprehensive examination of the process of

university selection, addressing various facets of the decision-making process. From methodological discussions to practical guidelines, the article offers a holistic perspective that aids both students and educational institutions in making informed choices and facilitating positive academic experiences.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Choosing a university is undoubtedly a crucial decision in the lives of high school students and college students. From building a strong academic foundation and networking to exploring career opportunities and developing key skills, each aspect of this choice can have a significant impact on their future. With careful consideration and adequate information, students can successfully navigate the selection process and open doors to extraordinary opportunities for their professional and personal success.

Simultaneously, choosing a university is a complex decision for students, with a significant impact on their academic and professional trajectory. Influential factors such as location, academic program, reputation, costs, and career opportunities are essential in making an informed and inspired decision. By carefully analyzing these aspects and their own expectations, students can make the most suitable choice, thus opening doors to a successful educational experience and promising opportunities for their future.

Conducting a comparative analysis of university preferences among different groups of students brings a fresh perspective to the decision-making process regarding university choice. Identifying trends and significant differences can provide higher education institutions with a better understanding of the diverse needs and preferences of students. Adapting recruitment strategies and developing an inclusive and diversified educational environment can contribute to increased accessibility and academic success for students from various socio-demographic backgrounds. By innovatively and attentively addressing the different preferences of students, higher education institutions can promote a more personalized and relevant educational experience, leading to the development of a wiser, inclusive, and progressive society.

By considering the findings of sociological research, universities and educational institutions can successfully address the challenges in the field of education and create a more successful and satisfying learning experience for students. This can contribute to the development of a more dynamic and healthy academic community that supports the personal and professional growth of all involved.

In conclusion, it can be stated that choosing a university is an important stage in the life of a high school student or college student and requires a careful and informed approach. Sociological research offers valuable perspectives and relevant data to support the decision-making process and ensure a successful educational experience.

REFERENCES

[1] Soutar, G. N., Turner, J. P.: *Students' preferences for university: a conjoint analysis*, International Journal of Educational Management, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 40-45, ISSN: 0951-354X, (2002). https://doi.org/10.1108/09513540210415523.

[2] Walsh, C.; Moorhouse, J., Dunnett, A., Barry, C.: *University choice: Which attributes matter when you are paying the full price?*, International Journal of Consumer Studies, Volume 11, p. 670–681, (2015). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00849.

[3] Xu, X., Yao, Z.: *Understanding the role of argument quality in the adoption of online reviews*. Online Information Review, Volume 39, No. 7, pp. 885–902, ISSN: 1468-4527 (2015). https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-05-2015-0149.

[4] Djafarova, E., Bowes, T.: *"Instagram made Me buy it": Generation Z impulse purchases in fashion industry*, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Studies, 2021, Volume 59, 102345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102345.

[5] Agrey, L., Lampadan, N.: D*eterminant factors contributing to student choice in selecting a university*. Journal of Education and Human Development, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 391-404, ISSN: 2334-296X, (2014).

[6] Howard, J. M., Nicholson, B. C., Chesnut, S.: *Relationships Between Positive Parenting, Overparenting, Grit, and Academic* Success, Journal of College Student Development, Volume 60, Number 2, March-April2019, pp. 189-202 (Article), doi:10.1353/csd.2019.0018.

[7] Alonderiene, R., Klimavičiene, A.: *Insights into Lithuanian students' choice of university and study program in management and economics*. Journal of Contemporary Management Issues, Vol. 18 No. 1, (2013).

[8] Cattaneo, M., Horta, H., Malighetti, P. et al.: *Effects of the financial crisis on university choice by gender*. Higher Education, Vol. 74, pp. 775–798 (2017). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0076-y.

[9] Whitehead, J. M., Raffan, J., Deaney, R.: *University choice: What influences the decisions of academically successful post-16 students?*, Higher Education Quarterly, Volume 60, Issue 1, pp. 4–26. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2006.00305.x.

[10] Strand, K. J., & Weiss, G. L.: Survey Research: Experiencing Social Research. New York, USA: Routledge, (2020).

[11] Dabbagh, N., Fake H., Zhang, Z.: *Student Perspectives of Technology use for Learning in Higher Education*, RIED - Revista Iberoamericana De Educación a Distancia, 22(1), 127–152, 2019, https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.22.1.22102.

[12] Li, H., Yao Ping-Peng, M., Yang, M., Chen, C. C., *Exploring the Influence of Learning Motivation and Socioeconomic Status on College Students' Learning Outcomes Using Self-Determination Theory*, Sec. Educational Psychology, Volume 11, (2020).

[13] Travia, R. M., Wall, A., Larcus, J., MA, Thibodeau, K., Merriweather, V. C., Hutchinson, C. R., *The influence of environmental factors, including diversity, equity, and inclusion, on the emotional well-being of students, staff, and faculty*, American College Health Foundation, (2021).

[14] Winkler, I., Rybnikova, I.: *Student resistance in the classroom—Functional-instrumentalist, critical-emancipatory and critical-functional conceptualisations*, Higher Education Quarterly, Volume 73, Issue 4, 521-538, (2019). doi:10.1111/hequ.12219.

[15] Bouchrika, I.: *Does It Matter Where You Go to College? It Depends on Who You Are*, Available from https://research.com/universities-colleges/does-it-matter-where-you-go-to-college, Accessed: 2023-06-30.

[16] Miftode, V.: Metode și tehnici de cercetare în sociologie. Iași: Polirom, (2017).

[17] Thompson, D. A., Dent, H. L., Fine, M. B.: *Factors related to a college student's career optimism and their perception of career services*, Higher Education Quarterly, Volume 77, Issue 3, 395-409, (2023). https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12408.

[18] Furukawa, D. T.: *College Choice Influences Among High-Achieving Students: An Exploratory Case Study of College Freshmen*, (2011). UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones. 1091. http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/2476207.

[19] Swail, W. S., & Perna, L. W. (Eds.): *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (Vol. 34). Springer, ISBN: 978-3-030-03456-6, (2014). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03457-3.

[20] Herzog, S.: *Financial Aid and College Persistence: Do Student Loans Help or Hurt?*, Research in Higher Education 59, 273–301 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-017-9471-1.

[21] Brace, I.: *Questionnaire design: How to plan, structure and write survey material for effective market research*. Kogan Page Publishers, ISBN: 0749450282, 9780749450281, London, UK, (2018).

Corresponding author:

Corresponding Author: Roxana – Adriana PUIU
Title: STUDENTS' AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PREFERENCES IN CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
Full address: 10 Crenguței Street, Domnești, Ilfov
Email: mechnoroxana@yahoo.com