

“Behavioral models of educational choice: A classification of decision-making patterns among Ukrainian higher education applicants”

AUTHORS	Anna Boiko 
	Olha Hrynkevych 
	
	Halyna Mishchuk 
	
	Yuriy Bilan 
	

ARTICLE INFO	Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk and Yuriy Bilan (2026). Behavioral models of educational choice: A classification of decision-making patterns among Ukrainian higher education applicants. <i>Problems and Perspectives in Management</i> , 24(3), 700–717. doi: 10.21511/ppm.24(3).2026.43
DOI	http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.24(3).2026.43
RELEASED ON	Friday, 18 September 2026
RECEIVED ON	Monday, 20 July 2026
ACCEPTED ON	Friday, 04 September 2026
LICENSE	 This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License
JOURNAL	"Problems and Perspectives in Management"
ISSN PRINT	1727-7051
ISSN ONLINE	1810-5467
PUBLISHER	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”
FOUNDER	LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”

		
NUMBER OF REFERENCES	NUMBER OF FIGURES	NUMBER OF TABLES
45	5	5

© The author(s) 2026. This publication is an open access article.



BUSINESS PERSPECTIVES



LLC "CPC "Business Perspectives"
Hryhorii Skovoroda lane, 10,
Sumy, 40022, Ukraine
www.businessperspectives.org

Type of the article: Research Article

Received on: 20th of July, 2026

Accepted on: 4th of September, 2026

Published on: 18th of September, 2026

© Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych,
Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan, 2026

Anna Boiko, Ph.D. in Economics,
Department of Statistics, Faculty of
Economics, Ivan Franko National
University of Lviv, Ukraine.

Olha Hrynkevych, Doctor of
Economics, Professor, Department of
Statistics, Faculty of Economics, Ivan
Franko National University of Lviv,
Ukraine.

Halyna Mishchuk, Doctor of
Economics, Professor, Department
of Human Resources and
Entrepreneurship, National University
of Water and Environmental
Engineering, Ukraine; VMU
Agriculture Academy, Department
of Business and Rural Development
Management, Lithuania.

Yuriy Bilan, Doctor of Economics,
Professor, Kautz Gyula Faculty of
Business and Economics, Széchenyi
István University, Hungary.
(Corresponding author)



This is an Open Access article,
distributed under the terms of the
[Creative Commons Attribution 4.0
International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits
unrestricted re-use, distribution, and
reproduction in any medium, provided
the original work is properly cited.

Conflict of interest statement:

Author(s) reported no conflict of interest

Anna Boiko (Ukraine), Olha Hrynkevych (Ukraine),
Halyna Mishchuk (Ukraine, Lithuania), Yuriy Bilan (Hungary)

BEHAVIORAL MODELS OF EDUCATIONAL CHOICE: A CLASSIFICATION OF DECISION- MAKING PATTERNS AMONG UKRAINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICANTS

Abstract

Educational choice is increasingly understood as a multidimensional decision-making process, shaped not only by economic, institutional, and social determinants but also by behavioral mechanisms that operate under uncertainty. Drawing on human capital theory, rational choice theory, social norms theory, and behavioral economics, this study develops a theoretically grounded, a priori classification of behavioral response patterns in educational choice – a rational model, a social-norms model, and a bounded-rationality model – and quantifies the distribution of model-coded responses among Ukrainian higher education applicants. It further examines whether this distribution varies by gender, admission score, family income, and locality of secondary education. The empirical analysis is based on a survey of 405 first-year students at five Ukrainian universities, using descriptive statistics and Pearson's chi-squared test. Rational responses predominate in the choice of higher education institution (54.0%) and study program (49.0%), whereas the choice of study city is distributed almost evenly across all three models. Gender is the only variable significantly, though weakly, associated with the distribution of model-coded responses (Cramer's $V = 0.138$); admission score, family income, and locality show no statistically significant association. The findings also point to the growing role of official university websites and social media in applicants' information-seeking behavior, and to the importance of security considerations as a context-specific factor shaping institutional choice under wartime conditions. By integrating established determinant-based theories with a behavioral decision-making perspective, the study offers a novel classification framework and practical implications for evidence-informed recruitment and communication strategies in higher education.

Keywords

educational choice; behavioral classification; bounded rationality; higher education applicants; information-seeking behavior

JEL Classification

D91, I23, D81, Z13

INTRODUCTION

Educational choice represents one of the most consequential decisions individuals make, influencing not only their educational trajectories but also their future employment opportunities, career development, and social mobility. At the societal level, applicants' educational decisions affect the allocation of human capital, the competitiveness of higher education institutions, and the responsiveness of educational systems to labor market needs. Consequently, understanding the mechanisms underlying educational choice has become an important research area in higher education, economics, psychology, and public policy.

Contemporary higher education systems have become increasingly complex and competitive. Applicants are required to evaluate numer-

ous study programs and institutions while considering expected career opportunities, educational quality, financial costs, institutional reputation, and personal aspirations. At the same time, the rapid expansion of digital information, university rankings, social media, and institutional marketing has substantially increased both information availability and the complexity of educational decision-making. Under these conditions, educational choice extends beyond the comparison of objective alternatives and increasingly involves the interpretation, prioritization, and integration of multiple sources of information.

Previous research has identified a broad range of determinants influencing educational choice, including economic, institutional, social, and informational factors. Although these determinants have been extensively examined across different educational contexts, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates substantial variation in applicants' decisions even when they face similar educational opportunities. This suggests that educational choice cannot be fully explained by analyzing external determinants alone. Differences in how applicants perceive uncertainty, evaluate information, and prioritize available alternatives may also play an important role in shaping educational decisions.

These developments have stimulated growing interest in behavioral approaches to educational decision-making. Drawing on behavioral economics and decision sciences, recent research increasingly recognizes that applicants do not always make decisions under conditions of perfect information or complete rationality. Instead, educational choices are frequently influenced by bounded rationality, cognitive limitations, individual preferences, and behavioral responses to uncertainty. Rather than replacing traditional factor-based explanations, behavioral perspectives provide an additional layer of understanding by explaining how applicants interpret and respond to the determinants of educational choice.

Unlike previous studies that identify determinants of educational choice, this paper introduces a theoretically grounded behavioral classification that focuses on how applicants interpret and prioritize these determinants.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Educational choice is widely recognized as a multidimensional phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained by a single theoretical perspective. Theoretical approaches have evolved from economically oriented models emphasizing rational utility maximization to broader frameworks integrating institutional, social, and behavioral influences.

Human Capital Theory conceptualizes higher education as an investment in future productivity and career outcomes (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1993). Similarly, Rational Choice Theory assumes that applicants compare expected benefits, costs, and risks to maximize individual utility (Simon, 1955; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Scott, 2000). While these approaches explain the economic rationale of educational choice, they provide only a partial

account because applicants often make decisions under uncertainty and imperfect information.

Social perspectives complement economic explanations by emphasizing the influence of social norms, family expectations, peer groups, and cultural values on educational decisions (Coleman, 1988; Arrow, 1994; Bicchieri, 2006; Elster, 1989; Axelrod, 1986; Horne, 2001). These influences frequently shape applicants' preferences alongside economic considerations.

Broader conceptual models further integrate individual and contextual determinants. Chapman (1981) highlighted the interaction between student characteristics and institutional influences, while Hossler and Gallagher (1987) described educational choice as a sequential process of predisposition, search, and choice. More recently, Iloh (2018) conceptualized educational choice as navigation through opportunity structures shaped by social inequality, institutional contexts, and digital information environments.

The growing complexity of educational decision-making has stimulated increasing interest in behavioral economics and decision sciences. Unlike traditional models that assume fully rational decision-makers, behavioral approaches recognize bounded rationality, heuristics, cognitive biases, and risk perceptions as integral components of decision-making (Simon, 1955; Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Thaler & Sunstein, 2021; Ariely, 2015). Consequently, applicants exposed to similar educational opportunities may interpret information differently and prioritize educational attributes in different ways. This premise motivates the behavioral classification developed in this study.

Contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes educational choice as a dynamic and context-dependent process in which applicants continuously reassess available information and adapt their preferences. Rather than assuming fully rational behavior, recent frameworks emphasize interactions among cognitive, social, institutional, and informational factors.

Haas and Terryn (2019) propose a decision-making model integrating push and pull factors with the influence of recruitment agencies and digital communication. Similarly, Poole et al. (2023) demonstrate that educational preferences evolve through recursive evaluation, as applicants continuously reconsider alternatives while new information becomes available.

The expansion of digital information environments, including university rankings, institutional websites, branding, and social media, has further transformed educational choice into an information-processing activity, requiring applicants to evaluate and prioritize multiple sources of often competing information.

Recent empirical evidence (Snadrou & Haoucha, 2024; Samoliuk et al., 2024) also indicates that applicants differ systematically in the relative importance they assign to educational choice determinants. Altenburger et al. (2026) identified distinct applicant profiles based on preferences for academic quality, career prospects, location, and social environment, whereas Torres Castro (2024) showed that behavioral and agentic dimensions of

student engagement begin to shape educational trajectories before university enrolment.

Collectively, these frameworks move beyond traditional factor-based explanations by recognizing educational choice as an adaptive behavioral process, closely aligned with the classification approach adopted in this study. This behavioral perspective is complemented by a substantial body of empirical research on the specific determinants that shape applicants' decisions.

Empirical research (Heathcote et al., 2020) consistently shows that educational choice is shaped by the interaction of economic, institutional, social, and informational factors rather than by any single determinant. Although their relative importance varies across countries and applicant groups, several common patterns emerge.

Economic factors, including tuition fees, expected labor market returns, financial aid, and family income, remain among the strongest predictors of educational decisions (Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Perna, 2006; Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Panchyshyn et al., 2020). Institutional characteristics, such as university reputation, program quality, employability, location, and campus facilities, also significantly influence applicants' preferences (Bilan et al., 2026; Chapman, 1981; Forlicz et al., 2024; Gan et al., 2022; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Lacmanović & Škare, 2024; Rydzak et al., 2025), as well as their mobility during education (Hrynkevych et al., 2022; Sułkowski & Ulatowska, 2025). More recently, university rankings, institutional branding, digital communication, and social media have become increasingly important sources of information (Iloh, 2018; Haas & Terryn, 2019).

Educational choice is further shaped by parents, peers, teachers, and other reference groups, whose influence interacts with economic and institutional considerations (Coleman, 1988; Perna, 2006). Recent studies also demonstrate that applicants differ in how they evaluate educational alternatives and prioritize choice determinants (Poole et al., 2023; Altenburger et al., 2026; Torres Castro, 2024). This is precisely the kind of behavioral heterogeneity that the present classification seeks to capture directly, rather than infer indirectly from determinant rankings.

This determinant-oriented evidence is reinforced by recent integrative and systematic reviews (Aydın, 2015; Benito-Hernández et al., 2024; Wijesinghe et al., 2023; Pérez Lavandera et al., 2025), which confirm that educational choice is a multidimensional process influenced by economic, institutional, social, psychological, and informational factors operating simultaneously. In Ukraine, the location of a university plays an important role not only because of the socioeconomic attractiveness of territories but also because of security considerations (Brintseva, 2026), which often shape applicants' migration attitudes (Brintseva, 2025; Chugaievska et al., 2026; Mishchuk & Oliinyk, 2025). This is a context-specific dimension directly addressed by the security-related choice factors examined in this study.

Taken together, the literature reviewed above demonstrates a clear shift from economically centered explanations of educational choice towards integrated approaches that recognize the joint influence of economic, social, institutional, and behavioral factors, complemented by a substantial and increasingly context-specific body of determinant-based evidence, including evidence from Ukraine. Yet, while this body of research has considerably advanced understanding of the determinants of educational choice, it remains primarily determinant-oriented.

Consequently, less attention has been devoted to explaining why applicants facing similar educational environments frequently prioritize these determinants differently. Existing research largely identifies what influences educational choice, whereas comparatively few studies examine how applicants combine and interpret these influences through different behavioral approaches to decision-making.

To address this gap, the present study develops a theoretically grounded, a priori classification of behavioral decision-making in educational choice and quantitatively characterizes its distribution among Ukrainian higher education applicants. Building on rational choice theory, social norms theory, and the concept of bounded rationality, it distinguishes rational, social-norms, and bounded-rationality decision models and examines the extent to which socio-demographic characteris-

tics are associated with their distribution. In doing so, the study extends existing research on educational choice by linking established determinants with behavioral decision-making patterns.

The literature reviewed above shows a shift from purely economic explanations of educational choice towards frameworks that integrate institutional, social, and behavioral factors, alongside a substantial body of determinant-based evidence, including evidence from Ukraine. However, this literature remains primarily oriented towards identifying what influences educational choice, with comparatively little attention paid to how applicants combine and interpret these influences through distinct decision-making mechanisms.

Building on this synthesis, the study aims to develop a theoretically grounded, a priori classification of behavioral decision-making in educational choice among Ukrainian higher education applicants, quantitatively characterize the distribution of its three decision models, and assess the extent to which socio-demographic characteristics (gender, admission score, family income, and locality of secondary education) are associated with that distribution.

Building on the theoretical foundations reviewed above, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: *There is a statistically significant association between the admission (competitive) score and the distribution of responses classified under the three theoretically defined behavioral models.*
- H2: *There is a statistically significant association between family income level and the distribution of responses classified under the three theoretically defined behavioral models.*
- H3: *There is a statistically significant association between gender and the distribution of responses classified under the three theoretically defined behavioral models.*
- H4: *There is a statistically significant association between the locality in which secondary education was completed and the distribution of responses classified under the three theoretically defined behavioral models.*

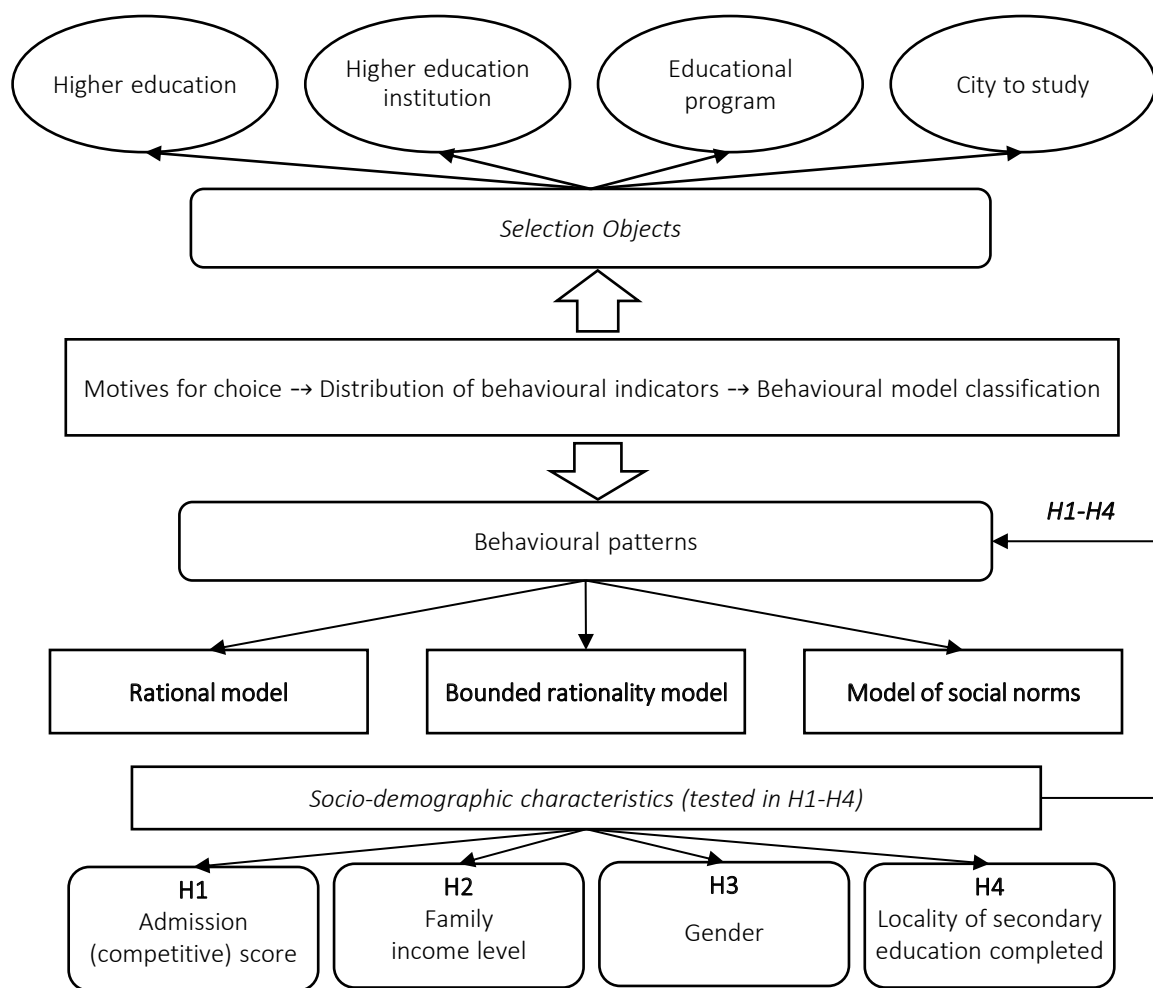


Figure 1. Theoretical framework for classifying behavioral response patterns in the higher education choice process

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model underlying the proposed classification, linking the objects and motives of educational choice with the corresponding behavioral indicators used to classify response options according to the three theoretical behavioral models.

The following section describes the research design, sample, and data analysis procedures used to examine these hypotheses.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research design

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the principles of human capital theory, rational choice theory, social norms theory, and

behavioral economics. The study is grounded in the assumption that applicants' educational choices are shaped not only by economic rationality but also by social norms, cognitive characteristics of decision-making, and the information environment.

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Within this design, individual response options are classified a priori according to a set of theoretically grounded indicators (Section 4.3), the resulting response shares are aggregated under the three proposed behavioral models, and associations between the model-coded response distributions and socio-demographic characteristics are examined in accordance with the hypotheses formulated in Section 3.

2.2. Sample and data collection

The study's quantitative basis consists of the results of a questionnaire survey of 405 first-year students at Ukrainian higher education institutions, conducted in 2025. The sample was formed using purposive non-probability sampling: higher education institutions were selected to ensure representation of the western, central, and eastern regions of Ukraine. The sample included students from the following institutions:

- Western regions: Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (100 students), National University of Water and Environmental Management (90 students);
- Central regions: Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (60 students), Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy (123 students);
- Eastern regions: V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (32 students).
- First-year students were selected because they had made their educational choices relatively recently, which helped minimize the risk of recall bias and enhanced the reliability of the responses. The five participating institutions were purposively selected to capture regional variation in Ukraine's higher education system, spanning western, central, and eastern macro-regions that differ in economic structure, urbanization, and, since 2022, proximity to active war areas. This purposive, maximum-variation strategy was intended to enhance the diversity of the sample along theoretically relevant dimensions rather than to achieve statistical representativeness of the applicant population;
- the implications of this choice for the generalizability of the findings are addressed in the Discussion. The questionnaire consisted of three thematic sections. The first section covered respondents' educational choices, specifically their choice of city of study, higher education institution, and field of study. The second section addressed motivations for pursuing higher education, factors influencing the choice of a higher

education institution and program, the use of information sources, attitudes towards the labor market, and the role of digital communication channels. The third section covered respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, including gender, region and type of locality in which they completed secondary education, entrance exam score, and self-assessed family financial situation. Before the main survey was conducted, the questionnaire was pilot-tested on a small group of respondents to assess wording clarity, the appropriateness of response options, and the time required for completion; revisions were made accordingly.

Most questions used a multiple-choice format with a maximum number of permitted responses, making it possible to identify applicants' most important motivations and priorities. The study and survey procedure received formal approval from the relevant committee (commission) on academic integrity and research ethics at the participating higher education institutions. The data were anonymized and used exclusively in aggregated form for research purposes. Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the research purpose of the data collection.

2.3. A priori classification of behavioral response patterns

The proposed classification of behavioral response patterns is based on the assumption that educational choices reflect different sets of motives, which may correspond to rational economic calculations, the influence of social norms, or decision-making under conditions of bounded rationality. Based on the motives reported for pursuing higher education and for choosing a higher education institution, educational program, and city of study, the study proposes three theoretical behavioral models: the rational model, the social norms model, and the bounded rationality model.

The proposed a priori classification is based on a combination of human capital theory, social norms theory, and behavioral economics (see Table 1).

According to human capital theory, educational choices are viewed as investment decisions aimed

Table 1. Theoretical basis of applicants' behavioral models in the educational choice process

Behavioral model	Theoretical basis	Decision logic	Typical behavioral indicators
Rational model	Human capital theory Rational choice theory	Educational choice is viewed as an investment in future economic and professional benefits	Employment prospects, expected wages, quality of education, reputation of higher education institutions, career opportunities, demand in the labor market
Model of social norms	Theory of social norms Theory of social capital	Educational decisions are shaped by the social environment, expectations, and reference groups	Recommendations from parents, relatives, teachers, friends, and classmates; positive feedback; social connections
Bounded rationality model	behavioral economics	Decisions are made under conditions of incomplete information, cognitive limitations, emotional influences, and subjective perceptions of alternatives	Prestige, program popularity, city attractiveness, advertising, program reputation, personal preferences, interesting subjects in the program

at future economic benefits, professional fulfillment, increased income, and competitiveness in the labor market. These motives form the basis of the rational model of applicants' behaviors.

The social norms model is based on the assumption that educational choices are shaped by the influence of reference groups, including parents, relatives, friends, classmates, teachers, and other significant figures. In this case, an applicant's decision is not entirely individualized but reflects the influence of the social environment, expectations, and norms that define a desired or acceptable educational trajectory.

The bounded rationality model is based on the principles of behavioral economics, according to which individuals make decisions under conditions of incomplete information, cognitive limi-

tations, information asymmetry, emotional influences, and subjective perceptions of alternatives. The motives associated with this model include personal preferences, prestige, popularity, the attractiveness of a city, the influence of advertising, and other factors that do not necessarily constitute a fully rational economic calculation.

To characterize behavioral response patterns, four key aspects of educational choice were analyzed: the choice of city of study, motivation for pursuing higher education, the choice of a higher education institution, and the choice of an educational program. This approach allows comparison of the relative distribution of theoretically classified response patterns across different objects of educational choice. The response options concerning motives for educational choice served as behavioral indicators of the corresponding model (Table 2).

Table 2. Behavioral indicators of applicants' educational choice

Object of choice – questions	Behavioral model based on choice (behavioral indicators – responses)		
	Rational model	Bounded rationality model	Model of social norms
City of study: Why did you choose this particular city?	It is a safer city; this city offers good prospects for future employment	I like this city	<i>This is the closest city to my permanent residence</i>
Higher education: Why do you need higher education?	Financial independence and stability; higher pay; obtaining a degree	Self-realization; student life	<i>Parents' influence; most of my classmates attend university; social connections; social status</i>
Higher education institution: Which factors were most important when choosing a higher education institution?	HEI reputation and academic ranking; tuition fees; availability of hybrid learning; security; good employment prospects after graduation; my competitive score	University prestige; opportunity to study on a state-funded place	Positive feedback about the university; my friends and acquaintances study at the university; recommendations from parents, relatives, and acquaintances
Educational program: Which factors were most important when choosing an educational program?	High salary in the relevant specialty; Availability of hybrid learning; High demand in the labor market; Quality of teaching staff; The program matches my abilities and career interests	Program popularity; I liked the advertisement or information about the program on the university's official resources; an attractive program name; interesting subjects in the program; opportunity to study on a state-funded place	<i>Positive feedback on the educational program; my friends and acquaintances study in the program; teacher recommendations; recommendations from popular bloggers; recommendations from parents, relatives, and acquaintances</i>

Each response option was assigned a priori to one of the three behavioral models by the research team, based on the theoretical criteria presented in Table 1. The selected response options were then aggregated by behavioral model for each object of educational choice. This procedure made it possible to quantify the distribution of model-coded responses across the choice of a higher education institution, city of study, educational program, and higher education in general.

This approach makes it possible to move from analyzing individual motives to quantitatively characterizing broader behavioral response patterns in educational choice. Unlike studies that examine individual choice factors separately, the proposed approach groups response options into theoretically defined behavioral models and assesses their prevalence across different objects of educational choice. Because the assignment of responses to behavioral models is based on a theoretically grounded, a priori classification rather than a statistically derived classification, the results should be interpreted as a quantitative characterization of the distribution of model-coded responses rather than as evidence that respondents constitute distinct behavioral types.

2.4. Data analysis and hypothesis testing

The study results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and categorical association analysis based on Pearson's χ^2 test of independence. Data processing was performed in Microsoft Excel using its built-in statistical functions.

Descriptive statistical methods were used to assess the structure of motivations for educational choices, factors influencing the choice of a higher education institution, and the information sources and digital communication channels

that applicants used when making their admission decisions.

To examine the hypotheses concerning socio-demographic differences in the distribution of model-coded responses, Pearson's χ^2 test of independence was used. The analysis considered entrance exam score (H1), family income (H2), respondent gender (H3), and the region in which general secondary education was completed (H4) in relation to the distribution of responses classified under the three theoretical behavioral models. Results were considered statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. For statistically significant relationships, Cramer's V was additionally calculated to assess the strength of the association, as statistical significance alone does not indicate its substantive importance.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Characteristics of respondents

A quantitative survey of prospective students' behavioral response patterns was conducted among first-year students at higher education institutions in Ukraine. A total of 405 respondents from five Ukrainian universities participated in the survey. An analysis of the sample's sociodemographic characteristics provides an overview of its structure and a basis for interpreting the study's subsequent results (Table 3).

The results show that women accounted for the majority of respondents (69.4%). The largest share of the sample consisted of applicants who had completed their general secondary education in large cities (43.0%). Most respondents assessed their family's financial situation as sufficient to meet current needs, with the ability to save (55.8%). The largest group, in terms of entrance exam scores, consisted of applicants who scored between 151 and 170 points (42.5%).

Table 3. Characteristics of respondents in the educational choice survey

Characteristics	Options	Number of respondents	Share. %
Universities where respondents study	Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv	60	14.8
	Ivan Franko National University of Lviv	100	24.7
	National University of Water and Environmental Management	90	22.2
	Karazin Kharkiv National University	32	7.9
	Bohdan Khmelnytsky National University of Cherkasy	123	30.4
Total:		405	100.0

Table 3 (cont.). Characteristics of respondents in the educational choice survey

Characteristics	Options	Number of respondents	Share. %
Gender	Woman	281	69.4
	Man	124	30.6
Total:		405	100.0
Location of secondary education	Large city (population over 250 thousand and/or regional center)	174	43.0
	Small towns (up to 50 thousand inhabitants) and medium-sized (up to 250 thousand inhabitants) cities	132	32.6
	Countryside	99	24.4
Total:		405	100.0
Family income level (self-assessment)	Had enough and made savings	226	55.8
	There was enough but no savings were made	151	37.3
	They were constantly denied the most necessary things, except for food	28	6.9
Total:		405	100.0
Competitive admission score (self-assessment)	100-150	151	37.3
	151-170	172	42.5
	171 and more	82	20.3
Total:		405	100.0

3.2. Why do high school graduates pursue higher education, and what factors influence their choice of city, institution, and program of study?

The study results indicate that when choosing a city to study in, applicants are primarily guided by social and emotional motivations (see Figure 2).

The most common reason was the city's proximity to the respondent's permanent place of residence (33.1%), reflecting the importance of the local environment and social ties in decision making. A nearly identical proportion of respondents (32.8%) indicated that they chose a city because they personally liked it, demonstrating the significant influence of subjective perceptions and emotional factors.

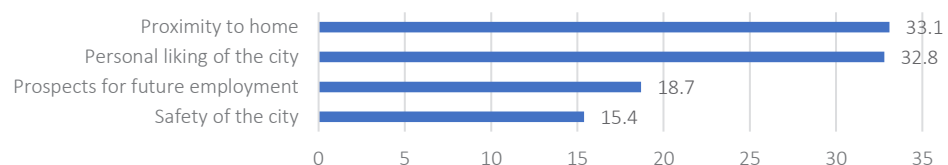
In contrast, rational motives were less common. Future employment prospects were reported by 18.7% of respondents, while the city's safety was reported by 15.4%. These results indicate that, when choosing a place to study, applicants tend

to be guided more by their familiar social environment and personal preferences than by pragmatic considerations related to future professional development.

Among the motivations for pursuing higher education, the largest shares were accounted for by self-actualization (21.2%), financial independence and stability (17.9%), and obtaining a degree (17.7%). This indicates a combination of personal and pragmatic expectations regarding higher education (see Figure 3).

An important feature is that self-actualization emerged as the most common motive across all responses, highlighting the role of intrinsic motivation and personal development in educational choice. At the same time, nearly one-third of the responses were related to economic expectations from education, specifically the desire for financial independence, higher wages, and the acquisition of formal qualifications.

Social factors have a less pronounced influence. Only a small proportion of applicants indicated that their decision was directly influenced by their

**Figure 2.** Choice of city for study among first-year students in Ukraine, share of responses, %

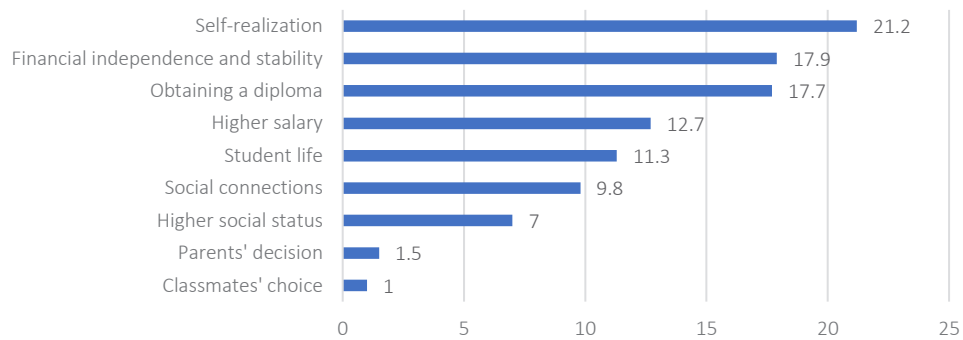


Figure 3. Motivations for pursuing higher education among first-year students in Ukraine, share of responses (%)

parents or classmates. This may indicate greater applicant autonomy in educational decision-making and a comparatively limited role for direct social pressure.

Unlike the choice of a city of study and motivations for pursuing higher education, rational criteria clearly dominate in the choice of a higher education institution (see Figure 4).

The most important factors for prospective students when choosing a higher education institution in Ukraine are the university's reputation and academic ranking (15.9%), employment prospects after graduation (12.7%), and the institution's prestige (12.2%).

At the same time, security considerations (9.5%) have a significant influence, reflecting the distinctive conditions of the Ukrainian higher education market during wartime. Social factors – includ-

ing recommendations from parents and acquaintances, as well as positive reviews of the university – also remain important, although they are not decisive for most applicants. Overall, the results indicate that rationally coded responses are most prominent in the choice of a higher education institution, with applicants focusing primarily on educational quality and prospects for future professional fulfilment.

As with the choice of a higher education institution, rational considerations related to educational relevance and future career prospects are prominent in the choice of an educational program (Figure 5).

The factors receiving the largest shares of responses are relevant and interesting subjects (15.9%), alignment of the educational program with applicants' abilities and career interests (13.6%), high salary potential (12.6%), and high demand in the labor

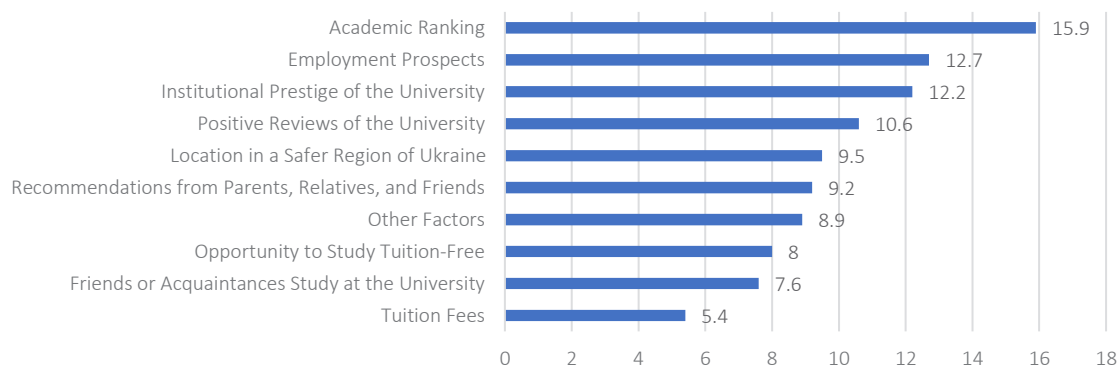


Figure 4. Factors influencing first-year students' choice of higher education institution in Ukraine, share of responses, %

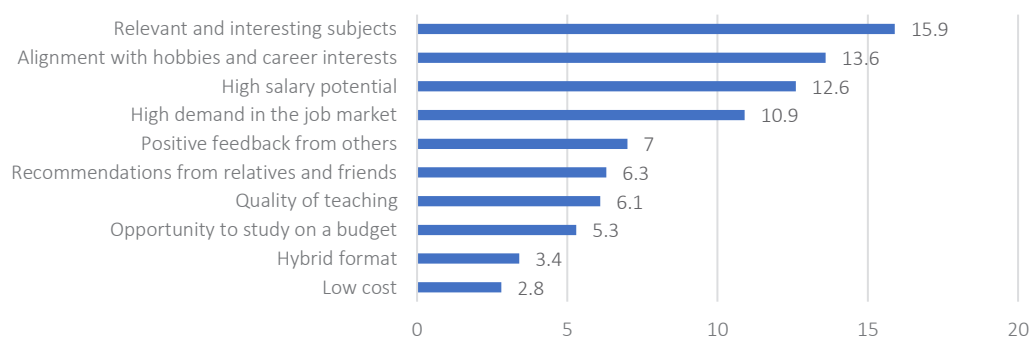


Figure 5. Motives influencing first-year students' choice of educational programs in Ukraine, share of responses (%)

market (10.9%). Together, these findings indicate that applicants place substantial weight on the practical relevance of the educational program, its fit with their abilities and interests, and its potential contribution to future employment and earnings.

At the same time, other considerations also contribute to the choice. The opportunity to study on a budget accounts for 5.3% of responses, while positive feedback from others accounts for 7.0% and low cost for 2.8%. A hybrid format is reported by 3.4% of respondents. These factors indicate that affordability, external evaluations, and study arrangements also enter the decision-making process, although they receive smaller shares than the main career- and education-related considerations shown in Figure 5.

Social considerations are present but less prominent in the distribution shown in Figure 5. Recommendations from relatives and friends account for 6.3% of responses. This suggests that applicants' choice of an educational program is shaped primarily by educational and career-related considerations, while interpersonal recommendations play a secondary role.

To characterize the distribution of model-coded responses, the results of the a priori classifica-

tion of behavioral indicators were summarized according to four key aspects of educational choice: choice of city of study, motivations for pursuing higher education, choice of higher education institution, and choice of educational program. This approach allows comparison of the relative prevalence of the three theoretical behavioral models across different objects of educational choice (see Table 4).

The distribution of model-coded responses varies depending on the object of educational choice. The rational model accounts for the largest share of classified responses in the choice of a higher education institution (54.0%) and an educational program (49.0%). This pattern is consistent with the emphasis placed on institutional quality, employment prospects, professional fulfilment, and future economic benefits in the corresponding response categories.

The rational model also predominates in the decision to pursue higher education (48.3%), although nearly one-third of responses (32.5%) are associated with the bounded-rationality model. This points to the significant role of internal motivations related to self-actualization, personal development, and individual values. At the same time, the social norms model is less pronounced (19.3%),

Table 4. Distribution of responses across the three theoretically defined behavioral models by object of educational choice (%)

Object of educational choice	Rational model	Bounded-rationality model	Social-norms model
Choice of city of study	34.1	32,8	33,1
Purpose of higher education	48.3	32,5	19,3
Choice of higher education institution	54.0	20,0	26,0
Choice of educational program	49.0	33,0	18,0

indicating a relatively limited role for direct social pressure in shaping motivations for pursuing higher education.

When choosing a city of study, the classified responses are distributed almost evenly across the three behavioral models: the rational model (34.1%), the bounded-rationality model (32.8%), and the social-norms model (33.1%). This pattern indicates that pragmatic considerations, personal preferences, and social influences are all represented to a substantial extent among the reported motives.

Overall, the findings indicate that the relative distribution of the three theoretically defined behavioral response patterns differs across objects of educational choice. Rationally coded responses are more prevalent when choosing a higher education institution and educational program, whereas the distribution for the choice of city is more balanced across the three models. This pattern reflects the simultaneous presence of economic, psychological, and social considerations in applicants' reported motives.

Thus, the results indicate that rationally coded response categories are particularly prominent in the choice of an educational program. At the same time, individual interests and subjective perceptions of program content remain visible among the reported motives, pointing to a combination of different decision-making considerations.

3.3. Socio-demographic differences in the distribution of model-coded responses

To examine the hypotheses concerning socio-demographic differences in the distribution of model-coded responses, Pearson's χ^2 test of independence was used. The analysis covered four characteristics: entrance exam score, family financial

status, the location where respondents completed their general secondary education, and gender.

The hypothesis tests indicate that sociodemographic characteristics are not uniformly associated with model-coded response patterns. Entrance exam score ($\chi^2 = 0.13$; $df = 4$; $p = 0.998$), family financial status ($\chi^2 = 1.23$; $df = 4$; $p = 0.873$), and the region in which general secondary education was completed ($\chi^2 = 5.64$; $df = 4$; $p = 0.228$) were not significantly associated with model-coded response patterns. Thus, hypotheses H1, H2, and H4 were not supported.

The absence of statistically significant associations for three of the four hypotheses indicates that the distribution of model-coded responses did not differ significantly across groups defined by entrance exam score, family financial status, and the region in which respondents completed their secondary education. The Discussion section provides a substantive interpretation of this result, including the possibility that the classification indicators have limited sensitivity to socio-demographic differences.

At the same time, a statistically significant association was found between gender and the distribution of model-coded responses ($\chi^2 = 7.75$; $df = 2$; $p = 0.021$), supporting Hypothesis H3. The corresponding distribution suggests a somewhat higher relative representation of bounded-rationality-coded responses among women and of social-norms-coded responses among men.

Table 5 summarizes the results of testing all four hypotheses.

For gender, for which a statistically significant association with the model-coded response distribution was identified, Cramer's V was additionally calculated. The resulting value ($V = 0.138$) indicates a weak association, suggesting that the observed gender difference has limited practical magnitude.

Table 5. Results of hypotheses tests on socio-demographic characteristics and model-coded response patterns

Hypotheses	Socio-demographic variable	χ^2	p-value	Test result
H1	Competitive score	0,13 (df=4)	0,998	Not confirmed
H2	Family income	1,23 (df=4)	0,873	Not confirmed
H3	Gender	7,75 (df=2)	0,021	Confirmed
H4	Location of secondary education	5,64 (df=4)	0,228	Not confirmed

3.4. Prospective students' information-seeking behavior and digital communication channels in the educational choice process

An important aspect of educational choice is prospective students' awareness of future employment prospects. The results showed that the majority of respondents (69.6%) took labor market demand into account when choosing their future profession. This pattern highlights the significant role of rational motives in educational decision-making and indicates that a substantial proportion of applicants are focused on future professional fulfilment and financial stability.

At the same time, nearly one-third of respondents either did not analyze the labor market situation (17.5%) or lacked information on where to obtain it (12.8%). This indicates information barriers and limited access among some applicants to systematic information on employment prospects in specific fields of study. The study also showed that universities' official digital resources play a key role in the search for information about higher education institutions and academic programs.

The most popular sources of information are official higher education institution resources (27.9%), universities' Instagram pages (16.4%), faculty and department websites (14.1%), and universities' official Telegram channels (12.5%). These results indicate a high level of applicant trust in official information sources and the growing importance of digital communication in the educational services market.

Alongside official resources, advertising channels also play a role in shaping educational choices. The most influential platforms were Instagram (22.9%) and TikTok (18.9%), which substantially outpace other digital marketing tools. At the same time, more than one-fifth of respondents (21.1%) reported that they did not use advertising sources when choosing a higher education institution or educational program, indicating that advertising plays a supplementary role compared with official information resources.

Overall, the findings demonstrate the growing role of digital communication channels in educational decision-making. For today's prospective students, official university websites and social media platforms - primarily Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok - are particularly important. This underscores the need for higher education institutions to develop multi-channel digital communication strategies and adapt their information policies to the ways in which young audiences consume information.

4. DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the literature on educational choice by showing the value of considering behavioral decision-making models alongside individual choice determinants. While previous research has extensively documented the influence of economic, institutional, and social factors on university choice (Chapman, 1981; Perna, 2006; Iloh, 2018), the present findings indicate that applicants exposed to similar educational environments may interpret and prioritize these determinants differently depending on the object of choice. This suggests that educational choice reflects not only which factors applicants consider but also how these factors are weighted and integrated at different stages of the decision process.

The behavioral classification developed in this study extends existing determinant-oriented research by distinguishing three decision-making models- rational, social-norms, and bounded rationality - and quantitatively characterizing their distribution across four objects of educational choice. Rather than challenging established theories of educational choice, the classification complements them by incorporating insights from Rational Choice Theory and behavioral economics (Simon, 1955; Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Thaler, 2016). In doing so, it complements recent research showing that applicants' preferences may reflect heterogeneous cognitive strategies and evolve throughout the decision process rather than representing a single, uniform response to educational conditions (Poole et al., 2023; Altenburger et al., 2026).

The distribution of model-coded responses varied systematically across the objects of choice. Rationally coded responses represented the largest shares in the choice of a higher education institution (54.0%) and an educational program (49.0%), consistent with Human Capital Theory and Rational Choice Theory, according to which educational choices may reflect expected institutional quality, program relevance, and labor-market returns (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1993; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997). By contrast, the reported motives for pursuing higher education included a substantial share of responses related to self-realization and personal development, while the choice of city showed an almost even distribution across the three theoretical models. This pattern indicates that different types of considerations receive different relative weights depending on the object of educational choice, an interpretation consistent with Simon's (1955) concept of bounded rationality and Kahneman and Tversky's (1982) account of context-dependent preference formation.

With respect to socio-demographic characteristics, the results only partially support the view, well established in the economic literature on educational choice (Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Perna, 2006; Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Panchyshyn et al., 2020), that admission score, family income, and locality of secondary education systematically shape decision-making. In this study, none of these three characteristics was significantly associated with the distribution of model-coded responses, whereas gender showed a statistically significant but weak association (*Cramer's V* = 0.138). A plausible explanation is that the sample consists exclusively of admitted first-year students, a group already filtered through the same competitive admission process, which may reduce variation in some socio-demographic characteristics. An alternative explanation is that the theoretically derived response classification may have limited sensitivity to socio-demographic differences. These possibilities qualify the interpretation of the observed associations and highlight the need for further research using independently derived classification procedures.

Importantly, the primary contribution of this study does not lie in identifying sociodemographic predictors of educational choice behavior, but

rather in developing and applying a theoretically grounded behavioral classification framework. The absence of significant associations for most socio-demographic characteristics therefore does not diminish the explanatory value of the proposed approach. Instead, it suggests that behavioral response patterns may reflect decision-making mechanisms that operate across different applicant groups and are not strongly conditioned by traditional socio-demographic characteristics.

An additional, context-specific finding concerns the role of security considerations in the choice of a higher education institution (9.5%), reflecting the conditions under which Ukrainian applicants have made their educational decisions since 2022. This factor is not addressed in the determinant-based or behavioral literature reviewed above, which has largely been developed in stable institutional contexts, and points to security as an emerging, context-dependent component of rational evaluation that warrants further theoretical attention in educational choice research conducted in conflict-affected settings.

The findings further confirm the growing importance of digital information channels in educational decision-making. Official university websites remained the primary source of information, while institutional social media accounts and, to a lesser extent, advertising-oriented platforms played a complementary role. These results are consistent with research emphasizing the expansion of digital information environments as a transformative factor in educational choice (Iloh, 2018; Haas & Terryn, 2019) and with evidence on the growing influence of institutional branding and digital communication on applicants' perceptions of higher education institutions (Snadrou & Haoucha, 2024). In practice, this suggests that universities should move beyond uniform recruitment campaigns and develop differentiated, multi-channel communication strategies aligned with applicants' information-seeking habits and the distribution of behavioral response patterns (Poole et al., 2023).

A further contribution of the study lies in shifting attention from the identification of educational choice determinants to the behavioral mechanisms through which these determinants are in-

terpreted and prioritized. While previous studies have primarily focused on what influences educational choice, the proposed framework offers a complementary perspective by examining how applicants respond to these influences through alternative decision-making logics.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample was drawn from five Ukrainian universities using purposive, non-probability sampling and is limited to first-year students, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of applicants and to other national contexts. Second, the behavioral classification is based on a theoretically grounded, a priori assignment of individual response options to behavioral categories rather than on a psychometrically validated or statistically derived typology. Consequently, the proposed framework should be interpreted as a conceptual and theory-driven classification intended to organize and compare behavioral response patterns, rather than as definitive evidence of distinct respondent-level behavioral profiles.

Future studies could evaluate the robustness of the proposed classification through exploratory and confirmatory statistical techniques, including factor analysis, cluster analysis, latent class analysis, or latent profile analysis.

It should also be noted that the aim of this study is not to produce statistically representative estimates for the population of Ukrainian applicants, but to apply a theoretically derived behavioral classification to survey data and examine how its resulting distribution relates to socio-demographic characteristics. Reliance on purposive rather than probability samples is well established in behavioral decision-making research, where the focus is on underlying cognitive mechanisms rather than population parameters (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Simon, 1955). Nevertheless, replication using probability samples across a broader range of institutions remains an important direction for future research.

Overall, the findings suggest that educational choice is shaped not only by the determinants applicants consider but also by the behavioral logic through which these determinants are interpreted, weighted, and prioritized at different stages of the decision process. By integrating established theories of educational choice with a behavioral decision-making perspective, the proposed classification offers a more nuanced account of applicant behavior under conditions of uncertainty and provides higher education institutions with a basis for developing more differentiated, evidence-informed recruitment and communication strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to develop a theoretically grounded, a priori classification of behavioral decision-making in educational choice among Ukrainian higher education applicants, quantitatively characterize the distribution of its three decision models (rational, social-norms, and bounded-rationality), and assess the extent to which socio-demographic characteristics are associated with that distribution.

Unlike determinant-oriented approaches that focus primarily on the factors influencing educational decisions, the proposed framework contributes to the literature by providing a theoretically grounded classification of the behavioural logics through which applicants interpret, evaluate, and prioritize these factors.

The results show that rationally coded responses account for the largest shares when choosing a higher education institution (54.0%) and educational program (49.0%), whereas the classified responses for the choice of city are distributed almost evenly across the three models. Of the four socio-demographic characteristics examined, only gender was significantly, though weakly (Cramer's $V = 0.138$), associated with the model-coded response distribution, while admission score, family income, and locality showed no statistically significant association. Digital communication channels, particularly official university websites and social media, emerged as an increasingly important source of information for applicants.

These findings indicate that educational choice is a multi-stage process in which the relative distribution of model-coded response patterns varies with the specific object of choice. The proposed classification thus offers higher education institutions a structured basis for differentiating recruitment and communication strategies according to the observed distribution of behavioral response patterns. Given the reliance on a non-probability sample of first-year students at five institutions and an a priori classification of behavioral indicators, future research should further evaluate the proposed classification using independently derived methods such as cluster or latent profile analysis and probability-based samples across broader institutional and national contexts.

From a managerial perspective, these findings have direct implications for higher education institutions' recruitment and communication practices. Given that official university websites, faculty pages, and institutional social media channels remain applicants' most trusted sources of information, while advertising-oriented platforms such as Instagram and TikTok play a growing but supplementary role, higher education institutions should prioritize the accuracy and accessibility of official digital resources while complementing them with targeted, platform-specific content for prospective students. Moreover, since nearly one-third of applicants reported limited or no access to information about labor-market prospects in their chosen field, universities have an opportunity to strengthen career-guidance communication as part of their recruitment strategy, thereby addressing an information gap that current digital channels do not fully resolve.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

Data curation: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Yuriy Bilan.

Formal analysis: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

Funding acquisition: Anna Boiko, Halyna Mishchuk.

Investigation: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk.

Methodology: Olha Hrynkevych, Yuriy Bilan.

Project administration: Anna Boiko, Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

Resources: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

Software: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych.

Supervision: Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

Validation: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

Visualization: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych.

Writing – original draft: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

Writing – review & editing: Anna Boiko, Olha Hrynkevych, Halyna Mishchuk, Yuriy Bilan.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine under the project “Higher education in the conditions of war and post-war recovery: determinants of development to overcome threats to the restoring of human capital” (State registration number 0124U000351).

REFERENCES

1. Altenburger, L., Schlüter, D., Göller, R., & Besser, M. (2026). Students' university choice: A latent profile analysis of influencing factors and the role of the selection process. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 15(4), 1047-1063. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.15.4.1047>
2. Ariely, D. (2015). *Irrationally yours: On missing socks, pickup lines, and other existential crises*.
3. Arrow, K. J. (1994). Methodological individualism and Harper Perennial. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Irrationally-Yours-Existential-Illustrated-Behavioral/dp/0062379992>

- social knowledge. *The American Economic Review*, 84(2), 1-9. Retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/a/aea/aecrev/v84y1994i2p1-9.html>
4. Axelrod, R. (1986). An evolutionary approach to norms. *American Political Science Review*, 80(4), 1095-1111. Retrieved from https://ideas.repec.org/a/cup/apsrev/v80y1986i04p1095-1111_18.html
 5. Aydın, O. T. (2015). University choice process: A literature review on models and factors affecting the process. *Higher Education Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.2399/yod.15.008>
 6. Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from <https://www.nber.org/system/files/chapters/c3730/c3730.pdf>
 7. Benito-Hernández, S., López-Cózar-Navarro, C., & Priede-Bergamini, T. (2024). Determining factors that influence job expectations of university students in the agri-food and biosystems area. *Economics and Sociology*, 17(1), 117-131. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789X.2024/17-1/8>
 8. Bicchieri, C. (2006). *The grammar of society: The nature and dynamics of social norms*. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2006-06579-000>
 9. Bilan, Y., Oliinyk, O., Mishchuk, H., & Streimikiene, D. (2026). Ensuring the Quality of Higher Education and its Impact on Country Attractiveness for International Students. *Contemporary Economics*, 20(1), 23-37. Retrieved from <https://ce.vizja.pl/en/issues/volume/20/issue/1#art789>
 10. Breen, R., & Goldthorpe, J. H. (1997). Explaining educational differentials: Towards a formal rational action theory. *Rationality and Society*, 9(3), 275-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104346397009003002>
 11. Brintseva, O. (2025). Ukrainian Higher Education in Time of War and EU Integration Aspirations: Great Losses or Great Opportunities for Change? *Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski*, 16(1), 85-96. <https://doi.org/10.31648/pw.11451>
 12. Brintseva, O. (2026). The Impact of War on Ukrainian Universities: A Difference-in-Differences Analysis and Post-War Recovery Strategies. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 80(2), e70113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.70113>
 13. Chapman, D. W. (1981). A model of student college choice. *Journal of Higher Education*, 52(5), 490-505. Retrieved from <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1683716>
 14. Chugaievska, S., Dybala, A., & Wisla, R. (2026). The impact of Ukrainian migration flows on labor and product markets in Poland. *Economics and Sociology*, 19(1), 92-112. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789X.2026/19-1/5>
 15. Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120. Retrieved from <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=1837268>
 16. Elster, J. (1989). Social norms and economic theory. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3(4), 99-117. Retrieved from <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.3.4.99>
 17. Forlicz, M., Tomaszewski, J., & Skýpalová, R. (2024). Measuring quality and effectiveness of HEI internationalisation - results from Poland, Czechia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. *Economics and Sociology*, 17(1), 196-214. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789X.2024/17-1/13>
 18. Gan, C., Senathirajah, A. R., Subramanian, P., Ranom, R., & Osman, Z. (2022). Factors influencing students' choice of an institution of higher education. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(4), 10015-10043. Retrieved from <https://www.journalppw.com/index.php/jpsp/article/view/6311>
 19. Haas, S., & Terryn, F. (2019). Decision-making process of prospective international students: A proposed generic complementary model. *Wissenschaftliche Beiträge*, 23, 103-116. https://doi.org/10.15771/0949-8214_2019_14
 20. Heathcote, D., Savage, S., & Hosseinian-Far, A. (2020). Factors affecting university choice behaviour in the UK higher education. *Education Sciences*, 10(8), Article 199. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10080199>
 21. Horne, C. (2001). Sociological perspectives on the emergence of social norms. In M. Hechter & K.-D. Opp (Eds.), *Social Norms* (pp. 3-34). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610442800.5>
 22. Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S. (1987). Studying student college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 62(3), 207-221. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234741450_Studying_Student_College_Choice_A_Three-Phase_Model_and_the_Implications_for_Policymakers
 23. Hoxby, C., & Avery, Ch. (2013). The Missing "One-Offs": The Hidden Supply of High-Achieving, Low-Income Students. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, Economic Studies Program, The Brookings Institution*, 44(1 (Spring), 1-65. Retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/p/nbr/nberwo/18586.html>
 24. Hrynkevych, O., Sorochak, O., & Krayevska, O. (2022). Internationalization of higher education under a new reality (case study of Ukraine). In A. Ratté (Ed.), *Education Systems: Past, Current and Future Trends* (pp. 1-71). Nova Science Publishers. Retrieved from <https://novapublishers.com/shop/education-systems-past-current-and-future-trends/>
 25. Iloh, C. (2018). Toward a new model of college "choice" for a twenty-first-century context. *Harvard Educational Review*, 88(2), 227-244. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-88.2.227>
 26. Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Retrieved from <https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374275631/thinking-fastandslow>

27. Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1982). The psychology of preferences. *Scientific American*, 246(1), 160-173. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1038/scientificamerican0182-160>
28. Lacmanović, S., & Škare, M. (2024). The comparative analysis of B Corp Impact Report results in higher education organizations. *Journal of International Studies*, 17(4), 255-277. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2024/17-4/15>
29. Mishchuk, H., & Oliinyk, O. (2025). *Youth migration aspirations: imagining the EU from the outside*: monograph (p.133). Szczecin: Centre of Sociological Research. DOI:10.14254/978-83-973513-5-6/2025 Retrieved from https://www.csr-pub.eu/?60,en_youth-migration-aspirations-imagining-the-eu-from-the-outside
30. Paulsen, M. B., & John, E. P. St. (2002). Social Class and College Costs: Examining the Financial Nexus between College Choice and Persistence. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(2), 189-236. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2002.11777141>
31. Pérez Lavandera, R., Constantin, C. P., Rodríguez Veiguela, G. V., & Ramos-Giral, G. V. (2025). Decision-making processes in higher education: A systematic literature review. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov. Series V: Economic Sciences*, 18(67), 29-38. <https://doi.org/10.31926/but.es.2025.18.67.1.3>
32. Perna, L. W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: a proposed conceptual model. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: handbook of theory and research* (vol. 21). Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4512-3_3
33. Panchyshyn, S., Hrynkevych, O., Marets, O., Demchyshak, N., & Popadynets, N. (2020). Simulation of tuition fees in competitiveness management of higher education institutions (Case of Ukraine's universities). *Scientific Journal of Pedagogy and Economics*, (5), 161-169. <https://doi.org/10.32014/2020.2518-1467.155>
34. Poole, R., Thompson, D., & Galloway, D. (2023). Decisions, decisions, decisions: An exploration of factors affecting the decision-making of "Uni Connect" students when choosing higher education study. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 36(1), 127-148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08841241.2023.2275752>
35. Rydzak, W., Adamus-Matuszyńska, A., Zacny, B., & Sellitto, M. A. (2025). Student satisfaction as a mediator between administrative e-system quality and university reputation: An empirical analysis from Poland. *Human Technology*, 21(3), 576-595. <https://doi.org/10.14254/1795-6889.2025.21-3.5>
36. Samoliuk, N., Hrynkevych, O., Mishchuk, H., & Bilan, Y. (2024). Ukrainian students on the global map of academic migration. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 22(4), 558-575 [http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22\(4\).2024.42](http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.22(4).2024.42)
37. Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1-17. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1818907>
38. Scott, J. (2000). Rational choice theory. In G. Browning, A. Halcli, & F. Webster (Eds.), *Understanding contemporary society: Theories of the present* (pp. 126-138). London: SAGE Publications. Retrieved from <https://gwern.net/doc/statistics/decision/2000-scott.pdf>
39. Simon, H. A. (1955). A behavioural model of rational choice. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 69(1), 99-118. Retrieved from <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.2307/1884852>
40. Snadrou, D., & Haoucha, M. (2024). Understanding the crucial role of brand image in students' higher education institution choice: A review of the higher education branding literature. *Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies*, 2024, Article 224523. <https://doi.org/10.5171/2024.224523>
41. Sułkowski, Ł., & Ulatowska, R. (2025). Cross-national and cross-cultural analysis of student motivation for mobility within the Erasmus+ program. *Journal of International Studies*, 18(4), 107-122. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2025/18-4/6>
42. Thaler, R. H. (2016). Behavioural economics: Past, present, and future. *American Economic Review*, 106(7), 1577-1600. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.106.7.1577>
43. Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2021). *Nudge: The final edition*. Penguin Books. Retrieved from <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/111/1116275/nudge/9780141999937.html>
44. Torres Castro, U. E. (2024). Toward a unified framework: The intellectual lineage of student engagement in higher education (1999-2024). *Cogent Education*, 11, Article 2369002. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2369002>
45. Wijesinghe, D., Ranwala, L., Siriwardena, S., Edirisinghe, L., & Kurukulaarachchi, V. (2023). A literature review on students' university choice and satisfaction. *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 15(2), 71-87. <https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEAPS2023.0753>