

Navigating New Horizons: Understanding International Students' Choices in Taiwan After COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected international student mobility, prompting a reevaluation of factors influencing students' decisions to study abroad. This study aims to understand these factors specifically for international students from New Southbound Policy countries considering Taiwan as their study destination in the post-pandemic context. A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing an online survey to collect data from 254 international students originating from New Southbound Policy nations. The survey instrument was developed based on established theoretical frameworks, including the push-pull model and rational choice theory, ensuring comprehensive coverage of relevant factors influencing study intentions. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through SMART PLS 4, allowing for the examination of relationships between various influencing factors and students' intentions to study in Taiwan. The results indicate that most factors, such as information sources, career opportunities, personal growth, and educational quality, significantly positively influence students' intentions. Notably, concerns related to COVID-19 and travel anxiety were found to have a non-significant impact on these intentions. Based on the findings, it is recommended that Taiwanese educational institutions enhance safety measures, improve communication strategies, and provide robust mental health support to attract more international students. Additionally, further research should explore travel-related factors and the role of cultural organizations in promoting Taiwan as a desirable study destination.

Keywords: Covid-19, International Students, New Southbound Policy, Study Abroad, Taiwan

1. Introduction

As the pandemic emerged early of 2020, have made an apparent impact to the development in education in many varieties of ways. This involves the postponement of on-site gatherings and events, the transition of instructional platforms from traditional classroom instruction to distance learning, and the establishment of a 'new normality' in education (Tesar, 2020). International

students already face significant challenges while learning overseas, such as adapting to new cultures, overcoming language limitations, bereavement, and financial issues (Ashifa, 2021). The pandemic has also had a significant impact specifically student mobility (Altbach & de Wit, 2020; Mok, 2020). The pandemic will undoubtedly have an influence on students' health. Vast majority of international students worldwide believe they are at danger of contracting COVID-19. High risk perception was somewhat related to students' level of concern about COVID-19. The main concern is their families, for most of them are locked abroad and far from their homes as safety response measures in many places. These concerns, and the need to follow preventive measures, seem to lead to situations where students feel lonely (Amoah & Mok, 2020).

Taiwan, like any other country in the globe, had suffered greatly as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak, as did other Southeast Asian countries. According to Chen (2020) even though Taiwan had been able to create a reputation for having a strong sense of national resilience despite the obstacles posed by the pandemic, there were still certain issues that arose as a result of the circumstances. Like other nations, it was evident that the pandemic had been able to hinder economic development, posing a significant risk to the country's economic stability.

In May 2020, the Institute of International Education (IIE) released a survey of 285 universities, revealing that over 22,000 students were studying abroad during the pandemic (Martel, 2020). More than 17,000 pupils were evacuated due to COVID-19. Additionally, Rogers (2020) reported that 93% of planned study-abroad programs for the summer of 2020 and 64% of undergraduate study-abroad courses for the fall of 2020 were cancelled. Students with a high probability of studying overseas are most likely to make substantial adjustments to their educational plans since the start of the pandemic, like postponing university enrollment and enrolling at an institution in their home country, rather than traveling abroad for studies (Schleicher, 2020). Due to immigration and travel restrictions as well as university closures, a lot of learners have altered or change their intensions to study abroad. COVID-19's social constraints may have exacerbated these already difficult circumstances for overseas students, increasing their vulnerability to injustices or mental health difficulties.

According to Beerkens et al. (2018), a large number of students believe that studying in another country will give them more chances of employability and enhance their career prospects. Studying abroad can transform life by opening new doors, enhancing education, and developing personality. It is a chance to travel, pick up new things, and have lifelong experiences. Various studies have enhanced knowledge about various factors related to studying abroad, some of which are but not limited to the following: Influence and recommendations from family, friends and professors, agency (Wanger et al., 2020; Netz, 2021); career prospects, collaboration with companies and agencies (Jafar & Legusov, 2021); International Experience, Acculturation (Zhao et al., 2023); cost of living, quality of life (Griffin, 2023); tuitions, Lee (2017); quality of education, student satisfaction, lack of access to higher education locally (Simpson & Tarnowskyj, 2022); the range of available courses, the institution's reputation for quality, university environment (Kim, Mai, & Ngoc, 2023); the commonality of the language and opportunity to learn English, the geographic

proximity, promotion and marketing of the institutions (Chen, 2017); immigration prospect (Lee, 2017; AACSB International, 2018); social culture (Gao et al., 2021); comfortable climate, safety and security (Nikou, Kadel, & Gutema, 2023); visa concerns (James-MacEachern & Yun, 2016); fear of Covid-19 (Azila-Gbettor, Mensah, & Agbodza, 2023); virtual study abroad (VSA) due to Covid19 (Upson & Bergiel, 2023). Furthermore, an increasing trend on higher education institutions are focusing on attracting students from overseas since they help to both the cultural and financial aspects in the institution. The popularity of studying abroad has made countries like the United States the top choice for people seeking post-secondary education worldwide (Milian et al., 2015).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Study Abroad

Many people believe that improving one's understanding of global politics is critical for professional success in a variety of fields. In today's increasingly globalized world, experts believe that studying abroad is essential for commercial success and citizenship in modern society (Simopoulou, 2022). Study abroad programs can help students prepare for future foreign work prospects (Arthur et al., 2023; Witkowsky & Agbonlahor, 2023).

Zhao et al. (2023) investigated how outreach program design related to personal growth among students who participated in various collegiate youth outreach activities while studying abroad. Studying abroad is an excellent approach to obtain a fresh perspective on how our increasingly globalized world operates. Studying abroad broadens sensitivity and cultural knowledge, improves comprehension of Taiwan's global position, and reveals that the world is made up of many different cultures. The students also realized that the 'Taiwanese method' of doing things is not the only choice. Higher education institutions may change as a result of the arrival of people from other cultures who challenge and improve administrative and academic life (Damiani & Ghazarian, 2023).

Many people believe that studying abroad provides opportunities for developing global skills (Byker and Putman, 2019). It does not prohibit students in host countries from undergoing cultural adjustment and transformation, also known as acculturation processes (Jaeger & Gram, 2020; Jing et al., 2022). However, they can be defined as dynamic groups of study-abroad students capable of coping with cultural shock (Wachyunni et al., 2023). Studying abroad provides benefits for all students, even those who only aim to study abroad and return to finish their academic pursuits and enter the workforce with a more profound awareness of the world.

Students from overseas have been found to increase through the recent years as compared to other country and as instantaneously Taiwan have been receiving praise from other country due to the quality of higher education. Consequently, acknowledging that the New Southbound Policy has brought adjustments. About 51,970 students studied in Taiwan last academic year, according to countries listed in the government's new southbound policy. This has exceeded the original target of 48,000 students set by the Department for Education and is expected to be achieved again this year

(Oduwaye, Kiraz, & Sorakin, 2023).

2.2 Taiwan Schools and Influence to International Students

Taiwan's government, through its developing programs, aims to provide not just additional grants and scholarships to NSPC students who wish to study in the country (i.e., the attraction strategy), as well as much more financial support to Taiwanese students who wish to travel abroad via NSPC for education, internships, and so on. Taiwan's government seeks to promote Taiwan's higher education institutions, increase educational exchange possibilities for individuals in the NSPC, and develop links and collaboration with southern countries (Lin, 2020).

The current desire for higher education overseas attracts a large number of non-native students. Education is crucial for marketers to understand the factors that influence the performance of potential students. In any event, overseas students are increasingly demanding to get what their money are worth for. They start to become pickier when it comes to higher education institutions. The issue may be because students may find it difficult to understand what they are receiving before they begin or conclude their education cycle. For example, if students fail their exams, they are unlikely to recognize the high importance of education. Some studies concentrate on students' options and the complications of enrolling in a higher education institution (Paulino & Castano, 2019). There are three elements to student choice: economic, sociological, and information processing models. Economic models highlight cost-related aspects of education, particularly the costs of studying over working. Sociological models cover a variety of issues, including family factors, personal drive, and ability. The information processing models incorporate economic and social models to help guide decision-making for additional studies and nine institutions. Although extensive studies have been conducted on the factors that influence international students' decisions about higher education, the results vary.

There are push and pull factors for students choice in studying abroad. The "push" aspect encourages students to pursue international learning opportunities. Students, in particular, are dissatisfied with the quality of education in their home country and seek additional education of higher quality. Some students are "pushed" from their home country because they were not offered the opportunity to attend a local university. However, "pull" variables are those that encourage students to pick a foreign country as their study destination over another or their own country. These might be attributed to their increased knowledge and awareness of the institution of interest as a result of its reputation, as well as peer and family recommendations and the possibility of working in the host country (Nikou, Kadel, & Gutema, 2023). The "pull" variables include economic and political factors that may entice international students, such as chances for migration and high-quality education (Simpson & Tarnowskyj, 2022). "Pull" refers to the characteristics that make the host 10 countries more enticing to international students. For example, examine recommendations from friends and family, the academic environment, and aid for international students. Wanger et al. (2020) found that family and friends are the most influencing factors in African American students' decision to study abroad.

3. Research Design

The research uses the push-pull migration theory and rational choice theory as the theoretical framework, provide a description of students' decisions to study abroad. It emphasized which factors could be essential to consider in order to understand their decision-making process. Furthermore, the Rational Choice Theory by Adam Smith was also used in the study. Its emphases on the “micro”, or otherwise called individual, perspective. It contends that the individual’s decision to study abroad are motivated and influenced by rational judgment and consideration. Individual decision-making is influenced by both macro and micro elements, including pupils' personality traits, capacities, reasons, aspirations, and gender (Muller & Klein, 2023).

The study distributed these factors into different levels of micro, mezzo and macro. It also looks at these many, yet connected, aspects to determine the backgrounds and elements that influence foreign students' intention to study in Taiwan. Students and micro level issues are typically tightly associated. The micro level determinants become significant when students tend to desire to study in other country. The main factors influencing their intention to study in Taiwan are as follows: Source of Information, Future Career Opportunity, Personal Growth, and Characteristics of Destination. Mezzo level factors, which we think are also known as institutional factors, are mostly associated with higher education institutions. These factors affect their decision-making strongly. This section is divided into three: Scholarship, Quality of Education, and Communication. The destination's environment is intimately linked to the macro level issues. It can be decided whether the location is appropriate for studying abroad based on this level. A safe and stable living environment, inclusive and open social cultures, and the government's backing of pertinent policies have all been major influences in the decisions made by international students. This section is divided into four: Immigration Policy, Social Culture, Safety and Security Factor, and Visa Application.

The figure below shows how the different factors are distributed in the levels of Micro, Mezzo and Macro, it also predicts relationship between the different factors and the students’ intention to study in Taiwan. It also shows the relationship between the fear of Covid19 and Travel Anxiety.

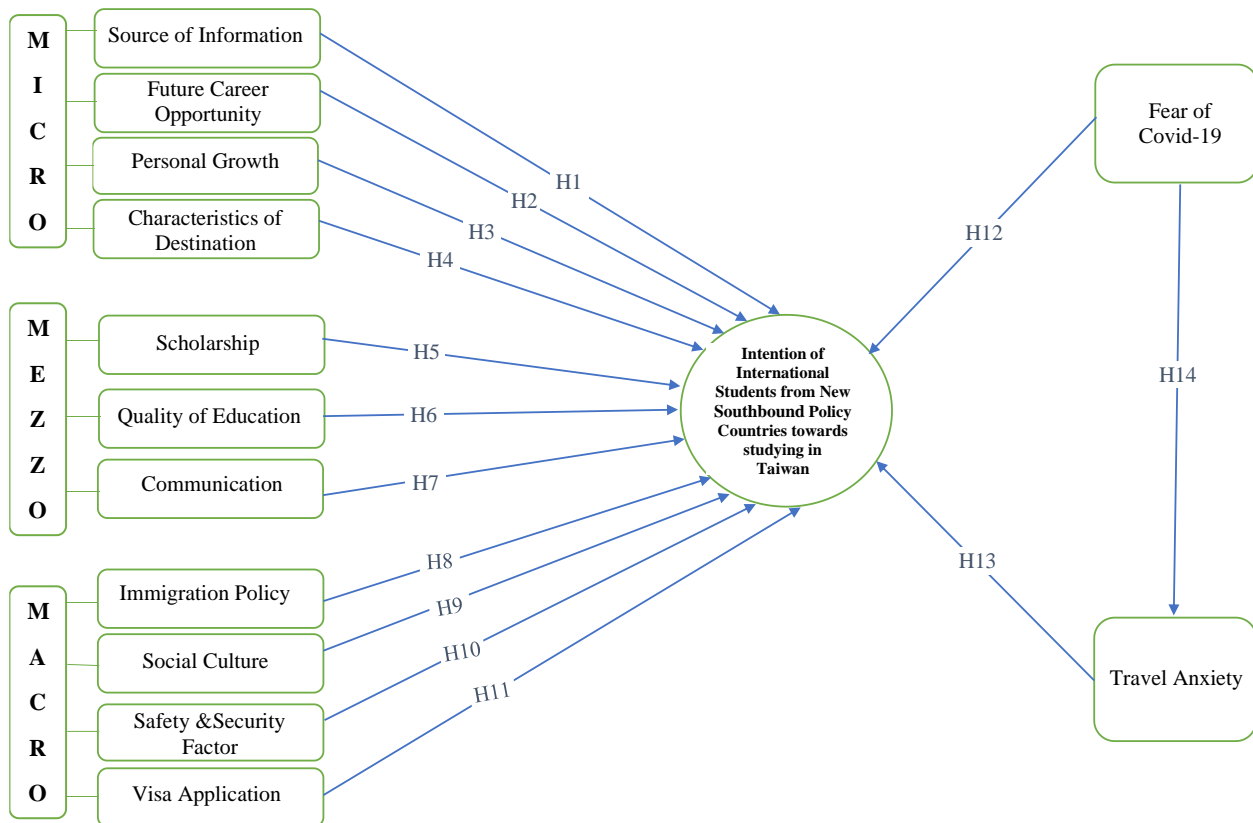


Figure 1. Research Framework

Source: This study

The respondents of the study are international students from NSP countries who are presently studying or have previously studied in Taiwan. The criteria for selecting members of the population will be as follows: (a) They must have enrolled at least once in any of the semesters during the school year 2020-2023. (b) prospective and present students pursuing various overseas study programs (undergraduate and postgraduate levels). (c) willing to cooperate and offer information for the sake of the study. The data was collected through structured questionnaires.

The questionnaires were designed based on a review of the literature and research objectives. They included closed-ended questions with Likert scales and ranking scales to assess the importance of different factors influencing the intention to study in Taiwan. To reach a larger number of participants, the questionnaires were administered online. Participants were provided with clear instructions and a link to access the online questionnaire. The online survey platform allowed for easy distribution and collection of responses. Participants were given a specified time frame to complete the survey, ensuring timely data collection. The target sample of population for the study will be 250, with a 0.5 margin of error.

In order to process and analyze the data collected, the researcher utilized an application called "Smart PLS 4.0" (the Smart Partial Least Squares software, it is used for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)). The software will help the researcher build and assess complex models that involve latent variables of the study. This analysis provided an overview of the response distribution

and the relative impact of each element in influencing international students' intentions to study in Taiwan. The PLS route model is made up of two components: the structural model and the measurement models, which serve to connect the indicators and depict their correlations (Hair et al., 2020).

The study is grounded by the aim to explore on the following Hypotheses: The importance of information sources has a positive influence on students in making the decision to study abroad (H1). The perceived availability of job opportunities and career prospects after graduation positively influences the intention of international students from NSP countries to study in Taiwan in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era (H2). Personal Growth has significantly influence on the decision of international students from new southbound nations towards studying in Taiwan (H3). The expectations and perceptions of the destination country have an influence on students when deciding to study abroad (H4). The scholarship has a beneficial influence on the decision of international students from new southbound policy countries towards studying in Taiwan (H5). The quality of education positively influences the decision of international students from new southbound policy countries towards studying in Taiwan (H6). Communication has a positive relationship with the International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan (H7). Flexible Immigration Policy has a positive relationship with the International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan (H8). Host Culture Identity has a positive relationship with the International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan (H9). Safety and Security has positively influenced the intention of International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan (H10). Easiness of Visa Application has positively influenced the intention of International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan (H11). The level of concern about contracting Covid-19 in Taiwan negatively influences the intention of international students from NSP countries to study in Taiwan in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era (H12). The level of travel restrictions and difficulties in reaching Taiwan negatively influences the intention of international students from NSP countries to study in Taiwan in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era (H13). Fear of Covid-19 has a positive effect on travel anxiety (H14).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Category		Frequency	Percentage
Age			
	Below 20	22	8.7%
	20-24	150	59.1%
	25-29	54	21.3%
	Above 30	28	11%
Gender			

	Male	108	42.5%
	Female	146	57.5%
Originating Country			
	Philippines	98	38.6%
	Vietnam	34	13.4%
	Indonesia	10	3.9%
	India	73	28.7%
	Malaysia	12	4.7%
	Cambodia	9	3.5%
	Thailand	6	2.4%
	UK	2	0.8%
	USA	2	0.8%
	Ukraine	1	0.4%
	Italy	1	0.4%
	Ethiopia	1	0.4%
	Mongolia	1	0.4%
	Kazakhstan	1	0.4%
	Azerbaijan	1	0.4%
	Germany	1	0.4%
	Spain	1	
Name of University			
	Minghsin University of Science and Technology	192	75.6%
	National Taipei University	12	4.7%
	Chung Hua University	7	2.8%
	National Taiwan University o...	6	2.4%
	Taipei Medical University	6	2.4%
	National Taiwan University	5	2%
	National Chengchi University	4	1.6%
	Tunghai University	6	2.4%
	National Tsing Hua University	4	1.6%
	National Dong Hwa University	2	0.8%
	National Yunlin University: of...	2	0.8%
	Wenzao University of Foreig...	1	0.4%
	National Taiwan Normal Uni...	1	0.4%
	National Pingtung University...	1	0.4%
	Yunlin University of Science...	1	0.4%
	Mingshin University	1	0.4%
	CHU	1	0.4%
	NYCU	1	0.4%

	Tamkang University	1	0.4%
Educational Level in the Current Program			
	Bachelor degree	107	42.1%
	Master degree	138	54.3%
	Doctoral degree	9	3.5%
Department			
	College of Business Administration	81	31.9%
	College of Engineering	94	37%
	College of Science	41	16.1%
	College of Foreign Languages	17	6.7%
	College of Social Sciences	7	2.8%
	College of Management	2	0.8%
	Medical practice science	2	0.8%
	Medical science	2	0.8%
	Department of Southeast Asi...	1	0.4%
	College of Applied Science a...	1	0.4%
	Mechanical Engineering	1	0.4%
	College of Mechanical Engin...	1	0.4%
	Medical	1	0.4%
	B pharmacy	1	0.4%
	College of management	1	0.4%
	National Taipei University	1	0.4%

Source: This study

The respondents are composed of students who are currently enrolled and studying in Taiwan. The students belong to different groups of age, gender, universities, country of origin, programs and departments. The researcher collected a total of 254 individuals as respondents of the study. Table 7 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. The table shows the age group of which 59.1% are from ages 20-24, followed by ages 25-29 by 21.3%, above 30 years old 11% and ages below 20 years old 8.7%. The respondents consist of Female which covers 57.5% and Male 42.5%. The respondents came from different countries of origin of which the majority of those who answered were from the Philippines which makes up the 38.6% of the responses, followed by India with 28.7%, Vietnam with 13.4%, Malaysia with 4.7%, Indonesia with 3.9%, Cambodia with 3.5%, Thailand with 2.4%, The UK and USA with 0.8% and the rest covers 0.4% respectively. The majority of the respondents came from Minghsin University of Science and Technology which covers 75.6% of the gathered responses, followed by National Taipei University that has 4.7%, Chung Hua University with 2.8%, three identified universities with 2.4% and the rest contributes 0.4% respectively. With educational level in the current program, the results garnered 54.3% are enrolled in Master's Degree Programs, while 42.1% are from the bachelor's degree and 3.5%

studies doctorate degree. Majority of the respondents are from the College of Engineering with 37%, followed by the College of Business Administration 31.9%, College of Science 16.1% and the rest were 6.7%, 2.8% 0.8% and 0.4% respectively.

4.2 Key Factors Influencing the Intention of International Students from NSP Countries to Study in Taiwan in the Post-COVID-19 Era

Table 2. Key factors influencing the intention of international students from NSP countries to study in Taiwan in the post-COVID-19 era

Level Factors	Key factors	#	Hypothesis	Path coefficient	STDEV	T-value	P-value	Result
Micro Level Factors (Push Factors)	Source of Information	H1	The importance of information sources has a positive influence on students in making the decision to study abroad	1.477	0.089	16.510	0.000***	Supported
	Future Career Opportunity	H2	The perceived availability of job opportunities and career prospects after graduation positively influences the intention of international students from NSP countries to study in Taiwan in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era.	2.166	0.131	16.515	0.000***	Supported
	Personal Growth	H3	Personal Growth has	1.217	0.070	17.456	0.000***	Supported

			significant influence on the decision of international students from new southbound nations towards studying in Taiwan.					
	Characteristics of Destination	H4	The expectations and perceptions of the destination country have an influence on students when deciding to study abroad.	0.973	0.057	17.003	0.000***	Supported
Mezzo Level Factors (Pull Factors)	Scholarship	H5	The scholarship has a beneficial influence on the decision of international students from new southbound policy countries towards studying in Taiwan.	0.843	0.035	24.057	0.000***	Supported
	Quality of Education	H6	The quality of education positively influences the decision of international students from	3.159	0.151	20.905	0.000***	Supported

			new southbound policy countries towards studying in Taiwan.					
	Language and Communication	H7	Communication has a positive relationship with the International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan	4.227	0.185	22.849	0.000***	Supported
Macro Level Factors (Pull Factors)	Immigration Policy	H8	Flexible Immigration Policy has a positive relationship with the International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan	0.074	0.004	19.839	0.000***	Supported
	Social Culture	H9	Host Culture Identity has a positive relationship with the International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan	2.779	0.155	17.901	0.000***	Supported

	Safety and Security Factor	H10	Safety and Security has positively influenced the intention of International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan	0.861	0.050	17.361	0.000***	Supported
	Visa Application	H11	Easiness of Visa Application has positively influenced the intention of International Students from New Southbound Nations to study in Taiwan	2.267	0.134	16.900	0.000***	Supported
	Fear of Covid-19	H12	The level of concern about contracting Covid-19 in Taiwan negatively influences the intention of international students from NSP countries to study in Taiwan in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era.	1.289	0.074	17.426	0.000***	Rejected
	Travel Anxiety	H13	The level of travel	1.586	0.085	18.619	0.000***	Rejected

			restrictions and difficulties in reaching Taiwan negatively influences the intention of international students from NSP countries to study in Taiwan in the post-Covid-19 pandemic era.					
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Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Source: This study

Hypothesis 1 is supported by the path coefficient of 1.477, the standard deviation (STDEV) of 0.089, the T-value of 16.510, the P-value of 0.000, and other indicators that show how important information sources are (H1). This illustrates how trustworthy and easily available information can have a significant impact on students' decisions.

With a path coefficient of 2.166, STDEV of 0.131, T-value of 16.515, and P-value of 0.000, the perceived availability of future employment options (H2) after graduation also plays a significant role in supporting the hypothesis. This shows that the possibility of finding employment after graduation is a major source of motivation for students. The results of the study highlight the significance of job prospects in the decision-making processes of students, indicating that their interest in studying abroad in NSPC nations is significantly influenced by future job opportunities. The current result and Sung and Lin's (2018) study show a correlation that highlights the complex motivations of students and the critical influence that employment prospects have on their decision to pursue an education.

Another significant factor is personal growth (H3), which supports its hypothesis with a path coefficient of 1.217, STDEV of 0.070, T-value of 17.456, and P-value of 0.000. This suggests that one of the main motivators for students is the chance to grow personally. The study's results on the importance of personal growth for students are consistent with the larger picture offered by Yang and Chiang's (2019) analysis of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP) and its compatibility with human values. This viewpoint is consistent with the discovery that students are highly motivated by personal improvement, pointing to a more comprehensive congruence between people's goals and the principles ingrained in Taiwan's regional policies, such as the NSP.

Moreover, this hypothesis is supported by the destination's characteristics (H4), which include

a path coefficient of 0.973, STDEV of 0.057, T-value of 17.003, and P-value of 0.000. The expectations and views that students have about the country of destination play a major role in how they make decisions. This highlight how important destination features and branding are in influencing travelers' impressions and behavioral intentions, giving managers important information to consider when creating marketing plans that will increase visitor pleasure and engagement.

Scholarships (H5) are demonstrated to positively impact students' judgments at the mezzo level; this hypothesis is supported by a path coefficient of 0.843, STDEV of 0.035, T-value of 24.057, and P-value of 0.000. Scholarship funding seems to be an important source of funding for students. Scholarships, along with job chances and educational offerings, are important factors that influence students' decisions, according to Lhakard's (2023) qualitative analysis. This implies that scholarship financing functions as a significant source of financial support and plays a critical part in students' decision-making processes. As a result, the value of scholarships in drawing foreign students to Taiwan demonstrate how successful these programs can be when used as a soft power tactic in conjunction with Taiwan's New Southbound Policy.

The quality of education (H6), with a path coefficient of 3.159, STDEV of 0.151, T-value of 20.905, and P-value of 0.000, is also a significant component that supports the hypothesis. International students from NSP nations are drawn to Taiwan because of the country's excellent educational system. In the ever-changing environment of worldwide higher education, students' decisions are significantly influenced by Taiwan's great educational offerings, underscoring the significance of high-quality education in luring and keeping top talent from across the world.

As demonstrated by a coefficient of 4.227, a standard error of 0.185, a T-value of 22.849, and a significance level of 0.000, language and communication (H7) has a positive link with the intentions of international students. This implies that one of the main factors luring NSP students to Taiwan is efficient avenues of communication. The findings, which support both Ng (2023) and Huang (2021) investigations, point to a positive relationship between language and communication (H7) and the intents of international students. The difficulties experienced by second-generation children of intermarriage migrants are brought to light by Ng's examination of multicultural dynamics in Taiwan, underscoring the significance of efficient communication channels for social integration. Thus, the results of both studies reinforce the idea that effective communication channels are important in drawing foreign students to Taiwan and validate the favorable correlation that has been found between language and communication and NSP students' intents.

Flexible immigration policy (H8), with a coefficient of 0.074, a standard error of 0.004, and a T-value of 19.839, is similarly favorably correlated with students' goals. This relationship is significant at the 0.000 level. This emphasizes how crucial flexible immigration laws are to supporting global education. The study clarifies how administrative discretion affects immigrants' social participation in the context of uncertain cross-strait interactions, highlighting the changing importance of hukou regulations in light of shifting migration dynamics.

With a coefficient of 2.779, a standard error of 0.155, and a T-value of 17.901, the social culture (H9) likewise demonstrates a positive connection that is significant at the 0.000 level. This

suggests that students' decision-making might be greatly influenced by a friendly and recognizable host culture. the significance of comprehending the ways in which cultural influences impact cross-Strait student mobility, indicates that students' choices can be greatly influenced by a friendly host culture.

Additionally, at a 0.000 significance level, safety and security (H10) have a considerable influence on students' intents, as evidenced by a coefficient of 0.861, a standard error of 0.050, and a There. The results of Lim (2023) confirm that safety and security (H11) have a major impact on students' plans to study overseas. Additionally, Taiwan's foreign education policy—which emphasizes the need for a safe and secure learning environment—promotes cross-cultural interchange by encouraging ethnic Laotian Chinese to study in Taiwan, especially under the New Southbound Policy (NSP). All things considered, the evidence supporting the impact of safety and security on students' intentions emphasizes how important it is to offer international students a safe and secure environment, not only for scholastic reasons but also to promote wider diplomatic and economic ties between nations.

Another important component is the ease of applying for a visa (H11), which supports the hypothesis with a positive correlation with a coefficient of 2.267, standard error of 0.134, and T-value of 16.900 at the 0.000 significance level. This implies that Taiwan's appeal as a study location is increased by streamlined visa processes. As Taiwan's government sought to enhance its international standing and address domestic challenges, such as higher education oversupply, the ease of visa processes likely played a role in attracting international students. Streamlined visa processes would have contributed to Taiwan's appeal as a study destination, aligning with the positive correlation suggested by the coefficient, standard error, and t-value provided. Thus, Hsieh's (2020) analysis supports the notion that Taiwan's appeal as a study location is indeed increased by streamlined visa processes, as indicated by the statistical values presented.

On the other hand, the hypothesis (H12) proposed that, in the post-Covid-19 pandemic age, international students from NSP (New Southbound Policy) nations would be less likely to intend to study in Taiwan if there was a high level of fear about catching Covid-19 in Taiwan. A path coefficient of 1.289, a standard deviation (STDEV) of 0.074, a T-value of 17.426 and a P-value of 0.000 were obtained from the statistical analysis hence, rejecting the hypothesis based on the interpretation of the path coefficient, which shows that it is in a positive value. This finding implies that, despite a significant statistical correlation, the relationship's structure does not support the theory that these students' dread of COVID-19 reduces their desire to study in Taiwan.

In the post-Covid-19 pandemic era, the hypothesis (H13) proposed that travel restrictions and challenges in reaching Taiwan would have a detrimental impact on international students' intention to study in Taiwan from countries covered by the New Southbound Policy (NSP). The statistical study, which produced a path coefficient of 1.586, a standard deviation of 0.085, a T-value of 18.619, and a P-value of 0.000, led to the rejection of this hypothesis.

4.3 Effect of Fear of Covid-19 to the Intention of International Students to Study in Taiwan

Table 3. Effect of Fear of Covid-19 to the intention of international students to study in Taiwan

Key factors	Path coefficients	STDEV	T-value	P-value	Result
Fear of Covid-19 positively affect intention of international students to study in Taiwan.	0.086	0.005	18.809	0.000***	Supported

Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Source: This study

The findings support the hypothesis that students' intentions are positively impacted by their dread of COVID-19, with a path coefficient of 0.086, a highly significant P-value of 0.000, a standard deviation of 0.005, and a T-value of 18.809. This suggests that students may be more motivated to study overseas, presumably seeking safer or better-managed surroundings during the pandemic, despite the expectation that fear would discourage them. Instead, it actually demonstrates a positive link with their intention to study in Taiwan. Although this result was unexpected at first, it implies that students may have chosen to continue their education in Taiwan because they believe it to be a safer or better-managed place during the pandemic. This highlight the complex interplay between perceived safety and COVID-19 anxiety, which influences international mobility decisions.

4.4 Effect of Travel Anxiety to the Intention of International Students to Study in Taiwan

Table 4. Effect of Travel Anxiety to the intention of international students to study in Taiwan

Key factors	Path coefficients	STDEV	T-value	P-value	Result
Travel Anxiety positively affect the intention of international students to study in Taiwan	0.111	0.005	23.615	0.000***	Supported

Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Source: This study

The findings support the extrapolation of the impact of travel anxiety on international students' intention to study in Taiwan. A stronger intention among international students to study in Taiwan is correlated with higher levels of travel anxiety, as indicated by the path coefficient of 0.111, which suggests a positive relationship. The T-value of 23.615 and the P-value of 0.000, both of which are below the traditional significance level of 0.05, show that this link is statistically significant. Consequently, the findings point to the importance of travel anxiety in influencing the intents of overseas students to study in Taiwan, with higher anxiety levels being linked to higher intention.

4.5 The relationship between Fear of Covid-19 and Travel Anxiety

Table 5. The relationship between Fear of Covid-19 and Travel Anxiety

Key factors	#	Hypothesis	Path coefficients	STDEV	T-value	P-value	Result
The relationship between Fear of Covid-19 and Travel Anxiety	H14	Fear of Covid-19 has a positive effect on travel anxiety.	0.641	0.042	15.387	0.000***	Supported

Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Source: This study

The findings indicate a number of noteworthy findings regarding the association between the Fear of Covid-19 and Travel Anxiety: a path coefficient of 0.641, a standard error of 0.042, a T-value of 15.387, and a P-value of 0.000. The results show that travel anxiety is strongly influenced by the fear of COVID-19, as indicated by the substantial positive path coefficient of 0.641. The estimate of this effect appears to be quite precise, as indicated by the small standard error of 0.042. Additionally, the statistical importance of this link is confirmed by the P-value of 0.000 and the T-value of 15.387, both of which are significantly higher than the traditional threshold for significance. Thus, the data provide substantial support for the notion that Fear of Covid-19 positively affects Travel Anxiety. The findings highlight the importance of resolving travel-related anxieties in order to facilitate international mobility.

4.6 Influence of Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Level Factors on students to study in Taiwan

Table 6. Influence of Micro, Mezzo, and Macro Level Factors on students to study in Taiwan

Key factors	Path coefficients	STDEV	T-value	P-value	Result
Micro Level	-4.469***	0.279	15.989	0.000***	Supported
Mezzo Level	-7.005***	0.320	21.912	0.000***	Supported
Macro	-7.035***	0.406	17.307	0.000***	Supported

Notes: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Source: This study

Notably, all three levels exhibit statistically significant negative path coefficients. The results in Table 12 show how micro-level factors affect students' intentions to study in Taiwan. There is a negative correlation between micro-level characteristics and students' intention to study in Taiwan, as indicated by the path coefficient of -4.469. The standard error (STDEV) of 0.279 indicates that the effect's estimate is reasonably accurate. This negative association is statistically significant, as shown by the T-value of 15.989 and the P-value of 0.000, both of which are significantly lower than the conventional significance level of 0.01). The results so strongly imply that students' decisions to study in Taiwan are significantly and negatively impacted by micro-level issues. These findings have significant ramifications since they suggest that micro-level factors may discourage students

from selecting Taiwan as their study destination.

5. Conclusions

Strong statistical values support the study's findings that trustworthy and easily accessible information (H1), the perception of future work alternatives (H2), and personal growth prospects (H3) all have a beneficial influence on students' decisions. Other important motivators included the destination's features (H4), scholarships (H5), educational quality (H6), language and communication (H8), flexible immigration policy (H9), social culture (H10), safety and security (H11), and simplicity of visa application (H12). Contrary to early predictions, however, it was discovered that travel anxiety (H14) and dread of COVID-19 (H13) positively correlated with the intention to study in Taiwan, indicating that these issues may not be as a deterrent for students as originally believed. These results emphasize the significance of accurate information dissemination, career chances, opportunities for personal development, and upholding high standards of education while guaranteeing adaptable regulations and a welcoming atmosphere in order to draw in international students.

The results offer insightful policy recommendations that will help legislators and educational institutions foster better job prospects, improve communication, and guarantee flexible immigration laws. Additionally, by concentrating on students from NSP countries, the study advances knowledge about regional education strategies and their efficacy. The strong methodology lays the groundwork for further studies and provides useful suggestions for enhancing Taiwan's attractiveness as a study location and assisting more general initiatives to draw in and keep international students.

Moreover, this study offers important academic contributions by providing a thorough analysis of the multi-level (micro, mezzo, and macro) restrictions that have a negative influence on international students' inclinations to pursue higher education in Taiwan. It adds to the body of knowledge on international student mobility by highlighting the connections between institutional, systemic, and personal issues. The results provide useful policy suggestions for removing these obstacles, including enhancing funding, communication systems, and health and safety protocols—all of which are essential in the post-COVID-19 environment. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the necessity for adaptive solutions to tackle pandemic-related issues by providing a foundation for comparative research in other nations. Moreover, the study emphasizes the necessity for adaptive solutions to tackle pandemic-related issues by providing a foundation for comparative research in other nations.

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