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**FACTORS MOTIVATING COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS IN THE SELECTION OF**

**A FEE-LEVYING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTE IN SRI LANKA**

**Gangani Chamarie Wickramasinghe1, Lubna Ali 2, Rathnayake Mudiyanselage Dhanapala3**

*1Department of English, School of Education, Lincoln University College, Malaysia,* [*gcwickramasinghe@lincoln.edu.my*](file:///C:\Users\ASUS\Downloads\gcwickramasinghe@lincoln.edu.my)

*2Department of English, School of Education, Lincoln University College, Malaysia, lubnaali@lincoln.edu.my*

*3 Department of English Language School of Education, Teaching, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, rmdhanapala@yahoo.co.uk*

**\*Correspondence:**

Email: *gcwickramasinghe@lincoln.edu.my*

# Abstract

Information Technology is one of the fastest-growing industries in Sri Lanka serving many sectors. Due to this, the demand for IT professionals has risen in the country and as a result, in recent years, student enrolment in computer science (CS) related degree programs has also increased. This increase can be observed mainly in fee-levying Higher Education Institutes (HEI). On the one hand, it has created fierce competition among these institutes to attract prospective students, thereby spending large sums of money on recruitment strategies without a proper understanding of student expectations. On the other hand, the availability of several HEIs has made the decision-making process of students in selecting an HEI more complex. Previous studies also indicate that factors influencing the decision-making process differ based on the degree of specialization. Therefore, this study aims to identify the factors that influence Sri Lankan students when choosing a fee-levying HEI to pursue a CS-related degree programme. Chapman’s (1981) model of student college choice was used as the theoretical model. A sample of 510 first and second-year undergraduates studying in CS-related degree programmes in three state fee-levying and five private institutes were considered. Thirty-five factors were considered under four main categories as identified in Chapman’s (1981) model: student-related internal characteristics and external factors: HEI-related characteristics, influential individuals in the environment, and methods used by the HEIs to communicate with the students. The results indicate that student-related internal characteristics, HEI-related characteristics, and communication methods have a positive influence on students in the selection of a fee-levying HEI while individuals in the external environment do not have a positive influence on students’ selection process.

***Keywords:*** *Computer science degrees, university choice, fee-levying Higher Education Institutes, influential factors, university education in Sri Lanka*