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Factors Influencing the Private Cost of Higher Education; the Case of Sri Lanka

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Abstract. The research aims to identify and analyze the cost elements that impact the private cost of university education in Sri Lanka. It focused on determining the private cost of the Bachelor's degree programs and also the cost elements affecting the total private cost and their significance. Twenty one cost categories were identified through a pilot study and analyzed in order to assess their impact on the private cost and their variability based on field of study, gender, programme duration, and the socio-economic group of undergraduates. The population comprised of students enrolled in private higher education institutes offering Bachelor's degree programs in Sri Lanka. The study was conducted during the 2016/2017 academic year and the sample contained 419 respondents drawn utilizing the purposive and stratified random sampling procedures. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square test for independent sample statistics at 0.05 level of significance. It was found that majority of cost categories (15) had significantly varied between fields of study undertaken while minority of cost categories (10) varied significantly between students' gender. The study revealed that the identified factors influenced the private cost of university education in the Sri Lankan context.

Keywords: Private cost; Higher education; Sri Lanka.

1. Introduction

Access to higher education is a critical factor for the growth of an economy. While an overall growth in global demand for higher education could be observed (Wende, 2003), a similar trend and an increase of student enrolments could be observed in the Asian region as well, including India (Angom, 2015), Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2016) and Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, the University Grants Commission (UGC) established under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 is responsible in allocating students to state universities and Higher Educational Institutes (HEIs). According to UGC statistics, there are 15 state universities and 19 HEIs in operation by the year

2017 in Sri Lanka. 64% of the students who sat for the General Certificate in Education Advanced Level (GCE A/L) examination in 2017 got qualified to enter public universities, an increase from 58% in 2013. Despite the increase in university qualifying rate, only 19% of those eligible candidates are finally admitted to state universities. As a result, majority of those who do not get enrolled to the state universities opt for private HEIs in the country while some travel abroad to pursue their higher education.

As far as private HEIs are concerned, presently there are 43 degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka, which are recognized by the UGC. In addition, there are 15 degree awarding institutes recognized by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). Further, the University Act No. 16 of 1978 has allowed non-state local institutions to conduct courses of study and award degrees (Liyanage, 2014). Even though, the extent of such institutions has not been properly assessed or identified increase in number of these institutions give more academic choices for the students who have passed the GCE A/L examination. Previous studies have investigated the factors which affects the selection of university in different countries while few have explored on the Sri Lankan context. Affordability of tertiary education to people from all backgrounds prevails as an issue that confronts governments all over the world (Akinkugbe, 2000). One of the primary factors that has been highlighted in the literature is the cost of university education and its affordability. In addition to course fee, undergraduate students in private HEIs incur various costs in different aspects.

Affordability issues aggravate when most of the students only consider the tuition fees of the private university as a cost and make their decision to enrol, and assume that there is no cost when they enrol in the state universities (Wilkins et al., 2012). However, when considering the cost of the university educations for undergraduates, there are two major costs identified; classified as academic cost and non-academic cost (Enaigbe and Olubor, 2016).

Therefore this study focus on filling the knowledge gap by producing a comprehensive list of academic and non-academic costs incurred by an undergraduate that make up the private cost and analysing the private cost and how the private cost vary based on the factors such as the field of study, gender, social economic groups and the length of the degree program in the Sri Lankan context.

2. Literature Review

The cost of education is classified into two different types which are private cost and institutional cost. Private cost expresses the part of investment or expenditure which is incurred by the student, the parents, or both together. Private cost implies the financial expenditures incurred by the parents or students in years for gaining the education.

Enaigbe and Olubor (2016) analysed the factors that influence the private cost of teacher education in public tertiary institutions in South-South Nigeria in 2014/2015 academic session. The component of academic costs are: examination

charges, books, admission expenses, projects/ assignment cost, student handbook cost, faculty dues, stationary materials, practical materials and tools. Further, the authors stated that incidental cost as: feeding, accommodation, transport, entertainment, snacks, medical, laundry, identity card, replaced damages & club/societies. The results show that private cost of teacher education was higher in state tertiary institutions than their federal counterparts and the private cost of university students was higher than college students. The study further revealed that factors such as type of institutions, gender, programme of study, level of study, place of students' residence and ownership status of institutions influence private cost.

Olakulehin and Panda (2011) examined the comparative private costs of distance and conventional university students in Nigeria. The objective of the study was to explore which of the two modes of education demands a higher or lesser private investment from students in higher education. The findings reveal that significant private costs learners generally incur both at the pre-entry as well as during the course of their studies for higher education in Nigeria.

Saruparia and Lodha (2013) conducted a cost analysis and compute the private and social cost of various technical and professional courses offered by a university in India. They identified different cost items such as pre-admission cost, tuition fees, books, stationary, equipment, hostels, food, and transportation and miscellaneous in order to calculate the average annual private cost across different degree programs and concluded that it varies across the programs.

Using an exogenous institutional shock, which resulted in regional and temporal variation in tuition fee regimes in Germany, Alecke et al. (2013) investigated the effects of tuition fees at German universities on the enrolment and migration behaviour of first-year students. The results showed that there is no impact of tuition fees on the enrolment rate but a redistribution of migration rate which is stronger for male students compared to female students.

A conceptual paper by Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013) reviews previous literature on how socio-economic status and educational background of the parents affect the educational process of their children. Children's education is influenced by the socio-economic status and educational background of their parents.

Dunnett et al. (2012) analysed the impact of the fee increases on student's choice of university by measuring the utility associated with various attributes of the university course. To investigate the choice of university, the paper mainly focused on the following criteria: course reputation, university reputation, whether the institution is industry focused, whether the university is local to the student, entry qualifications and tuition fees. Conjoint analysis was used to measure the relative importance of the above attributes on the choice of university courses for different groups of students. It explored how different subgroups evaluate the impact that results from changing the levels of above attributes. The authors concluded that female students seem to derive more utility from teaching-focused institutions and much less from industry-focused

institutions and there are also differences in the patterns of utility derived from course and university reputation and fees. Furthermore, there were marked differences between students with a family history of university compared to students with no family experience of university in terms of entry qualifications, fees and course and university reputation.

Premarathne et al. (2016) explored the factors influencing the choice of degree offering institutes among the logistics management students in Sri Lanka. Using a sample of 92 students from a state and a non-state higher education institute, the authors concluded that institutional discipline and advanced level stream are considered as significant factors for students to select logistics management.

The review of literature reveals that the costs related to higher education has not been studied in the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, this study aims at filling this knowledge gap by exploring the costs associated with higher education.

Based on the literature, the study developed the following conceptual framework. According to Figure 1, field of study, gender, length of the degree program and socio – economic group were identified as factors affecting the private cost of undergraduates. Field of study consist of undergraduate programmes in the fields of business management, information technology and engineering. Length of the programme is defined in terms of programme duration; three or four academic years. Three socio economic groups were identified based on the mean income of households. The income details used for the classification were obtained from the Sri Lanka Socio-Economic Data for 2016 issued by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

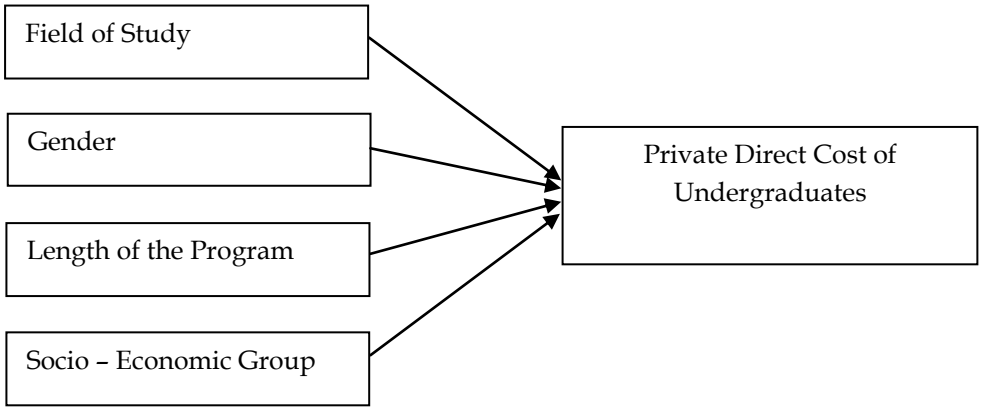

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

The study tested the following hypothesis;
H1: There is a significant difference between Field of study and the explanatory variable
H2: There is a significant difference between Gender and the explanatory variable
H3: There is a significant difference between Length of the Program and the explanatory variable
H4: There is a significant difference between Socio- Economic Group and the explanatory variable

3. Method

The objectives of the study were to identify the direct private cost incurred by a student with respect to higher education in Sri Lanka and to explain the variability of costs between factors affecting the cost. The factors explored include gender, field of study, length of the degree program, and socio-economic groups of the student.

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study based on in-depth interviews was conducted among a total of 25 students in private HEIs. The purpose of the in-depth interview was to understand different types of cost categories, nature of the cost, and cost ranges for each category. Subsequently, the questionnaire was developed across three sections; section A consist of student's demographic factors, Section B consist of questions relating student's family background and Section C consist of questions on cost categories (academic and non-academic). The revised questionnaire was then distributed among the sample for the collection of data.

During the pilot study 21 cost categories were identified. These cost categories were identified under two broad areas as academic and non-academic cost. Academic cost consist of costs which are directly related to academic activities while non-academic cost comprise of costs which are indirectly related to academic activities such as accommodation, transport, food and beverages, clothing etc. List of cost categories under these two areas are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Cost Categories

Academic Cost	**Description**
1. Course fees	Cost of course fee, registration fee and other administration related cost
2. Stationery	Study material such as text books, exercise books, pen, pencil, bag
3. Library & membership	Library membership cost for the student, subscription and penalty payments
4. Coursework and assignments	Field visit, photo copy/ print out, spiral binding and other cost which are specific to coursework
5. Laptop and desktop	Laptop or desktop purchased for the purpose of the higher education by a student
6. Photocopies	Photocopying cost of lecture notes, worksheets, tutorials
7. Tools and instruments	Mathematical instrument box, folder, pen drive and calculator
8. Repeat exam cost	Repeat exam fees during the academic program
Non-Academic Cost	
1. Internship	Cost of travelling, accommodation and materials used for internship.
2. Transportation	Transportation cost such as bus fare, rent for monthly hired vehicle, fuel, taxi charges
3. Vehicle maintenance and repair	Maintenance cost of the own vehicle

4. Accommodation	Rent charges
5. Food and beverage	Food and beverage cost
6. Medicine	Medicine cost
7. Cloths and wear	The cost related to cloths and wear especially for presentation or other specific occasions.
8. Communication	Mobile phones calls and internet cost
9. Personal care & cosmetics	The cost incurred for personal care
10. Entertainment	The cost related for batch trips during the academic program.
11. Sports	The cost refers sports equipment and transport specially for sport events etc.
12. Events	The cost related to cultural, dance programmes
13. Other expenses	The cost related to donations, university event fees and society or club subscription.

Source: Compiled by the authors

3.1 Sample

The graduate output of state and non – state universities and HEIs under UGC are published in Sri Lanka University Statistics report. However, there is no record of the graduate output of the private HEIs. According to a survey done by LirneAsia, the graduate output as for the academic year 2010/2011 for both public and private universities are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Graduate Output (2010/2011)

Stream	Public – UGC	Public – Non UGC	Private	Total
Management	2,679	143	867	3,689
Information Technology	429	144	1,552	2,125
Engineering	1,195	221	71	1,487
Other	8,301	3,721	243	12,265
Total	12,604	4,229	2,733	19,599

Source: Gamage and Wijesooriya (2012)

The study focused on those who are graduated/completed their Bachelor's degree program at private HEIs in Sri Lanka. The students are selected using stratified sampling method, and those students are sub divided in to the university as stratum by field of study, gender, the length of the degree program and social economic group.

The sample consisted of 419 respondents. Table 3 provides a summary of key attributes of the sample.

Table 3: Characteristics of the sample

	No. of Students	As a % of the sample
Field of study		
Business Management (BM)	91	21.7%
Engineering (Eng)	109	26.0%
Information Technology (IT)	219	52.3%
Gender		
Male	243	58.0%
Female	176	42.0%
Length of the degree program		
3 years	141	33.7%
4 Years	278	66.3%
Socio - economic group		
Low (Income Below $106)*	10	2.4%
Middle (Income between $107 to $377)*	115	27.4%
High (Income $378 or above)*	294	70.2%

Source: Compiled by the authors
* The rupee values were converted using Rs.152.4575 per 1USDollar, the average US dollar to rupee exchange rate for 2017

Table 4 summarizes the distribution of the sample across field of study with gender, length of the program and socio – economic group. Majority of the respondents in the field of business management are female (60.4%) while most of the respondents from the engineering (64.2%) and information technology (62.6%) are males. A larger proportion of the engineering and information technology students follow a 4 year degree program while over 50% of the respondents from the business management field follow a 3 year degree program. Business management and engineering are followed by students from high income families while 38% of the students following information technology are from middle income families while 59% are from high income families.

Table 4: Distribution of the sample across field of study

	Gender		Length of the Program		Socio - Economic Group		
Field of Study	Female	Male	3 years	4 years	Low	Middle	High
BM	60.40%	39.60%	51.60%	48.40%	0.00%	17.60%	82.40%
Eng	35.80%	64.20%	16.50%	83.50%	3.70%	13.80%	82.60%
IT	37.40%	62.60%	34.70%	65.30%	2.70%	38.40%	58.90%

Source: Compiled by the authors

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive analysis of the cost information

Table 5 shows the cost ranges in the academic cost categories within the three fields of study. Expenditure on course fees of engineering degrees tend to be higher compared to other fields. The stationary cost is higher among IT students compared to other fields of study whereas the photocopy cost is lower.

Expenses on library membership seem to be very rarely incurred by IT students and almost 50% of the BM students. More than 50% of the Engineering students spend $17 to $36 per annum on library membership fees.

Expenses on coursework and assignments is significant in the Engineering stream as more than 40% of the surveyed students spend more than $208 per annum on it. More than 50% of both BM and IT stream students spend less than the amount spent by an engineering counterpart. BM students do not spend on buying computers whereas in the other two streams more than 90% of the students invest in computers. Majority of those who spend on computers spend between $590 - $853 p.a. on such purchases. Expenses on repeat examinations, though identified as a cost item is an insignificant item in terms of both value and frequency of incurring.

Table 5: Academic cost ranges within the field of study

Academic Cost (USD)		**BM**	**Eng**	**IT**
Course fees	3,936 - 5,575	56%	5%	64%
	5,576 - 7,215	21%	10%	24%
	7,216 - 8,855	4%	64%	4%
	> 8,856	19%	21%	8%
Stationery	< 66	32%	25%	44%
	67 - 131	31%	23%	22%
	132 - 197	4%	17%	14%
	198 - 262	18%	11%	6%
	> 263	15%	24%	14%
Photocopies	< 69	37%	23%	52%
	70 - 138	23%	27%	27%
	139 - 207	12%	24%	13%
	208 - 275	12%	17%	4%
	> 276	15%	10%	5%
Library Membership	None	48%	28%	61%
	7 - 16	2%	13%	12%
	17 - 26	28%	54%	18%
	27 - 36	6%	2%	2%
	> 37	17%	3%	6%

Coursework & Assignment	< 69	40%	20%	39%
	70 - 138	25%	21%	28%
	139 - 207	12%	19%	14%
	208 - 275	12%	12%	10%
	> 276	11%	28%	9%
Tools & Instruments	None	23%		11%
	10 – 36	44%	38%	53%
	37 – 62	20%	24%	16%
	63 - 89	6%	24%	11%
	> 90	8%	15%	9%
Laptop & Desktop	Did not buy	30%	6%	6%
	328 - 590	22%	31%	30%
	591 - 853	30%	37%	48%
	854 - 1,115	11%	21%	8%
	> 1,116	8%	5%	7%
Repeat Exam Cost	None	68%	44%	44%
	< 7	1%	3%	1%
	8 - 46	18%	28%	27%
	47 - 85	6%	8%	8%
	86 - 125	6%	5%	7%
	> 126	2%	13%	15%

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 6 shows the cost ranges in the non - academic cost categories within the three fields of study. 67% and 51% of the surveyed BM and IT students respectively do not spend on internships. However, may be owing to the demands of the programme, 91% of the engineering students spend on this.

Majority of the students surveyed from the three disciplines spend between $30 - $128 p.a. on transportation. Majority of the students surveyed do not incur costs on vehicle maintenance. Residing at convenient locations close to the place of study would affect both these cost categories.

Food and beverage is a significant non-academic cost which records the largest lower limit of the lowest cost interval which is a $ 98 p.a. More than 50% of the surveyed respondents spend more than $296 per annum on food and beverage. However, engineering students tend to spend more lavishly on food and beverages compared to other streams with 52% spending more than $ 493 p.a. This may also imply that engineering field, being the most expensive stream than other two streams in terms of tuition fees, attract students representing higher socio economic classes.

Majority of the surveyed sample of students spend between $30 to $95 p.a. on medicine and spend more than $211 p.a. on clothing and wear irrespective of their field of study.

Majority of the students surveyed spend more than $217 p.a. on communication irrespective of their field of study. Cost intervals derived from the pilot study for both communication and clothing and wear expense categories are somewhat similar. Therefore, it could be assumed that the students' choose to spend on these cost items with equal prominence in their spending.

Majority of the students surveyed spend less than $49 p.a. on entertainment and between $ 30 to $111 p.a. on personal care & cosmetics irrespective of their field of study. The amount spent on personal care and cosmetics are higher among business management students. This could be a result of more female students included in the sample studied (60%) compared to other two fields of study (35%- IT and 37%-Eng.) A more gender balanced sample may have provided different results for this cost category.

Expenses on sports show a significantly different behavior compared to other non-academic costs. More than 50% of students across all fields of study do not spend on sports. This could also depend on the sports facilities offered by the institutes free of charge to students.

Majority of the IT and Engineering students and 48% of the BM students do not spend money on events. However, between 30 to 40% of the respondents at least spend $10 p.a. on events. For majority, other expenses also range between $10 and $62, across all specializations.

Table 6: Non – Academic cost ranges within the field of study

Non - Academic Cost (USD)		**BM**	**Eng**	**IT**
Internship	None	67%	9%	51%
	< 23	4%	18%	15%
	24 - 82	13%	30%	17%
	83 - 141	12%	28%	11%
	142 - 200	1%	6%	2%
	> 201	2%	9%	4%
Transportation	None	20%	7%	16%
	30 - 128	26%	31%	29%
	129 - 226	23%	19%	22%
	227 - 331	12%	20%	17%
	> 332	19%	22%	16%
Vehicle Maintenance & Repair	None	78%	79%	77%
	39 - 79	6%	4%	5%
	80 - 118	4%	2%	6%
	119 - 157	3%	4%	3%
	> 158	9%	119%	8%
Accommodation	None	75%	59%	55%
	< 131	3%	4%	9%
	132 - 328		5%	4%

	329 - 525	2%	1%	3%
	526 - 722	4%	6%	4%
	> 723	15%	26%	25%
Food & Beverage	98 - 197	31%	22%	26%
	198 - 295	11%	11%	16%
	296 - 394	20%	12%	14%
	395 - 492	11%	3%	11%
	> 493	28%	52%	34%
Medicine	None	25%	17%	21%
	30 - 62	39%	46%	41%
	63 - 95	29%	32%	30%
	> 96	8%	6%	9%
Clothing and Wear	26 - 105	24%	13%	30%
	106 - 210	21%	30%	23%
	211 - 315	22%	17%	22%
	316 - 420	10%	16%	15%
	> 421	23%	24%	11%
Communication	7 - 111	21%	21%	26%
	112 - 216	21%	22%	26%
	217 - 321	24%	21%	22%
	322 - 426	22%	9%	11%
	> 427	12%	27%	16%
Entertainment	None	29%	3%	25%
	10 – 49	37%	68%	43%
	50 – 82	12%	20%	22%
	83 - 115	14%	6%	6%
	> 116	8%	3%	5%
Personal Care & Cosmetics	30 - 111	46%	57%	76%
	112 - 193	24%	12%	14%
	194 - 275	12%	17%	6%
	276 - 357	13%	9%	2%
	> 358	4%	6%	2%
Sports	None	55%	56%	53%
	7 - 111	31%	35%	40%
	112 - 216	6%	6%	6%
	217 - 321	7%	4%	1%
	322 - 426	2%		1%
Events	None	48%	51%	51%
	10 - 49	35%	33%	39%
	50 - 82	14%	7%	680%
	83 - 115	2%	5%	2%
	> 116		4%	1%
Other Expenses	None	19%	9%	16%
	10 - 36	44%	45%	51%

	37 - 62	25%	34%	20%
	63 - 89	8%	1%	7%
	> 90	4%	11%	6%

Source: Compiled by the authors

4.2 Chi-square test

Chi-square test was carried out in order to identify the association between the identified four factors affecting private cost and the private cost of higher education. Since the cost of higher education status is an ordinal categorical variable, the analysis was conducted to check the association between each of the cost category and other independent variables.

Table 7 and 8 summarizes the result of each cost category with the field of study, gender, length of the program and socio-economic group in private HEIs. The results show that all the academic cost categories show a significant difference while 7 of the non-academic costs (internship, accommodation, food and beverage, cloths and wear, communication, personal care and cosmetics and entertainment) show a significant difference with the field of study. Since the alternative hypothesis was accepted in majority of the cost categories, it can be concluded that there is a significance difference among cost categories and field of study in private HEIs.

In the case of gender and the cost categories, all the academic cost categories other than course fee, cost related to coursework and assignment and laptop and desktop, are significant at 5% level. It is interesting to note from the non – academic cost categories, cost related to cloths and wear, personal care and cosmetics, sports, internship and entertainment are the only cost which shows a significant difference with the gender.

All the cost categories under academic cost are significant at 5% level while out of the non-academic cost only four categories (internship, transportation, vehicle maintenance and entertainment) have shown significant difference with the length of the program. Therefore, the results show that there is a significant different between 12 cost categories and length of the program.

There is a significant difference between the course fee, cost related to library and membership and cost for photocopies with socio-economic group. Furthermore, 7 non-academic cost categories (internship, accommodation, cloths and wear, communication, personal care and cosmetics, events and other expenses) exhibit a significant difference with different income levels of undergraduate students.

Overall, 15 costs categories out of 21 show a significant difference with the field of study. The length of the program exhibit a significant difference between 12 costs out of 21 cost categories. Similarly, the gender and the social economic

group provide evidence on significant differences between costs respectively 12 and 10 out of 21 cost categories.

The study identified that medical cost did not have association with any of the independent variables. Thus, it clearly stated that medical cost is not dependent with any of the independent variables. However, cost related to library, photo copies and internship have a significant difference between field of study, gender, length of the program and socio-economic groups. Some cost categories such as stationery, course fee, tool and instruments, repeat, cloths and wear, personal care cosmetics and cost related to trips have a significant difference with at least three independent variables.

The reason for those differences could be the University which they selected, their economic level, their participations in the academic program such as internships, workshops, conferences and the requirement of the field, the safety purposes among the gender and duration of the program. Those reasons vary by field of study, gender, the length of the program and socio-economic group.

The results of this study are consistent with the empirical work of Enaigbe and Olubor (2016), Saruparia and Lodha (2013) and Iyiomo and Olayiwola (2014) whose results provide evidence that there is a significant difference between field of study and cost categories.

On gender basis, the findings are supported by Salami (2013) and Enaigbe and Olubor (2016) who concluded that there is significance difference between gender and cost of high education. Further, Ofem and Ahunanya (2013) revealed that the difference in the private cost of university education of male and female can attributed to the differences in the choice of course on offer.

The socio-economic group were identified based on the family income level of the students in the sample for this study. This study is therefore consistent with Salami (2013) who found that there is a significant difference with the socio-economic group.

Table 7: Chi – square test for Academic Cost

	Field of Study		Gender		Length of the Program		Socio-Economic Group	
	Expected count	Significant value	Expected count	Significant value	Expected count	Significant value	Expected count	Significant value
Academic Cost								
1. Course fees	12.60	0.000	24.36	0.324	19.52	0.000	17.30	0.000
2. Stationery	9.12	0.000	17.64	0.017	14.13	0.007	12.53	0.070
3. Library & membership	9.34	0.000	18.06	0.008	14.47	0.000	12.83	0.002
4. Coursework and assignments	9.99	0.000	19.32	0.539	15.48	0.005	13.72	0.052
5. Laptop and desktop	6.08	0.000	11.76	0.154	9.42	0.008	8.35.	0.246
6. Photocopies	7.82	0.000	15.12	0.001	12.11	0.000	10.74.	0.011
7. Tools and instruments	9.34	0.000	18.06	0.013	14.47	0.001	12.83	0.283
8. Repeat examination charges	5.43	0.006	10.50	0.037	8.41	0.007	7.46	0.066

Source: Compiled by the Authors

Table 8: Chi - square test for Non – Academic Cost

	Field of Study		Gender		Length of the Program		Socio-Economic Group	
	Expected count	Significant value	Expected count	Significant value	Expected count	Significant value	Expected count	Significant value
Non – Academic Cost								
1. Internship	7.17	0.000	13.86	0.035	11.11	0.000	9.84	0.047
2. Transportation	13.25	0.273	25.62	0.252	20.53	0.016	18.20	0.637
3. Vehicle maintenance and repair	8.69	0.442	16.80	0.760	13.46	0.015	11.93	0.326
4. Accommodation	10.86	0.008	21.00	0.293	16.83	0.575	14.92	0.001
5. Food and beverage	8.04	0.007	15.54	0.055	12.45	0.201	11.04	0.492
6. Medicine	7.17	0.670	13.86	0.483	11.11	0.097	9.84	0.169
7. Cloths and wear	12.60	0.003	24.36	0.005	19.52	0.717	17.30	0.000
8. Communication	11.73	0.041	22.68	0.715	18.17	0.108	16.11	0.039
9. Personal care and cosmetics	8.90	0.000	17.22	0.000	13.80	0.247	12.23	0.002
10. Entertainment	11.51	0.000	22.26	0.021	17.84	0.000	15.81	0.067
11. Sports	8.25	0.219	15.96	0.001	12.79	0.391	11.34	0.144
12. Events	45.17	0.904	87.37	0.207	70.00	0.835	62.05	0.020
13. Other expenses	11.51	0.121	22.26	0.627	17.84	0.154	15.81	0.022

Source: Compiled by the Authors

5. Conclusion

The study aimed at exploring the academic and non-academic costs associated with higher education in the Sri Lankan context and to identifying the significance of the difference between private cost for the higher education in Sri Lanka with four independent variables, namely, field of the study, gender, the length of the program and socio-economic class. The costs were divided into 21 categories identified from a pilot survey and the field of the study shows significant difference with 15 cost categories whereas gender, the length of the program and socio-economic class demonstrate significant difference with 10, 12 and 10 cost categories respectively. Hence the cost of the higher education is highly influenced by the field of study and partly influenced by other independent variables.

Academic costs are completely influenced by the field of study and length of the program. Further, most of the non-academic costs are influenced by socio-economic group and field of study. Exceptionally, medicine was not influenced by any of the independent variables concerned by this study.

The current study does not analyze the cost categories of students in state universities. Therefore, future studies can be conducted focusing on both private HEIs and state universities.

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