

A Systematic Literature Review of Perceived Educational Quality as a Driver of Higher Education Intention

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to synthesize the existing literature on the role of perceived educational quality in shaping higher education intentions. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA framework was employed. A total of 155 articles were identified, and 78 articles published between 2020 and 2025 met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed. The findings indicate that perceived educational quality is a multidimensional construct consisting of teaching quality, service quality, institutional reputation, academic environment, student-faculty interaction, and graduate employability, all of which contribute to students' intentions to pursue higher education. The review further reveals that previous studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding the most influential dimensions of educational quality, resulting in fragmented theoretical understanding. This study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive synthesis of the existing evidence and identifying key dimensions that consistently influence higher education intentions across different contexts. The findings contribute to the development of a more integrated conceptual framework and offer practical insights for higher education institutions in designing effective recruitment, marketing, and student retention strategies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has undergone a significant paradigm shift in the era of globalization. Universities are no longer viewed merely as institutions for knowledge transmission but also as strategic instruments for enhancing national competitiveness, improving human capital quality, and expanding social mobility. The emergence of a knowledge-based economy has positioned higher education as an essential pathway for individuals seeking competencies, academic credentials, and better career opportunities. This condition has intensified competition among higher education institutions in attracting prospective students through various strategies aimed at improving educational quality and institutional services. Consequently, the decision to pursue higher education is no longer a simple and linear process but rather a complex student decision-making process. Prospective students must evaluate multiple factors, including academic quality, institutional reputation, tuition costs, learning environment, and graduate employability before making educational choices. According to [1], the decision to pursue higher education is a gradual process influenced by the interaction of internal and external factors. In this context, higher education intentions represent an important indicator for understanding prospective students' behavior, as intention constitutes the preliminary stage preceding the actual decision to enroll in higher education.

According to [2], intention is the primary predictor of actual behavior and is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Therefore, understanding the factors that shape higher education intentions is crucial for higher education institutions in designing effective recruitment and retention strategies. One factor that has received increasing attention in the literature is perceived educational quality. Unlike objective quality indicators such as accreditation status or facility availability, perceived educational quality reflects individuals' subjective evaluations of their

overall educational experiences. This perspective aligns with service quality theory proposed by [3], which argues that quality is determined by users' perceptions of the services they receive.

Within the higher education context, perceived educational quality encompasses various dimensions, including teaching quality, service quality, institutional reputation, lecturer–student interaction, academic environment, and graduate employability [4]. Perceptions of these dimensions serve as important considerations in determining whether higher education is viewed as a worthwhile investment or a financial burden. Several studies have found that academic quality significantly influences students' intentions to pursue higher education, whereas other studies emphasize institutional reputation and graduate career prospects as more influential factors [5]. Furthermore, educational service quality may influence students' intentions indirectly through student satisfaction as a mediating variable [6].

The primary research gap in this field lies in the lack of consensus regarding which dimension of perceived educational quality most strongly influences higher education intentions. Although previous studies have identified dimensions such as teaching quality, service quality, institutional reputation, and graduate employability, the findings remain inconsistent and fragmented. Some studies highlight academic quality as the dominant factor, while others suggest that institutional reputation or career prospects play a more significant role in students' decisions to pursue higher education. These inconsistencies indicate the absence of a comprehensive conceptual framework capable of explaining how perceptions of educational quality shape higher education intentions. Despite the growing body of research on perceived educational quality in higher education, there remains limited understanding of which dimensions are most influential in shaping students' intentions, thereby necessitating a systematic synthesis to

provide a more integrated and evidence-based explanation.

The issue becomes even more complex because most previous studies have treated perceived educational quality as a unidimensional construct without systematically examining the contribution of each dimension [7]. In addition, the dominance of context-specific and locally focused studies has resulted in fragmented empirical findings that are difficult to generalize across broader educational settings. This situation highlights the urgent need for a research synthesis capable of integrating multiple dimensions of perceived educational quality into a comprehensive and evidence-based framework.

Therefore, this study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the PRISMA guidelines proposed by [8]. The study aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the various dimensions of perceived educational quality that influence higher education intentions, while also developing an integrative conceptual framework that contributes to both theoretical advancement and practical improvements in higher education management.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate, and systematically synthesize studies related to perceived educational quality as a determinant of higher education intentions. The literature review process was conducted through four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines developed by Moher et al. (2009). This approach was employed to ensure that the selected articles met high standards of relevance, methodological rigor, and scientific credibility.

During the identification stage, articles were retrieved from reputable academic databases using relevant keywords, including *“perceived educational quality,”*

“higher education intentions,” and *“student decision-making.”* The objective of this stage was to capture the broadest possible range of literature without imposing restrictive criteria at the outset. The search process resulted in the identification of 155 potentially relevant articles related to the research topic.

At the screening stage, a two-step filtering process was applied. First, articles were screened based on publication year, with only studies published between 2020 and 2025 retained to ensure the inclusion of recent literature. This criterion led to the exclusion of 57 articles, leaving 98 articles for further review. Second, articles were screened based on publication language. Only studies published in English were included to ensure consistency and accessibility in the review process. As a result, an additional 20 articles were excluded, leaving 78 articles for eligibility assessment.

During the eligibility stage, the remaining articles underwent a full-text review to determine their relevance to the study's focus, particularly regarding perceived educational quality and higher education intentions. The assessment revealed that all 78 articles met the eligibility criteria, and therefore no articles were excluded at this stage.

Finally, in the inclusion stage, all eligible articles were included in the final review sample. Consequently, a total of 78 articles were analyzed in this study. Quantitatively, the inclusion rate from the initial identification stage to the final inclusion stage was approximately 50.3% (78 out of 155 articles). This proportion indicates that the selection process was systematic and guided by clearly defined criteria, particularly regarding publication recency and language. The final dataset represents the most relevant, up-to-date, and credible literature examining the relationship between perceived educational quality and higher education intentions. Accordingly, the selected studies provide a robust foundation for thematic synthesis and the identification of key determinants influencing student decision-making within the higher education context.

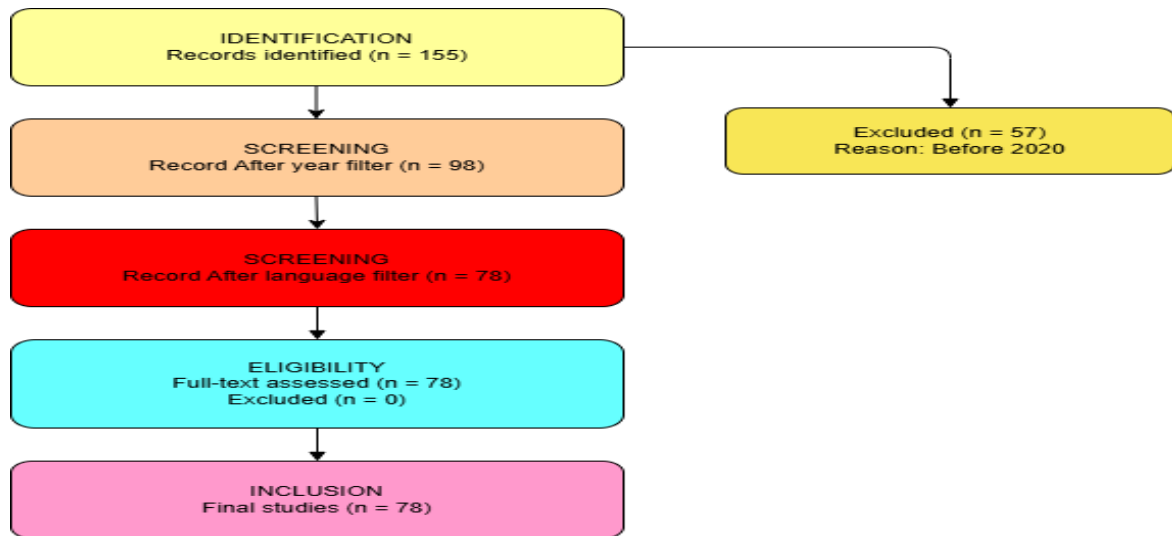


Figure 1. Tahapan dalam penyempurnaan Data

The screening stage was conducted in two phases. First, articles were filtered based on the publication period between 2020 and 2025 to ensure the inclusion of recent studies. At this stage, 57 articles were excluded because they did not meet the publication-year criterion, leaving 98 articles for further review. Second, language screening was applied, and only articles published in English were retained. As a result, 20 additional articles were excluded, reducing the final number to 78 articles.

During the eligibility stage, all remaining articles underwent a comprehensive full-text review to assess their relevance to the research focus, particularly discussions related to perceived educational quality and higher education intentions. The evaluation revealed that all 78 articles met the eligibility criteria; therefore, no articles were excluded at this stage.

In the final inclusion stage, all eligible articles were included in the review sample. Consequently, a total of 78 articles were analyzed in this study. Quantitatively, the inclusion rate from the identification stage to the final inclusion stage was approximately 50.3% (78 out of 155 articles). This proportion indicates that the selection process was systematic and based on clearly defined criteria, particularly regarding publication recency and language. The final set of articles represents the most relevant, current, and

credible literature examining the relationship between perceived educational quality and higher education intentions. Therefore, these studies provide a strong foundation for thematic synthesis and for identifying the key determinants influencing student decision-making in higher education.

To facilitate data analysis, several software applications were employed. Microsoft Excel was used to generate publication and citation trend tables. VOSviewer was utilized to visualize international research collaboration networks and research focus areas. In addition, Publish or Perish (PoP) was used to calculate bibliometric indicators, including Total Citations (TC), Number of Cited Papers (NCP), citations per paper (C/P), h-index, and g-index.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study synthesized the literature on perceived educational quality as a determinant of higher education intentions through four main aspects: publication trends, citation trends, research collaboration, and research focus. Publication trends during the 2020–2025 period indicate a growing scholarly interest in understanding how students' perceptions of educational quality influence their intentions to pursue higher education. This trend reflects the increasing

importance of student decision-making within a highly competitive higher education environment.

Citation trends demonstrate that research in this area has generated considerable academic impact and has become an important reference within higher education literature. The high citation rates suggest that perceived educational quality is increasingly recognized as a key variable in explaining higher education intentions, particularly within behavioral and decision-making frameworks.

From a collaboration perspective, international research partnerships have expanded significantly, contributing to a broader understanding of how educational quality perceptions are shaped across different social, cultural, and economic contexts. Such collaborations enrich the theoretical and empirical foundations of the field by incorporating diverse educational perspectives.

The analysis of research focus reveals that perceived educational quality is a multidimensional construct encompassing teaching quality, service quality, institutional reputation, academic environment, lecturer-student interaction, and graduate employability. In addition, several studies have incorporated complementary factors

such as motivation, career expectations, technology acceptance, and student satisfaction to explain higher education intentions more comprehensively.

Overall, the synthesis confirms that perceived educational quality plays a significant role in shaping higher education intentions. However, the findings also reveal substantial variation regarding which dimensions exert the strongest influence. This inconsistency suggests the need for a more integrative conceptual framework capable of explaining the mechanisms through which different dimensions of perceived educational quality contribute to students' intentions to pursue higher education. Such a framework would strengthen both theoretical understanding and practical strategies for higher education institutions seeking to attract and retain **prospective students** [9].

3.1 Publication Trend

Publication trends were analyzed by grouping the selected articles according to their year of publication. This analysis aims to illustrate the development of research on *perceived educational quality* and *higher education intentions* over the period 2020–2025. The annual distribution of publications is presented in Figure 2.

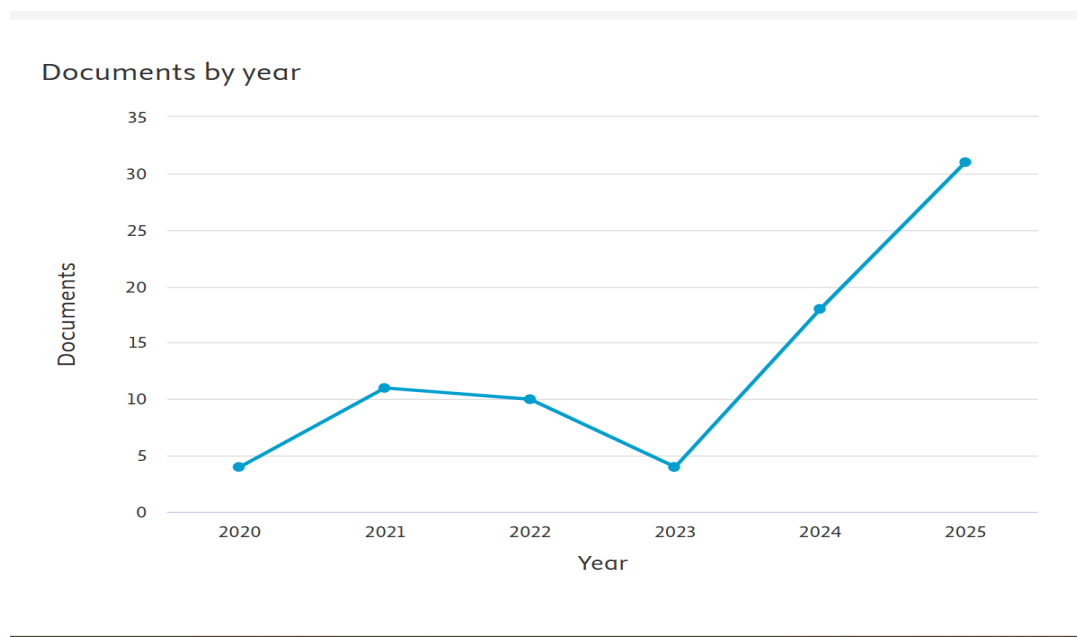


Figure 2. Publication Trends

The publication trend illustrates the development of scientific research on *perceived educational quality* and *higher education intentions* during the period 2020–2025. As shown in Figure 2, the number of publications exhibits a fluctuating pattern but demonstrates a clear upward trend toward the end of the observation period. In 2020, only four publications were identified, indicating the early stage of scholarly interest in this research area. A notable increase occurred in 2021, with the number of publications rising to ten, suggesting growing academic attention to the role of perceived educational quality in higher education. Although the number of publications slightly decreased to nine in 2022, research activity remained relatively stable. A more substantial decline was observed in 2023, when only four publications were recorded, representing the lowest level during the study period and potentially reflecting shifts in research priorities or publication dynamics.

A significant increase emerged in 2024, with the number of publications rising to eighteen articles. This upward trend continued in 2025, reaching a peak of thirty publications. The sharp increase in publication output indicates that *perceived educational quality* has become an increasingly important topic in explaining *higher education intentions*, particularly within the context of student decision-making. The growing research interest may also be associated with intensifying competition among higher education institutions to attract prospective students, making perceptions of educational quality a critical area of investigation. Overall, the publication trend suggests that research on *perceived educational quality* and *higher education intentions* is expanding rapidly and offers substantial opportunities for further theoretical and empirical development in the field of higher education.

Table 1. Citation Trends

Year	TP	TC	NCP	H	G
2025	31	107	19	6	9
2024	18	448	18	10	18
2023	4	220	3	2	4
2022	10	285	10	7	10
2021	11	387	11	9	11
2020	4	113	4	4	4

TP: Total Publication; TC: Total Citation; NCP: Number Citation Paper; H: h-index; G: g-index

3.2 Citation Trends

Table 1 presents the citation trends of studies related to *perceived educational quality* and *higher education intentions* based on several bibliometric indicators, namely Total Publications (TP), Total Citations (TC), Number of Cited Papers (NCP), h-index, and g-index. The table illustrates the citation dynamics of publications between 2020 and 2025. Overall, a distinctive pattern can be observed in which earlier publications accumulated relatively higher citation counts compared to their publication volume, whereas more recent years show an increase in publication output that has not yet been

accompanied by a proportional increase in citations.

To facilitate interpretation, the citation-per-publication ratio (TC/TP) was calculated for each year: 2020 = 28.3, 2021 = 35.2, 2022 = 28.5, 2023 = 55.0, 2024 = 24.9, and 2025 = 3.5. These figures indicate that publications from earlier years generally received more citations per article than recently published studies. Notably, the exceptionally high ratio recorded in 2023 suggests that, despite the relatively small number of publications, the articles published during that year achieved substantial academic influence. This pattern can largely be explained by the **citation age effect**,

whereby older publications have had more time to accumulate citations and establish their scholarly impact.

In contrast, publications from 2024 and 2025 have had limited time to gain visibility and accumulate citations, resulting in lower TC values and citation-per-publication ratios. This phenomenon is common in bibliometric analyses and should not be interpreted as an indication of lower research quality. Similar trends are reflected in the NCP, h-index, and g-index values. The year 2024 recorded the highest h-index (10) and g-index (18), indicating that publications from this period achieved broad scholarly recognition and citation distribution. Meanwhile, although 2025 produced the highest number of publications (31 articles), its bibliometric indicators remain comparatively lower, reflecting the early stage of citation accumulation.

The fluctuation in publication output (TP) also reflects the evolving dynamics of

research productivity in this field. The substantial increase in publications during 2024 and 2025 demonstrates a growing academic interest in *perceived educational quality* as a determinant of *higher education intentions*. However, this increase in productivity has not yet translated into a comparable rise in citation impact. This finding suggests that, in addition to research productivity, time and scholarly visibility remain critical factors in generating scientific influence. Overall, the citation analysis indicates that while research output in this area has expanded considerably in recent years, its academic impact remains strongly shaped by temporal factors. Therefore, the findings highlight the importance of considering the time dimension when evaluating the scientific contribution of studies examining *perceived educational quality* and *higher education intentions*.

Table 2. Most-Cited Publications Tabel

Author	Title	Journal Name	Citation
(Chung Yee Lai, Kwok Yip Cheung, Chee Seng Chan,2023)	Exploring the role of intrinsic motivation in Chat GPT adoption to support active learning: An extension of the technology acceptance model.	www.sciencedirect.com/journal/computers-and-education-artificial-intelligence	196
(A.M.Al-Rahmi, A.Shamsuddin, A. Alturki, A.Aldraiwest,F.M. Yusof,2021)	The Influence of Information System Success and Technology Acceptance Model on Social Media Factors in Education	MDPI AG	144
(S. Almogren · Waleed Mugahed Al-Rahmi Nisar Ahmed Dahri ,2024)	Exploring factors influencing the acceptance of ChatGPT in higher education: A smart education perspective	Heliyon A Cell Press Journal	123
	Determinants Influencing the Continuous		91

(M.A, Almaiah, R, Alfaisal, S.A. Solloum, 2022)	Intention to Use Digital Technologies in Higher Education	Kybernetes Emerald Publishing 75	
(A.Rof, A.Bikfalvi, 2024)	Understanding learners' intention toward Metaverse in higher education institutions from a developing country perspective		

3.3 Most Cited Publication Trends

Table 2 shows that the most highly cited publications are predominantly focused on digital technology adoption and artificial intelligence in higher education. The study conducted by [10], entitled *“Exploring the Role of Intrinsic Motivation in ChatGPT Adoption to Support Active Learning: An Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model,”* received the highest number of citations, totaling 196. This high citation count indicates the growing scholarly interest in ChatGPT adoption and the integration of artificial intelligence into active learning environments. The study also highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation and technology acceptance in shaping user behavior within digital learning contexts.

The second most-cited publication is the study by [11], *“The Influence of Information System Success and Technology Acceptance Model on Social Media Factors in Education,”* which received 144 citations. The findings emphasize the critical role of information system success and technology acceptance in supporting the educational use of social media platforms. Similarly, the study by [12], which examines the acceptance of ChatGPT in higher education, accumulated 123 citations, further demonstrating the increasing academic attention devoted to artificial intelligence applications in educational settings. Meanwhile, the study by [13] on the continuous intention to use digital technologies in higher education received 91 citations, whereas the research conducted by

[14] on learners’ intentions to adopt the metaverse in higher education obtained 75 citations.

These findings suggest that contemporary higher education research extends beyond traditional discussions of educational quality and increasingly focuses on the role of digital technologies in shaping learning experiences and behavioral intentions. The prominence of highly cited studies related to artificial intelligence, technology acceptance, social media, and virtual learning environments indicates that digital transformation has become a central theme in higher education research. Overall, the citation patterns reveal that technology integration, artificial intelligence, and digital learning constitute major research directions that continue to influence the evolution of higher education scholarship in recent years.

3.4 International Research Collaboration Trends

Figure 3 illustrates the pattern of international research collaboration related to *perceived educational quality and higher education intentions*. In the visualization, each node represents a country that has contributed to scientific publications within the field, while the connecting lines indicate collaborative relationships among countries. The network provides an overview of the extent to which international partnerships contribute to the development of research on higher education and student decision-making. Such collaborations facilitate the

exchange of knowledge, perspectives, and methodological approaches, thereby strengthening the global understanding of

factors influencing students' intentions to pursue higher education.

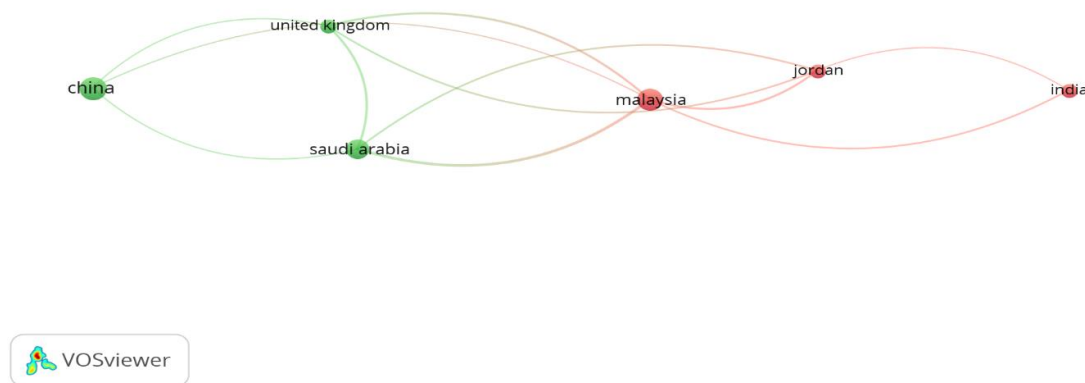


Figure 3. International Research Collaboration Network

3.5 Research Collaboration Trends Countries

Figure 3 presents a country collaboration network in research related to *perceived educational quality* and *higher education intentions*, visualized using VOSviewer [15]. Each node represents a country involved in scientific publications, while the connecting lines indicate research collaborations between countries. The size of a node reflects the level of publication contribution, whereas different colors represent distinct collaboration clusters.

The visualization shows that Malaysia occupies a central position within the international collaboration network, as it is connected with several countries, including Jordan, India, the United Kingdom, and Saudi Arabia. This finding suggests that Malaysia plays a significant role in advancing research on higher education and perceived educational quality. In addition, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia demonstrate

relatively strong collaborative relationships with other countries, particularly within the green collaboration cluster. Meanwhile, India and Jordan belong to smaller collaboration groups but remain connected to Malaysia as the central hub of the network.

Overall, the collaboration map indicates that research on *perceived educational quality* and *higher education intentions* has evolved through interconnected international partnerships. These cross-national collaborations facilitate the exchange of diverse academic perspectives and contribute to a broader understanding of the factors influencing students' intentions to pursue higher education across different social, cultural, and educational contexts. The findings also highlight the growing importance of global research cooperation in developing a more comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of student decision-making in higher education.

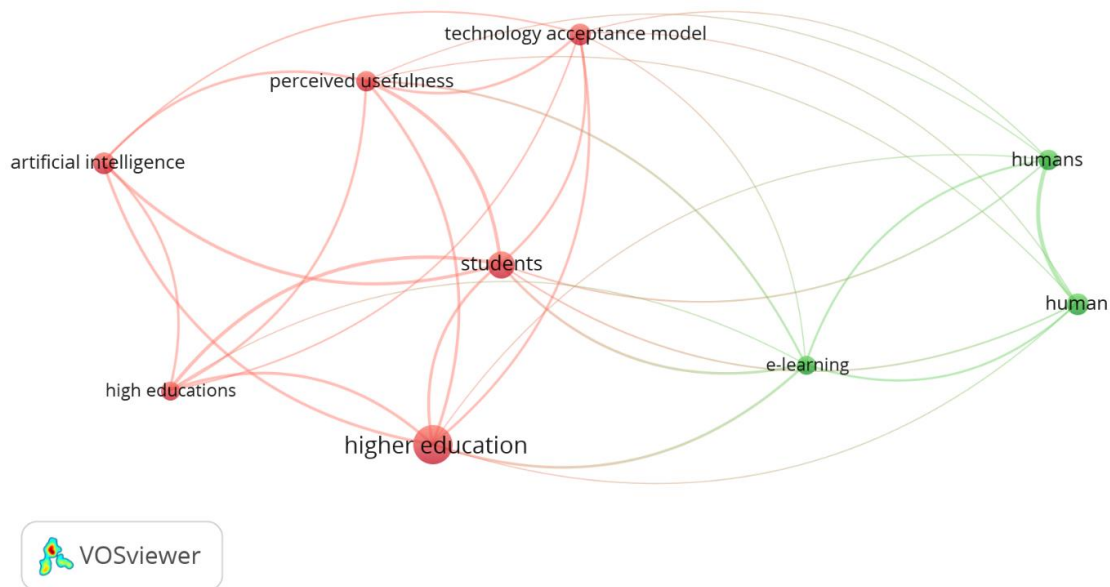


Figure 4. Research Novelty

3.6 Research Novelty

The bibliometric visualization generated using VOSviewer indicates that recent research in higher education has been predominantly dominated by technology-oriented themes, such as the *Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)*, *perceived usefulness*, *artificial intelligence*, and *e-learning*. The keywords *higher education* and *students* occupy central positions within the network and exhibit strong connections with various technology acceptance constructs. This finding suggests that scholarly attention in higher education research has largely focused on digital technology integration and students' technology usage behavior rather than on perceptions of educational quality itself.

The strong relationships among *technology acceptance model*, *perceived usefulness*, and *artificial intelligence* further demonstrate that previous studies have primarily emphasized how students adopt and utilize technology in higher education settings. In contrast, research specifically examining *perceived educational quality* as a determinant of *higher education intentions* remains relatively limited and has not yet

become a major focus within the existing research network. This condition highlights a significant research gap, particularly the absence of a comprehensive synthesis identifying which dimensions of *perceived educational quality* most strongly influence students' intentions to pursue higher education.

In this study, the term *drivers* refers to the various dimensions of *perceived educational quality* that influence *higher education intentions*, including *teaching quality*, *service quality*, *institutional reputation*, *academic environment*, *student-faculty interaction*, and *graduate employability* [16]. These dimensions shape students' subjective evaluations of higher education quality before making decisions about continuing their studies. However, previous studies have produced fragmented findings and have not adequately explained the relative contribution of each dimension in shaping *higher education intentions* [17].

Based on this condition, the novelty of the present study lies in offering a perspective that extends beyond technology acceptance in higher education by positioning *perceived educational quality* as a multidimensional

construct that plays a critical role in shaping *higher education intentions* [18]. Through a *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) approach [19], this study synthesizes the various dimensions of educational quality perceptions that serve as drivers of students' intentions to pursue higher education. Furthermore, this study contributes to the development of an evidence-based conceptual framework that integrates the multidimensional aspects of *perceived educational quality* and explains their influence on *higher education intentions*, an area that remains insufficiently addressed in the higher education literature [20].

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to systematically synthesize empirical findings regarding the role of perceived educational quality in shaping higher education intentions. Based on the analysis of 78 articles, the findings indicate that perceived educational quality is a significant determinant of individuals' intentions to pursue higher education. The review reveals that perceived educational quality is a multidimensional construct consisting of teaching quality, service quality, institutional reputation, academic environment, student–faculty interaction, and graduate employability. These dimensions

contribute differently to higher education intentions depending on social, cultural, and institutional contexts.

The findings also highlight the fragmentation of previous studies and the lack of consensus regarding which dimension of perceived educational quality exerts the strongest influence on higher education intentions. This study contributes to the literature by providing a systematic synthesis and developing an integrated conceptual understanding of how educational quality perceptions influence students' decision-making processes. The novelty of this review lies in positioning perceived educational quality as a multidimensional driver of higher education intentions and consolidating evidence that has previously been dispersed across different research contexts.

Practically, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should not focus solely on academic quality but also strengthen institutional reputation, service quality, learning environment, and graduate career prospects to enhance students' intentions to continue their studies. Future research is recommended to empirically validate the proposed conceptual framework using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches across diverse higher education settings.

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