

## Higher Education in Asia: The Changing World Rankings of Asian Higher Education Institutions (2015-2025)

### Asya'da Yükseköğretim: Asya Yükseköğretim Kurumlarının Değişen Dünya Sıralamaları (2015-2025)

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**ABSTRACT:** This research aims to comparatively examine the changing appearance of world rankings of Asian HEIs among their global competitors from 2015 to 2025. The study group consists of the top five HEIs indexed in the 2024 Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings from the nine countries with the largest population in Asia and the top five HEIs indexed in the 2025 Times Higher Education World University Rankings from the Russian Federation. The study found that HEIs in China, Japan, and Russia were the most stable examples that performed positively regarding world rankings. Although there was no solid continuity, the rankings of Indian HEIs generally showed a positive momentum. HEIs in Vietnam and Bangladesh did not have ongoing success because they were in the ranking index only for the last couple of years. HEIs in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Pakistan either performed in a neutral direction with slight fluctuations or showed decreasing ranking trends. The results revealed that the global rankings of HEIs in most Asian countries, except Japan, China, and Russia, lag behind their international competitors. Therefore, HEIs in most Asian countries could not establish a stable profile against their international competitors in global rankings.

**Keywords:** World rankings, Asian HEIs, higher education studies, international education.

**ÖZ:** Bu araştırma, 2015'ten 2025'e Asya yükseköğretim kurumlarının dünya sıralamalarının küresel rakipleri arasında değişen görünümünü karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma grubu içerisinde Asya'da en fazla nüfusa sahip dokuz ülkenin 2024 Times Yükseköğretim Asya Üniversite Sıralamalarında indekslenen en iyi beş yükseköğretim kurumu ile Rusya Federasyonu'nun 2025 Times Yükseköğretim Dünya Sıralamalarında indekslenen en iyi beş yükseköğretim kurumu yer almaktadır. Çalışma; Çin, Japonya ve Rusya'daki yükseköğretim kurumlarının dünya sıralamalarında olumlu performans gösteren en istikrarlı örnekler olduğunu bulmuştur. Sağlam bir devamlılık olmamasına rağmen Hint yükseköğretim kurumlarının sıralamaları genel olarak olumlu bir ivme göstermiştir. Vietnam ve Bangladeş'teki yükseköğretim kurumları, yalnızca birkaç yıldır sıralama indeksinde yer aldıkları için devam eden bir başarıya sahip değildir. Filipinler, Endonezya, Tayland ve Pakistan'daki yükseköğretim kurumları, hafif dalgalanmalarla nötr veya azalan yönde sıralama eğilimleri göstermiştir. Sonuçlar; Japonya, Çin ve Rusya hariç çoğu Asya ülkesindeki yükseköğretim kurumlarının yükseköğretim sıralamaları bakımından uluslararası rakiplerinin gerisinde kaldığını ortaya koymuştur. Dolayısıyla Asya ülkelerinin çoğunda yükseköğretim kurumları, küresel sıralamalarda uluslararası rakipleri karşısında istikrarlı bir profil çizememiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Dünya sıralamaları, Asya yükseköğretim kurumları, yükseköğretim çalışmaları, uluslararası eğitim.

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The ongoing effects of globalization on countries and its various effects on higher education have always made the rankings of higher education institutions (HEIs) a hot topic. Different academic ranking indexes that aim to evaluate HEIs each other through various factors have been becoming more popular among world countries due to globalization and its inevitable economic consequences (Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2017). Rankings have been seen as an essential indicator that reflects the current positions of HEIs from a comparative perspective (van der Wende, 2008). Although the current literature always contains major criticism regarding inconsistent ranking results of different ranking indexes due to several factors, such as objectivity and credibility issues, methodological concerns, or overall validity problems (Fauzi et al., 2020; Harvey, 2008; Huang, 2012; Liu & Cheng, 2005; Pandiella-Dominique et al., 2018; Sayed, 2019; Soh, 2017; Ying & Jingao, 2009), HEIs still believe in the power and significance of global ranking indexes. In well-known ranking indexes, such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR), the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), and the QS World University Rankings, HEIs from different continents fiercely compete to be at the top positions for possible future benefits. By becoming leaders of eminent ranking indexes worldwide, HEIs aim to attract prospective students to consider choosing and enrolling them thanks to their enhanced reputation among the other alternatives (Altbach, 2012; Joseph et al., 2012; Koenings et al., 2020). Because being ranked low among stakeholders may negatively affect students' preferences and cause HEIs in question not to be among their first choices for application (Broecke, 2015; Meyer et al., 2017). From a broader perspective, governments pay attention to the positions of HEIs in ranking indexes to design creative and innovative pathways for their future policies in higher education area (Castro & Tomàs-Folch, 2015; Lim & Williams Øerberg, 2017). For these reasons, the role of global ranking indexes and being ranked in high positions of HEIs by these indexes are critical for each HEI in world countries. That is because occupying the top positions not only contributes to the cumulative growth and reputation of HEIs but also provides feedback for governments or countries to examine whether they follow an effective track to support and develop national higher education.

Nowadays, HEIs are evaluated and ranked by global ranking indexes to obtain top-ranking positions worldwide and gain global prestige as a vital part of global competition. However, some of them, such as the QS, THE, or ARWU, are most widely taken into account by the global arena to be ranked HEIs. Different global ranking indexes rank HEIs through their unique evaluation standards. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR) employs numerous factors within five focal points (teaching, research quality, research environment, industry, and international outlook) to determine performances and general ranks of HEIs from a comparative perspective (Times Higher Education, 2024). Based on these solid standards, the ranking index aims to rank each HEI by appointing values up to 100 points and publishes a global ranking list each year. Beyond this mission, the ranking index also offers a comprehensive dataset for HEIs that each HEI can interpret their global appearance by analyzing unique data, such as their global brand power or what fields they are best among the other HEIs, to improve their current reputations or shape their future actions in different areas (Times Higher Education, n.d.). At this point, benefits and potential future developments of being ranked by a ranking index may

offer HEIs remarkable outcomes in terms of not only being among the top choices of prospective students but also aiming to design and implement the best marketing campaigns to make their names more visible through their successes in different fields.

To comprehensively understand the role of global ranking indexes in higher education, it is notable to emphasize the interactive relationship between the concepts of internationalization and competitiveness within the framework of HEIs. As a complex term, internationalization has been a core and enduring element of higher education for a long time. Although the emergence of internationalization began to gain attention through the increasing visibility of the global capitalism movement in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bamberger & Morris, 2024), its effects and reflections on higher education have become more comprehensive over the last three decades (Knight & de Wit, 2018).

The nature of internationalization in higher education mainly included the evolving processes of institutional and national actions from local and regional to the global world, spreading education worldwide, adopting a more decentralized and specific understanding in creating policies by always considering the role of economic welfare, and the roles of rankings in different scales (de Wit, 2019). These key features have intensified competition among HEIs, prompting them to take comprehensive and inclusive steps in the field of higher education. In this context, expanding HEIs all over the world through branch campuses and establishing new academic programs conducted in English (Altbach & Knight, 2007), increasing the number of international students and academics (de Wit & Deca, 2020) are among the crucial steps taken by HEIs and countries.

Global ranking indexes are another influential factor in the reputation race among world HEIs (Hazelkorn, 2008). These indexes prioritize the role of institutional quality as HEIs consistently aim to improve their academic excellence through various innovations to be steadily ranked by these indexes. The institutional quality efforts of HEIs to be at first rankings in global ranking indexes can be linked to the resource dependence theory. This theory argues that organizations are not completely independent in terms of managing their resources, as they are affected by their environments, and this dual interactive relationship creates a dependency between organizations and environmental actors (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

The resource dependence theory explains the institutional quality efforts of HEIs to be ranked in global rankings from several points. Ranking indexes are considered critical indicators that governments attach importance to in their decision-making processes regarding financial support or funding allocation to HEIs (Harvey, 2008; Ordorika & Lloyd, 2015; Thakur, 2007). Therefore, this fact forms a multidimensional dependency among HEIs, ranking indexes, and governments by enriching the efforts of HEIs to provide institutional quality. Secondly, being at the top of prestigious ranking indexes is important for HEIs to attract qualified international students and expand their institutional brand images through overseas campuses as a result of increasing global demand. Global rankings play a leading role for HEIs as they have the potential to attract the best international students from around the world for educational purposes (Katsumoto et al., 2024; Rust & Kim, 2015; Souto-Otero & Enders, 2017). Global rankings also shape academics' future careers by influencing their desire to work at prestigious HEIs. Having the best-talented students and renowned academicians directly improved the academic excellence of HEIs and indirectly provided a high-level

contribution to the cumulative growth of countries. Therefore, these positive results that may arise depending on the dependency between HEIs and their global ranking success further increase the importance of being included in these indexes.

### Literature Review

Although HEIs in Asia demonstrate high-level efforts to boost their global rankings through higher education initiatives (Guo et al. 2023), they still do not appear to be as competitive as their American counterparts in world rankings (Balatsky & Ekimova, 2020; Kaba, 2012). Research in the literature investigated possible roles of rankings that might affect global appearances of HEIs and shape future policy-related actions of countries regarding higher education (Ahlers & Christmann-Budian, 2023; Erkkilä, 2014; Poelmans et al., 2024; Taylor & Braddock, 2007). Furthermore, numerous research activities focused on the features of ranking indexes or compared different global ranking indexes with each other to understand whether there is consistency or similarities among the results presented in the scope of the HEI rankings (Aguillo et al., 2010; Chen & Liao, 2012; Khosrowjerdi & Kashani, 2013; Selten et al., 2020; Shehatta & Mahmood, 2016).

However, there is a lack of research emphasizing the overall ranking positions of Asian HEIs in various regions or areas of the continent through different types of ranking indexes. As an example of this limited number of studies, Soh (2012) compared the global rankings of selected top ten Asian HEIs located in East Asia with the top ten other international HEIs through the THE World University Rankings 2011-2012 and concluded that HEIs in the East Asia region were behind among world HEIs in different aspects. Emphasizing the effects of global rankings on higher education policies based on a cross-national comparative analysis, Lee et al. (2020) revealed that China and Korea performed a rising ranking pattern against their Japanese and American counterparts in the scope of global rankings. In their study, Reddy et al. (2016) aimed to thoroughly examine the rankings of HEIs in China and India as well as their research performances, and found that many Chinese universities were among the top HEIs according to the 2015-2016 THE World University Rankings (n=20) and the 2015 Academic Ranking of World Universities (n=110). However, their study indicated that only one Indian university was among the top 400 in the 2015 Academic Ranking of World Universities and was among the top 300 in the 2015-2016 THE World University Rankings (Reddy et al., 2016). Based on the 2014 THE rankings, Postiglione and Arimoto (2015) emphasized the rise of Chinese HEIs among their global counterparts and paid attention to the competitive challenge among some Asian HEIs to fulfill first places. Liu (2016) evaluated the rankings of East Asian HEIs through the ARWU 2015 ranking data. Her study found that Japanese HEIs (n=4) were in the top 100 and many Chinese HEIs (n=44) were in the top 500, while American HEIs led the ranking index (Liu, 2016).

Based on the data provided by various leading global ranking indexes, Puzatykh (2023) found that Russian HEIs lagged behind other international HEIs due to their low success indicators in different areas, such as academic publications-related problems, inadequate knowledge about HEIs, low level of integration with world or internationalization issues. Examining Indian HEIs, Tilak (2016) suggested that higher education policies in India need to be improved to move HEIs to better positions in

rankings. In his study, he mentioned that Indian HEIs lagged behind other Asian HEIs in the QS University Rankings: Asia 2014 and the 2014 THE Asia University Rankings (Tilak, 2016). By paying attention to the methodological differences among some of the eminent global ranking indexes through Indian HEIs, Chowdhury and Rahman (2021) emphasized that two Indian HEIs separately succeeded in being ranked in the top 500 lists of ARWU, THE, QS, and Webometrics indexes. In their study, Chowdhury and Rahman (2021) also noted that these methodological differences in global ranking indexes directly influenced the rankings of Indian HEIs. Through the case of Indonesia, Pramana et al. (2021) shed light the low-level performance of Indonesian HEIs in both regional and global rankings. Highlighting various problems affecting Indonesian education, they suggested different institutional and governmental actions that could enhance the quality of the higher education system nationwide (Pramana et al., 2021). In another study, Fernandes and Singh (2022) compared the evaluation metrics between domestic ranking indexes in India and the THE global ranking index. Their study found that Indian HEIs suffered a lack of research and citation scores, which are among the core elements in THE WUR, and this was the main reason that caused them to lag in global ranking indexes, even though they seem more successful in domestic rankings (Fernandes & Singh, 2022). Different research in the literature can be considered as a clear indication that the importance given to the issue of global rankings is important not only for HEIs but also for governments or countries to compete worldwide in higher education.

Although not quantitatively intensive and not directly related to the success or failure of Asian HEIs in global ranking indexes, some policy papers and research reports mostly prepared by NGOs worldwide also draw attention to the current view of higher education in different regions of Asia. For example, a policy paper published by UNESCO noted that the main problems with internationalization in higher education in some selected Central Asia countries were low levels of cooperation efforts with other countries and varying quality standards (UNESCO, 2021). Similarly, another global report by UNESCO highlighted that South and West Asia (1.2%) and Central Asia (1.2%) hosted the fewest international students compared to the rest of the world in 2019 (UNESCO, 2022). However, according to the same report, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia regions have succeeded in placing at the top worldwide in terms of gross enrollment rates in higher education between 2000-2020 years (UNESCO, 2022). The report prepared by Ambasz et al. (2023) also pointed out that the lack of funding, quality issues, inequality in reaching higher education, academic programs that did not directly cover the workforce needs, the low level of cooperation between industry and HEIs, and inadequate importance given to research and innovation activities were some of the key problems faced by higher education in Central Asia. These recent global reports address key issues regarding the reasons for the unsatisfactory or inconsistent performance of Asian higher education institutions in global rankings in the international arena.

As seen in the current literature, most research focused on a single or a combination of a few Asian HEI cases to examine their global rankings among world counterparts. Therefore, there is a gap in the current literature in terms of understanding the ranking positions of Asian HEIs from past to present. Based on this gap, this research evaluates the overall global rankings of five HEIs in 10 different Asian

countries from a longitudinal perspective between 2015 and 2025. This study aims to understand whether there are rising or decreasing trends regarding the global rankings of Asian HEIs. Thus, this study is critical for Asian HEIs and governments to gain awareness about the global ranking positions of their national HEIs. This study is also noteworthy because it offers Asian HEIs and governments innovative higher education policies and initiatives to enhance the reputation and visibility of their HEIs worldwide. This study seeks to answer the two research questions below:

- What is the overall success pattern of global rankings of HEIs in selected Asian countries between 2015 and 2025 based on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE WUR)?
- What types of comprehensive higher education policies can be designed and implemented to improve the overall rankings of HEIs in selected Asian countries?

## Method

### Research Design

As an example of qualitative research, this study is a multiple case study since it created a general understanding of the changing ranking patterns of Asian HEIs based on examples from many countries. The multiple case study is a sub-dimension of the case study research design, and thanks to its nature, it mainly examines situations from a comprehensive perspective. There are several positive aspects to consider employing this design while focusing on an issue or issues. This research design inherently allows researchers to analyze problems/situations from similar or different perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008). According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), “Multiple cases also enable broader exploration of research questions and theoretical elaboration” (p. 27). Therefore, conducting this study under a multiple case study design is appropriate to make better explorations and create better connections among the cases in the scope of the research questions.

### Study Group

The study group purposefully selected consists of the top five HEIs indexed in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings from the nine Asian countries (Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) and the top five HEIs indexed in the 2025 THE WUR from the Russian Federation. The determination and selection of the top ten Asian countries with the largest populations in the continent is configured in light of the data obtained from the *World Factbook* prepared and presented by the CIA (CIA, 2024). Besides, the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings and the 2025 THE WUR were used to determine the top five HEIs in these country examples. Although it is a country with most of its territory located within the Asia continent, HEIs in the Russian Federation are not included in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings. Therefore, the 2025 THE WUR was used as a reference to identify and select the top five HEIs in the Russian Federation.

### Data Collection Procedure

The data used in this study is based on the THE WUR between 2015 (included) and 2025 (included). The required datasets regarding the global ranking positions of

HEIs were gathered from the THE World University Rankings website from 2015 to 2025 through the open-published ranking indexes of each year (Times Higher Education, 2024; Times Higher Education, 2023; Times Higher Education, 2022; Times Higher Education, 2021; Times Higher Education, 2020; Times Higher Education, 2019; Times Higher Education, 2018; Times Higher Education, 2017; Times Higher Education, 2016; Times Higher Education, 2015; Times Higher Education, 2015a).

### **Data Analysis**

The method used in the data analysis process of this study is document analysis. As Bowen (2009) noted, “Document analysis involves skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation” (p. 32). Therefore, this method mainly focuses on examining data through a source or a combination of different sources and reaching outcomes by deeply analyzing them. The data analysis process began with gathering the relevant data from the THE WUR datasets for 2015-2025 based on the research questions.

In the following phase, individual univariate tables were created to present the year-based ranking appearances of each HEI for each of the ten Asian countries. The ranking positions and overall ranking trends of HEIs through the selected cases were analyzed. Based on the data analyzed, the researcher made interpretations regarding increasing or decreasing ranking trends for each case. The existence of a quantitatively large number of HEIs and year-based intense fluctuations observed among those prevented the researcher from selecting a concrete numerical unit to evaluate the increasing or decreasing trend of global institution rankings. In cases where HEIs improved (e.g., from 251-300 to 201-250) their rankings every two-year period (e.g., 2018-2019) and had an overall positive trend over ten years, the researcher considered that the HEIs had a successful momentum in the global rankings. Conversely, in cases where HEIs decreased (e.g., from 201-250 to 251-300) their rankings every two-year period and performed an overall negative trend over ten years, the HEIs reviewed had an unsuccessful momentum in the global rankings. In the final phase of the analysis process, the researcher suggested potential higher education policies that might boost the current rankings for each case.

### **Validity and Reliability**

There are different strategies or approaches to ensure or increase validity in qualitative research. One of these strategies, called analyst triangulation, focuses on subjecting the data to a meticulous and comparative evaluation and analysis process by two or more people other than the researcher (Patton, 2002, p. 560). Following the characteristics of this strategy, the analyses carried out by the researcher were carefully examined by two external evaluators. Then, the researcher completed the necessary revisions by considering the feedback from the external evaluators. This process aimed to increase the validity level of the research.

### **Ethics Procedure**

This study does not require ethics committee approval since it does not involve human participants or animal research objects at any stage of the research process. Additionally, the open-access nature of the THE WUR website ensures a high level of

transparency and accuracy in the data collection and interpretation processes throughout the study. The availability of the dataset used in the research in an unalterable form also prevents potential biases and improves the overall accountability and fairness levels.

## Results

This section presents the overall ranking positions of each HEI in selected Asian countries from 2015 to 2025 through tables based on the THE WUR dataset.

### China

The top five Chinese HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are Tsinghua University, Peking University, Fudan University, Zhejiang University, and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. The current rankings of the selected Chinese HEIs are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1  
*Global Rankings of Chinese HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Tsinghua University	49	=47	35	30	22	23	=20	=16	16	12	12
Peking University	48	42	29	=27	31	24	23	=16	17	14	13
Fudan University	193	201-250	155	116	104	109	=70	60	51	44	=36
Zhejiang University	301-350	251-300	201-250	=177	101	=107	=94	=75	67	=55	=47
Shanghai Jiao Tong University	276-300	301-350	201-250	=188	189	=157	100	84	52	43	52

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

Table 1 shows that Tsinghua University was ranked 49th in 2015 and increased to 12th place among world universities in 2025. This HEI had a static ranking performance between 2022 (=16) and 2023 (16). Almost in the same way, Peking University gradually improved its ranking positions year by year. In 2015, this university obtained 48th place just before Tsinghua University and reached 13th place in 2025. Even though they were not among the top 50 HEIs in 2015, Fudan University and Shanghai Jiao Tong University performed well in advance by being among the top 50 HEIs worldwide in 2024. However, Shanghai Jiao Tong University could not protect its position in the top 50 by decreasing its ranking to 52 in 2025. Lastly, in 2025, Zhejiang University obtained 47th place and succeeded in being ranked in the top 50 HEIs worldwide, just like other Chinese HEIs, except Shanghai Jiao Tong University.



Table 1 indicates that Tsinghua University and Peking University, which have the highest ranks (Tsinghua University =12 and Peking University =13) in the 2025 THE WUR, consistently enhanced their academic rankings from 2015 to 2025 with minimal fluctuations except for a few year periods. In the same direction, the other three Chinese HEIs, including Fudan, Zhejiang, and Shanghai Jiao Tong, also had an increasing achievement momentum year by year even though they did not have a clear and continuous positive direction in terms of their ranking success compared to Tsinghua and Peking Universities.

### India

The top five Indian HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are the Indian Institute of Science, Anna University, Mahatma Gandhi University, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Shoolini University of Biotechnology and Management Sciences. The current rankings of selected Indian HEIs are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2  
*Global Rankings of Indian HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Indian Institute of Science	276-300	251-300	201-250	251-300	251-300	301-350	301-350	301-350	251-300	201-250	201-250
Anna University	-	-	-	-	-	1001+	1001+	801-1000	801-1000	501-600	401-500
Mahatma Gandhi University	-	-	-	-	-	-	601-800	601-800	401-500	501-600	401-500
Jamia Millia Islamia	-	-	-	801-1000	801-1000	601-800	601-800	601-800	501-600	501-600	501-600
Shoolini University of Biotechnology and Management Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Reporter	351-400	501-600	401-500

Note. This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

According to Table 2, only one Indian HEI, the Indian Institute of Science, consistently featured in the THE WUR from 2015 to 2025. This HEI found a ranking spot mostly between 251 and 300. Anna, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jamia Millia Islamia HEIs have been performing positively with ongoing momentum regarding global rankings although they were not on the ranking lists in 2015, 2016, and 2017. However, one of the HEIs examined, Shoolini University of Biotechnology and Management

Sciences, showed an inconsistent ranking performance as its rankings in 2023 (=351-400), 2024 (=501-600), and 2025 (=401-500) had highly fluctuated patterns.

Table 2 reflects that only one HEI in India, the Indian Institute of Science, seeks almost a linear path regarding its global rankings. Although this HEI did not obtain the top 50 or 100 ranks in all the years analyzed, it usually managed to find a place within the 251-300 ranking range. Secondly, the general ranking momentum observed in Anna and Jamia Millia Islamia HEIs was positive, and these HEIs improved their global ranks year by year among their stakeholders' positions in the ranking datasets analyzed. Even if the rankings of Mahatma Gandhi University and Shoolini University of Biotechnology and Management Sciences drew mostly an increasing ranking pattern, the global ranks of both HEIs decreased in 2024 compared to the previous year.

### Indonesia

The top five Indonesian HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are the University of Indonesia, Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), BINUS University, Universitas Sebelas Maret, and Universitas Gadjah Mada. The current rankings of selected Indonesian HEIs are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3

*Global Rankings of Indonesian HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
University of Indonesia	-	601-800	801+	801-1000	601-800	601-800	801-1000	801-1000	1001-1200	801-1000	801-1000
Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB)	-	-	801+	801-1000	801-1000	1001+	1001+	1001-1200	1201-1500	1201-1500	1201-1500
BINUS University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1201+	1201-1500	1201-1500	1201-1500
Universitas Sebelas Maret	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1201+	1201-1500	1201-1500	1201-1500
Universitas Gadjah Mada	-	-	-	801-1000	1001+	1001+	1001+	1201+	1201-1500	1201-1500	1201-1500

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

Table 3 revealed that no Indonesian HEIs had a place in the 2015 THE WUR. The University of Indonesia was in the ranking index for the first time in 2016, whereas the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) was in the index for the first time in 2017. Then, the Universitas Gadjah Mada followed the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) and found a place in the index for the first time in 2018. BINUS University and

Universitas Sebelas Maret have been in the THE WUR since 2022. *Table 3* indicates that the Indian HEI examples examined either performed a negative performance in terms of their ranking statuses year by year or had a neutral direction regarding their global rankings. For example, the year-based rankings of the University of Indonesia constantly fluctuated, and its rankings were generally within 801-1000. Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) and the Universitas Gadjah Mada achieved a rank between 801-1000 or 801+ in all years as the highest achievement rate. However, their rankings gradually decreased and reached the 1201-1500 rank range by the recent ranking datasets.

Table 3 also reflects that the University of Indonesia had the most fluctuating rankings throughout the years analyzed. Unlike the University of Indonesia and its fluctuating ranking status, all Indian HEIs (Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), BINUS University, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Universitas Gadjah Mada) had a low level of performance pattern regarding their global positions due to their decreasing rankings during the ten years.

### Pakistan

The top five Pakistani HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are Quaid-i-Azam University, Air University, National University of Sciences and Technology, COMSATS University Islamabad, and Government College University Faisalabad. The current rankings of selected Pakistani HEIs are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

*Global Rankings of Pakistani HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Quaid-i-Azam University	-	501-600	601-800	401-500	-	401-500	501-600	501-600	401-500	401-500	401-500
Air University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Reporter	601-800	601-800
National University of Sciences and Technology	-	601-800	601-800	601-800	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000	601-800	601-800
COMSATS University Islamabad	-	-	601-800	601-800	601-800	601-800	601-800	801-1000	601-800	601-800	601-800
Government College University Faisalabad	-	-	-	-	-	-	801-1000	601-800	501-600	601-800	601-800

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

Similar to Indonesian HEI examples, Table 4 shows that no Pakistani HEIs were in the THE World University Rankings 2015. On the one hand, Quaid-i-Azam University had the most successful global rankings among the other Pakistani HEIs in all years by obtaining a rank between 401-500 in 2025. On the other hand, Air University was included only for 2024 (=601-800) and 2025 (=601-800) in THE World University Rankings, except for its reporter status in 2023. All other Pakistani HEIs were in the 601-800 or 801-1000 ranking range in all years examined, except for the 2023 ranking performance of Government College University Faisalabad (=501-600).

According to Table 4, there is no static or positive/negative pattern in terms of global ranking statuses of Pakistani HEIs in the light of the THE WUR datasets between 2015 and 2025. Since 2016, all Pakistani HEIs performed an inconsistent ranking momentum. This situation means all HEIs had completely uncorrelated and random ranking patterns among their stakeholders worldwide, without giving any weight to any direction in the context of increasing and decreasing ranking situations. For instance, in 2019, Quaid-i-Azam University could not find a place for itself worldwide, even though it seems that it had the most successful rankings among Pakistani counterparts since 2015. Moreover, except for Air University and Government College University Faisalabad, other Pakistani HEIs (Quaid-i-Azam University, National University of Science and Technology, and COMSATS University Islamabad) appeared together in the ranking datasets from 2017 onwards, but there was no change in their performance, either positively or negatively.

### **Bangladesh**

The top five Bangladesh HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Jahangirnagar University, BRAC University, and North South University. The current rankings of selected Bangladesh HEIs are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5 reflects that Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology has found itself in the 1001+ ranking position of the global ranking index as of 2021. In the latest ranking dataset, this HEI maintained its ranking status (=1001-1200). Similarly, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), which entered the global ranking competition in 2022 with a rank range of 1001-1200, remained in the same position in the 2025 THE WUR. In 2024, two other Bangladesh HEIs, Jahangirnagar and BRAC universities, are included in the index with the same rankings (=801-1000). Jahangirnagar University maintained its global ranking in 2025 (=801-1000), while BRAC University downgraded its global ranking in the same year (=1001-1200). Finally, North South University, which was first indexed with a rank of 601-800 in the 2023 THE WUR, downgraded its ranking in 2024 and 2025, giving it a rank of 801-1000.

Table 5  
*Global Rankings of Bangladesh HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology	-	-	-	-	-	-	1001+	1201+	1201-1500	1001-1200	1001-1200
Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1001-1200	1201-1500	1001-1200	1001-1200
Jahangirnagar University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	801-1000	801-1000
BRAC University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	801-1000	1001-1200
North South University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	601-800	801-1000	801-1000

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

Table 5 also shows that most Bangladesh HEIs examined had a neutral tendency regarding their global ranking positions. Jahangirnagar University, which was in the world rankings for only two years, retained its place in the 2024 and 2025 indexes. However, Bangladesh HEIs examined in this study were not as successful as their international counterparts in the THE WUR. These HEIs did not find places for themselves between 2015 and 2020. The absence of a comprehensive dataset on the global ranking positions of Bangladeshi HEIs has prevented a thorough analysis of their global academic success. This situation has caused the failure to draw a positive or negative pattern of ranking fluctuations from year to year.

### Russian Federation

The top five Russian HEIs in the 2025 THE WUR were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT), Bauman Moscow State Technical University, HSE University, and National Research Nuclear University MPhI. The current rankings of selected Russian HEIs are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6  
*Global Rankings of Russian HEIs year-by-year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Lomonosov Moscow State University	196	=161	=188	194	=199	=189	=174	=158	=163	=95	=107
Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT)	-	501-600	301-350	251-300	251-300	201-250	201-250	201-250	201-250	201-250	251-300
Bauman Moscow State Technical University	-	501-600	601-800	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000	401-500	801-1000	501-600	401-500	351-400
HSE University	-	-	401-500	351-400	301-350	251-300	251-300	301-350	401-500	401-500	401-500
National Research Nuclear University MPhI	-	251-300	401-500	401-500	351-400	401-500	401-500	401-500	401-500	401-500	501-600

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

As the most successful HEI among the other Russian HEIs examined, Lomonosov Moscow State University obtained =107th place in the 2025 THE WUR. This HEI also succeeds in being ranked among the top 200 HEIs worldwide in all the years between 2015 and 2025. The second most successful Russian HEI in the global academic rankings, the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT), had the worst ranking performance in 2016 but was ranked between 251 and 300 in the 2025 ranking index. HSE University was not in the ranking index in 2015 and 2016. However, it appeared all the other years and was among the top 500 HEIs worldwide, even at its worst ranking performance. National Research Nuclear University MPhI put forward similar performance and was among the top 500 HEIs in all the years examined, except for 2025 THE WUR. According to the 2025 rankings, this HEI had a 501-600 ranking range among global partners. The least successful Russian HEI in the ranking indexes, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, obtained a 351-400

ranking range in the most recent index. This university has been among the top 1000 HEIs since 2016, despite being the least successful university in Russia among its national peers.

Table 6 shows that all Russian HEIs examined, excluding HSE University, were in the THE Rankings between 2016 and 2025. These HEIs drew a stable and ongoing pattern regarding their year-based rankings with minor fluctuations. In some years, these HEIs either performed decreasing or increasing ranking patterns, whereas they mostly maintained their ranking ranges in the ranking index of each new year. However, Bauman Moscow State Technical University could not provide stability regarding its year-based rankings, and the ranking range of this HEI significantly fluctuated each year. For example, according to the 2021 THE WUR, this HEI had a 401-500 ranking range. Then, this appearance suddenly changed in the 2022 ranking index negatively. However, in 2023, this HEI increased its ranking from 801-1000 to 501-600 through a sharp shift. This fluctuation followed the next years or was observed in previous years.

### Japan

The top five Japanese HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are the University of Tokyo, Kyoto University, Tohoku University, the University of Osaka, and Tokyo Institute of Technology. The current rankings of selected Japanese HEIs are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7

#### *Global Rankings of Japanese HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
The University of Tokyo	23	43	39	46	42	=36	=36	=35	39	29	28
Kyoto University	59	=88	=91	=74	65	65	=54	61	68	=55	55
Tohoku University	165	201-250	201-250	201-250	251-300	251-300	201-250	201-250	201-250	=130	120
The University of Osaka	157	251-300	251-300	201-250	251-300	301-350	351-400	301-350	251-300	=175	162
Tokyo Institute of Technology	141	201-250	251-300	251-300	251-300	251-300	301-350	301-350	301-350	=191	195

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

Table 7 demonstrates that Japanese HEIs have always been in the global competition among their international counterparts since 2015. The five Japanese HEIs analyzed in this research were at the top of global ranking indexes every year. Although

all five Japanese HEIs were in the indexes, the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University were more successful than the other Japanese HEIs. These HEIs found places in the top 100 HEIs between 2015 and 2025. The University of Tokyo reached its peak ranking point in 2015 with its 23rd rank and made 28th rank in the most recent index. Kyoto University achieved the 54th rank in 2021 and showed a similar performance in 2024 and 2025 by having 55th place worldwide. Three Japanese HEIs did not enter the top 100 in any of the years. One of them, Tohoku University, performed its worst ranking performance in 2019 and 2020 as it was between the 251-300 ranking range. However, this HEI reached the 120th rank in 2025. The University of Osaka ranked 157th in 2015 and found a similar point in the 2025 THE WUR index, where it was ranked 162nd. Tokyo Institute of Technology showed its best ranking performance in 2015, ranking 141st worldwide. Over the years under review, this HEI achieved the second and third-best ranking positions in 2024 (=191) and 2025 (195).

Table 7 also shows that two Japanese HEIs, the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University, follow an almost stable success pattern in a positive direction over the 10 years. In contrast, the other three Japanese HEIs had significant fluctuations in their rankings over the years. The pattern in the global academic rankings over the years analyzed in the context of Tohoku University, the University of Osaka, and Tokyo University of Technology is that all three HEIs experienced maximum fluctuations between 2016 and 2023. Between these years, they have not been able to maintain a stable position among their global stakeholders compared to other years. Similarly, since 2024, all three HEIs managed to recapture the success they achieved in 2015 by being among the top 200 world universities. This stability ensured that the fluctuation between 2016 and 2023 changed in 2024 and gained more regular status.

### **Philippines**

The top five Philippine HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are Ateneo de Manila University, the University of the Philippines, De La Salle University, Mapúa University, and the University of Santo Tomas. The current rankings of selected Philippines HEIs are shown in Table 8 below.

Table 8 highlighted that the most successful Philippine HEI ranked among international HEIs since 2017 was the University of the Philippines. This HEI had its best global rank in 2020 and 2021, with its 401-500 rank range among its national counterparts. One of the other Philippine HEIs, De La Salle University entered the ranking index in 2019 and also made its best global rank that year with 801-1000 rank range. Ateneo de Manila University has been in the international ranking index since 2022 but started occupying a global rank in 2023 with its 351-400 rank range. Similarly, in 2023, the University of Santo Tomas was in reporter position and made its first ranks in 2024 (=1501+) and 2025 (=1501+). Mapúa University, one of the other Philippine HEI examined, entered the index in 2023 and maintained its position (1501+) through three consequent years between 2023 and 2025.



Table 8  
*Global Rankings of Philippine HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Ateneo de Manila University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Reporter	351-400	1001-1200	1001-1200
University of the Philippines	-	-	801+	601-800	501-600	401-500	401-500	601-800	801-1000	1201-1500	1201-1500
De La Salle University	-	-	-	-	801-1000	1001+	1001+	1201+	1201-1500	1501+	1501+
Mapúa University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1501+	1501+	1501+
University of Santo Tomas	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Reporter	1501+	1501+

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

According to Table 8, only Mapúa University and the University of Santo Tomas performed a regular and stable ranking performance since their ranking positions were always the same as different from the other Philippine HEIs in the list. Ateneo de Manila University showed a decreasing success trend in terms of its global rank worldwide. Similarly, De La Salle University has shown a decreasing trend in terms of global ranking success since 2019, whereas it protected its position between 2020-2021 and 2024-2025. However, that did not change its overall negative ranking tendency during the then years analyzed. Unlike the four Philippine HEIs mentioned above, the University of the Philippines had the most stable and regular global rank pattern among its national counterparts in the list. This HEI performed an increasing trend in terms of its global rank from 2018 to 2021. Afterward, its rankings began to decline, although it is still among the top 1500 HEIs worldwide as of 2025.

## Vietnam

The top five Vietnamese HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are Hanoi University of Science and Technology, Duy Tan University, Ton Duc Thang University, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and Hue University. The current rankings of selected Vietnamese HEIs are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9

### Global Rankings of Vietnamese HEIs Year-by-Year

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Hanoi University of Science and Technology	-	-	-	-	-	801-1000	1001+	1201+	1501+	1501+	1501+
Duy Tan University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	401-500	401-500	601-800	601-800
Ton Duc Thang University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	401-500	401-500	601-800	601-800
Vietnam National University, Hanoi	-	-	-	-	-	801-1000	801-1000	1001-1200	1001-1200	1201-1500	1201-1500
Hue University	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1501+	1501+	1501+

*Note.* This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

Table 9 highlighted that the two most successful Vietnamese HEIs among national and international HEIs were Duy Tan and Ton Duc Thang Universities. These HEIs were in the index as of 2022. Besides, by the end of 2023, they were among the top 500 HEIs worldwide. Even though these HEIs declined their global academic ranking positions after 2023, they continued to be the best HEIs in Vietnam and to be in the top 800 HEIs worldwide in the 2024 and 2025 THE WUR. Since 2020, Hanoi University of Science and Technology and Vietnam National University, Hanoi were the two Vietnamese HEIs in the ranking index. Hanoi University of Science and Technology achieved its best global ranking in 2020 by entering the 801-1000 ranking range, while Vietnam National University, Hanoi achieved its best global ranking by having the same ranking range (801-1000) in 2020 and 2021. The other Vietnamese HEI, Hue University, was the youngest member of the global ranking index among its national counterparts. This HEI has been included in the ranking index in 2023 and succeeded in maintaining the same ranking (1501+) in 2023, 2024, and 2025.

Table 9 also indicates an ongoing downgrade in global achievement trends for all Vietnamese HEIs except HUE University. Compared to the 2020 ranking statuses, Hanoi University of Science and Technology and Vietnam National University, Hanoi performed declining global rankings in the following years until 2025. After two years, Duy Tan University and Ton Duc Thang University put forward similar ranking outcomes. Compared to 2022, when they first appeared in the THE WUR, these HEIs could not maintain their best ranking positions in subsequent years and demonstrated a declining ranking trend among their international counterparts.

### Thailand

The top five Thai HEIs in the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings were examined for their global world rankings between 2015 and 2025. These HEIs are Chulalongkorn University, Mahidol University, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Chiang Mai University, and Khon Kaen University. The current rankings of selected Thai HEIs are shown in Table 10 below.

Table 10  
*Global Rankings of Thai HEIs Year-by-Year*

HEIs	Years										
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Chulalongkorn University	-	601-800	601-800	601-800	801-1000	801-1000	601-800	801-1000	801-1000	601-800	601-800
Mahidol University	-	501-600	501-600	501-600	601-800	601-800	601-800	601-800	801-1000	601-800	601-800
King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi	351-400	601-800	601-800	601-800	801-1000	1001+	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000	801-1000
Chiang Mai University	-	601-800	601-800	801-1000	801-1000	1001+	1001+	1001-1200	1001-1200	801-1000	1001-1200
Khon Kaen University	-	601-800	801+	801-1000	1001+	1001+	1001+	1201+	1201-1500	1201-1500	1001-1200

Note. This table was created based on the *THE World University Rankings* for the period 2015-2025. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

Table 10 reveals the success of Thai HEIs in the global arena as they have been a part of the THE WUR since 2015 and 2016. Among the other Thai HEIs on the list, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi was the best one because it was in the top 400 HEIs worldwide in 2015. Then, this HEI obtained the worst ranking range position (=1001+) in 2020. The second-best ranking position belonged to Mahidol University. This HEI was placed within the 501-600 ranking range in three subsequent years (2016-2017-2018), whereas it showed its worst ranking performance in 2023

(=801-1000). The third best-performing Thai HEI in global ranking positions was Chulalongkorn University through its 601-800 ranking range in six years between 2015-2025. Although the other two Thai HEIs, Chiang Mai University, and Khon Kaen University, showed similar ranking performance to Chulalongkorn University, their worst ranking positions were far behind Chulalongkorn University in most of the years examined (for Chiang Mai University, =1001-1200, in 2022, 2023, and 2025; for Khon Kaen University, =1201-1500, in 2023 and 2024).

According to Table 10, most Thai HEIs maintained their global ranking positions with only minor fluctuations, but these fluctuations are generally negative. The general momentum observed since the 2015 THE WUR was that most Thai HEIs declined their global rankings in most of the years examined. For instance, one Thai HEI, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, performed a negative achievement pattern due to its decreasing global rankings between 2015-2016, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020. Khon Kaen University has also been a part of this declining ranking trend similar to King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, and its global rankings decreased between 2016-2017, 2018-2019, and 2021-2022. Chiang Mai University showed parallel ranking performances similar to King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi and Khon Kaen University. Unlike these HEIs, Chulalongkorn University was the most consistent and stable Thai HEI examined in terms of its global rankings since it mostly found a 601-800 ranking range for itself, except for the 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023 indexes.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The dynamic and multidimensional structure of globalization and its comprehensive effects on HEIs push them to be a part of ongoing global competition in higher education. For this reason, HEIs try to keep pace with this fierce competition. They aim to enhance their academic quality by hiring reputable academics worldwide and publishing much more research in education, health sciences, engineering, and social sciences in eminent journals or publishing houses than their stakeholders. HEIs also try to design and implement innovations to appeal to students of different ages or interests in scientific areas worldwide. All these efforts, which deeply affect the current and future policy movements and priorities of HEIs, serve various purposes, such as making HEIs more preferred and recognized among their competitors worldwide.

While the domination of American and European HEIs in various global ranking indexes, such as QS, THE, or ARWU, is clear, there are several reasons why having a large number of HEIs at the top of international rankings is also crucial for Asian countries. One of the main reasons behind this fact is that Asian countries may expand and stabilize their global growth, visibility, and reputation through globally top-ranked national HEIs. This situation may positively affect the perception and preferences of successful students to study in Asian HEIs as a solid alternative to certain countries that are at the forefront of higher education worldwide (e.g., the US, the UK, or Canada). Globally visible and successful Asian HEIs may also motivate and attract respected international academics to work in these countries. Moreover, the increasing interest in HEIs in Asia may lead Asian countries to prioritize designing and implementing new higher education policies that support HEIs, international students and academics, and general teaching and learning processes. By embracing the role and power of

contemporary higher education policies and reforms, Asian governments can provide HEIs with more flexibility to maintain their successful positions on a global scale. For these reasons, global ranking indexes have macro-level significance in making Asian HEIs the main attraction hubs in higher education and contributing to the socioeconomic and cultural development of Asian countries.

By examining the global rankings of selected Asian HEIs between 2015 and 2025 through the THE WUR, this study revealed that the global rankings of HEIs in most Asian countries, except Japan, China, and Russia, lag behind their international competitors. Moreover, HEIs in most countries did not have a stable profile regarding their rankings since they could not follow a balanced or positive pattern among their global competitors. This study indicated that China and Japan were the most successful Asian countries in their HEIs, and these countries always placed first in the global ranking competition. In almost every year analyzed, Chinese HEIs improved their academic ranks globally and ranked in the top 100 HEIs among their international counterparts. Thus, Chinese HEIs had a more visible and successful global ranking trend year-by-year in the world higher education arena. These outcomes supported the current literature that put forward the academic success of Chinese HEIs in different types of global ranking indexes as eminent Asian cases (Lee et al., 2020; Liu, 2016). The rising global ranking trend of Chinese HEIs worldwide can be explained by the outcomes of higher education policy initiatives in China. The reason was that one of the key higher education policy initiatives in China was to establish well-qualified universities that could compete with Western HEIs (Allen, 2017). By updating the existing research that highlights the decline in global rankings of HEIs in Japan (Ishikawa, 2021), this study also found that Japanese HEIs recovered from low global rankings and achieved a sharp and positive momentum in terms of their global rankings over the past two years. The current literature vitally criticizes the lack of internationalization movements as the cause of Japanese HEIs' low global rankings (Yonezawa, 2010). For this reason, these outcomes can be evaluated as the result of improving the level of internationalization for Japanese HEIs in the higher education arena. For the Russian Federation case, this study revealed that Russian HEIs were among the best performers in all the other Asian HEIs examined. These HEIs performed in a stable and positive direction regarding their global rankings from 2015 to 2025. Considering the effects and outcomes of multidimensional variables such as military conflicts or political issues in Russia, these stable global rankings of Russian HEIs are an indicator of how this country gives importance to being at the forefront of higher education.

This study revealed that Indian HEIs advanced well in their rankings compared to other Asian countries except China, Japan, and Russia. Even though previous studies paid attention to the fact that the rankings of Indian universities lagged among their global counterparts (Altbach, 2006; Basu, 2013), this study showed that Indian HEIs analyzed performed a positive trend in terms of their global academic rankings based on the THE WUR dataset between 2015 and 2025. Unlike the countries that increased their global rankings consistently or caught a positive ranking trend by the ranking indexes examined (i.e., China, Japan, Russia, and India), this study revealed that HEIs in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Pakistan either performed in a neutral direction with slight fluctuations or showed decreasing ranking trends. For the Indonesian HEIs,

these decreasing global rankings can be related to the inadequate level of autonomy for HEIs or lack of support for research and innovation practices in higher education (Gaus, 2024). Even though Thai HEIs performed minor fluctuations regarding their global rankings, the direction of these fluctuations was generally negative. Therefore, in most of the years analyzed, Thai HEIs experienced decreased global rankings among their international stakeholders. The focal points that may change the current negative ranking pattern in favor of Thai HEIs can depend on providing quality in different parts of higher education through various actions (Chaemchoy et al., 2021; Hemthong et al., 2023). Similar to the case of Thailand, the overall rankings of Pakistani and Philippine HEIs between 2015 and 2025 either followed a stable pattern or showed a downward trend.

Unlike Asian HEIs performing rising global ranking trends in the international context or having downward ranking patterns, Bangladesh HEIs were newcomers to the THE WUR as they have been indexing only for a few years. However, their ranking trends were neutral. The HEIs in this country mostly tend to maintain their ranking with minimal fluctuations in a negative direction since 2021. Even though their global ranking history goes back a bit further, compared to Bangladesh HEIs, Vietnamese HEIs started to appear in the ranking index as of 2020. More clearly than Bangladeshi HEIs, the global rankings of Vietnamese HEIs showed a downward trend from year to year among world countries. At this point, this country was one of the examples of countries that showed the most pronounced negative decline pattern in global academic rankings among the Asian countries examined.

This research had two limitations. The first limitation of this research was to examine only the top five HEIs in selected ten Asian countries, which had the largest populations in the continent and indexed by the 2024 THE Asia University Rankings and the THE WUR 2025 (for the Russian Federation case). Therefore, this research did not examine the other Asian countries or Asian HEIs that succeeded in being indexed in the ranking index. The second limitation of this research was that it did not discuss the changing ranking patterns of Asian HEIs through other eminent ranking systems, such as QS World University Rankings or Webometrics Rankings of Web Universities. Given these limitations, future researchers should ensure diversity across Asian countries and their HEIs and consider examining country and HEI samples through different global and recognized ranking indexes.

### **Implications**

This research discovered that the rankings of most Asian HEIs were generally behind their counterparts in other continents except for Japan, China, and Russia. Moreover, HEIs in most Asian countries did not have a stable profile regarding their rankings as they could not follow a balanced or positive ranking pattern among their global competitors. Based on these outcomes, this research offers some higher education policy recommendations for Asian countries to increase the global academic ranking positions of HEIs:

- The globalization efforts to establish solid networks with global stakeholders for research, teaching, and academic exchange opportunities should be diversified and adopted as a key government policy in higher education to increase the visibility of Asian HEIs worldwide.

- HEIs in Asia should be aware of the importance of global marketing activities through effective public relations to attract domestic and international students who are interested and eager to be accepted by elite HEIs in Europe or North America.
- Asian governments should expand the content of funding opportunities to make their HEIs more competitive and better qualified in terms of the benefits they offer to prospective students.
- Asian HEIs should consider opening overseas offices or bureaus to expand the scope of their global campaigns and become more visible worldwide, especially in developed European countries and the United States. At this point, Asian governments should create required financial legal regulations as a permanent policy action to facilitate Asian HEIs to move in this direction.

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### **Statement of Responsibility**

This research was carried out by a single author.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest in this research.

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