



An Exploration of Cultural impediments, Adjustments, and academic motivations of Pakistani Undergraduate Students at China

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ABSTRACT

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The present study aims to unveil the motivations and experiences of Pakistani undergraduate students at China. The research questions of the study were what are the intellectual, economic, and cultural factors that motivate young Pakistanis to pursue educational possibilities in China, how various challenges encountered by Pakistani students in China, including language hurdles, cultural adjustment, academic adjustments, and socio-economic challenges. The universe of the study was Multan city and unit of analysis was those students who have accomplished their undergraduate studies from China in the diverse range of academic realm from natural and social science students. Researchers used purposive sampling to obtain the data from the concerned respondents and the interview guide was used as a tool to collect the data. The saturation point of the study was 7 respondents (4 males, 3 females). The study concluded that key motivator is a thirst for cultural exploration, as well as specialized academic programmes, economic prospects, and the perceived quality of education. Academic and personal development can take root in China because to its diverse cultural offerings, abundant international chances, and excellent educational programmes. The study is novel to formulate policies and practices for attaining human capital in context of growth and productivity.

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Introduction

Students' aspirations to study abroad have grown in recent years, highlighting the need for a diverse range of educational possibilities and cultural immersion on a global scale. An increasing number of young Pakistanis are seeking educational opportunities in China, and this trend has piqued the curiosity of international students generally. The higher education sector in China has evolved rapidly, matching the country's reputation for strong economic growth and innovative technological advancement. Numerous educational institutions offering a variety of degree programs, research opportunities, and international connections attest to the country's commitment to raising educational standards (Cui, 2018). This change has drawn students from all over the world, including Pakistan, who are looking for a great education and a chance to be part of a dynamic academic community. The rising tide of Pakistani students vying for admission to Chinese colleges is indicative of a larger trend among Pakistani youth to seek out educational possibilities in China.

There are a number of reasons why Pakistani students are flocking to China for higher education, including the country's excellent research opportunities, specialized academic programs, and robust economy (Rasool, 2017). Numerous young Pakistanis have sought academic opportunities in China due to the country's attractive educational infrastructure and the promise of a globalized learning environment. Chinese universities provide many opportunities, however Pakistani students encounter many challenges when trying to study there. According to Tian and Lowe (2019), a major hurdle to successful academic engagement and social integration is the prevalence of language barriers, particularly a lack of fluency in Mandarin. According to Noreen et al. (2020), Pakistani students encounter various challenges that greatly affect their academic experiences. These challenges include cultural differences, difficulties with transitioning, and differing teaching methods.

Pakistani students going to school in China go through a distinct adjustment process compared to students going to school in Pakistan. Varieties in pedagogy, assessment tools, and student expectations necessitate flexible strategies. Cultural adaptation often involves negotiating identities; for example, Pakistani students try to be sensitive to their own culture while still learning about and embracing the nuances of their host country (Altbach & Knight, 2007). This passage gives some context for why young Pakistanis are increasingly looking to China for educational opportunities. Within the context of China's higher education system, it highlights the interplay between opportunities, challenges, and changes that impact their educational aspirations. In today's global education scenario, it is not uncommon for students to pursue higher education in foreign locations. In this context, there has been a noticeable uptick in the number of young Pakistanis looking for educational opportunities in China. It is a reflection of the complicated interplay of needs, issues, and changes in the academic system. Various socio-cultural, intellectual, and economic factors converge to shape the educational aspirations of young Pakistanis residing in China. There has been a recent uptick in the number of Pakistani students expressing interest in studying in China, mostly due to the country's enticing employment market, diverse academic offers, and fast expanding educational system (Cui, 2018). In light of educational globalization,

China's position as the leading educational destination is of strategic importance. Pakistani students and other international students are really interested in this trend. While navigating their academic adventures in China, Pakistani adolescents encounter difficult challenges, subtle transformations, and various cultural adjustments. Some of the challenges that these students face in the classroom include difficulties communicating, cultural differences, academic shifts, and difficulties integrating into their new communities (Su, 2017). Individuals' educational paths inside China's education system are already complicated due to the existence of people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and varying degrees of preparedness.

Studying the aspirations of Pakistani youth in China for higher education is crucial for two reasons: first, to understand their individual academic journeys; and second, to recognize the broader effects of international student exchanges and intercultural education. Through an analysis of the opportunities, challenges, and transitions faced by this specific group, this study aspires to add to the ongoing conversation on global education, the experiences of international students, and the intricate dynamics of educational interactions between Pakistan and China. The purpose of this research is to illuminate the reasons why Pakistani students go to universities in China, the difficulties they encounter, and the methods they employ to succeed academically. In order to promote international educational cooperation and guarantee the academic success of Pakistani students studying in China, this study aspires to provide useful insights for academic institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders. It will delve into multiple facets of this subject.

It is critical to address the unique challenges faced by Pakistani students studying in China, despite the fact that China and Pakistan have rules and agreements to encourage educational cooperation and student exchanges. Efficaciously addressing language competency, cultural integration, and socio-academic adaptations requires tailored support systems, policy measures, and academic endeavors. For the sake of the academic success and general well-being of Pakistani students in China, this is essential (Malik & Ahmed, 2020). But the present academic discourse around overseas students' experiences rarely take into account the specific challenges and adaptations encountered by Pakistani students within the Chinese educational system. There needs to be a comprehensive study of this demographic within the broader context of international higher education to overcome the paucity of research specifically addressing the educational aspirations, challenges, and changes encountered by young Pakistanis in China. This problem statement highlights the critical importance of addressing the myriad of changes and difficulties encountered by young Pakistanis pursuing higher education in China. It stresses the need for thorough academic research and focused actions to guarantee their success and safety in China's higher education system.

Understanding the aspirations, challenges, and transformations of young Pakistanis studying in China is crucial because it mirrors the intricate dynamics of global higher learning, cultural exchange, and China-Pakistani relations. By offering a thorough understanding of the educational contacts of Pakistani students in the Chinese higher education system, this study significantly fills a gap in academic research. By shedding light on the possibilities, obstacles, and transitional processes encountered by this demographic, the study enriches the academic discourse

surrounding international student mobility, cross-cultural education, and the complexities of educational globalization. Policymakers, educational institutions, and stakeholders involved in fostering international educational relationships can draw substantial implications from this research's findings. Adolescents from Pakistan studying in China face a number of challenges, including language obstacles, cultural adaptation, and academic adjustments. By understanding these issues, the government can provide tailored interventions and support measures to help these students succeed academically and personally. Strategies that put an emphasis on academic support networks, cultural integration events, and language competency programmes can help alleviate these issues (Cui, 2018). Additionally, this research promotes mutual understanding and cultural exchange by improving our understanding of the ways in which Pakistani and Chinese groups have interacted across cultural boundaries. Improving Pakistani students' cultural experiences in China helps them build stronger relationships and a sense of global belonging. In addition, the study's results are significant for fostering stronger and more fruitful ties between Pakistan and China. This will improve diplomatic ties and cooperation, especially in the academic sphere and beyond. The academic success and career prospects of Pakistani students in China can be better understood by delving into the challenges and adaptations these students face. It is possible to overcome these challenges by offering academic support and conducting targeted interventions. Academic performance, employment opportunities, and the ability to participate in global professional activities could all improve with this strategy. This study aims to improve the personal well-being of Pakistani students by providing them with the necessary tools, networks, and strategies to overcome any challenges they may encounter while studying in China. Their return to Pakistan, armed with the knowledge and skills they gained abroad, can have a profound impact on the country's economic and social progress. This study's findings will have far-reaching effects on scholarship, policy, cultural understanding, bilateral relations, and the futures of Pakistani students studying in China.

Research Questions

1. What are the intellectual, economic, and cultural factors that motivate young Pakistanis to pursue educational possibilities in China.
2. How challenges encountered by Pakistani students in China, including language hurdles, cultural adjustment, academic adjustments, and socio-economic challenges.

2.1 Literature Review

Adjustment is interpreted by Anderson (1994) as “working toward a fit for the person and the new environment,” which further refers to people trying to adapt to a change of situations (p. 299). The way individuals perceive and assess the difficulties and barriers that come with change can influence their ability to adapt to new circumstances (Ramsay et al., 1999). International students face a particularly arduous task when it comes to adapting, as they must navigate a two-fold challenge. Similar to all first-year students commencing their university education, they must acclimate themselves to the demands of academic life. Additionally, they must deal with the acculturation stress that all visitors to a foreign country experience (Li & Gasser, 2005). To the exclusion of their own cultural group, people who want to fit in with the dominant society use

assimilation as a strategy. Separation is applicable to those who retain their culture of origin and do not adapt to the culture of the host society. Modifications are required for the proper acclimatization of international students. Wang and Guan (2020) investigated the process of adaptation among overseas students in China, highlighting the importance of cultural assimilation, academic assimilation, and social participation. Pakistani students may need to change their learning methods, communication skills, and daily schedules to successfully navigate the Chinese educational system.

The growing number of young Pakistanis looking to China for higher education opportunities is a complicated situation characterized by aspirations, challenges, and shifts in the global higher education landscape. Pakistani students are increasingly choosing to study in China for the opportunity to get foreign experience and achieve academically. Nevertheless, they face intricate obstacles and adaptations along their educational paths, which substantially affect how they learn. Many things go in the way of Pakistani teenagers' academic aspirations while they study in China. Language barriers and cultural adaptations are two of the most significant. For maximum academic engagement and social integration, fluency in Mandarin, the language of instruction and communication in Chinese universities, is essential (Raza et al., 2023). Additionally, due to cultural differences, socioeconomic dynamics, and teaching methods, Pakistani students transferring to the Chinese academic system must be flexible (Rasool, 2017). All of these challenges, on top of the fact that Pakistani students in China come from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of educational preparedness, have deep-reaching effects on their well-being and sense of belonging, far beyond their academic performance. Emotional and psychological stresses caused by trying to understand cultural nuances in a new classroom environment can have a negative effect on students' motivation, performance, and overall academic experience (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

3.0 Methodology

The present study interviewed Pakistani students studying in China to learn about their perspectives, experiences, and tales from a qualitative research perspective. The research has used purposive sampling techniques to find Pakistani students in China who are studying a wide range of subjects at a variety of universities and who are at various stages of their academic careers. The reason for using purposive sampling was that it helped researchers pick participants who were very relevant to their study. This ensured that the data collected was relevant to the research problem, leading to a more focused and meaningful study. Using a deliberate sampling strategy helped save time and money. To better understand Pakistani students' experiences in China, the researchers have conducted semi-structured interviews to learn about their goals for the future, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to adapt. At its saturation point, the study included 7 participants (4 males and 3 females). The data was analyzed through the use of thematic analysis. The researcher has prioritized getting participants' informed consent after making sure they understand the research's purpose, methods, and rights. Protect the privacy and security of all information.

4.0 Results

1. *Motivations for Pursuing Education in China*

Various factors, including academic, economic, cultural, and perceived quality considerations, influence the decision of young Pakistanis to pursue higher education in China. For these and other factors that matter much in the realm of education, more and more Pakistani students are opting to study in China.

One of the main draws for Pakistani students considering studying in China is the wide variety of academic courses and specializations offered in fields including engineering, medicine, technology, and business (Cui, 2018). Chinese universities attract Pakistani students seeking specialist education that is difficult to obtain at home because of the breadth of their academic offerings, the quality of their research, and the innovation of their pedagogical approaches. Many Pakistani students choose to study in China because of the country's relatively low tuition rates and promising economic future. Chinese colleges attract students from all walks of life because of their affordable tuition, generous scholarship opportunities, and other forms of financial assistance (Ning et al., 2023).

"I decided to go to China because of the handsome stipend, research quality, and academic traditions (R1, R3)."

Education in China is attractive because of the high value that foreign employers place on Chinese degrees. A thirst for knowledge and an eagerness to see the world are driving forces behind Pakistani students' decision to attend universities in China. Immersing oneself in a culturally rich past, socioeconomically complex present, and globally dynamic future attracts students because it offers the chance to learn cross-cultural experiences and a broader worldview (Altbach & Knight, 2007). There is a strong push for cross-cultural understanding and research in China due to the country's unique cultural fabric and its enormous global influence. When considering whether or not to study in China, Pakistani students also take into account their impressions about the country's educational system's quality and creativity. A more positive view of educational quality has resulted from China's technological, scientific, and innovative advancements as well as its ever-improving higher education system, which increases the allure of Chinese colleges (Haqiqat & Alam, 2023)

2. *Language Barriers and Academic Adaptation: Challenges Faced by Pakistani Students*

For Pakistani students pursuing higher education in China, the language barrier—and the need to be fluent in Mandarin in particular—presents a significant obstacle. Their academic adaptability, classroom participation, and capacity to attain learning outcomes are all significantly impacted by this issue.

Students from Pakistan, particularly those with little exposure to the language before starting school, have a formidable task of becoming fluent Mandarin Chinese speakers. Due to its complicated characters and tonal structure, Mandarin is challenging to learn and understand (Mengchen & Kamarudin, 2023). Because of this language barrier, students are unable to communicate well, which hinders classroom interactions and reduces their interest in learning. Students from Pakistan have multiple challenges when trying to adapt to school life due to the

language barrier.

"Without language, one cannot imagine survival in China; I started it at the basic level, though it was quite difficult for me (R6, R7)..

Classroom lectures, conversations, and study materials are mostly in Mandarin, which makes it difficult for students to grasp and effectively integrate what they learn (Rasool, 2017). The language barrier has a multiplicative effect on their adaptation process since it impacts not just academic environments but also social connections and extracurricular activities. Due to linguistic barriers, Pakistani students are less invested in academic discourse since they struggle to understand lectures and take part in class discussions. Their inability to communicate effectively limits their participation in Chinese classrooms and their ability to make the most of their educational possibilities there (Karim et al., 2023).

3. Cultural Adaptation and Identity Negotiation

Students from Pakistan studying in China show great commitment to preserving their heritage. As Yaqoob (2019) points out, people can keep their cultural heritage alive by doing things like attending religious ceremonies, preparing traditional foods, and celebrating cultural festivals. Participating in these events helps individuals feel more at home and keeps them linked to their heritage, which helps them hold on to their homeland even while they're away from it. Pakistani students studying in China are deftly negotiating the many cultural nuances of their host nation. In many respects, they immerse themselves in Chinese culture, taking on the habits, customs, and social mores of the Chinese people. They learn more about the host country's culture, language, and values by taking part in cultural events, joining language exchange programs, and befriending native Chinese people (Rana et al. 2019).

"We learn and adapt rich cultural customs at various cultural events, particularly Chinese foods, which are key factors of attraction (R4, R1).

When adapting to a new culture, Pakistani students must strike a delicate balance between being true to themselves and absorbing all aspects of the host society. They use a bicultural approach, blending parts of Chinese culture with their own traditions and beliefs (Yaqoob, 2019). This duality enables individuals to manage cultural differences, minimize disputes, and create a harmonious cohabitation between their original culture and their new cultural surroundings. Challenges and Perseverance in Cultural Adjustment: Interacting effectively across cultural boundaries is challenging. It may be more challenging for Pakistani students to adjust to a new environment if they face prejudice, misconceptions, and cultural bias (Rana, 2018). Their resilience and adaptability, though, help them triumph over adversity, and the result is a deep understanding of both their own and their host country's cultures.

4. Academic Challenges Faced by Pakistani Students in China

Pakistani students pursuing higher education in China have several challenges in their academic pursuits as a result of disparities in educational systems, teaching methodologies, and examination formats between the two countries. All of these issues make it hard for them to adjust to college life in China and do well academically. The disparity between the Chinese and Pakistani educational systems is a major challenge for students from Pakistan. Differences in academic rigor,

grading systems, and course content make it difficult to adjust to Chinese schooling (Makowska, 2022). Initial confusion, intellectual disorientation, and struggles to meet academic norms might result from this disparity. Students in Pakistan have it tough because of the cultural differences between their country and China when it comes to education. In contrast to the more collaborative and conversational style of instruction prevalent in Pakistani classrooms, Chinese institutions often place an emphasis on memorization and lecture-based pedagogy (Tian & Lowe, 2019). This discrepancy has the potential to impact students' engagement, critical thinking skills, and flexibility in adjusting to different ways of learning.

"Our education system is lagging; our education system prepared us for memorization, while Chinese academic style triggered us for creativity and provided us with self-confidence" (R5, R2)

Disparities in evaluation methodologies and exam styles also pose significant challenges. Ali et al. (2013) note that Pakistan's evaluation techniques are more inclusive and practical, in contrast to China's emphasis on rote-based exams. Pakistani pupils' academic performance and confidence in assessments could take a hit if they struggle to adjust to this new exam structure. Individualized systems of support and interventions are required to overcome these academic challenges. It would be helpful to start pre-departure orientation programs that teach Pakistani students everything they need to know about the Chinese educational system, teaching methods, and assessment systems before they come (Akram et al., 2020). Academic support programs that provide language assistance, tutoring, and mentorship could also enhance students' learning experiences and help reduce educational inequalities. Academic writing, study skills, and cultural adjustment can all benefit from educational aid facilities and cultural assimilation programs designed specifically for international students, such as those from Pakistan (Shan et al., 2020). Programs that address cultural sensitivity in the classroom, peer mentoring, and counseling services could all be available at these resource centers.

5. Impact of Education in China on Career Aspirations and Employability of Pakistani Students

When Pakistani students study in China, their experience greatly influences their future plans and employment opportunities upon their return to their own country. Educational excellence in China, cultural immersion, and immersion in an international academic environment all have a profound impact on their career pathways and employment prospects back home in Pakistan. Students from Pakistan who study in China gain exposure to innovative teaching methods, state-of-the-art technology, and a broader perspective on global issues. Traveling broadens people's horizons, which in turn improves their capacity to adapt, think critically, and build cross-cultural competence. According to Raza et al. (2023), these qualities are incredibly desirable in today's global job market. In recent years, Pakistani firms have begun to place a higher value on a Chinese education. Pakistani students' employment prospects improve upon their return to their home country after studying in China because employers value the academic rigor, technical skills, and global perspective that students acquire during their time there (Rasool, 2017).

"I am determined that there is a broader spectrum of opportunities after graduation from

China, not only back to Pakistan, but it opens new doors of opportunities in the overall world (R3, R7)".

Academic Qualifications and Employment Opportunities: However, it could be challenging to find a job in Pakistan that matches the academic credentials earned in China. Some sectors may be wary of sending their employees to China for further education because of the tech skills and international perspective they may get, while others may be worried that their employees won't be able to handle the unique challenges of working in Pakistan (Chaudhry & Ikram, 2021). It can be challenging for Pakistani students who have studied in China to effectively translate their academic achievements into job opportunities back home. One must be able to articulate the value of their education, highlight transferable skills, and adapt their learning to each unique setting if they want to be successful in the job market (Rasool, 2017). Yaqoob (2019) notes that Pakistani students have opportunities to engage in cross-border partnerships, entrepreneurship, and business ventures with their Chinese counterparts through China's education system, which helps students build broad networks and contacts. For those looking to advance their careers and cultivate their professional skills, this network can be an invaluable resource.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the multifaceted landscape that Pakistani students face as they pursue higher education abroad, complete with opportunities, challenges, and transformations. Individuals' academic goals, personal development, cultural adaptability, and career opportunities are all profoundly affected by their decision to pursue higher education in China. A considerable number of compelling opportunities have come together to influence Pakistani students' decisions to attend universities in China. A key motivator is a thirst for cultural exploration, as well as specialized academic programs, economic prospects, and the perceived quality of education. Academic and personal development can take root in China because of its diverse cultural offerings, abundant international chances, and excellent educational programs. However, there are challenges associated with this scholarly pursuit. Difficulties arise when attempting to overcome language barriers, cultural differences, educational system inequalities, and the incompatibility of academic credentials with planned career paths. The capacity to adapt and use good coping mechanisms gives Pakistani students extraordinary resilience. People overcome these challenges by maintaining an optimistic view, actively seeking out social support, striving for cultural integration, and using adaptive learning tactics.

Students from Pakistan benefit greatly from their scholastic experiences in China in terms of their own personal development. Gaining exposure to new cultures, learning about one's place in them, gaining confidence, and developing a diverse set of abilities are all outcomes of these kinds of encounters. The life-altering experience cultivates an international outlook, equipping students with the adaptability and skills necessary for success in a globally interconnected world. Students from Pakistan have a lot to gain or lose from their time in China in terms of their future employment and professional aspirations. Possibilities and challenges for Pakistani job seekers with Chinese degrees are evolving in tandem with the rising value of a Chinese education. Turning overseas experiences into good job prospects requires planning ahead and making good use of contacts and talents. This investigation emphasizes the multifaceted character of educational goals among young Pakistanis residing in China. As such, it stresses the significance of schools that welcome and value students from many backgrounds and strive to meet their diverse needs and goals. In addition, by expanding our knowledge of this subject, it adds to intellectual conversation.

Recommendations and suggestions

The government must hold comprehensive orientation sessions to prepare Pakistani students for the academic, cultural, and linguistic challenges they will face in China. It should start programs to adjust students by teaching them the Chinese language, giving them cultural sensitivity training, and giving them academic expectations. In addition to this, there must be some forum that coordinates internships, industry placements, and job fairs to link students from

Limitations of the Study

The results may not be generalizable to a larger population because the study only included a small sample of Pakistani students in China. The conclusions may not be applicable or practical depending on individuals' backgrounds, areas of expertise, or educational institutions. The limited time may make it difficult to carry out a study that targets Pakistani students' professional and personal growth by tracking the long-term effects of their educational experiences.

Salma Bibi: Problem Identification and Model Development

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Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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