

## Navigating Academic and Cultural Adaptations: Experiences of Pakistani Students Studying in China During and After COVID-19

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**Abstract:** *This research examines the scholastic and cultural transitions of Pakistani students in China before and after the COVID-19 break. The study focuses on exploring how the pandemic affected the academic daily schedule, interaction with peers and community, and accessing cultural resources as well as the possibilities of the students' resistance and creativity. Based on a survey and interviews conducted with Pakistani students studying in Chinese universities, this study examines the problems like; instructional challenges of online learning, stress, and; limited social contact due to the COVID-19 outbreak. It also puts emphasis on how students cope with these challenges such as the use of Information communication technologies in learning and networking. After the pandemic, the research contributes to understanding in-person academically related interactions and cultural transition focusing on institutional support arrangements. The results enrich the theoretical knowledge about the patterns of international student mobility, cross-cultural adjustment, and the long-term effects of global emergencies on education. The findings in this study can be of valuable support to policymakers and universities to improve the lives of international students in the post-COVID-19 era.*

**Keywords:** China, Pakistan, Culture, Students, COVID-19

### Introduction

It is unevaluated that the outbreak of COVID-19 affected education systems globally, especially international students going through changes in academics in different countries. In this period, Pakistani students pursuing their education in China also faced certain peculiar challenges such as an unexpected paradigm shift from face-to-face learning to blended learning, limited social interactions, and less encounter with Chinese culture. Currently, China has become one of the most popular host countries in the world with more than 492,000 international students among them many Pakistanis. However, the break out of COVID-19 led to the shutdown of borders and the adoption of strict health measures affected their school schedules and social engagements greatly (Jabeen et al., 2024). Many of these students have the challenge of having to cope with Chinese academic rigor and cultural differences in the first place, and COVID-19 made the challenge worse for them. Difficulties experienced in virtual learning classrooms, shortage of tangible learning accessories, and absence of interactions with peers in the local and global community were observed as challenges of online learning., these students were good at using technology, building up peer supports, and promoting intercultural communication in face-to-face online classes. After the pandemic, when the educational process was gradually transferred offline, Pakistani students had another problem adaptation to the new conditions, the renewal of cultural interactions, and the elimination of the gaps caused by learning in quarantine (Anusionwu et al., 2024). This research aims to understand the situations and situation of Pakistani students in China before, during, and after the

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pandemic in terms of their academic lives and cultural changes. This article explores the approaches used to overcome these disruptions and features Chinese universities addressing their international student population's needs. Through exploring and making sense of these experiences, the research helps fill the gaps in prior literature about how global crises affect international education and promises specific suggestions on how to improve the academic and cultural acculturative experiences of international students in a post-COVID-19 era (Dai et al., [2024](#)).

## Literature Review

This text breaks out the wide-ranging and diverse experiences of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic time; and demonstrates how they are exposed to a variety of disadvantageous situations because they live and learn in a foreign country. Using 78 papers, the current study systematically integrates different significant themes that pinpoint the essence of the pandemic on this population (Tu, [2024](#)). The inexperienced lockdown learning barriers where international students lament the hasty switching to online learning. Other hurdles faced by these learners were; lack of proximal access to computers and internet resources, differences in time zones, and lack of proper facilities or technologies in the learner's country or host country interfering with their study timetables. On the other hand, the theme of our study is stalled transnational mobility which captures students' narratives about the halted process of traveling and visa issues to the countries of origin or hosts while some of them could not return home or continue with their education in their host country. This state of freeze meant much insecurity about academic progression and employment opportunities (Kanwal & Mehmood, [2024](#)). The theme concerning financial, social, and cultural vulnerability deepest in lockdown and involved the experiences of losing jobs, incurring higher costs in living standards, and going through restricted social interactions because of lockdown. The most significant pressure was financial, especially for students with rely on part-time employment or families with earnings impacted by the coronavirus disease. This was because traditional familiarization with cultural differences and coping with them would involve interaction within a social circle, which now could not be accessed due to social distancing. Moreover, worst racism and racial discrimination, confirm that international students as well as Asian students in particular became victims of xenophobia and racial discrimination. This social antagonism added to depression and routinization of the community and hurt the patients' quality of life in general (Shoukat, [2024](#)). The presentation is of Higher likelihood of mental health problems which points out the psychological impact of these diverse adversities. Studying stress, social exclusion, financial difficulties, and discrimination raised the probability of anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems among international students. In addition to providing an archive of the diverse experiences of international students during the pandemic, this review also demonstrates the value of well-coordinated support in the post-pandemic world. These include the provision of special services, additional counseling services, leadership grant services, and preventing racism services among others. These measures are hoped to engender a more supportive context for international students in the context of the long-term shadow cast by the pandemic on students' lives (Khan et al., [2024](#)).

The transforms analyze the diverse issues that international postgraduate students in British universities face attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting academic, psychological, and sociocultural adjustment. Therefore, adopting a qualitative method and collecting information through VFI with 30 students, the study has highlighted the need to appreciate the students' experience in this COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The thematic analysis shows that COVID-19-related stressors lead to a poorer level of psychological adjustment with the manifestation of symptoms of increased feelings of loneliness and social isolation from the host environment of this population group. Several students had difficulties establishing or maintaining friendly relationships, thus their isolation worsened. This has also renewed the realization that international students need belongingness, a feeling that is strongly offered by social networks (Schartner & Wang, [2024](#)). The examination of experiences regarding academic adjustment produces a complex view. Meanwhile, some students stated they had to struggle greatly with several issues, including emulating online tutorials and schooling, and the lack of academic support due to COVID-19 remote conditions, others pointed out that COVID is an enabler of flexibility and or decreased social

pressure depending on the personal context. This shows how the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic differs from student to student and academic year to academic year. The study also offers precious information on the sociocultural barriers experienced by international students. Two pillars of the international students' experience: cultural engagement and interactions with local people were severely impacted by the pandemic. The absence of social interrelatedness escalated cultural alienation and hindered reintegration into the society of the host country (Khalid et al., [2024](#)).

The study implies that global health crises including pandemics can worsen the students' vulnerability factors which are; loneliness, academic pressure, and cultural adaptation difficulties in the context of international students. However, the study also provides a chance for higher education institutions to learn from these and such experiences. The observations produced can serve as guidelines of adaptive institutional strategies when aiming at providing international students with more assistance during such crises. Some of the recommendations may include; the improvement of mental health care services, providing more focused integration programs, more elastic academic support plans, and more acceptable and suitable services during emergencies around the globe for international students (Fedorchenko et al., [2024](#)). Given that global epidemics are more and more possible, the study emphasizes the necessity of addressing the issues of institutional preparedness and policy formulation and implementation so that higher learning institutions are ready to address academic, psychological, and sociocultural concerns of international students during epidemics. This research focuses on the academic culture shock of Indonesian students in Pakistan to establish the various facets, causes, as well as coping mechanisms. To ensure that this issue is analyzed using a multidimensional approach, the research is grounded on theoretical frameworks like Collen Ward's ABCs of culture shock paradigm, Rajasekar's model on factors influencing culture shock, and Brislin's theory in cultural adjustment training (Ebrahimi, [2024](#)).

Therefore, the qualitative research design explores the emotional, motor, and cognitive characteristics of academic culture shock. These dimensions are emotional, practical, and mental and all pertain to the difficulty that the students have when they have to shift to another learning system and culture. Some of the factors found include language inaccessibility, meaning that the content cannot be easily understood, and cross-cultural issues which may do with racial and cultural origin. Indonesian students are generally challenged to adjust to new emerging traditions, social practices, and norms prevailing in the host country. Moreover, changes in schedules and timings and these seasonal changes form the next seemingly unrelated yet influential shocks. Again, it focuses on the factors of initiative and adaptation process when trying to address these challenges. There are three main patterns of students' coping with the Indonesian cultural and academic environment, namely comprehension, memorization, and self-directed task completion. These strategies ensure the students create a gradual transition to the academic and cultural environment in Pakistan (Azizi et al., [2024](#)). This research speaks to Indonesian students and enlightens the core experience, with cultural, environmental, and educational factors embedded in the academic culture shock. In this way, the study presents pragmatic recommendations from the case, focusing on the strengths of the learners to the educators and institutional frameworks of both countries. That is why attempts to develop targeted orientation programs, language support, and cultural sensitization initiatives would go a long way toward helping international students cope with the transition. This research adds to the existing body of literature on international students' transition and experiences by first focusing on Indonesian students in Pakistan and second, on cultural and academic acculturation in non-Western contexts. This serves as a call for more generally institutional-based interventions to assist learners who encounter such issues elsewhere in the world (Sandy, [2024](#)).

Through interviews with 25 students participating in international programs, this qualitative study explores the connection between digital technologies, education diplomacy, and student mobility in Pakistan. Because of this, the study adopts an interpretative epistemology that uses interviews and thematic analysis to identify five pertinent themes that underpin the findings regarding digital education diplomacy in the region. Digital connectivity; facilitating global engagement focuses on how technology plays a central role in enhancing online engagements globally. According to the respondents, virtual activity allowed them to interact with students from all over the world, opened questions that unite people, and gave a feeling of oneness irrespective of geographical location, as they were able to participate in

various events online, work on projects together, discuss items in real-time. This goes to show how knowledge connectivity creates the world's communities in education (Shah & Shah, 2024). The paper, *Challenges in Access and Technological Disparities*, tackles a familiar problem of equitable access to technology or the lack of it. Some of the specific reasons participants identified include infrastructural challenges and the digital divide to support parity, which is an issue around the world. This theme focuses on the use of information and communication technology to enhance the inclusion of students in global learning. The theme, that is, *Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptation in the Digital Realm* analyzes the conflicts that students go through when addressing culture in cyberspace. Importantly, the concept of intercultural competence is the guiding principle of the study, pointing to the cases of both multicultural communication with peers and the evaluation of distinct social practices in the context of digital education diplomacy (Maqbool, 2024).

*Enhanced Learning Experiences through Innovative Digital Tools* reveals the benefits of Digital Technologies in the education system. Using information technologies, specifically virtual simulations and collaborative online projects as learning tools was noted to enable active learning and enhancement of educational experience. *Digital Diplomacy's Opportunities in the Future* encompass the aspirations of the participants regarding the future advantages of digital education diplomacy. From the interviews, students also described the ability to learn digitally in terms of their future prospects thus positioning digital diplomacy as a factor in providing future opportunities (Fatima & Niazi, 2024). Drawing on the available literature, this work provides a theoretical understanding and insights into the prospect of digital education diplomacy to revolutionize international education with specific reference to Pakistan. It effectively builds on current research by expanding on the trends and issues unique to the Asia Pacific pertaining to digital education. However, some limitations of the study such as limited enrollment, and the viewpoint of only students imply the necessity to expand the work of this type. Some of the specific suggestions that the authors make are preventing technological divides, respecting cultural differences, and encouraging international partnerships for digital learning projects. This study presents preliminary evidence and recommendations for additional research and practical implications by educators, policy-makers, and school leaders to enhance international education in the digital age for all learners (Chen et al., 2024).

## Methodology

This paper therefore uses a qualitative research approach to examine the academic and cultural exposure of the Pakistani students while learning in China before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Coping, adaptation, and changes are stressed in understanding participants' experiences with a focus on phenomenology. The sample comprises 25–30 Pakistani students studying in several Chinese universities for diverse academic fields, different stays, and who have or have not gone through the COVID-19 experiences. Information is gathered with the help of ten semi-structured interviews, Using English and Urdu, depending on a participant's choice. The interviews shall provide rich descriptions of their learning, teaching, and social experiences in a new culture, as well as their experiences during the pandemic period. Thematic analysis is employed in order to analyze the data collected and to develop patterns that are pertinent to academic, cultural, and pandemic changes. In general, ethical concerns are not compromised in this study with respect to the participants' self-consent, the use of pseudonyms, and obtaining ethical clearance from the appropriate quarters. Sensitivity and credibility are sustained by member checking and triangulation of results with the extant literature and other institutional records. The use of this approach will afford a rich picture of the student's adaptive trajectories with reference to Pakistan and China, serving to advance the debate on international learning and educational disruption due to the furtherance of COVID-19.

## Discussion

The views of Pakistani students doing their studies in China before and after the COVID-19 pandemic are quite complex searching for academic, cultural, psychological, and logistic dimensions. The outbreak of the pandemic at the end of the year 2019 impacted education systems all around the world, especially those



students who are international students. What it meant for Pakistani students in China was an array of challenges different from those that could be faced in any other country; the fact being that China and Pakistan have shared a bond of education, economy, and culture. This cross-sectional research study will focus on understanding the learning context of Pakistani students in China and their academic and cultural adjustment, their pre-pandemic, pandemic experiences, and barriers, coping strategies, and how all these factors have impacted their learning journey (Gillani et al., 2024). The Chinese government has always been a preferred choice for the student community, with China being the preferred choice for Pakistani students who want to study overseas. Within the next five years, the number of Pakistani students studying in Chinese universities also has increased a lot and the current number is around 28000 (China Scholarship Council, 2020). But, when COVID-19 breakout in December 2019, it became a turning point for these students because a Chinese university abruptly turned online and numerous international students including Pakistani students had to stay far from their families within a few months, they faced not only academic issues but also cultural shock. They claim that the absence of face-to-face learning, the transition to distance learning, and the consequences of quarantine measures were the major aspects of their learning process during the pandemic (Nirwana, 2024). Most of the Pakistani students in China when switching from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning systems faced considerable difficulties. All Chinese universities moved their classes online almost immediately but the level of success of doing so was not the same. The analysis carried out by UNESCO established that despite online learning minimizing the effects of school closures, students in various areas received different quality internet and technological resources (UNESCO, 2020). The basic requirements of internet connectivity and space for studying were problematic for students and particularly challenging for students from rural Pakistan who were struggling to find a stable internet connection and suitable study space in their homes essential when learning online. Insufficient funding created problems that affected the quality of education including frequent reliance on an unstable internet connection, and inability to access essential digital tools and materials affected students' ability to fully engage in their learning (Zia & Bashir, 2024).

Further, the syntax and communication disparity between Chinese and Pakistani education systems turned academic shifts more challenging. The education system in Chinese universities has always come under a lot of criticism because of its easily recognizable traits: it is intensive and produces high achievements through rote learning. It was quite a change for many of the Pakistani students such that the majority of them had been introduced to a system of education where most of the learning was done through lectures and little class discussion. Capturing these interactions was especially challenging online owing to pre-recorded videos and synchronous learning platforms, which limited students' possibilities to communicate with professors and other students. Another report by the Ministry of Education of China reveals that international students for instance suffered the most when the learning shifted to online since most of them lack both academic and technological skills to cope with the situation (Ministry of Education of China, 2020). Such a gap raised many issues concerning the academic achievement and mental health issues of the international student populace including the students from Pakistan. Other effects – psychological impacts were also observed during the pandemic. Students had the stress of loneliness due to wear restrictions, lockdowns, and quarantine measures typical for the academic year in Pakistan. Of course, situations like these are not unique to these students; many international students lose their support systems or are geographically separated from them. An International Association of Universities survey showed that international students experience higher levels of anxiety and depression during the pandemic as a result of loneliness, and uncertainty due to fear of returning back home amid an up and ongoing pandemic (IAU, 2021). Pakistani students who are studying in China face an extra layer of stress as they have to try to understand a new healthcare system and, in a way, communicate in a language they may not be so familiar with. While students in their home country had access to support systems most Pakistani students struggled to get proper help because the culture and language, they encountered were quite different from what they were used to. Furthermore, Pakistan had very little network regarding telemedicine so the students were facing restrictions in getting mental health support while staying at home (Memon et al., 2024). Staying culturally relevant was also another major issue faced by Pakistani learners pre-, during, and post-pandemic. Although some Chinese universities have been accommodating foreigners as international students Chinese and Pakistani students differ in culture. Lack of understanding

of the Chinese language was also a major challenge among Pakistani students as well as a lack of understanding of Chinese social culture and high levels of ethnic endogamy. These issues became worse during the pandemic, many students did not attend social events or cultural activities that may enable them to be part of the university fraternity. The lack of contact with other Chinese cultures with local Chinese students and the proximity to their families resulted in increased perceived social isolation and loneliness. However, as these two short-term issues show, students also had more long-standing goals complicated by the effects of the pandemic. Time factors Consider the following points: There was always an unclear time of when the restriction for traveling would be lifted seeing internships, job opportunities, and networking as challenging to obtain brought a blurred vision of the future for students. Based on a survey of international students in China, the Chinese Association of Higher Education reported that 65% of Pakistani students mentioned that employment opportunities unknown after graduation had negative impacts on their concentration and motivation (Chinese Association of Higher Education, 2021). These aspects were even more critical to Pakistani students, as many of them expect their personal and professional connections in the Chinese internships to help them get jobs in China or back in Pakistan. Because of the arrangements brought about by the pandemic, they were unable to attain these professional networks essential for their future academic and professional pursuits (English, 2024). However, all of these he said present major challenges that many Pakistani students have to overcome. Effectively addressing these challenges was therefore determined by each student's level of personality reserve or coping resources.

One of the major forms of coping was to stay in touch with family and friends on social networks and instant messengers. Similarly, Pakistani students also relied on perceptions in the form of community networks and sought forums of group solidarity and emotional support with other international students. Although these strategies served to decrease the feelings of isolation, they did not effectively address the academic or cultural issues. Chinese authorities and universities likewise introduced some SSCs: free online study materials provided and mental health/well-being support services for international students during the COVID-19 outbreak (Luo et al., 2024). Instead, as the pandemic went on, most Pakistani students started to adapt both academically and culturally to their time in China. However, some students expressed the understanding that the widespread connections to international cyberspace as well as virtual international meetings make them feel involved with peers inside China and the world outside it. In so many ways, COVID-19 served as the much-needed tipping point prompting the shift to digital solutions that will determine the nature of intercultural communication in the future. Some students claimed that thanks to the accessibility of more resources to learn online, they were able to gaze beyond the limited pool of resources available within their university environment to participate in international seminars and Webinar-based courses. In the wake of and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, the problems that Pakistani students encountered in China became intertwined with the more comprehensively international concerns for students' mobility driven by the new global economic order and geopolitics. Technologies and remote work have opened other opportunities for students, however, the distance technologies pointed to the inequality of opportunities in students' access to technologies and the problem of the digital divide. Nevertheless, many Pakistani students still face the problem of absence of the digital equipment and a stable connection to the Internet. In addition, due to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the world economy, including the ensuing local lockdown, many Pakistanis lost their sources of income, including part-time employment and family support, to help finance their education. It has also been observed that after the pandemic universities in Pakistan and China have been expanding their partnerships.

With the improvement of educational cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), more Pakistani students are concerned with educational programs with Chinese Universities. However, these collaborations were abruptly ceased due to the pandemic, but there might be a positive sign of this if things go back to normality as planned. The Chinese government has also pledged to enhance the education opportunities for Pakistani Students; The CSC awards several hundred scholarships to Pakistani Students annually. These opportunities are important to continuously feed the Chinese universities with Pakistani students as the region gets over the worst effects of the pandemic. Therefore, 11 academic, cultural, psychological, and logistical factors examined in this study run the Pakistani students' lives during and

after the COVID-19 paradigm in China. Similar to actual academics and cultural transitions, actual student learning was interrupted by the pandemic; nonetheless, it made them stronger and learn how to adapt to new situations. The existence and sustenance of Pakistani students in China will, therefore, be as influenced by global and local solutions for these challenges as they will be shaped by China, Pakistan, and other long-term education development strategies adopted in China. Mitigation of the challenges that have been highlighted above through specific support for the students, infrastructure development, and increasing cross-culture research will play essential roles for Pakistani students in China in future academic achievement and mental well-being.

## Findings

### Academic Challenges and Adaptations

Pakistani students attributed the biggest difficulty they had to overcome to the disruption of face-to-face classes due to COVID-19. Some of them complained of challenges in accessing stable internet connectivity; which is a core component as they engaged in the online classes. Moreover, the poverty of necessary forms of digital equipment and an environment that encourages distance learning made such academic difficulties worse. Thus, the method of teaching with which China's traditional education system was associated – memorization and rote learning – added some more burden to Pakistani students who had far more discussion-based learning and critical thinking. This difference in teaching methods led to an academic adaptation gap and when compounded by the barriers of online learning, a devastating outcome for the students. As much as there was some level of continuity in learning, through the use of online learning platforms students reported that the quality of their study was less engaging. This was especially felt by postgraduate students who engaged in research; they needed physical resources, labs, and personal meetings with instructors. The above-mentioned influences give rise to psychological and/or emotional repercussions. Stress, anxiety, and depression have risen sharply among Pakistani students because of social isolation caused by the pandemic. Even on social aspects, students stated that they are lonely because they cannot go home and see their families. The absence of related cultural and social environments worsened the scenario even further. Counseling services were inadequate or none nonexistent because many students did not understand the local language or the health care system meaning that they could not seek a psychologist's help. A lack of support for psychological problems was also due to cultural Taboos rejecting the idea of such issues. Stress was also attributed to the overall uncertainties including COVID-19, traveling, and visa issues which cause distress beyond the performance pressure in academics and future careers.

### Cultural Adjustment and Social Isolation

Another barrier to Pakistani students was culture where they felt uncomfortable due to the difference in culture they experienced in China. These students had to adapt to a new social culture and context that included new social practices, new social ethics, and manners as well as new ways of expressing or communicating. These challenges were however compounded by the aspects of the pandemic in as much as social events and cultural interchange that could faceplate the adaptation of the students in the respective country was either restricted or non-existent. These feelings gave rise to loneliness and a perceived cultural rejection from local Chinese students and other students from other international countries. Relations with other people or with relatives became another problem; many Pakistani students reported that they had problems establishing new friends or keeping contact with friends from home for cultural reasons. Language differences also contribute a major motive in inefficient communication and adaptability. Despite the fact that a high percentage of Pakistani students join English-medium programs, the general society in China predominantly uses middle Chinese thus limiting the ability of the students to fully participate in the academic and co-curriculum life of the university.

### Coping Strategies and Adaptation Mechanisms

There are several signs of how Pakistani students tried to cope with academic and culturally adjusted challenges. The majority of respondents continued to have very good or fairly good actual/ideal face-to-face/FB communication with their family and friends back home as a source of comfort and

companionship. These people were important to update the current state of affairs in China and Pakistan and social sites were helpful to remain in contact with them. Eye contact: It was seen that due to COVID-19 Pakistani students forced themselves to connect with other Pakistani students and other international students as well. They also used what is called independent learning strategies and means in order to cope with academic difficulties. Several students said that they were relieved from the increased pressure that was received from the conventional Chinese academic system by stating that they were able to learn at their own pace while studying online. In terms of the cultural aspect, students attempted to surmount the challenges by studying the Chinese language and getting to know more about Chinese culture and traditions; however, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, most students had restricted chances to interact face-to-face to make use of the medium that usually helps to deal with the issue.

### **Impact on Postgraduate Prospects**

The coronavirus disrupted the students' lives and the plans for the post-graduation life of students greatly. The problems were found in the areas of internships, jobs, and professions mainly both in China and in the home country. The economic situation worldwide also played an additional role in constraining these opportunities as many organizations either provided few openings for which to apply or did not have openings at all for international students. Other problems that students faced included the unpredictable nature of travel bans and visa policies for the country which they intended to return to after their learning sessions. Due to ongoing restrictions, some of them had to spend more time in academic periods than they would have spent at home thus leading to financial stress and anxiety. However, some students were flexible and sought new career opportunities such as online jobs and remote internships which were not as many and well-defined as normal internships.

### **Institutional Support and Policy Changes**

The Chinese universities tried their best to bring support to international students during the pandemic; providing them with online resources, counseling, and/or financial support. However, the experiences of inventions in these measures were incongruent, whereby many students were insulted by the available support, particularly in mental health. Some universities implemented things like extension of due dates and accessibility to virtual career services and guidance but their poor communication ended up causing much confusion and disappointment among itself and international students. Several governmental actions for example; the China Scholarship Council found international students continued to be funded by the China government to alleviate certain financial barriers though, there was limited tangible assistance to the students to help them cope with the new dynamic world.

### **Long-Term Outlook**

Prospects for the Pakistani students in China in the long run after COVID-19 are still inconclusive. The event has shown how there is a need to advance infrastructure in technology-supported learning; funding of mental health services; and, relevance of internationalization. It might still take time for universities throughout China to expand the efficiency of virtual exchanges and other applications that keep international students connected and more engaged academically. Nevertheless, these institutions should also come to terms with technological differences and equality of instrumentality to the students. This invariably implies the adoption of new forms of structural change in international education which has happened effectively with the shift to digital learning and virtual exchanges as more inclusive and comprehensive systems to suit the varied needs of international learners but comes with huge demands on investment both in the innovational technological tools and supporting facilities required for their needs.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study found Academic, cultural, psychological, and social challenges that affect the Pakistani students studying in China during and after the COVID-19 outbreak stress the academic continuity, cultural change psychological impact, and social adjustment of the students in coping with the



situation. Technological barriers coupled with the shift from face-to-face lessons to online learning time felt like a major disruption of the academic year for many learners. These cultural adaptation proceedings fared worse because of scarce social interactions the pandemic worsened feelings of loneliness and rejection. Other mental issues that caused much strain included anxieties and stress due to confusion on progression in education, movement restrictions, and lack of access to family. Nevertheless, the challenges depicted show that Pakistani students had an array of strategies they used to overcome issues of academic as well as cultural transition. Some students stayed disconnected from friends and relatives to whom they could turn for help; some students reported that they had to be more solitary and independent in their approaches to their class assignments. In addition, a number of students applied themselves to interact with Chinese culture and language, however, the interactions were rather limited due to the COVID-19 online presence. Chinese universities' institutional responses while not homogeneous played a central role in offering academic assistance, Web-based materials, and to some extent mental health care. Nevertheless, the existences of such support systems were found to be lacking, and thus the a need to enhance them, for instance through improving mental health counseling services, and diversifying technology. Subsequently, there is a need for universities in China, and other hosting countries, to build stronger infrastructure to accommodate the international learners, multimodal learning provision, increased cultural consciousness, and easy access to psychological services. In any case, the COVID-19 pandemic has given important lessons in understanding the dynamics of the international student experience during a crisis. In this manner, being able to meet academic, social, and emotional development more suitably, institutions can brace up for other challenges and be ready to welcome international students in a post-pandemic world. The overlaid experiences of Pakistani students in China during and after post COVID-19 pandemic can be valuable in developing and enhancing the policies and practices aimed at enhancing the experiences of international students and their resilience while translating them into the academic and cultural environments Across the world that has turn out to be inter-connected due to globalization.

### **Future Directions**

First of all, more longitudinal research should be performed to analyze the permanent impact of the pandemic on students' academic achievements, cultural adjustment, and psychological well-being. Such studies could give important information about how the experience of studying in a global crisis affects the students' subsequent professions, their cultural assimilation, and their concepts about themselves. Another important direction is the study of institutional support management systems and using them to improve students' adaptation during critical situations. Subsequent studies could treat the faculty's different strategies for handling COVID-19 as a case of how other universities in China could approach the situation, addressing online teaching platforms, mental health services, and cultural exchange programs. These responses could then be compared between universities and may reveal what practices could be adopted more broadly across Chinese Higher education institutions or any global university. Besides, it is also possible to investigate protective factors that may help a learner to overcome different difficulties and succeed. These studies could explore personal-level antecedents, for example, student self-efficacy, coping resources, and sources of social support that would enable students to cope with the academic and cultural losses resulting from the pandemic. This could positively help in the design of intervention programs which will help in increasing the resilience of the international students before they are faced with such setbacks. Technology in relation to the processes of student learning represents another rich area for future research. , pandemic disruption exposed concerns such as; technology literacy, technology access, and appropriateness of online learning among International students. Based on the findings, future research might consider examining how emerging technologies that enhance online learning may be effectively utilized to enhance students' cultural involvement within classroom practices. Second, it is also limited to the extent that the views of Pakistani students on cultural differences between China and Pakistan were to some degree impacted by their Chinese and social cultures.

### **Recommendations for Policymakers**

#### **Addressing Mental Health Support Service Delivery**

A remedial effort should be made to ensure that international students' mental health is given adequate

consideration by policymakers foremost those who experienced strained or social life during the pandemic. Chinese universities should therefore provide effective mental health care that is sensitive to the needs of the Pakistani students. This way it entails delivering counseling sessions, support groups, and other online services that touch on mental health. Mental health support as a student service must be provided in several languages and English to cater to non-Chinese speaking students.

### **Best Practices to Improve Online and Hybrid Courses**

Since the pandemic enhanced the dependency on online and hybrid learning, universities must maintain refining information and communication technology learning spaces. University administrators should be encouraged to put their resources into the development of technology-rich digital space with customer-friendly solutions to complement interactive learning. Further, technical support would include giving students reliable dependable internet as well as online materials required to overcome the barriers in online classes, especially international students. It may be useful to remain partially blended, with cheap communication technologies, which may persist to be helpful in the future for international students who have travel limitations or challenges to acculturate in the host country's educational system.

### **Culturally Relevant and Inclusive Practice**

The authorities should support the propagandizing of cultural sensitivity in Chinese universities. This will ensure students from Pakistan and other parts of the world will feel more at home and part of that society. This includes providing sensitivity training for the employees, hosting functions for the varied ethnic communities, and promoting student interaction in the global society. Furthermore, universities could design and implement different orientation packages that would focus on aspects of culture that Pakistani students might experience and some solutions to help them adapt to the Chinese community.

### **Enhancing Protective Mechanisms for the Internationally Mobile Student Populace**

It is crucial to create wide umbrella support for international students for them to easily cope with existing academic and social environment changes. It is recommended that universities open offices or departments whose main role would be to help international students through academic and cultural transitions as well as logistics. These departments can provide individual counseling that involves having mentors since experienced students or alumni can help new students. Other relationships could also have been formed especially in terms of riding out with virtual peer support and sharing groups during restricted travels.

### **Helping Refugee Clients with Their Reintegration into Local Communities**

Policymakers should promote partnerships between universities and towns to ensure interrelation for international students. An effective method of reducing cultural barriers for Pakistani students to interact with locals within China and locals in academic settings is to arrange for social and other academic-related activities to be carried out with the local Chinese students and communities. Organized activities like language exchange programs, community service, and cultural activities will enable Pakistani students to learn the Chinese language and the social environment successfully. Furthermore, understanding each other's situation by local and international students would change and help in the fight against discrimination in most cases.

### **Tackling Points Related to Finance and Scholarships**

Due to the pandemic, many students have struggled financially and international students have especially been affected. The Pakistan authorities should consider requesting more scholarships or other kinds of financial support for Pakistani students, who study in China. It can offer students emergency money in case they lose their part-time jobs or encounter some troubles because of changes in exchange rates and limitations on travel. By working with universities and other government-related bodies, opportunities for funding for international students are created in order to avoid a situation whereby a student's funding stresses him/her academically and personally.

## **Enhancing the Relationship Between Communication and Coordination among Universities and Embassies**

There should be a proper exchange of information among universities in China, the Pakistani government, and Pakistani embassies are essential in this case, particularly during an emergency situation. The authorities should facilitate cooperation between universities and embassies so that the obtained information and updates on travel restrictions, health measures, and academic calendars, are reached on time. From time to time, the flow of information will resolve any misunderstanding and worry of the Pakistani students to equip them with appropriate information concerning changes in university policies or new resources in the university.

## **Building Long-Term Strategies for Crisis Management**

Future challenges like pandemics or crises may as well look for any nondescript way to challenge the SPI international students. The government and relevant authorities ought to collaborate with universities in China to explore sustainable solutions to cover for loss of academic and cultural translations during calamities. This could include developing a ready means to offer courses in a format that is not traditional face-to-face, having plans in case learning has to go online, and developing a framework for responding to crises. There should also be policies in place that protect international students during emergencies around the world from the Universities at which they study. This ought to be applied by supporting the universities in developing broad emergency preparedness policies that should be updated for novel traditions.

## **Onshore Evolution and Feedback and Performance Monitoring Loops**

Future research work and feedback mechanisms should be encouraged so that the problems faced by Pakistani students in China can be observed regularly. Qualitative data can also be collected by using questionnaires and questionnaires like surveys, interviews, and focus groups to establish what challenges students undergo through, their progress, and their welfare state. These findings can be used to make future policy changes: universities and governments will be able to promptly address students' demands. An annual overview of the experiences of international students will assist in the evaluation of whether or not the support structures put in place are adequate and relevant in case of any changes.

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