

A Re-Examination of the Pull Factors Influencing the Destination Choices of Chinese International Students After Massive Global Immobility

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Discussion
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01

Introduction

- Research background
 - Literature review
 - Research objectives
- 

Background

1.1

- ✧ International education for Chinese
- ✧ The influence of Covid-19
- ✧ The newest policies facilitating international mobility from and to China

Introduction

International Education for Chinese students

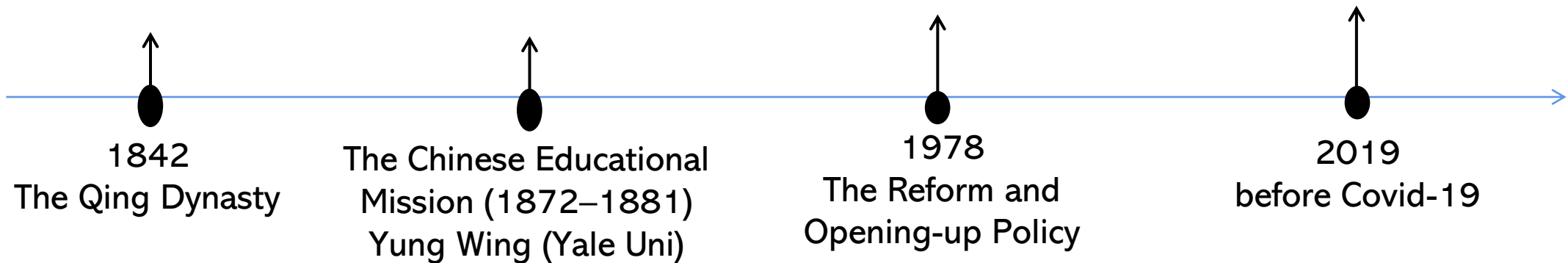
6,560,600 Chinese people obtained international degrees between 1978 and **2019**.

Westernised movement:
in the quest of
advanced knowledge

120 students to study
Western science and
engineering in the USA
in 1872.

A booming demand for
pursuing international
knowledge for skilled
human resources

Big demands on
inter-disciplinary
talents



(Liu, 2016; Mok, 2016, 2023)

(Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2020, 2020; Choudaha, 2017; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2020)

International students' mobility (ISM)

Receiving destinations: benefit or no **For countries: benefitted**

Net income gain was generated from the international ed

- US: 44 billion dollars (Anderson, 2016; Bureau of Econom
- Australia: 16 billion dollars (Australian Education Int
- UK:14 billion dollars (British Council, 2012)

For universities: benefitted

- layoffs and budget deficiencies for insufficient full-tuition-paying international students (Hegarty, 2014; Welch, 2022a).

Thus, the benefits of maintaining an adequate number of overseas students are critical for the economy of universities and countries (Marginson & Xu, 2022; Redden, 2019).

The Influence of Covid-19 on the International Education of Chinese Students

• Immobility (amid Covid-19)



Global **lockdowns** at the peak of the pandemic

Frequent emergency **flight fuses**

Inbound: “Trapped in a **double bind**”:
price+demand; (Ma & Miller, 2021, p. 1598;
Deng et al., 2021; S. Chen, 2022)

Outbound: C9 League university students' intention to study abroad: from **23.74%** to **11.49%** in 2020 (Lin, 2020).

• Policy for remobilization (after Covid-19)

From **zero tolerance** to **coexistence** with the COVID-19 virus in January 2023

Policy shifting facilitates international mobility from and to China

- ✓ flight availability
- ✓ quarantine-related inconveniences

The Impact of COVID-19 on Chinese International students' Mobility

Higher education institutions (HEIs)

The university is heavily affected by

- massive lockdowns ;
- facilities closure;
- declined international travel and shipping;
- global unemployment.

(Evans Darrell et al., 2020; Gruszczynski, 2020; World Trade Organization, 2020)

Students

Multiple destinations in applications to avoid *those*.

(EIC Education, 2021; New Oriental, 2021)

Pedagogical countering measures
e.g. hosting online; virtual classrooms

(Evans Darrell et al., 2020; Longhurst et al., 2020)

Literature Review

1.2

- ✧ The pull factors of destination decisions
- ✧ Insufficiency of the identified pull factors
- ✧ Research questions

The pull factors of destination decisions

PUSH FACTORS: the social, political, and economic developments **in students' home countries** that motivate them to pursue education abroad (e.g. Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Dimmock et al., 2010; Lee, 2014)

PULL FACTORS: the elements that **attract students to select one destination over others** (Lee, 2017; Mazzarol et al., 2001)

In this research, **only the PULL factor** of the push and pull model is adopted as the research framework because the **push factors** are less relevant for those students we studied during COVID-19.

Six Pull Factors for Chinese Students

- ❖ the reputations and locations of institutions
- ❖ the employment and immigration opportunities
- ❖ the economic development of the destination
- ❖ recommendations from family and friends
- ❖ language in use
- ❖ the cost of the overseas experience

(Bodycott, 2009; Dimmock & Ong Soon Leong., 2010; Li & Bray, 2007; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Yang, 2007)

Literature Review

Insufficiency of the identified pull factors



Previous studies were all conducted **before the pandemic** when there was **little** to consider regarding **mobility**.



One difference that has already emerged regarding the choice of studying destinations relates to **the application process**. Chinese students now have a strong tendency to **apply to multiple destinations** (EIC Education, 2021; New Oriental, 2021).

Research objectives

1.3

1. To re-examine the *influence* of COVID-19 on the **pull factors** that help Chinese full-tuition-paying international students to decide **on institution destinations**
2. To investigate the **similarity and differences in evaluating pull factors** between Chinese **students and parents**



02

Methodology

Methodology

Table 1. Pull factors and corresponding subfactors

Pull Factors	Sub-factors
The reputation of institutions and city	(1) World ranking of institutions
	(2) World ranking of majors
	(3) Knowledge of the host city
	(4) Knowledge of the host institution
The employment and immigration opportunities	(5) Overseas employment prospects
	(6) Chinese employment prospects
	(7) Immigration opportunities
The economic development of the host country	(8) Economic development of host country
Recommendations of others	(9) Recommendations of others
Language in use	(10) Tuition language
	(11) Daily language
Cost of overseas experiences	(12) Tuition cost
	(13) Living cost

Research Design

Survey
7-point Likert Scale

1(the least important)



7 (the most important)

Procedure and Sample

Sample (n=1,335)

1. online survey platforms (5.84%);
2. study abroad agencies (58.13%);
3. HEIs' global cooperation programs (36.03%).



03

Data Analysis

Methodology

Data Cleaning

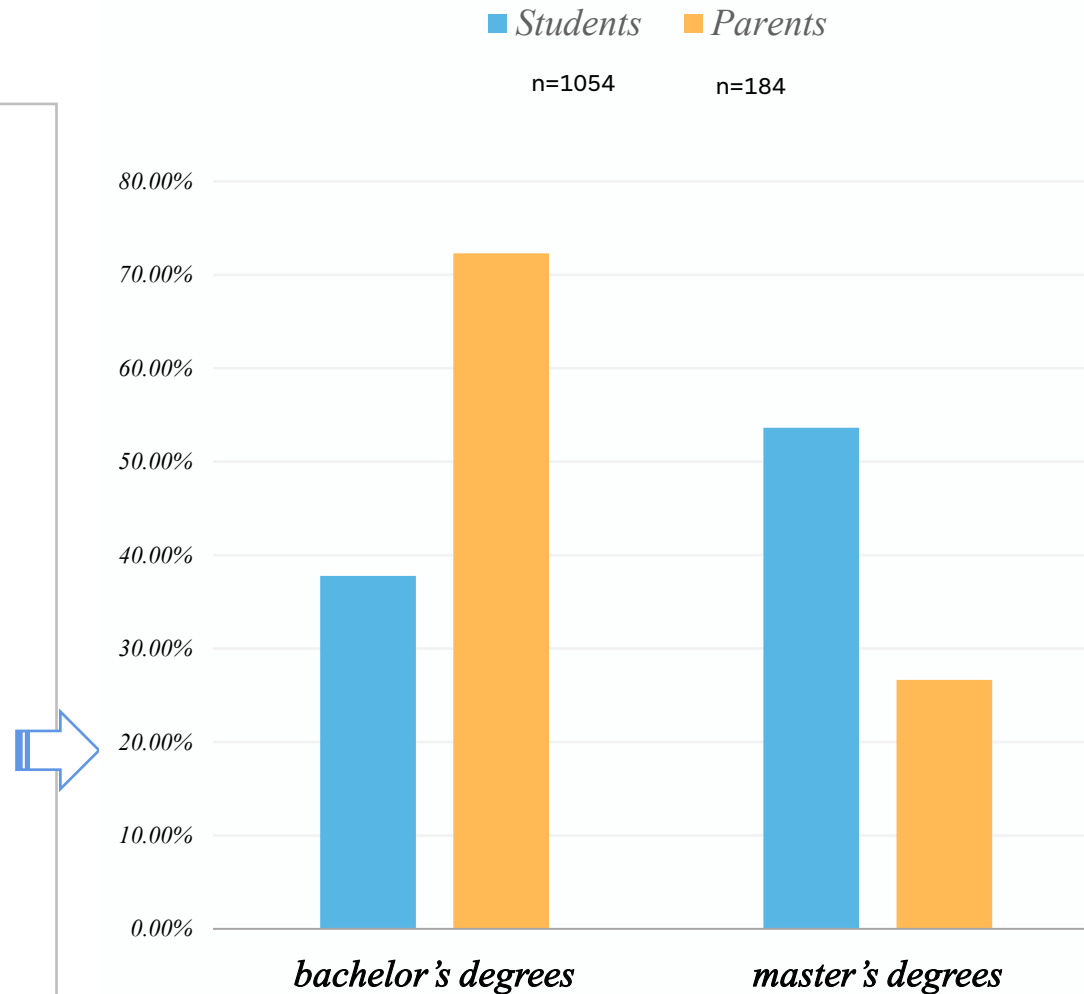
97 were excluded

Valid survey :

✓ 1,054 for students;

✓ 184 for parents

Figure 1 Parents And Students' Goals for Study Abroad



Participants

Students

- ✓ Bachelor: 398
- ✓ Master: 565
- ✓ Doctor: 91 (8.28%)

Gender:

- ✓ 61% females
- ✓ 39% males

Parents:

- ✓ Bachelor: 72%; 133
- ✓ Master: 27%; 49

Finding 1: Pull factors for students

Table 2. Pull factors considered by international students

Pull factors	Frequency	Consideration ratio
Tuition cost	884	83.87%
Living cost	773	69.55%
Tuition language	714	67.74%
Chinese employment prospects	578	54.84%
Economic development of host country	516	48.95%
World ranking of majors	510	48.39%
World ranking of institutions	476	45.16%
Daily language	442	41.94%
Knowledge of host city	374	35.48%
Knowledge of host institution	368	34.89%
Recommendations of others	238	22.58%
Overseas employment prospects	102	9.68%
Immigration opportunities	34	3.23%
Sum	5,969	566.30%

Pull factors for students: ‘

- Tuition cost (83.87%)
- Living cost (69.55%)
- Tuition language (67.74%)
- Chinese employment prospects (54.84%)

Frequency of pull factors considered by students

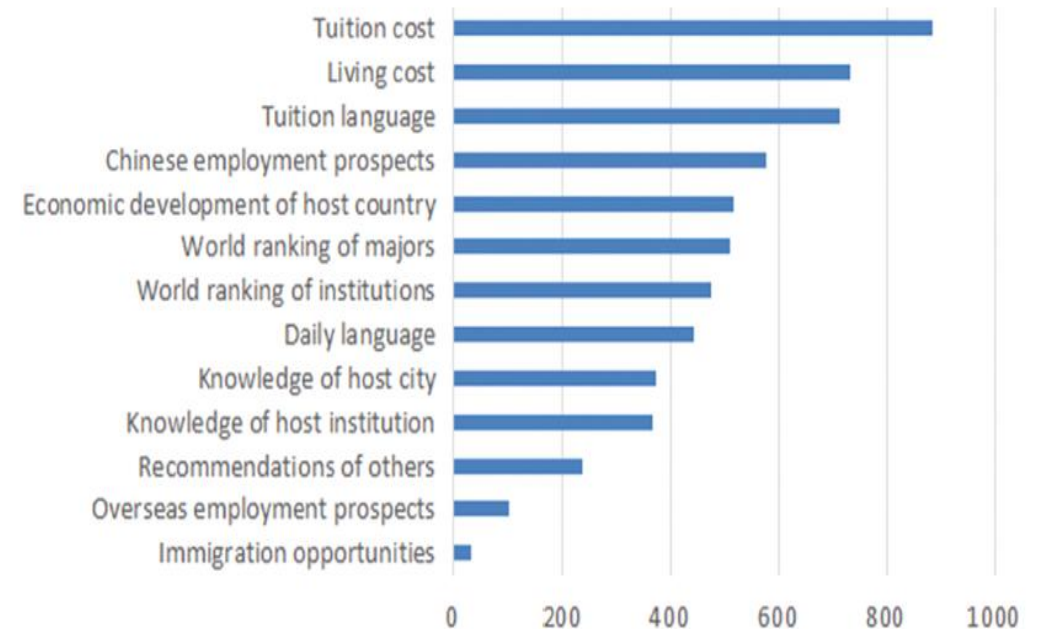


Table 3. Pull factors considered by parents of international students

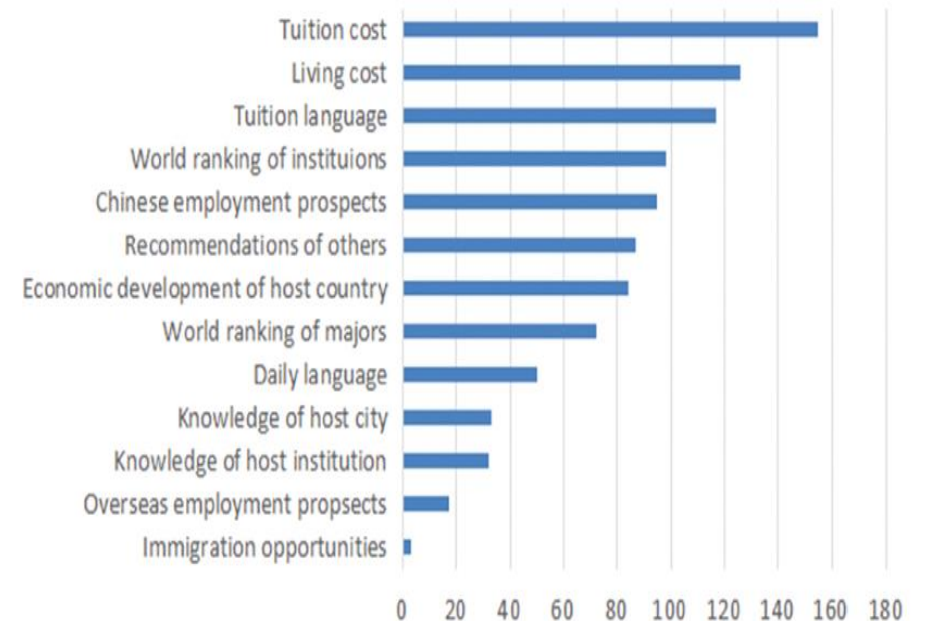
Pull factors	Frequency	Consideration ratio
Tuition cost	155	84.24%
Living cost	126	68.48%
Tuition language	117	63.59%
World ranking of institutions	98	53.26%
Chinese employment prospects	95	51.63%
Recommendations of others	87	47.28%
Economic development of host country	84	45.65%
World ranking of majors	72	39.13%
Daily language	50	27.17%
Knowledge of host city	33	17.93%
Knowledge of host institution	32	17.39%
Overseas employment prospects	17	9.24%
Immigration opportunities	3	1.63%
Sum	969	526.62%

Note: The consideration ratio is calculated by the 'frequency of each factor divided by the total number of parent respondents' so that it represents the possibility of each factor being considered by individuals in the sample.

Pull factors for parents

1. tuition cost' (84.24%)
2. living cost' (68.48%)
3. tuition language (63.59%)
4. world ranking of institutions (53.26%)
5. Chinese employment prospects (51.63%)

Frequency of pull factors considered by parents



Differences in rating pull factors between students and parents

Table 4. Comparison of factor importance between the student group and parent group

Factors that attract and influence	Students	Parents	Significance
decision-making	Mean	Mean	Significance
Tuition Cost	5.97	6.54	P < 0.001
Living Cost	5.13	5.12	P = 0.935
Tuition Language	5.03	4.91	P = 0.446
Chinese Employment Prospects	4.65	4.02	P < 0.001
World Ranking of Institutions	3.32	3.41	P = 0.561
World Ranking of Majors	3.23	3.11	P = 0.288
Daily Language	3.09	2.17	P < 0.001
Knowledge of Host City	2.97	5.15	P < 0.001
Knowledge of Host Institution	2.52	5.19	P < 0.001
Economic Development of Host	2.45	4.48	P < 0.001
	-	-	-
Recommendations of Others	1.72	4.53	P < 0.001
Immigration Opportunities	1.05	1.26	P < 0.001
Overseas Employment Prospect	1.02	1.01	P = 0.378



04

Discussion and Implications



1. A combination of five to six factors is decisive enough for the destination decision

The consideration ratio showed in table 2 and 3, which is the likeliness of individuals in the sample considering a certain pull factor, totals **566.30%** and **526.62%** for **students** and the **parents** respectively.

Students'

In decreasing importance



Parents'

In decreasing importance



2. Critical factors shared in both groups

Parents and international students resemble in relevant pull factors:
They favour elite education, institutions and programs at an affordable price for employment advancement in China.

Subject and institution rankings are still effective for successful employment (Lv et al., 2014).

3. Unimportant factors

Factors that no longer be considered important:

- ① **employment prospects of destination;**
- ② **immigration opportunities;**
- ③ **recommendations of friends and family.**

WHY not important?

1. There is an increasing trend of returning Chinese international students from 2019 to 2021 (MoE, 2020; Dong et al., 2021);
2. There is a political explanation that the worsening relationship between China and the US has led to a new cold war and other major west powers (Mok et al., 2022; Welch, 2022b);
3. There is a possible demographic answer. Previous Chinese families showed strong patriarchal tendencies (Kang, 2011; Song, 2020) while after the one-child policy began in 1979, parents become more prone to their sons' needs and life projects (Song, 2012; Ren, 2006).

4. Differences in parents' and students' priorities

Students: Chinese employment prospects and daily language;

- From a Return on Investment perspective, they see English as an opportunity for global communication skills and employment (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

Parents: tuition cost; knowledge of host city, knowledge of host institution, and the recommendation of others.

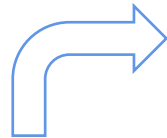
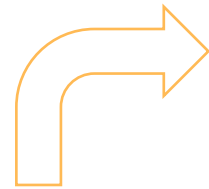
- Parents are more fixated on cost, something that must be related to the negative effects Covid-19 had on families' finance;
- Knowledge of host city and institutions can be interpreted as parents now having a high involvement in children's education choices, being affected by Confucianism and Mencius;
- Economic development is a reliable indicator of higher-quality education.

5. Recommendations for Institutions

Methods for more full-tuition-paying international students:

offering financial aid;

emphasizing in return on investment.



- a. Financial aid has proven before to be beneficial for students and universities, even during economic downturns (Abbas et al., 2021, p. 4; Bamberger et al., 2020).
- b. For students' education investment, Institutions should work with Chinese study-abroad agencies to advertise figures like the Chinese employment rate, the average salary of graduates, and the Chinese career paths of the institution's alumni.



Implications

1. **Research design:**

- **Future research can use qualitative data to know more about the reasons**
- **Pairing students with parents' design will be very valuable in understanding the differences between students and parents.**

2. **Research scale:**

- **Similar research country-wide is valuable especially after China abandoned the zero-tolerance policy**
- **Large-scale surveys across different countries will be meaningful in understanding international students' mobility through a comparative perspective**

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