

An impetus for African students' choice of China as a study destination under the Belt and Road background-a case study of Kenyan scholars

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ABSTRACT

Little is known about the push-pull factors that influenced choice of many African scholars to China as a study destination in the Belt and Road era. The present study employed quantitative research methodology to investigate how push-pull factors act as stimulus to influence the decision-making process of 364 Kenyan students in China. The findings revealed significant association (P-value < 0.05) between push factors such as quality of education, education reputation, smooth student visa process, recognition of previous credentials, availability of scholarship, the level of technology and easy to obtain information about China (P-value < 0.05, χ^2 -value of 3.61-16.32) and respondents' preference for China. Furthermore, major pull factors such as recognition of previous credentials, university reputation, availability of financial aid, offering a wide range of courses in English, links with my previous university, a large number of international students in the university and employment prospects strongly associated with decision of respondents to choose a particular university/institution in China among Kenyans. The findings from this study may be valuable to policy makers with regards to higher education in China and beyond.

Keywords: Higher education; quality education; preference for china; pull-factors; push-factors

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I. INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of higher education is crucial in this era of globalization. Countries across the globe are adapting to the era of globalization by internationalizing their education systems. The internationalization of education, therefore, has led to increased international student mobility (ISM) to various study destinations. Countries interested in internationalization and enhancing their education power have come up with policies that encourage students from other countries to join their higher education institutions (HEIs); according to The British Council Report in 2016 (on a study involving 26 countries), 23 out of 26 countries are most open regarding policies favoring internationalization and exchange. The above countries included Germany, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), Malaysia and People's Republic of China (China), (The British Council, 2016), it is due to such measures that international student mobility is increasing. According to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) statistics, in 2014, globally mobile students rose to 5 million; this is more than double the 2.1 million figure in 2000 (OECD, 2014). In line with the changes in higher education policy at the global context and other factors like immigration policies, there are also changing patterns in student destinations. For instance, the United States of America (USA) is facing a negative trend especially after 2015 while the UK is facing a slow growth in international students' enrollments (Baer, 2017; University Of Oxford, 2017). Currently, China is rising steadily as an international student destination. This is owed to several policy changes and recently a boost through Belt and Road (BR).

China has made several steps in internationalization of higher education by focusing on International Student Mobility (ISM) and academic cooperation. Since 2014, after the rollout of BR, the government of China has increased education cooperation and having more inbound students from the Belt and Road Countries (BRCs). African nations have been at the forefront of these interactions, and it is now one of the largest sources of international students in China. Kenya had education relationship with China before Belt and Road (BR), however the expansion and promotion of such cooperation among the goals of BR have made tremendous influence on Kenya's education arena (MoE, 2016a). The 2016 Ministry of Education (MoE) action plan-lays down strategies aimed at improving people to people ties, cultivating and supporting talent and achieving common development along the Belt and road countries (BRCs), (MoE, 2016b). Amongst these strategies are the pull factors for BRCs students' mobility to China which include: Recognition of academic credentials, smooth

visa process, academic exchange programs, breaking language barriers, scaling up Confucius institutes, scholarships, improving education quality, management and service to students and giving play to existing cooperation mechanisms. In addition, the Chinese mega projects running in the BRCs is selling the soaring level of Chinese technology, the BR economics ties with BRCs is another pull factor in play.

However, there is limited literature showing Kenyan students' motivations to study in China under the BR background. China's commitment to supporting BRCs efforts towards polishing human capital is a significant roadmap to the greater academic and training partnership. Since the BR inception and implementation, a considerable amount of research has been channeled towards the project. Its education policy is a small component meant to boost relevant human capital, cultural exchange, and to support knowledge and technological transfer to BRCS. This study thus explores this research gap, by identifying major pull-push factors among Kenyan students to China and their choice of institution of learning. The results from this study may be useful to policy makers in China to improve pull-push factors necessary to attract large number of persons to study in China to contribute to the realization of the BR policy.

EDUCATION POLICIES IN CHINA

Though literature abounds on how China and academic institutions in China are leveraging the push-pull model to drive students' traffic into these instructions, little is available on the BR as a pull mechanism. Peters et al. (2020) examined education in and for the Belt and Road initiative (BR). They opined that the increased developmental capacity, specifically regarding the internationalization of its higher education system as a primary element of the BR. This is supported by evidence from the onset of the BR in 2013. Through collaborations with 46 key international education organizations and several educational partnerships established between 188 countries and regions (Ministry of Education, 2018), China's BR can be accepted as a leading global contributor to the overall connectivity between culturally diverse peoples from all over the world. By continuing to award scholarships to students from countries along the belt and road, China has created a pull that draws an ever-increasing influx of international students to study at its burgeoning world class universities (WCUs). It has been argued that, through these initiatives, China is on track to be the center of higher education (HE) in the near future (Peters, 2019a).

A recent study by King (2019) digests China–Africa Education Cooperation: From the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to Belt and Road. The study answers how the FOCAC traditions of support to Human Resource Development are reinforced by the Belt and Road Initiative (BR), and in particular by the Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative, issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2016 (MOE, 2016). King establishes that the discourse of the Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative has sonority with the discourse of FOCAC. This is very evident for education collaboration and collaboration in other sectors. The human resource exchange and development is one of the pillars of the four major connectivities: “enhanced infrastructure connectivity, increased trade connectivity, expanded financial connectivity, and strengthened people-to-people connectivity.” The latter covers collaboration and partnership in education, health, culture, and science. King's assessment gives in-depth knowledge on how the factors of the push-pull model play together from FOCAC to Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative to promote international education in China.

Language can be a barrier to such connectivity and a major concern is with “breaking the language barriers between the Belt and Road countries” (MOE, 2016). It focuses on encouraging the use of each other's languages. The implication of this are foreign language training in the BR universities. There is a strong case “to institutions from the Belt and Road countries to work in partnership with Chinese institutions to establish programmes that teach their languages in China” (MOE, 2016) while there is also a call for more social actors to consider establishing Confucius Institutes and Classrooms in Belt and Road countries.

In addition, BR countries are strongly encouraged to incorporate education for international understanding into the curricula termed as “Silk Road cultural heritage protection”. The goal of this is for mutual recognition of qualifications in the region. The “Silk Road” brand in respect of heritage extends to teachers' education to ensure that the best practice in teacher education is shared around the region (Silk Road Teacher Training Enhancement Programme) and joint training projects (Silk Road Joint Education and Training Enhancement Programme) (MOE, 2016).

An important element in the FOCAC Action Plans was giving several scholarships for Africans to learn in China, as well as short-term training awards for African professionals to visit China. This is also prominent in the Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. There is a slot given to the Silk Road Scholarship, aimed at students and technicians along the routes. "By combining government funding, private financing, and public donations, we aim to broaden the funding sources for education, enlarge the scope of education assistance, and achieve shared development in education" (MOE, 2016). Furthermore, there is strong encouragement for more Chinese students to study in the Belt and Road countries. Although the long-term goal

of such an initiative will strengthen the quality of education in home countries to reduce the push to study in China, it creates a strong pull in the short term.

Technical vocational education and training (TVET) institutions are not left out in this deal because of its critical role in infrastructure development across BR countries. The Action Plan employs a “multi-layered cooperation in vocational and technical education and training” developing talent for the BR regions. In addition, there is a challenge to China’s top vocational and technical institutions to consider establishing an overseas presence through links with industry (MOE, 2016).

Talking about TVET under the BR, Musyimi, Malechwani and Luo (2018) explored the impact of China’s Belt and Road Initiative on improving vocational education quality and employment rates in Kenya through a collaborative educational program known as the Kenya-China Technical and TVET project.

The results show that the Kenya-China TVET Project has improved Kenyan TVET classrooms with state-of-the-art equipment to meet industrial standards and permits important skills to be developed through various collaborative opportunities with Chinese corporations. Such projects will develop in-country capacity and reduce the push factors at play.

PUSH-PULL MODEL AND DECISION FOR DESTINATION FOR EDUCATION

The push-pull theory best explains international migration (Krishnakumar & Indumathi, 2014) and has since been widely applied to explain student migration (McMahon, 1992). The student's decision-making process is complex (Eder, Smith & Pitts 2010) and highly influenced by push and pull factors that work in conjunction to affect the student decision-making (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Push factors according to Bodycott and Lai (2012), comprises the social, political, environmental and economic forces within the home country that necessitate a student’s decision to pursue education overseas. This includes high levels of student competition for university entrance due to overpopulation (Bodycott & Lai, 2012), ethnic conflicts, the legacy of colonialism, the growing gap between rich and poor, and the unequal development of different regions (Lei, Xiao, and Li, 2021).

On the contrary, pull factors are those that influence the student to choose a particular country over another (Mazzarol, Soutar, & Thein, 2001). The pull factors embody the knowledge and awareness of an institution’s reputation, recommendations by peers and relatives, and ability to work in the host country. Simply put, pull factors indicate how the students are attracted by a particular location (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Kim, Jogaratnam, & Noh, 2006).

Many literatures available strongly model students’ decision-making process in three concerted steps starting with the decision the decision to study overseas instead of domestically (Altbach, 1998). Secondly, they consider different countries as their study destination and finally settle on a city and an institution. The students’ decision-making is not straight forward and Mazzarol & Soutar, (2002) theorised that it is influenced by three main factors: personal reasons, impact of significant others, and push–pull factors at each of the three stages. Lei, Xiao & Li (2021) conceptualised this in Figure 1 below. The value of the push-pull theory lies in its ability to analyse and develop in detail student migration flows. However, current studies on international student migration flow turn to emphasize one level; examining push-pull factors influencing students’ decision to study abroad (e.g., Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), or marketing strategies employed by individual institutions (e.g., Mazzarol, Soutar, Smart, & Choo, 2001) for international students’ admission. In so doing, they turn to neglects the fact that students’ decision to study abroad is affected by several, complex, and often interrelated factors that work at different levels. Another flaw in the model is its inability to draw distinctions between country characteristics (e.g., ability to work) and characteristics within the country (e.g., an institution’s reputation, which may not correlate to the host country’s appeal) (Chen, 2017)

II. METHODS

Research design and approach

The cross-sectional study design was used employing both descriptive and analytical strategies. Combining descriptive and analytical approaches was useful in collecting and comparing data of different phenomena at the same time. A hybrid approach using both Qualitative and Quantitative research methodologies was employed in the study. The hybrid approach is relevant and appropriate in the identification of distribution of attitudes, characteristics or beliefs from population samples (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Study population and Sampling technique and sample size

The research involved 364 Kenyan degree students currently studying in China and 100 alumni. Of the current students, 174 studied humanities, and 190 studied science-based courses. A total of 45 alumni studied humanities while 55 studied sciences. Purposive non-probability sampling was used in the study. Non-probability sampling is applied when probability sampling is impossible to be used or not appropriate (Babbie, 2007).

Data collection procedure

The online questionnaire distribution to Kenyan Students in China via WeChat groups. Participants' consent was sought and granted for purposes of the interviews. Close-ended questions were administered to solicit their opinion on their demographic characteristics, pull and push factors in relation to their decision to come and study in China. Most of the questions were in 5 Likert scale (1-5), thus 1 = unimportant, 2 = least important, 3 = moderately important, 4 = important, and 5 = very important.

Data analysis and presentation

The data collected from questionnaires and interviewees was confirmed to ensure they were fully filled and they were edited to ensure consistency, legibility, uniformity, and accuracy. Any gaps were filled by consultation of the respondents to ensure no information was missing. The data was then conceptualized, coded and analyzed using SPSS software version 19 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). Descriptive statistics was used to interpret the results. Chi-square test was performed with preference for China as the first choice for further as against the pull-push factors identified in previous studies to establish the relationship at $P < 0.05$. The output was presented in form of frequency tables and graphs and percentage distribution

III. RESULTS

The SPSS version 9 package was used to analyse the data. Simple descriptive statistics was applied to the demographic characteristics of respondents' analysis (Table 1). To generate the outcome and to test the influence of the source of information, pull and push factors, chi-square test was performed to determine the association of dependent variable (China as the most preferred destination for education) against the independent variables (push factors), and pull factors were used to establish their association with dependent variable (choice of institution of learning in China).

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 below presents descriptive statistics of students' demographics. Demographics play a role in migration (Plane, 1993) and students' decision of choosing a destination and institution for study overseas (Thomas & Inkpen, 2017). Therefore, it's imperative that demographic data is collected and analysed. The students who filled in the questionnaires were mostly aged between 25-34 (62.79%) followed by those between the ages of 18-24 (28.49 %). Students above 45 years old constitute the least percentage (0.29 %). Also, males represent the highest percentage of students (59.01%) compared to females (40.99 %). The majority of the students (70.64 %) had their first study abroad opportunity in China while 29.36 % have had the chance of studying overseas before. Table 1 also shows that less than 20 % of the students had travelled to China before (18.60 %) the admission to study while the student whose first time of travel to China coincides with admission to study constitute the majority (81.40 %). The percentage of students were observed to increase with duration and fall beyond 3 years (14.83 %) with the highest percentage (32.36 %) between 2 to 3 years.

With regards to funding, the result shows that the Chinese Scholarship Council scholarship dominates funding sources for Kenyan studying in China. It constitutes approximately 40.00 % of the funding source followed by totally self-funded (38.08 %). Scholarships sponsored by the host institution, home government, home institution, China province, a Chinese company and others form less than a quarter (21.79 %). The students studying in the field of science represent 52.30 % of the respondents while humanities represent 47.70%. The results also show that approximately half of the students are at the level of pursuing a PhD (49.90%) followed by Masters (35.80 %) with undergraduates constituting just 14.80 %. Students who have studied previously in a Confucius institution in Kenya before coming to China represent 23.84% of respondents while the majority (76.16 %) did not. 88.08% of students neither have family nor relatives who reside in China while only 11.92 % had family member prior to their coming to China.

Push factors attracting foreign students to China as a destination for further studies

In order to identify push factors to China, we used responses to question, was China your most preferred choice for further education against some push factors identified in literature via chi-square (χ^2) test. The results of the association of China as preferred choice for further education and possible push factors are shown in Table 2. Among the push factors: quality of education, education reputation, smooth student visa process, recognition of previous credentials, availability of scholarship, the level of technology and easy to obtain information about China significantly associated ($P < 0.05$, with χ^2 value of 3.61-16.32) respondents' preference for China.

Pull factors influencing foreign students to study in China

We further identified recognition of previous credentials, university reputation, availability of financial aid, offering a wide range of courses in English, links with my previous university, a large number of

international students in the university and employment prospects as the major factors associated with decision of respondents to choose a particular university/institution of learning in China among the Kenyans as shown in Table 3.

IV. DISCUSSION

This study shows sex characteristics consistent with finding elsewhere such (Durik, 2003; Son, 2011) that show higher percentage of male compared to female (Table 1). The ages of respondents contrast with a study by Belyavina (2013) but conforms with Cheng and Wang 2012, and Hu, (2005) who attributed the dominance of ages between 25 and 34 years to availability of a large number of English-taught postgraduate courses compared to undergraduate courses.

Other factors referred to as personal reasons and impact of significant others by Lei, Xiao and Li (2021) are known to have influence on student's decision-making process as well. This study explores such factors such history of study in or visit to China, duration of study at the university in China, current area of study, study in a Confucius Institute before, current area of study, source of funding (Table 1). Contrary a study by Lei et al. (2021) who reported that nearly 90 % of African students in China are self-funded, in this current study, only 38.08 % indicated to have self-funded possibly due to higher economic ties between China and Kenya. An association was observed between students' access of information from the Confucius Institute and influence on decision to study in china and Chinese institutions (Table 3). There is evidence of the rise in number of Confucius institutes matching with increasing number of international students studying in China (Ding, 2016). Lien, Ghosh & Yamarik (2014) find that the presence of Confucius Institute(s) in the host country increases overall tourism in general and business and worker tourists travel to China. A driving forces behind international travel is the culture of the destination country (Lien, Ghosh & Yamarik, 2014). Confucius Institutes, by promoting Chinese culture (Siyuan, 2017; Lien, Ghosh & Yamarik, 2014; Wheeler, 2014; Zhou & Luk, 2016). and raising people's awareness in Kenya of China's reputation, has increased travel flows to China. Breaking language barriers and scaling up Confucius institutes are pull factors identified in the action plan laid out by the MoE (MoE, 2016b).

The research findings indicate that Kenyan students' decision to study in China is to larger extent influenced by quality of education, education reputation, smooth student visa process, recognition of previous credentials, availability of scholarship, the level of technology and easy to obtain information about China. This supported the work of Altbach and Knight (2007) which recognized push factors as a necessity to create environment for international students' recruitment. Several researches over the years point to the fact that the quality and reputation of education in the home country of the prospect is influential in making a decision to study overseas (Poock and Love, 2001; Mazzarol, Soutar, and Thein, 2000; Moogan, Baron, and Harris, 1999; Licata and Maxham, 1998; Australian International Education Foundation, 1996). African students in China cited poor capacity of local universities as push for choosing to study overseas. Also, a study by Willis (2006) shows that the image of the foreign university is of key importance to prospective students. This and another study by Mazzarol & Soutar (2002) further support the strong association between education quality and reputation and China as preference for further education observed in our study. The educational challenges in Kenya (Odhiambo, 2014; Kinuthia, 2009; Kipsoi, Chang'ach & Sang, 2012) might fuel the students' decision of choose china for their higher education. The MoE has strategically included improving education quality in its Action Plan (MoE, 2016b).

The association between smooth student visa process and China as preference for further education is confirmed by other works (Ferdjani, 2012; Haugen, 2013) which reported that the seamless access to academic visas in China than in the US and the UK informs African students' decision to study in mainland China. Belyavina (2013) reported that Chinese government's friendly attitude toward international students makes it a spot to consider in study abroad decision making. China and Kenya cooperation extends to several years (Sautman & Hairong, 2009) and it is now strengthening through the BR (Kodzi, 2018). Such cooperation has the tendency to smoothen visa processing (Pijnenburg, Gammeltoft-Hansen & Rijken, 2018) for Kenyans to study in Kenya. Smoothening visa processing is intentionally included in the BR Action Plan by the MoE (2016b).

Students studying in China have high preference and apply for spots at top-ranking universities for the fact that the reputation of an institution has an important role to play in increasing students' job competitiveness in future life (Ferdjani, 2012; Ma, 2017). The study reaffirmed the finding in our study that shows an association between recognition of previous credentials and preference for China.

A study by Haugen (2013) found that African students considered access to scholarships to be an important factor in the choice of country and institution. This is consistent with our finding. The Chinese government has pledged to give over 50,000 scholarships to African students from the years 2018 to 2021. Consequently, China now has the largest number of African international students in the world, larger than traditional study abroad destinations such as the US or UK.

Also, technology-based programs are considered as a very important factor by the Push and Pull theory because it is one of the factors that strongly influence the decision of students to study internationally rather than locally (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). China has emerged as a leading hub in terms of technology and it has marketed itself as such. Many Kenyan students perceive China as having cutting edge modern technologies that are limited or lacking in Kenya and are therefore motivated to go and study in China. In the study, the level of technology was viewed as a very important factor.

Xiao, & Li (2021) states that the decision-making depends especially on the information available online including program availability, reputation and rank of the university, its academic quality, the image of the city, and the availability of scholarships, the affordability of tuition and the cost of living, and application accessibility.

A decision-making model by Lei, Xiao & Li (2020) identified settling on a specific institution as the final stage of the decision-making process of African students. This is driven by a combination of pull factors in the destination countries such city image, city dimensions, cost of living/tuition costs. environment, reputation/rankings, program availability, scholarships availability, application accessibility in the host countries. Pull factors in the destination countries may also include high achievement of faculty and the level of development in the economy of the host countries (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Altbach, 2004) International students also considers issues of cost at this stage of the decision-making process (Li et al. 2009; Ma, 2017; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Wei, 2013). Maringe and Carter (2007) reported that the availability of a labor market in the host country influences international students' decision-making. Similarly, Li et al. (2010) found that international students consider opportunity of landing part time jobs in China as they make decision on the city and institute for their study. A work by Willis (2005) identified choice of subjects, language of instruction, use of foreign national teachers, reputation of the university, Level of courses and cost as pull factors that influences students' destination and institution for international education. Previous studies investigating role of recognition of previous credentials of host institutions in the decision-making process of students revealed that students were most likely to choose an institution that recognized credentials gained in their home country (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Wilkins et al., 2011). Other studies also established that global student populace in a country's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is a pull factor for prospective students (Macready & Tucker, 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

Based on the works of these authors, and findings from this study (Table 3), it's imperative to conclude that these pull factors play a critical role in the preference of China and Chinese institutions are destination for Kenya students.

The BR optimized these pull factors in several ways. For instance, after the advent of the BR, it turns out that more BRCs' students are studying in China more than ever before. China's HEIs have many international students that add up to about 500,000 in a decade (Gao & de Wit, 2017). This is a factor that enhances the inflow of students due to alumni, friend's and peers' recommendations, and also needs to go where one has an already established social link. In addition, English as a language of instruction is one of China's crucial strategies in attracting international students under the Belt and Road initiative. Providing English-taught courses is a principal strategy in attracting international students (Sirat, 2011), Chinese HEIs have made every effort in developing English programs and courses. The Chinese MoE recently even included a "course/program taught in English" as an essential indicator of the external quality evaluation system (Wen, Hu & Hao, 2017). China under the BR seeks to transform the quality of education in its HEI through improvement in programmes, facility and technology (MoE, 2016b).

V. CONCLUSION

China was preferred as a study destination mainly because of a combination of pull factor (quality of education, education reputation, smooth student visa process, recognition of previous credentials, availability of scholarship, the level of technology and easy to obtain information)

and push factors notably, recognition of previous credentials, university reputation, availability of financial aid, offering a wide range of courses in English, links with my previous university, a large number of international students in the university and employment prospects. China should therefore prioritize factors that are related to education and human-capital accumulation in her marketing strategy because they highly influence the decision of Kenyan students to study in China. As for Chinese technological prowess, offering internships to BRCs students in Chinese companies in China will indirectly create familiarity to Chinese institutions hence attracting students and spicing up recommendations for others to further their studies in China.

China should maintain and improve on the administrative policies because they significantly influence Kenyan students' mobility to China. In addition to the existing university collaborations and ISM, China could explore export of courses unavailable in BRCs like Kenya and corresponding teaching specialists as part of collaborations to boost first-hand attraction strategy of Kenyan students and internationalization of Chinese higher education.

According to the study, many students who studied in China were mainly postgraduate, this might be due to the fact that there is a wide range of English-taught postgraduate courses compared to the undergraduate courses. The government of China has made tremendous steps to make English a language of instruction; however, the relevant authorities can increase the attraction strategies of undergraduate students by widening the number of English-taught courses at this respective level.

The study provided a better understanding regarding perception of characteristics of China and institutional factors by prospective Kenyan students in their choice for study destinations. It has contributed to improve the understanding of the various factors that underpin students' decision with regards to choosing study destination. This knowledge is a key to formulating effective communication and recruitment strategies for host institutions and countries to attract international students.

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age (years)	18-24	98	28.49
	25-34	216	62.79
	35-44	29	8.43
	Above 45	1	0.29
Sex	Female	141	40.99
	Male	203	59.01
Studied overseas before	No	243	70.64
	Yes	101	29.36
Been to China before	Yes	64	18.60
	No	280	81.40
Duration in China	1 to 2 years	110	31.98
	2 to 3 years	112	32.56
	6 months-1 year	71	20.64
	Above 3 years	51	14.83
Study in a Confucius Institute before	Yes	82	23.84%
	No	262	76.16%
Have family or relatives who reside in China	Yes	41	11.92%
	No	303	88.08%
Source of funding	a. Totally self-funded	131	38.08%
	b. Chinese Scholarship Council scholarship	138	40.12%
	c. Scholarship sponsored by the host institution	3	0.87%
	d. Scholarship sponsored by the home government	2	0.58%
	e. Scholarship sponsored by the home institution	4	1.16%
	f. China's provincial partial scholarship	4	1.16%
	g. Chinese company's sponsorship	6	1.74%
	h. Other forms of sponsorship	56	16.28%
Area of study	Humanity	164	47.70
	Science	180	52.30
Level of study	Undergraduate	51	14.80
	Master	123	35.80
	PhD	170	49.90

Source: Field Data, May 2019

Table 2: Push factors and their association with China as preference for further education

Factors	Mean±SE	Chi-square	
		P-value	χ^2
Quality of education	4.81±0.03	0.01	5.78
Education reputation	4.49±0.04	0.03	16.32
Smooth student visa process	4.09±0.05	0.01	6.31
China has strong economic ties with my home country	4.17±0.05	0.62	0.24
Recognition of previous credentials	4.45±0.04	0.04	5.12
Availability of scholarship	3.41±0.07	0.02	7.59
To learn Chinese language and culture	3.46±0.06	0.7	2.54
The level of technology	4.67±0.03	0.03	3.61
Easy to obtain information about China	3.75±0.06	0.01	7.32
Possibility for immigration	3.19±0.06	0.50	1.21
Recommendation from family/spouse	3.41±0.06	0.24	2.5
Recommendation from friends/alumni	3.47±0.05	0.22	2.93
Recommendation from employer	2.90±0.06	0.56	2.94

Source: Field Data, May 2019

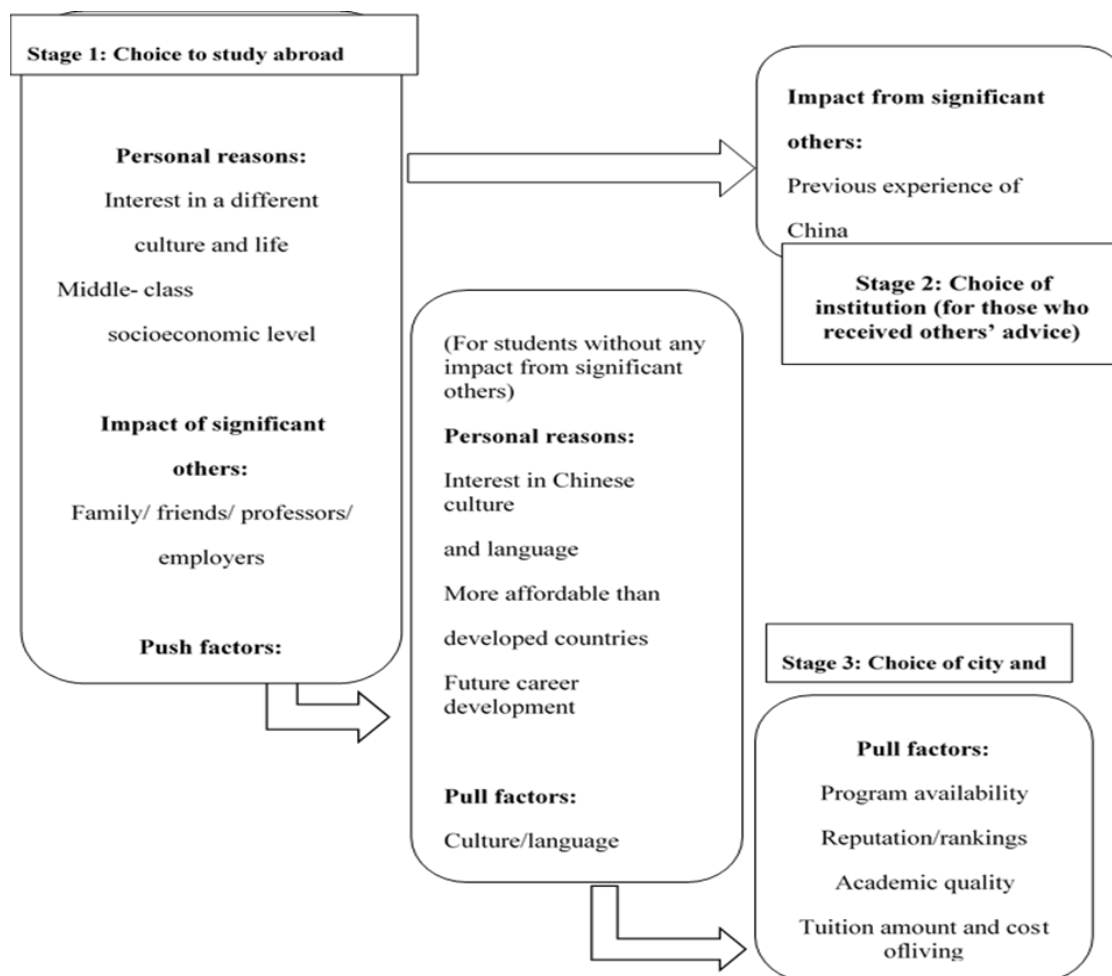
Table 3: Pull factors and their association with China as preference for further education

Factors	Mean±SE	Chi-square	
		P-value	χ^2
Recognition of previous credentials	4.32±0.04	0.03	5.68
University reputation	3.82±0.08	0.01	7.81
Availability of financial aid	4.29±0.04	0.02	1.62
Ease of the application process	3.30±0.05	0.86	2.87
Offering a wide range of courses in English	3.47±0.06	0.01	6.48
Possible language support (opportunity to learn Chinese language)	3.88±0.06	0.64	4.01
Links with my previous university	4.36±0.04	0.04	5.99
Satisfactory student service and management	3.92±0.06	0.18	2.94
A large number of international students in the university	3.85±0.05	0.01	7.32
Ease of getting information concerning the university's (website etc.)	3.70±0.06	0.67	1.58
Employment prospects	3.30±0.06	0.02	5.34
Family influence	3.45±0.06	0.46	2.5
Friends/alumni recommendation	2.90±0.07	0.25	3.54
Recommendation by employer	3.37±0.07	0.51	0.54

Source: Field Data, May 2019

Figure 1

Steps in African students' decision making process to choose China as destination for a study abroad. The international students' decision process involves 3 steps. Firstly, they make the decision to study overseas instead of home country after which in most cases, they consider different countries as their study destination subsequently. Finally, they choose a specific institution, taking city influences into consideration



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