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## **Transnational Academic Mobility and Capital Accumulation: An Empirical Study of Chinese-Trained Pakistani Academic Returnees**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Academic returnees are fast-growing group in developing countries, prominently recognised for their competence in acquiring valuable knowledge and producing quality academic outcomes. This qualitative study, grounded in Bourdieu's notions of capital theory, explored the experiences of Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees regarding impact of transitional academic mobility on their professional networks, and capital accumulation in the Pakistani academic context. Faculty members (19) participated in this study and semi-structured interviews were conducted in a comprehensive university in Balochistan. The study revealed that transnational academic mobility significantly enhanced returnees' research skills and professional networking. However, returnees face challenges, such as, lack of institutional support, and systemic fences in applying foreign-learned skills and knowledge in the Pakistani academic setting. Moreover, the findings highlight the need for supportive policies and infrastructure to facilitate knowledge transfer and implementation. The study contributed to understanding of the complex dynamics of academic mobility and knowledge accumulation in Pakistani context.

**Keywords:** Transitional Academic Mobility; Capital Accumulation; Empirical Study; Chinese-Trained Pakistani Scholar

### **Introduction**

Reducing poverty and fostering shared prosperity require a knowledge-based society. The most important resources in these kinds of communities are knowledge, abilities, and skills (The World Bank, 2018; Ahmed et al., 2024). Therefore, since human capital is valued globally, many developing nations have made investments to send students overseas to further their education and establish professional networks (Brooks & Waters, 2010; Madge et al., 2015; Tran, 2016). The notion of mobility is commonly connected to ideas of globalization, global connection, international academic capital, and the information finances; it is therefore seen as the fundamental requirement of the global academy (Chen & Li, 2019).

Asia is crucial to global academic mobility. For instance, the number of international students in Asia tripled between 2000 and 2015, whereas international



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student mobility doubled during same time (Guruz, 2011; Kaur, 2019). However, China has changed from being a significant student sender in the early 2000s to one of the top host nations for international students by 2007 (Hvistendahl, 2008; UNESCO, 2007). Although Pakistan has made noteworthy paces in sponsoring transnational academic mobility via policy initiatives and scholarship programs (Ali, 2015; Ahmad et al., 2022), leveraging its benefits, challenges persist, specifically in focusing boosting mobility outcomes and academic impediments (Iqbal, 2015; Surriah, 2018).

Since the turn of new century, Pakistani HE has started innovative reform projects mainly at universities. These reforms were intended to bring about significant improvements in a variety of sectors, including reversal of ongoing underfunding, investment in the academic staff, renewal of declining research enterprise (Osama et al., 2009). Further, about 13,000 doctoral scholarships (both national and international) were offered between 2003 and 2011 in order to generate a critical mass of highly skilled and competent human resources, improve the development and research proficiency of research institutions and teaching, and nourish Pakistan's industrial entrepreneurial sectors. Moreover, overseas Pakistani scholars who are consider to be key driver, have been recruited on enduring and temporary basis in Pakistani's universities to boost quality and productivity of research in Pakistan (Rahman, 2012). Even with their growing manifestation and worth in universities have been paid no heed to higher education literature, especially with no empirical studies (Baloch et al., 2021). However, only a small number of studies explored empirically the consequence or worth of the transnational academic mobility experience on academics' career development (Li et al., 2018; Wang, 2014; Liu et al., 2021; Li & Tang, 2019; Leung, 2013; Chen & Li, 2019; Rosen & Zweig, 2005; Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008). Therefore, this study aims to explore the accumulated capital of Chinese-trained Pakistani scholar during their academic sojourns in China through the lens of Bourdieu's notions of capital theory. To achieve the aim, following research objectives are formulated: 1) To examine the impact of transnational academic mobility and capital accumulation on professional networks of Chinese trained Pakistani scholars; and 2) To analyze the impact of transnational academic mobility and capital accumulation on human capital development among Chinese trained Pakistani scholars

The findings of this study contribute towards transnational networks, linkages arise, the functions and the benefits they provide to both people and their home countries. As well as, provides information on utilization of human capital and help to the country's socioeconomic progress. Also provides awareness on abroad education which leads to economic achievement at both the people and national levels by gauging the economic activities of Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees. This study also includes cultural exchange, which promote mutual understanding and boost diplomatic relations between nations. Investigating the cultural components of this movement increase international collaboration and intercultural competency

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

Education is one of the fundamental human rights (Mohanty, 2000; Khalilia et al., 2015). And Higher education is regarded the most important capital investment for a society's social and economic growth (Talik, 2015). Over the past few decades, there have been significant changes in higher education systems globally (Altbach,



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2008). These changes were driven by the increasing emphases of a knowledge-based economy, which required higher education to produce highly skilled individuals to enhance a country's competitiveness, both nationally and internationally (Welch, 2011). The concept of mobility is linked to the idea of internationalization that involves researcher's collaboration and working across international borders, which is viewed as a positive development for the scientific community (Wangner & Jonkers, 2017).

After the far-reaching universities marches and changes in late 1960s, Western universities went through a major transformation. Their purpose shifted from being institutions focused exclusively on generating knowledge to become institutions that produced skilled workers for the knowledge-based economy. In this new role, universities were not only responsible for producing knowledge and educating students but also played a crucial role in driving economic growth and improving a nation's productivity in the global economy. By building human capital and contributing significantly to the knowledge economy. However, China has arisen as a competitive player in the students' international market due to its pursuit of internationalization and establishment of the world class universities (Wang, 2014; Zha et al., 2019; Ding, 2016). This success is attributed to the Chinese governments strategic plan to recruited approximately 500,000 international students by 2020, with its favorable policies including affordable tuitions, relaxed admission criteria, scholarships, and flexible visa regulation (Ahmad & Shah, 2018; Wen et al., 2018; Yang, 2022). Accordingly, the latest data shows that 492,185 international students from 196 countries were enrolled in Chinese higher education institutions (MOE, 2018). At the same time, China is becoming a significant source of international students (Lu et al., 2019; Pan, 2013), as 6.5 million Chinese nationals having pursued education abroad between 1978 and 2019 (MOE, 2020).

Pakistan's academics reported issues such as less strategic purposes, limited learning resources and professional development opportunities (Anjum et al., 2021). Obtaining international academics degrees in foreign, strengthen scientific-technical capital (Edler et al., 2011). Foreign education modifies pedagogical skills and knowledge exchange (Shtewi, 2019). In Pakistani higher education institutions, academic programs are erratic and poor to maximize mobility benefits and attain excellence, therefore, a holistic strategy is needed to remove these academic barriers (Iqbal, 2015; Surriah, 2018). Pakistani public sectors sufficiently as to improve both financial resources and intellectual to promote quality teaching.

Numerous studies examined the concept of capital, generated by transnational mobility. Khan and Jabeen (2024) found that establishing performance management systems in Pakistan's higher education sector is challenging and requires a contextualized and adaptable strategy to ensure their efficacy. Accordingly, Rosen and Zweig (2005) transnational capital represents international publication, language proficiency, and international collaboration. Chen and Li (2019) highlighted the utilization of such capital depends on specific institutional context of returnees. Furthermore, Leung (2013); Bauder and Hannan (2017) explored the impact of transnational academic mobility using the capital framework developed by Bourdieu (1986) to provide theoretical foundation for the study. Working environment played a significant role in innovation (Chen and Li, 2019). Nevertheless, the dearth of such networks may affect the process. However, Edler et al. (2011) international mobility improves academics knowledge and technology transfer performance in host and home countries, and longer stays enhance



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knowledge and technology transfer in both countries (host and home). China is becoming a significant source of international students (Lu et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Khalid et al. (2024) international mobility and the exchange of researchers across national borders have been widely promoted by both national governments and supranational organizations. The returnees were initiated to publish more papers in international journals, secure more national patents, receive more research grants, and earn more science and technology awards (Rosen & Zweig, 2005; Zweig et al., 2006). Moreover, overseas returnees often preserved stronger international networks (Jonkers & Cruz-Castro, 2013; Scellato et al., 2015), thus contributing significantly to the internationalization efforts of their students, colleagues, and institutions (Rosen & Zweig, 2005; Zweig et al. 2006). Furthermore, Netz et al. (2020) found that foreign trained scholars effectively establish contacts to scientists of different countries which increase their professional network and access different scientists. Moreover, added by Velema (2012) and Baloch et al. (2021) that returnees serve as a link between national and international institutions networks, and access to international academic connections and resources that develops professional networks.

Ahmed et al. (2024) conducted a comparative study among foreign and local doctorates to uncover teaching-related challenges of public universities in Panjab. The challenges and solutions were studied through Bronfenbrenner system theory. The result exposed foreign academic returnees and local academics are somehow having similar characteristics in teaching. Nevertheless, foreign academic returnees are better in subject mastery, collaboration, teaching and using learning resources. Wu and Zhu (2023) with the help of mixed- method approach to explore the influence of overseas and local networks on professional development satisfaction, and benefits of local and overseas academic networks in professional development. Findings of the study showed that twofold academic networks influence returnees' satisfaction with professional development and network member with diverse connection strengthen their role. Academic networks and social capital of people can grow through transnational academic mobility (Rosen & Zweig, 2003). Furthermore, Meng (2022) Using Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework. revealed that returned Chinese scientists can accumulate cultural, social, and symbolic capital, and are able to convert cultural and social capital into economic capital.

### **Bourdieu's Capital Theory**

Bourdieu's theory gives analytical tools for investigating the intricate interplay of social, economic, and cultural elements influencing international student mobility. It assists in understanding how students negotiate and modify their places within diverse social spheres, providing a nuanced and complete explanation of the issue (Tran, 2016). Additionally, Esien, (2022) defined social capital in the perspective of transnational networks as individual and institutional linkages that foster partnerships and social ties between migrants in their host and home countries. These linkages act as a resource, facilitating migrants' mobility, cooperation, and overall life-course pathways. Thus, applied Bourdieu's social capital theory to comprehend how networks and information impact migration of undocumented refugees and African refugees. Accumulated transnational capital helps returnees to perform better in their home institutions (Zweig et al., 2004; Wiers-Jenssen, 2008). Evidently, longer engages with advanced research system scholars accumulate



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greater human and social capital. Existing studies shows that the overseas experience of returnees' increase human and social capital (Jonkers & Tijssen, 2008; Edler & Georghiou, 2007; Edler et al., 2011). Returnees benefits their local institutions in two primary ways: First, knowledge and skills gained abroad can promote quality and scope of research at these institutions. Second, returnees serve as a link between national and international institutions networks, and access to international academic connections and resources (Velema, 2012; Baloch et al., 2021). Successful knowledge transfer causes changes in the receiving unit, on the other hand, fails and has no value if the receiver does not integrate the new knowledge to their previous knowledge (Minbaeva et al., 2010).

### **Method and data**

#### **Research Paradigm and Research Design**

This research is based on a constructive research paradigm, which highlighted that knowledge is co-constructed by individual experiences and social interactions (Chafe, 2024). This is reliable with the study focusing on how transnational academic mobility nurtures the accumulation of diverse form of capital as directed by Bourdieu's theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 1986). This research adopted a qualitative approach to record the transnational academic mobility experiences of Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees in Pakistani academia, (Larbi, & Ashraf, 2020). Considering the various research design this study adopted eexploratory research design, which also referred as formulative research. Accordingly, the aim of the study was to explore the perceptions about transnational academic mobility and capital accumulation of Chinese-trained Pakistani scholars of LUAWMS.

#### **Participants and sampling**

The target population of the study consisted of Pakistani academic returnees who completed their education in China then returned to Pakistan and joined academic institutions. These individuals are well positioned to contribute insights into the effects of transnational academic mobility on the accumulation of different forms of capital (social, cultural, economic and symbolic) and their influences on their academics and professional careers. Participants of the study were chosen purposefully according to their relevant experiences and qualities. Personal contacts, direct communication via cell phones conversation, professional networks were all used to conscription. Under the umbrella of non-probability sampling, purposive sampling procedure was used for the selection of participants, and 19 participants were selected, which is an appropriate number for qualitative research to achieve saturated data over statistical generalizability. Saturation of data was completely achieved as no new data themes or insights occurred from the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

#### **Instrumentation: Semi-structured Interview**

Semi-structures interviews are excellent for the study of Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees, as they are exploratory in nature and help to grasp the nuanced perspectives. These interviews allow for in-depth conversations using open-ended questions (Bell et al., 2022) capturing participants viewpoints while validating theoretical discoveries (Blumberg et al., 2014). Semi-structured interviews balance structure and flexibility, allowing participants to disclose detailed narratives while



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focusing on the research objectives, such as, capital accumulation (professional networks and human capital).

### **Data Collection**

The researcher collected primary data through conducting semi structured interview from scholars or doctoral degree holders from China and currently serving at the Lasbela University of Agriculture Water and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS) Uthal, Baluchistan, about their experiences and capital they accumulated during their academic sojourns in China.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed deductively and manually. King et al. (2018) presented a three-stage thematic analysis process for qualitative data. According to him thematic analysis consists of three steps: descriptive coding, interpretive coding, and the identification of overarching themes. The framework proposed by King et al. (2018) begins with descriptive coding, as defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 88) descriptive coding involves the production of initial codes from the data. The procedure of interpretive coding is the second phase in the thematic analysis. Codes that go beyond describing relevant features of participants' account and focus more on your interpretation of their meaning. Finally, thematic analysis culminates in the development of overarching themes. In order to find recurring themes and patterns in the data, descriptive and interpretive codes are mixed at this step.

### **Ethical Consideration**

This study is conducted in Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water, and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS), which is an educational institution and has its own rules and regulation, and the respondents/ scholars who are the member of this institution, this research considered all the ethics related to institution and participants and will assure for the welfare and safeguard of both.

### **Results**

This section presents the results of the study, which provide insights into the experiences of Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees. The results are organized around three key themes. The following paragraphs will elaborate on each of these themes, highlighting the participants' experiences, challenges, and benefits associated with their transnational academic mobility to China.

#### **Theme 1: The influences of Transnational Academic Mobility on the Professional Network Building**

Majority of interviewees expressed positive influences and impacts regarding professional networking with Chinese scholars while they were in China. They stated that they established professional relationships with their international colleagues and partners during the group projects and tasks. A participant responded that they built a strong connection with Chinese scholars even they exchanged information by discussing about career opportunities in various regions. A participant of interview mentioned that when a project starts in Africa then they inform each other and make themselves ready to assist each other. Further, they discuss about opportunities which are available in Asia. A respondent answered that they were always ready for supporting and collaborating with each other if a project requires collaboration



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between 2 regions. These all responses elaborate that collaboration with international peers and professional network building among various regions helps in cross-border exchange of knowledge and life or career opportunities. A participant narrated:

Few days ago, I collaborated with my peer regarding various types projects. My peer used to inform me regarding opportunities in Africa while I also informed him too regarding opportunities in Asia. We guaranteed each other that if a project needs teamwork or collaboration then we will work together to manage the project.

(Interviewed Participant 4)

Participant 6 also expressed working together with his peer on a project of a fertilizer. He also described collaboration with his supervisor for a project. participant 6 noted that Chinese peers very hard working and determined even they also expect equal efforts, support and collaboration in return when they are collaborating or working together with colleagues. This illustrates that they also expect collaboration, dedication, support and commitment while building professional relationship with cross-border colleagues. Regarding cross-cultural collaboration, an interviewee stated given lines:

Yeah. I collaborated with my peer on an agricultural project regarding fertilizer. I was also having a supervisor who supervised and guided me. To be honest, Chinese are very diligent and committed people. They always expect same level of effort, focus and support in return when someone works or collaborate with them. It means they believe on tit for tat. (Interviewed Participant 6)

Another interviewee acknowledged ongoing collaboration with his colleagues and a friend who was currently staying in America but basically, he was from Nepal. They worked together to complete a research paper. This international collaboration demonstrates that they have spent time together by having a professional relationship with peers. Such active engagement for group projects helps to maintain a professional relationship. It is cleared that cross border collaboration leads towards the accumulation of social capital and building international connections and networking. Similarly, another participant of interview elaborated and confirmed this reality through following statements:

Currently, I have many incomplete research papers and my friends are still working with me to handle these research papers. My one friend belongs to Nepal but currently he is living in America. We are collaborating with each other in order to finish the research paper. (Interviewed Participant 12)

Another participant mentioned that role of transnational mobility in building professional networks and gaining different academic and cultural perspectives. He stated that he used to maintain professional relationship with his colleagues and supervisors who belonged to China. He expressed in interview that Chinese colleagues helped him in group research and also supported him regarding publications. However, this interview acknowledged that he faced difficulties because it was a large project but his Chinese peers were active and supported him to handle the project. He explained whole phenomenon in given lines:

I am still in contact with my supervisor regarding research projects, research paper writing and publications. We both are collaborating with each other as researchers and trying to establish relationships, connections and professional networks. (Interviewed Participant 16)

Apart from those, one participant claimed in interview that his transnational academic experiences have influenced and enhanced his professional networking. He stated that he had learnt professional research techniques and international



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perspectives due to global collaboration. He said that he has been to foreign country for research and he met with several international researchers who helped him in professional development. It means academic mobility enhanced his knowledge, provided research strategies and supported him in growing in academic contexts. He interviewed and shared following comments:

Transnational academic experiences have significantly enhanced my professional networking in my own country and it is linked to my transnational academic experiences. Through international collaborations, I gained exposure to advanced research techniques and global perspectives. (Interviewed Participant 19)

One of the interviewees expressed that he has had collaborative research and projects opportunities through his international connections. A participant was called 2 times to deliver speeches on World Ocean Day in the country where he studied. It highlights those professional connections and relationships helped him to gain respect and recognition. It is clear that when individuals remain active in international circles and global academia then they are likely to have more opportunities and collaboration. An interviewee described this in his statements in below statements:

Yes, due to strong international connections, I got opportunities for collaborative researches and group projects. For instance, I was invited twice to my host country to attend and deliver a speech on World Ocean Day. (Interviewed Participant 18)

In addition, another interviewee emphasized his successful publishing in four to five impact factor papers annually, often with Chinese co-authors collaboration in China. He stressed his ongoing collaboration not only contributes to his personal success but also advances the ranking of both the Chinese university and his home institution, signifying the value of international academic partnerships in enhancing research output and institutional recognition. The interviewee confirmed it as below:

My success, so far, has been in the form of publications. Every year, I publish four to five impact factor papers with co-authors in China. This collaboration boosts the ranking of both universities. (Interviewed Participant 10)

### **Theme 2: Challenges in Implementing Knowledge Upon Returning**

Under the umbrella of main theme “challenges in implementing knowledge upon returning” the sub-theme 1, focuses on challenges related to infrastructure and financial constraints, which most of participants included are, lack of modern facilities, equipment, funding, and reliable energy supply affecting knowledge implementation.

Additionally, one of the Assistant professors explained that the limitations in his home country, particularly the lack of resources and advanced technology, hinder his ability to conduct certain types of research. He contrasts this with the developed labs he experienced abroad, where tasks that are challenging or impossible to consider back home were easily accomplished. This highlights the disparity in research infrastructure and the challenges it poses for conducting advanced work in their home country. The interviewee expressed in the following comments:

The reason is that we are limited. All resources, labs and advanced technological tools are available in foreign countries but here we can't imagine about those resources which are available there. (Interviewed Participant 6)

Majority of participants expressed that it is difficult to implement international practices, ideas and methodologies in local context because local environment and situations differ from international context. Proper plannings are required to use



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international research techniques otherwise it is difficult to utilize acquired knowledge in local context. One participant clearly mentioned in the interview that Pakistan is behind than China in many areas, therefore, we can't directly copy their educational system. He suggested that Pakistan has to adapt techniques, rules, strategies, approaches and different mindsets from China in order to improve local context of Pakistan. This illustrated that foreign knowledge, practices and educational techniques are very crucial and effective for solving local problems and challenges. An interviewee narrated following opinions regarding this matter:

China is a developed country and Pakistan is too behind from China. Pakistan is unable to implement their knowledge in local context. Firstly, we need to establish rules and regulations then we can be able to replicate their knowledge. Similarly, Pakistan requires methods and approaches which are being used in China and also it has to have mindsets like China. (Interviewed Participant 12)

An assistant professor interviewed that China and Pakistan differ from each other in networking or making connections. For instance: When Pakistani moves school to college and towards the university then they behave and meet informally while Chinese meet in educational stages purposefully. Chinese always follows discipline and focuses on goal while meeting. They prefer or discuss regarding career advancement and academic works while building professional network. On the other hand, Pakistan people are likely to discuss informal and they often focus on personal discussions and relationships. Their preferences and priorities are completely different from each other. The interviewee said this statement in following lines:

When Chinese and Pakistani students go from school to college or college to university then both are having different preferences. The basis of their professional networking differs from each other. (Interviewed Participant 14)

Another participant of interview discussed complicated challenges that are being faced by the Pakistani researchers. Pakistani scholars and researchers often worried about funding because funds are often late and insufficient. Delay of funds influence the effectiveness of project. If they receive funds on the time then these financial supports may reduce the tension of studying in a foreign country. The interviewee asserted that Pakistan students get better financial support and systems in China. The participant expressed following sentences:

Poor funding from Government of Pakistan created numerous problems for researchers, students and scholars. China and foreign countries provide scholarships and funding for researches and expenses but our own government is failing to meet the needs of researchers and provide funds on the time. (Interviewed Participant 2)

### **Theme 3: Impact on Knowledge Transfer and Innovation**

An important theme was developed that the experiences of foreign academics helped the Pakistani scholars to improve the local contexts by implementing global practices in the country. Those scholars, who studied in China, brought new methodologies, experiences, ideas and solutions to resolve local problems. Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees are transferring their knowledge from China to Pakistan and solving the challenges which are being faced by Pakistan such as addressing agricultural problems. It is clear that academic mobility is addressing local agricultural challenges. A returnee utilized his international experiences, acquired skills and knowledge to address feed shortage problems among animals in Pakistan and he found alternative resources as well. Returnees are using new research methods which is leading the Pakistani scholars towards the innovation. It illustrates that



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returnees are bringing global knowledge, skills and expertise in Pakistan. The returnee shared his reflection in given lines:

Yes, I am the one who used his international experiences and skills to solve local problems like animal feed shortage. I have found alternative resources to address this issue. (Interviewed Participant 8)

Another returnee explained how he implemented global knowledge, experiences and skills in local projects. He gained knowledge from China and used his knowledge in Pakistani projects. This participant of interview described that he had utilized latest analytical techniques and research methodologies to achieve the goals of project. He learnt how to analyze the data and apply the insights in a meaningful way for the development. It is obviously clear that returnees are having ability to transfer and bring international knowledge in own country in order to improve the research techniques and practices in Pakistan. The interviewee explained in his words as:

Yes, I have been to China and I have learnt a lot from China. The innovative practices of China were useful and I have implemented them in my own country Pakistan. I have used advanced research methodologies while I was working on local projects. The collaborative study in China helped me to learn latest analytical techniques and gain insights from the researches, studies or group projects. (Interviewed Participant 19)

A returnee who was an assistant professor differentiated 2 types of scientific research which are direct and second one is indirect research. He stated that his research is indirect because it mainly focused on veterinary doctors in developing new treatments and medicines. This applied research benefited the doctors and contributed in the field of veterinary medicine because it developed practical applications to problems. The returnee assistant professor described this in given lines:

The scientific research has 2 types which are direct and indirect. My research looked like indirect which was beneficial for veterinary doctors because it supported them to develop new medicines and treatments. (Interviewed Participant 7)

A returnee interviewed that he had gotten 2 projects to work. He acknowledged that though he got small opportunities and projects, but he was satisfied with himself whatever he learnt. He showed willingness that he can implement his knowledge in local projects. The returnee expressed this as:

Fortunately, I am very happy that I got 2 projects in China and it was a good experience for me because now I can utilize my skills and knowledge at local projects. My knowledge might not be beneficial at higher level but I am sure that I can contribute in small local projects. successful. (Interviewed Participant 9)

Similarly, another returnee described that his global networking, collaborations and relationships can give benefits to universities along with students because returnee was well aware of advanced research techniques. He could implement global perspectives there. How words clarify that collaboration with international countries can enhance the research practices at local level. The participant of interview described these in following lines:

Collaborating and making global connection with international scholars helped me to bring advanced research techniques. I have implemented global perspectives in the projects which were in Pakistan. (Interviewed Participant 19)

Regarding implementation of global knowledge, perspectives and research skills, a returnee mentioned in the interview that he has acquired latest research methodologies and advanced research skills which can contribute in local projects. He was confident that he can be a mentor for students by providing solutions because



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he was expert in publications. He could help and guide them through publications but it is the duty of policymakers to implement that acquired knowledge in local context. Though it was a challenging task to implement global practices here, but he was confident that he can integrate advance practices in agricultural field by teaching them advanced research skills and techniques. The interviewees narrated that:

We implement what we learn from different universities or countries here so that our students, particularly in agriculture, can continue using these techniques and apply them in their research or practical lives. (Interviewed Participant 2)

### **Discussion and implications**

The findings of the study revealed that transnational academic mobility significantly improves professional network development among Chinese-trained Pakistani scholars. The participants emphasized their experiences in establishing and sustaining transnational collaborations, often eased by opportunities to attend conferences, interact with diverse academic communities, and participate in joint research. These findings are consistent with foregoing findings. Similarly, Wu and Zhu (2023) findings of the study showed that twofold academic networks influence returnees' satisfaction with professional development and network member with diverse connection strengthen their role. Academic networks and social capital of people can grow through transnational academic mobility (Rosen & Zweig, 2005). Furthermore, Meng (2021) found that Japanese-trained scientists in China accumulated valuable social capital throughout transnational mobility. As Meng noted (p. 38), social connections cannot be ignored; particularly in contexts where professional connections play a central role in academic and career development. Moreover, Lu et al. (2019) found that foreign trained scholars have more knowledge, skills and identity that develops their professional network. Similarly, Jonkers and Cruz-Castro (2013) found that returnees often perceive stronger international networks that benefits their professional network. In addition, Netz et al. (2020) found that foreign trained scholars effectively establish contacts to scientists of different countries which increase their professional network and access different scientists. Moreover, added by Velema (2012) and Baloch et al. (2021) that returnees serve as a link between national and international institutions networks, and access to international academic connections and resources that develops professional networks.

However, this study highlighted some challenges such as time limitations in maintaining these networks and inadequate institutional support. This interlinks with Meng's (2021, p. 38). observation that most of the returnees experienced difficulties in maintaining academic collaborations upon returning to China, with most relationships remaining personal rather than academic. The major challenge found in this study is the adversity of applying the knowledge and skills developed in China to the professional and local academic context in Pakistan. Respondents often cited limited funding, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of institutional support as hurdles to valuable knowledge implementation. Moreover, Wang (2015) findings showed that an effective transfer of knowledge occurs only when the new knowledge is adopted and routinized in new environment. However, successful knowledge transfer causes changes in the receiving unit, on the other hand, fails and has no value if the receiver does not integrate the new knowledge to their previous knowledge (Minbaeva et al., 2010). In the same way, Meng (2021) study revealed that Chinese returnees from Japan faced difficulties associated to the difference in resources between their home and host countries. These barriers had stopped to apply and



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implement advanced practices and methodologies in local setting. However, the findings of research focus and suggest the adaption of global knowledge in local contexts.

Despite putting lots of efforts, replication of global methodologies and international knowledge remained ineffective due to poor implementation and policies. These global practices were not suitable to fit in the situations of Pakistan. This supports Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, emphasizing the demand for contextualized adaptation of expertise to maximize its effectiveness. The findings of the study also show that participants acquired new knowledge, research skills, and cultural knowledge through their academic mobility experiences while living in China. Many of the Chinese-trained Pakistani scholars developed research skills, problem-solving techniques and critical thinking while interacting with Chinese scholars. Resultantly, their transnational academic mobility developed their human capital. Furthermore, most of the participants acknowledged their experience to diverse academic environments in China for nurturing these developments. Supporting these findings, Waters and Leung (2022) found that transnational students are engaged in variety of formal and informal with both local and global which play an important role to comprehend information flows, knowledge gaining and skills development. Similarly, Meng (2021) stated, international academic mobility often directs to the accumulation of embodied cultural capital, like, innovative academic capabilities and rigorous research ethics (p. 37). Transnational academic mobility can have a major positive feedback effect on both academics, as well as their students, research groups, and institutions, including the creation of new knowledge, the international transfer of existing knowledge. Also, Laudel and Gläser (2008) found that international academic mobility provides opportunities to people for observing innovative knowledge, transferring knowledge and reshaping one's identity resultantly developing human capital.

The influences of mobility or reading abroad depends on the subject area and quality of institution that how good they were and how you worked hard there. The effects of mobility are dependent on foreign experiences. Moreover, the study found that participants' experiences in China enrich cultural exchange that occurred as a transformative aspect for improving their ability to direct multicultural environments and encompass diverse prospects into their professional practices. Similarly, Oddou et al. (2009) found that individualized knowledge transfer is possible for instance, an academic staff member earned a degree in abroad could learn about that county's culture. Knowledge transfer is not limited to inter-and intra-organizational context. This paradigm is applied to graduate returnees' knowledge transfer, for instance, when returnees start a job in local, their accumulated knowledge and experiences gained in abroad will be share to their co-workers or the rest of other organization. Likewise, Wang (2015) found that socialization foster trust and understanding among returnees and group members. Returnees with professional experiences in both their host and home countries are well-positioned to share their knowledge with their local country. As a result, these returnees are more likely to have information that help them to solve problems or improve practices in their home country organizations. Returnees with more knowledge from abroad are also more capable to identify chances for knowledge transfer in their home countries.

However, most of the participants mentioned that they faced challenges to apply their potentials for innovative work due to the restrained systemic issues for instance, resource constraints and bureaucratic hindrances. This result of the study aligns with



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Meng's findings that the budget of economic resources in Chinese academies mostly follows the principle of supremacy, but locally social networking remains essential. In addition, to Pakistani scientists, these limitations required greater institutional contexts to boost the effective application of transnational knowledge.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research examines the influence of transnational academic mobility on the accumulation of different forms of capital including, social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital among Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees. This study is based on the capital theory of Bourdieu which illustrates the effects of returnee academics when they come in their own country and contribute to the human capital development. Their experiences lead towards innovation because they transfer the knowledge from foreign countries to local areas such as transferring the ideas and knowledge of Chinese to Pakistan. These returnee academics build professional networks which help them to transfer valuable global skills, gained knowledge and ideas to local areas.

The outcomes and findings of this study discusses the benefits of transnational academic mobility and its advantages for academic development like building professional networking, development of advanced research skills and enhancement of knowledge. Apart from those, it was found in this research that Pakistan academics who read in China were suffering from too many challenges like poor institutional support and insufficient resources which prevent them to implement global knowledge in local contexts. These were the barriers which prevent the returnee academics to boost the education and researches of Pakistan. However, the findings of this study recommend some implications for the academic institutions for academic development. These implications also support the policymakers of Pakistan to avoid academic hurdles and integrate global knowledge in local context. To increase the value of transnational academic mobility, enhance findings and infrastructure to apply transnational or advanced knowledge and methodologies to contribute local innovation. Create encouraging environment for knowledge exchange and collaboration so that returnees can integrate their best transnational practices. Promote cultural adaptation by offering training packages to support academic returnees adapt transnational accumulated knowledge to local context that can boosts the significance and effects of their contributions. Establish platforms to foster professional networking and for regular academic interactions that aid returnees sustain and strengthen their professional networks.

### **Limitations and suggestions for future research**

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. These limitations are acknowledged to provide a guide for future studies. First, it focuses entirely on Chinese-trained Pakistani academic returnees at LUAWMS, that limit the generalizability of results to other territories or institutes in Pakistan. Second, this study consisted of relatively homogeneous and small sample size, however, which is appropriate for data saturation, but may not detain the maximum diversity of experiences among returnees from diverse academics or backgrounds. Third, Data collection relied on semi-structured interviews, which may be subject to social appropriateness bias. This study primary emphasis on the accumulation of social, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital neglected other dimensions, for instance psychological well-being and family dynamics, which could have enhanced the



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understanding of returnees' experiences. Forth, the findings of the study are context-specific that are formed by Pakistan's unique socio-economic and organizational challenges, which may not entirely apply to global contexts. The dearth of a longitudinal viewpoint limits the capability to track changes in Chinese-trained returnees experiences and capital accumulation over time. Lastly, while structural obstacles were recognized, the findings of study did not explore detailed potential solutions or policy recommendations to tackle these challenges. Despite these limitations, this study provides a foundation for comprehending the influence of transnational academic mobility and fixes the stage for additional investigation in this area.

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