

# Significance of the revised push-pull model for Chinese postgraduate students in Malaysia

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**Abstract:** This study uses an updated push-pull model framework to explore the factors influencing Chinese postgraduate students' decisions to study at Malaysian universities. The increasing demand for higher education in China and the perception of the inferiority of domestic Ph.D. qualifications drive many Chinese students to seek postgraduate education abroad. The study identifies critical push factors, such as dissatisfaction with the Chinese higher education system, and pull factors, including Malaysia's supportive government policies, affordability, and international reputation. Additionally, the study examines the role of academic and social support services in attracting Chinese students and maintaining Malaysia's competitive position in the global education market. The research employs a quantitative approach, surveying 400 Chinese postgraduate students in Malaysian public universities. The findings reveal that cost-related matters, understanding and perception of the host country, environmental factors, and social links significantly influence students' choice of institution. The study concludes that enhancing costing-related matters (CRM) and academic support services are vital strategies for Malaysian universities to attract and retain Chinese postgraduate students, thereby contributing to the internationalization of Malaysian higher education. This research contributes to Quality Education (SDG 4) by identifying key factors that influence Chinese postgraduate students' decisions to study in Malaysia, helping to enhance internationalization efforts and strengthen the global competitiveness of Malaysian higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Education, puh-pull model, postgraduate students, Chinese Students, Higher Education, host Country, Academic and Social Support

## 1 Introduction

The demand for PhDs in Mainland China is rising, driven by the country's expanding economy. As the economy grows, there is an increasing need for a workforce with a higher level of education. This has led to Mainland China setting ambitious educational reform and development objectives. Since 2008, China has been the world's leading producer of Ph.D.s annually, surpassing even the United States [1, 2, 3]. However, there are significant push factors to consider, such as the growing mistrust of the Chinese higher education system and the perceived

inferiority of Ph.D. holders from the Mainland. Ironically, Ph.D. holders from Chinese universities on the mainland often need help finding employment abroad.

On the other hand, even in China, a Ph.D. from a Western university is considered superior. International training or postdoctoral degrees are frequently required for top positions in prestigious universities and institutes [4]. The decision of Mainland Chinese students to continue postgraduate studies overseas has been dramatically affected by this recognition, as well as pull factors, including social prestige, government policy, and the current job market [5, 6, 7, 8].

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From a Malaysian perspective, the Ministry of Higher Education's support for the Student Mobility Program (SMP) is a significant driver of the internationalization of higher education. Many universities are gearing up to increase their participation in the SMP, aligning with the Ministry's goal of fostering a more international environment for higher education. These initiatives will enable public and private universities to expand their global exposure and establish their international identities, underlining the profound impact of internationalization programs on higher education institutions.

According to Zhu and Reeves [9], Chinese students make up 20% of all international students enrolled in higher education worldwide or one in ten. This makes Chinese students the most mobile group in higher education. China's Ministry of Education said that overseas students rose from 179,800 in 2008 to 608,400 in 2017. Because of this, China has emerged as the primary destination for international students hoping to study in English-speaking nations like Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom in recent years. International higher education providers also need to know why Chinese students choose to study at foreign colleges as domestic Chinese higher education grows and improves. In 2017, around 900,000 tertiary students studied abroad, with mainland China being the primary source country for international education. Previously, Chinese students were drawn to 'inner circle' English-speaking nations, including Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom [10, 11, 12]. Nonetheless, some signs suggest its exponential growth is coming to an end. Demand is shifting, the market is growing more competitive, and the institutions that participate in it are operating and acting differently [13, 14, 15].

Mainland Once the largest group of overseas students studying in the UK, Chinese students are now more interested in Australia because it is closer and less expensive. However, due to escalating commercial and political restrictions, safety concerns, and blocked borders, many Chinese students have stopped attending. Students from mainland China who were unable to travel were searching for other places to study. Some may have discovered domestic opportunities by enlarging spaces at nearby universities or investigating regional options like Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Korea, and Malaysia [16, 17, 18].

### 1.1 Research Objective

- 1.To investigate how Chinese students decide to undertake postgraduate study in Malaysian universities.
- 2.To investigate how academic and social support services can be developed to convince Chinese students to enroll in Malaysian universities.

- 3.To investigate how Malaysian universities maintain a strong international reputation to attract postgraduate Chinese students in the competitive education landscape.

## 2 Literature Review

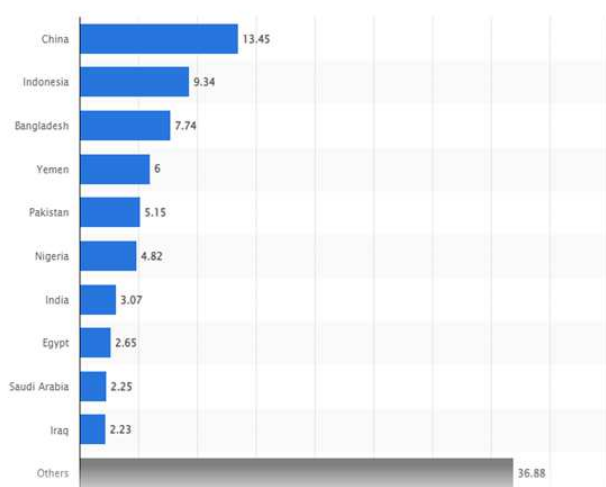
Chinese postgraduate students desired to study overseas following the epidemic, per a poll conducted by the School of Graduate Studies at Lingnan University [19]. According to the poll, the United States (50.8%), the United Kingdom (45.2%), Japan (19.1%), Canada (16.9%), and Germany (14.4%) are the most popular study-abroad locations for Chinese postgraduate students [19, 20]. According to a follow-up survey, one in five university students on the mainland said they would look into studying overseas following the outbreak. Lu claims that before to the epidemic, 78% of Chinese postgraduate students had no plans to study overseas. This percentage increased to 92% during the pandemic, and 1 in 5 respondents stated they would go into postgraduate studies abroad following the Covid 19 pandemic.

In order to establish a favorable learning environment and a regional center for higher education in Asia, the Malaysian government and its universities intended to design a comprehensive strategy [21, 22]. The influx of Iranian students, which peaked at 15,000 in 2011 [22], was the first to contribute to the trend of graduate student mobility, according to the researchers. Later, African, Arab, and Pakistani/Bangladeshi students and Mainland Chinese students in recent years followed (see Figure 1 and Table 1). The proportion of students from Mainland China is rising as predicted.

**Table 1:** Number of Mainland Chinese and Total International Students in Malaysia (2016-2020)

Year	Number of Mainland Chinese Students	Number of International Students	Percentage of Mainland Chinese to International Students
2016	5556	99532	5.5821
2017	14854	133860	11.0967
2018	16361	130245	12.5617
2019	13448	93570	14.3721
2020	16957	95955	17.6718

The majority of Chinese students from the mainland found Malaysia's Ph.D. programs to be quite appealing. According to Stephanie [23], Malaysian universities provide internationally recognized education, and many only provide English-taught degree programs, which helps them rank higher internationally. Furthermore, compared to the United States and the United Kingdom, studying in Malaysia is still a reasonably reasonable alternative for overseas students. According to the Global Peace Index 2020, Malaysia is one of the world's most biodiverse regions. It is ranked as the 20th safest country



**Fig. 1:** Number of international students studying in higher education institutes in Malaysia in 2019, by country of origin (in 1,000s).

in the world and the fifth safest in the Asia-Pacific area [24].

Unlike the United Kingdom and Australia, Malaysia has relatively severe laws regarding international students. Malaysia approaches its policies regarding international students differently than other nations. In contrast to Australia and the UK, Malaysia restricts the number of hours that international students can work to 20 per week, even on breaks from classes and longer vacations than seven days. Furthermore, dependents of international students are not allowed to work in Malaysia. Only restaurants, gas stations, small markets, and motels are permitted to employ part-timers; financial parts of the business are not permitted. The length of work can only be extended by the immigration authorities and only if the student has obtained stellar academic standing from their university. Furthermore, foreign students cannot search for employment right after graduation. On behalf of the student, the employer must get an Employment Pass, valid for up to five years, contingent upon the situation [25].

Australia and the UK changed their admissions procedures for international students to their advantage. The proposed policy changes and implementation have resulted in a significant increase in the number of international students studying in Australia and the United Kingdom [25,26]. It is not a given that Malaysia’s foreign student policies should be developed likethose of other nations. Still, it sheds some light on one of the many factors that can lead to fewer foreign students enrolling in Malaysian universities. There is a chance that the current number can rise, and the long-term goal of 250,000 students by 2025 can be achieved if Malaysia adopts

comparable rules on international students [25]. This is in line with the government’s plan to increase the number of foreign students studying in Malaysia.

China postgraduate students who were thinking about continuing their education overseas most frequently chose the United States (50.8%), the United Kingdom (45.2%), Japan (19.1%), Canada (16.9%), and Germany (14.4%) as their study abroad locations [19,27]. The preferred location is shown in Figure 1.1 for the following three scenarios: Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, preferred study locations; 2. Preferred study locations during the pandemic; and 3. Preferred study locations following the COVID-19 pandemic. Malaysia only ranks between 12 and 13 in these three scenarios, as seen in Table 2.

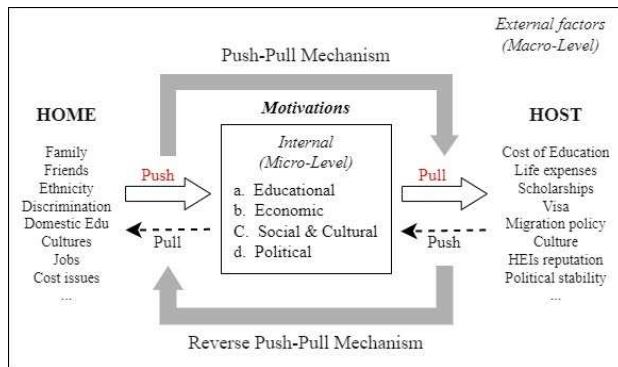
**Table 2:** Preferred Destination

Scenario	Preferred Destinations (Rank 1 to 15)
A. Preferred study destination before the COVID-19 pandemic	1. United States (50.8%), 2. United Kingdom (45.2%), 3. Japan (19.1%), 4. Canada (16.9%), 5. Germany (14.4%), 6. France (13.3%), 7. Australia (11.9%), 8. Hong Kong (11%), 8. South Korea (11%), 9. Singapore (9.4%), 10. Italy (7%), 11. New Zealand (6.3%), 12. Macau (3.4%), 13. Malaysia (2.7%), 14. Taiwan (1.1%), 15. Poland (0.5%) and 15. Others (4%)
B. Preferred Study destinations during the ongoing pandemic	1. United Kingdom (42.3%), 2. United States (41.1%), 3. Canada (23.2%), 4. Japan (20.8%), 5. Germany (17.3%), 5. France (17.3%), 6. Hong Kong (16.1%), 7. Singapore (15.5%), 8. Australia (13.7%), 9. South Korea (9.5%), 10. New Zealand (8.9%), 11. Italy (7.1%), 12. Malaysia (4.8%), 13. Macau (4.2%), 13. Taiwan (4.2%), 14. Poland (3.0%) and 15. Others (3.6%)
C. Preferred study destinations after the COVID-19 pandemic	1. United States (45.5%), 2. United Kingdom (43.7%), 3. Japan (23.9%), 4. Canada (21.6%), 5. Germany (20.2%), 6. France (19.7%), 7. Australia (15%), 8. Singapore (14.1%), 9. Hong Kong (13.9%), 9. South Korea (13.9%), 10. New Zealand (9.4%), 10. Italy (9.4%), 11. Macau (5.9%), 12. Taiwan (4%), 13. Malaysia (3.3%), 14. Poland (2.1%) ad 15. Others (4%)

### 2.1 Theoretical Justification of Push-Pull Model

The “push-pull” theory is a crucial conceptual framework for understanding trends in student migration. The push-pull model, of which there are numerous variations, basically argues that students decide to study abroad when they are “pulled” [28,29,30] in the direction of their destination by specific educational opportunities and general economic and social dynamism, and “pushed” (away from their home country) by circumstances such as political unrest, a lack of educational and employment opportunities, and so on (see Figure 2).

Researchers have attempted to develop a push-pull model to examine the factors affecting student mobility [31,32,33]. Altbach [34] investigated international student mobility using the push-pull model and found that while opportunities in host countries drew some students, others were pushed by unfavorable circumstances in their home countries. Similarly, Mazzarol and Soutar [33] propose that students who study overseas do so to broaden their horizons and experience something different. Pull reasons were the quality and reputation of HE, the potential for immigration, and the employment opportunities in the host country following graduation.



**Fig. 2:** A tentative push-pull model.

However, there are specific issues with the push-pull paradigm.

Additionally, there are push and pull influences between the home and host nations and in the global educational and economic context where students contrast the draw factors of other locations. As was previously discussed, because China is a growing center of education, there is no solitary vertical or horizontal pattern to the migration of international students in Chinese higher education. Scholars have thus argued for integrating macro and microelements to comprehend mobility and investigated the conflicting dynamics between the factors [35,36,37]. This reasoning is followed in the current study, which uses the push-pull paradigm to investigate how various influences at various stages encourage foreign students to pursue PhD research in China.

## 2.2 Choice of Institutions

Chen [38] states that the push-pull paradigm was first applied in migration theory to describe the variables affecting individuals' movements. The decision-making, flow, and incentives of overseas students have all been explained by the model. Pull factors are those that exist in a host country and are what draw in international students, while push factors are those that function within the source country and influence students' decisions to study abroad. Niece and Braun [39] asserted that in the case of international students, pull forces were significantly more significant than push factors. The primary reason for international students' requests for foreign education is the dearth of quality education in their native countries. Other factors included proximity to the supplier, linguistic community, science-based program availability, quality of the home country's tertiary education system, relative wealth of the home country's population, GNP growth rate in the home

country, and historical or colonial ties to a potential supplier country [40,41,42].

## 2.3 Understanding and Perception of Host Country

The direct cost-benefit interactions of international students about host countries and institutions are the subject of an ambitious new study. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) study, *The Financial Impact of Cross-border Student Mobility on the Economy of the Host Country*, shows that the host nation's tax, immigration, and tuition policies significantly impact the economic benefits generated by international students. Across the six European nations included in the study, a wide range of economic consequences from overseas students were discovered. It also showed that the time it takes for the economic advantages of having overseas students to offset the expenses of housing them can be significantly longer in different nations. The German study, arguably the most fascinating, emphasizes the value of keeping international students in the host nation's economy after graduation [43].

*H1: Understanding and Perception of Host Country have Positive Significance of choice of Institutions.*

## 2.4 Costing related matters

Education is an expensive, intangible service that demands significant decision-making input. Foreign students look for economical, high-quality universities and make a concerted effort to get greater value for their money. This can be classified as a sophisticated buying behavior. The most important component of tuition prices is the cost element, which also considers living expenses, housing costs, and the possibility of receiving a scholarship [44,45,46]. Foreign student enrollment rates typically decline as prices rise [47,48].

According to Migin et al. [49], employment in Malaysia is undoubtedly prohibited, and international students must cover their expenses in the host country. In most countries, foreign students are not permitted to work full-time during their study period. As a result, when choosing where to pursue higher education, students will carefully consider the cost of education. This claim has been supported by numerous studies conducted in Malaysia, New Zealand, Indonesia, and Australia [33,48,50,51,52].

*H2: Costing-related matters has a Positive Significance of the choice of Institutions.*

## 2.5 Environment

According to studies, a campus's learning environment, social and technical amenities, and infrastructure



significantly impact a prospective student's decision on which university to attend [53,54]. For many students, the location of their university and its environs are critical factors. Furthermore, a university's diversified campus culture is indicated by the amount of international students enrolled there. Furthermore, these elements may affect how foreign students view colleges and traditional diasporas. Mazzarol and Soutar [33] noted that international students must consider the host nation's environment while selecting a site for their international education, with particular attention to temperature and facilities. Offering top-notch on-campus housing with contemporary conveniences and a pristine setting is essential for international students [55,56]. According to Ghani's findings [57], a neighborhood's quality is influenced by various elements, including but not limited to safety, accessibility to business districts, transit, and the absence of vice pollution and traffic congestion. These attributes may influence the mobility of students from other countries. Social links, such as alumni recommendations and referrals, impact prospective students' choice of nations in the destination country [33, 58]. Therefore, offering top-notch services and a welcoming atmosphere to international students is one of the best free promotion strategies for a specific international education location.

*H3: Environment has a Positive Significance of the choice of Institutions.*

## 2.6 Social Links and Geographic Proximity

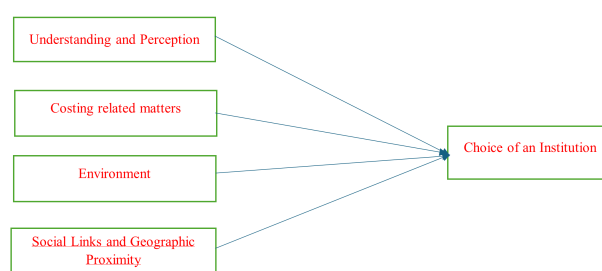
Social networks are one social component that affects students' decisions to study abroad. Students' social networks are their connections with those in their immediate vicinity. The student's social network includes connections with faculty, staff, friends, and family at their desired university.

According to Ahmad and Buchanan [59], word-of-mouth is the best advertising for universities looking to expand their student body. Students' decisions on which universities to attend are greatly influenced by the opinions of their friends and family; these opinions might alter a student's choice even if that student has already decided on their dream university. Families may also suggest whether family members have been abroad and had positive experiences there [59,60].

A tiny percentage of students will attempt to obtain information from their peers, and peers' persuasive power will directly affect family members, mainly if the peers had positive or negative experiences with a specific university after graduation [61]. According to Ahmad and Buchanan [59], families with graduates from overseas universities may impact students. However, this circumstance is uncommon among Chinese students because of China's government's one-child policy. Prior to the 1990s, there were very few students who studied overseas. According to a study by Zeeshan et al. [62],

international university students are likely to cite the foreign nation where their friends and family reside. In addition, guidance from education consultants, such as information, will influence the choice of study location [63]. Because of their experiences as well as those of their pupils, the education agents could have differing opinions [64,65]. However, Ahmad and Buchanan [59] emphasized that, in comparison to families, education agents have less influence over students' decisions.

*H4: Social Links and Geographic Proximity Have a Positive Significance of the choice of Institutions.*



**Fig. 3:** Study model.

## 3 Methods

This study examined the updated push-pull model using a quantitative approach and a descriptive research design for Chinese postgraduate students in Malaysia. Techniques for non-probability sampling were applied to choose participants. Statistical formulas are used to calculate the necessary sample size, considering variables like population variability, margin of error, and confidence level. This study's sample design made use of non-probability sampling methods. 500 surveys had to be distributed as part of the study to achieve the necessary sample size. The survey was disseminated via social media platforms, guaranteeing respondents' accessibility and convenience for paper copies and Google Forms. The respondents are postgraduate Chinese students enrolled in Malaysian public higher education programs. This analysis gathered and utilized 400 valid answers from the real analysis. The reliability of the data and the correlations between the variables were assessed using the SPSS version 29, which also included factor analysis, multiple regression analysis, descriptive analysis, multicollinearity testing, and beta coefficient assessment. Regression ANOVA and multiple regression analysis were used to evaluate four hypotheses.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Demographic Data

**Table 3:** Demographic Data

	Item	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	198	49.5
	Female	202	50.5
Age	18-25	10	2.5
	26-30	200	50.0
	31-40	170	42.5
	41 and above	20	5.0
Education	Master	298	74.5
	PhD	102	25.5

The demographic data in Table 3 reveals a balanced gender distribution, with 49.5% male and 50.5% female participants. The age distribution shows that most participants are between 26 and 40 years old, with 50% in the 26-30 age group and 42.5% in the 31-40 age group. Only 2.5% are aged 18-25, and 5% are 41 and above. Regarding education, 74.5% of the participants hold a Master's degree, while 25.5% have a PhD. This data indicates a predominantly mid-career, highly educated population, which may influence the generalizability of the study's findings to similar demographic groups.

### 4.2 Reliability Test

**Table 4:** Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
CRM (costing related matters)	.985
ENV (environment)	.985
SLGP (social link and geographic proximity)	.970
UPM (Understanding and Perception of Host Country)	.979
CI (Choice of an Institution)	.996

Table 4 presents the reliability analysis of various variables measured by Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha values for CRM (costing-related matters), ENV (environment), UPM (Understanding and Perception of Host Country), and CI (Choice of an Institution) are all exceptionally high, each being .985 or above, indicating excellent internal consistency for these measures. The SLGP (social link and geographic proximity) variable has a slightly lower but still strong reliability score of .870, reflecting good internal consistency. These high-reliability scores suggest that the instruments used to measure these variables are highly reliable, providing confidence in the consistency of the results obtained from this data.

### 4.3 Regression Analysis

**Table 5:** Correlations

		TCI	TUPM	TCRM	TENV	TSLGP
Pearson Correlation	TCI	1.000	.801	.808	.808	.600
	TUPM	.801	1.000	.923	.924	.605
	TCRM	.808	.923	1.000	.937	.608
	TENV	.808	.924	.937	1.000	.622
	TSLGP	.600	.605	.608	.622	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	TCI	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	TUPM	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	TCRM	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	TENV	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	TSLGP	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	TCI	400	400	400	400	400
	TUPM	400	400	400	400	400
	TCRM	400	400	400	400	400
	TENV	400	400	400	400	400
	TSLGP	400	400	400	400	400

Table 5 displays the regression analysis through Pearson Correlation coefficients among five variables: TCI, TUPM, TCRM, TENV, and TSLGP. The correlations indicate strong positive relationships among TCI, TUPM, TCRM, and TENV, with coefficients ranging from .801 to .937. Specifically, TCRM and TENV show the highest correlation at .937, suggesting a strong association between these variables. TSLGP has a moderate positive correlation with the other variables, with coefficients between .600 and .622. All correlations are statistically significant with p-values of .000, indicating robust evidence against the null hypothesis of no correlation. The sample size for each variable is 400, ensuring a reliable analysis. This data implies that the variables are significantly interrelated, which is important for understanding their combined impact in the regression model.

**Table 6:** Model Summary (b)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.833(a)	.693	.690	.62332

(a) Predictors: (Constant), TSLGP, TUPM, TCRM, TENV  
(b) Dependent Variable: TCI

Table 6 provides the model summary for a regression analysis where TCI is the dependent variable and TSLGP, TUPM, TCRM, and TENV are the predictors. The model has an R-value of .833, indicating a strong correlation between the observed and predicted values of TCI. The R<sup>2</sup> value of .693 suggests that approximately 69.3% of the variability in TCI can be explained by the combined influence of TSLGP, TUPM, TCRM, and TENV. The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of .690, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model, is very close to the R<sup>2</sup>, indicating that the model is well-fitted without overfitting. The standard error of the estimate is .62332, which measures the accuracy of predictions. Overall, the high R and R<sup>2</sup> values indicate that the model explains a substantial portion of the variance in TCI, demonstrating the predictors' effectiveness in predicting the dependent variable.

**Table 7:** ANOVA (a)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	346.713	4	86.678	223.096	.000(b)
	Residual	153.467	395	.389		
	Total	500.180	399			

(a) Dependent Variable: TCI

(b) Predictors: (Constant), TSLGP, TUPM, TCRM, TENV

Table 7 presents the ANOVA results for the regression model with TCI as the dependent variable and TSLGP, TUPM, TCRM, and TENV as predictors. The regression model's Sum of Squares is 346.713, with 4 degrees of freedom, leading to a Mean Square of 86.678. The residual Sum of Squares is 153.467 with 395 degrees of freedom, resulting in a Mean Square of .389. The F-statistic for the model is 223.096, which is highly significant with a p-value of .000. This indicates that the regression model significantly predicts the dependent variable, TCI, meaning the predictors collectively explain a substantial portion of the variance in TCI. The high F-value and the significance level demonstrate that the model's predictors, TSLGP, TUPM, TCRM, and TENV, are meaningful contributors to explaining changes in TCI.

Table 8 presents the coefficients for the regression model predicting TCI from TUPM, TCRM, TENV, and TSLGP. The unstandardized coefficients (B) indicate the contribution of each predictor to the model. The constant (intercept) is .352 with a standard error of .116, significant at  $p = .003$ . For the predictors, TUPM has a coefficient of .249 ( $p = .003$ ), TCRM .297 ( $p = .001$ ), TENV .239 ( $p = .009$ ), and TSLGP .124 ( $p = .000$ ). These values show that all predictors are significant contributors to the model.

The standardized coefficients (Beta) indicate the relative importance of each predictor. TCRM has the highest Beta (.284), followed by TUPM and TENV (both .237), and TSLGP (.136). This suggests that TCRM is the most influential predictor of TCI. The t-values and significance levels confirm the statistical significance of each predictor. The confidence intervals for B show the range within which the true coefficient values lie with 95% confidence—correlations between predictors and TCI range from .600 to .808, indicating strong relationships. Partial and part correlations suggest the unique contribution of each predictor. Collinearity statistics (Tolerance and VIF) indicate that multicollinearity is not a concern, with VIF values well below the threshold of 10, except for TSLGP, which has a VIF of 1.653, showing low collinearity. The model indicates that TUPM, TCRM, TENV, and TSLGP are significant predictors of TCI, with TCRM being the most influential factor.

Based on the results presented in your document, several key findings and recommendations can be drawn regarding the factors influencing Chinese postgraduate students' decisions to study in Malaysian universities. The study predominantly includes participants aged

between 26-40 years (92.5%), with a balanced gender distribution and a higher proportion of Master's students (74.5%) compared to PhD students (25.5%). This suggests the findings are most relevant to mid-career, highly educated individuals. The Cronbach's Alpha values for the variables are all above .870, indicating excellent reliability. This suggests that the data collected are consistent and the instruments used for measurement are reliable. Strong positive correlations were found between the Total College Interest (TCI) and the other variables (TUPM, TCRM, TENV, TSLGP), with the highest correlation between TCRM (costing-related matters) and TENV (Environmental Factors) at .937. The model explains 69.3% of the variability in TCI ( $R^2 = .693$ ),

## 5 Discussion of Hypothesis/Propositions

As this research uses mixed methods, the researchers propose the following propositions and hypotheses as follows:

### (H1) Push-pull factors influence the decision to further studies in Malaysia (proposition)

The findings are consistent with the theory that push and pull influences affect Malaysian students' decisions to continue their education there. For CRM (costing-related matters), SLGP (social link and geographic proximity), and UPM (understanding and perception of the host nation), the substantial t-values and low p-values suggest that these factors are important in influencing students' decisions. More specifically, the importance of social connections and financial considerations is highlighted by the great significance of SLGP ( $t = 3.806$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and CRM ( $t = 3.219$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). On the other hand, the noteworthy outcome for UPM ( $t = 2.938$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ) highlights the influence of students' opinions toward Malaysia. There is a tendency for environmental elements to influence decision-making, even though the ENV component (environment) has a less significant influence ( $t = 2.630$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ). The findings support the hypothesis by confirming that various ecological, social, perceptual, and financial elements affect students' decisions to continue their education in Malaysia.

### (H2) Academic and support service stimulates enrolment (hypothesis)

By emphasizing the vital role academic and support services have in students' overall satisfaction, academic achievement, and adaptability, the themes offered in RQ3 provide evidence in favor of the notion that these services encourage enrollment. Sub-Theme 3 highlights the importance of structured academic support, which is essential for assisting students in overcoming obstacles to studying in a foreign environment. Examples of this support include seminars, professional counsel, and improved resources. This support is necessary to overcome the academic and social hurdles delineated in

**Table 8:** Coefficient (a)

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.352	.116		3.030	.003	.124	.581					
TUPM	.249	.085	.237	2.938	.003	.082	.415	.801	.146	.082	.119	8.408
TCRM	.297	.092	.284	3.219	.001	.116	.479	.808	.160	.090	.100	10.046
TENV	.239	.091	.237	2.630	.009	.060	.418	.808	.131	.073	.096	10.441
TSLGP	.124	.033	.136	3.806	.000	.060	.188	.600	.188	.106	.605	1.653

(a) Dependent Variable: TCI

Sub-Themes 1, 2, 4, and 5, where students have issues with adaptation, homesickness, language barriers, and limited social connections. The importance of academic and support services on student experiences is highlighted by the key occurrences in Sub-Theme 6, which include positive experiences associated with university activities and bad experiences connected to inadequate facilities. The story implies that enhancing these services could significantly improve the educational experience for students and increase the institution's appeal to potential students. In conclusion, as these topics have shown, having strong academic and support services is essential for encouraging student enrolment because it helps students with various difficulties.

### (H3) New strategies and policies can improve the competitiveness of Malaysian universities (proposition)

Enhancing university appearances, participating in international education fairs, providing more scholarships, and raising publication output in journals with a Scopus index are some of the new tactics being used to attract international students. By increasing their exposure and global rating, these initiatives hope to elevate Malaysian universities' appeal and attract more international students.

## 6 Recommendation

Since CRM is the most influential factor, Malaysian universities should invest in improving their CRM systems. This could involve personalized communication strategies, regular engagement with potential students, and providing detailed and accurate information about the university and its programs. As TUPM is another significant factor, universities should focus on continually enhancing the quality and relevance of their academic programs. This includes updating curricula to meet current industry demands, offering flexible learning options, and ensuring the programs have strong career outcomes. Environmental factors, including campus facilities, location, and the overall living environment, play a crucial role. Universities should promote their campuses' safety, accessibility, and cultural vibrancy, possibly offering virtual tours and testimonials from current students. While TSLGP has a lower impact than the other variables, it still significantly influences

students' decisions. Universities can enhance social integration opportunities, extracurricular activities, and support systems for international students, which could make the university more appealing. Given the demographic profile of the respondents, marketing efforts should be tailored to mid-career professionals looking to advance their education. Highlighting opportunities for career advancement and professional networking within the university's programs could be particularly effective. Universities should establish mechanisms for continuous feedback from international students, allowing them to adapt their strategies based on evolving needs and preferences. By focusing on these areas, Malaysian universities can better attract and retain Chinese postgraduate students, ultimately enhancing their international student recruitment efforts.

## 7 Conclusion

Several important topics emerged from the study of Chinese postgraduate students in Malaysian universities. Students have difficulty adjusting to their new surroundings, especially regarding socializing and scholastic adaptations. Some challenges were mitigated by Malaysian culture, especially in the Chinese community, yet problems, including language hurdles, foreign research techniques, and homesickness, persisted. The findings clarified how much more academic help is required, including workshops, language support, and better library resources. There was a conspicuous absence of involvement with the larger society, and socialization was frequently restricted to contact with other Chinese students. The survey also revealed that although students valued the disciplined learning atmosphere, many expressed dissatisfaction with the meager social amenities and limited social changes on campus. According to the findings, although Malaysian universities offer a helpful learning environment, more has to be done regarding social integration initiatives and focused academic support to better the overall experience of overseas students.



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