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Exploring Chinese Students' Learning Experiences in a Private Higher Education Institution in the Philippines towards a Proposed Global Engagement Initiative Program

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ABSTRACT

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In response to the growing number of foreign students in the Philippines, Philippine higher education institutions have begun offering competitive programs to establish a global presence and foster internationalization. This study explored the educational experiences of Chinese graduate students at St. Paul University Manila. Through a qualitative research approach, the study explored Chinese students' motivation for participating in an international program in a private higher education institution, expectations and their significant learning experiences as an international student, goal achievements in the international program, and their advice and recommendations for future international higher education students. Using a phenomenological research method incorporating open-ended

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questionnaires, the study analyzed narratives and reflections from the participants to understand their academic, cultural, and personal adaptation processes. The findings underscore key motivators, including career advancement, cultural exchange, and the institution's reputation. Themes reveal that students highly value the quality of education, multicultural interactions, and the opportunity to improve their English communication skills. These findings served as a basis for proposing a "Global Engagement Initiative" Program to enrich international students' experiences through tailored support services and intercultural programs. This initiative is envisioned to address students' academic needs and foster their integration and satisfaction, enhancing St. Paul University's and other private universities' global appeal and support for international education.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, increasing numbers of Chinese students have chosen to pursue higher education outside of China, contributing to the global diversification of educational institutions. This trend aligns with China's broader "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which encourages international exchange and collaboration, including in the educational sector (Yue et al., 2022). In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) oversees Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) through CHED Memorandum Orders (CMOs). The country has seen a significant surge in foreign student enrollment, with the number of international students tripled over the past decade. With its English-based instruction, relatively low cost of living, and culturally welcoming environment, the Philippines has emerged as an attractive destination for international students, particularly those from China (Ortiga, 2018).

In 2019, the Philippines and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate bilateral cooperation in higher education. St. Paul University Manila, a research institution, has experienced a rise in Chinese students enrolling in its Graduate Programs. The university has partnered with Triosocean Corporation, an educational services company, to facilitate Chinese students' enrollment. To ensure customer satisfaction, universities should offer personalized services, such as immigration and visa processes, accommodation, and orientation programs. Effective communication channels, cultural sensitivity, comprehensive non-academic support, robust orientation programs, and efficient feedback mechanisms are essential. Research suggests that tailored support services and structured engagement programs play a crucial role in student success and satisfaction (Wang et al., 2022). Universities should also provide career and employment services specific to international students, such as internship

opportunities and job placement assistance. Incorporating these business-focused customer service practices not only ensures satisfaction during their academic journey but also contributes to their long-term success and their likelihood of becoming advocates for the institution.

However, adapting to the academic and social environment of a foreign country presents unique challenges that can significantly impact students' learning experiences and satisfaction (Luo, 2024). This study aimed to investigate the learning experiences of Chinese students enrolled in a private university in the Philippines, examining their motivations, expectations, and the challenges they encounter. Drawing on a qualitative-practice-based research approach, this study analyzes firsthand accounts to develop a comprehensive understanding of these students' educational journeys. This understanding informs the proposal of a "Global Engagement Initiative Program" designed to address the specific needs of international students, support their academic and cultural integration, and ultimately enhance the university's global education mission.

FRAMEWORK

This study is aligned with the three fundamental educational learning theories: Social Cognitive Theory, Humanistic Learning Theory, and Behaviorist Theory. Social Cognitive Theory, proposed by Bandura (1986), highlights the role of observational learning and peer interactions in shaping student behaviors and attitudes. Research shows that peer support and modeling from instructors can enhance academic confidence and motivation, crucial for navigating diverse environments (Zhao & Liu, 2022). Meanwhile, Humanistic Learning Theory, articulated by Rogers (1980 in Bermea, 2022), emphasizes personal growth and emotional well-being. It advocates for supportive learning environments that address students' emotional needs, leading to improved engagement and satisfaction (Li & Zhang, 2024). This theory promotes fostering relationships and open communication to enhance the sense of belonging for Chinese students (Chan & Smith, 2024). Finally, Behaviorism, founded by Skinner (1953 in Leeder, 2022), focuses on observable behaviors shaped by environmental stimuli, emphasizing reinforcement. In Chinese higher education, clear expectations and rewards can motivate students and help them adapt to different academic settings (Liu & Kee, 2024). By applying these frameworks, the study aims to better understand and improve the global engagement of Chinese students in a multicultural academic context.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study explores the learning journey of Chinese students in St. Paul University Manila's College of Business and Management-Graduate Programs. Specifically, it seeks to (1) unravel Chinese students' motivation for participating in an international program in a private higher education institution, (2) determine their expectations and their significant learning experiences as an international student, (3) unpack their goal achievements in the international program, and (4) recognize their advice and recommendations for other foreign students. The ultimate goal is to unpack their learning experiences towards developing a Global Engagement Initiative to improve Chinese students' experiences in the Philippines and other foreign countries.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the learning experiences of Chinese students in the international program at St. Paul University Manila. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences, which cannot be fully captured through quantitative methods (Babbie, 2020). Qualitative research has gained traction in traditionally objective fields, as noted by Cassell et al. (2017), highlighting its relevance in understanding complex social phenomena. Through the lens of a qualitative-descriptive approach, this study aimed to gather rich narrative accounts from participants, which are essential for understanding social processes in natural settings. Hence, this method included interviews, recognized as a vital component of the study, allowing for personalized and contextualized data collection. Additionally, secondary data from existing literature and scholarly works supported the findings, providing a broader context for the lived experiences documented (Taherdoost, 2021). This comprehensive qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for addressing the research questions and gaining valuable insights into the experiences of international students.

Research Site

The research was conducted at St. Paul University-Manila, located in the vibrant capital of the Philippines, which is recognized for its dedication to academic excellence and values-based education, making it a significant research locale. The university's commitment to the teachings of St. Paul, emphasizing

love, faith, and service, infuses an ethical dimension into its research initiatives, encouraging scholars to address both academic and societal challenges. The institution fosters a diverse and inclusive community, comprising local and international students, which enriches the research environment with varied perspectives and experiences. Moreover, St. Paul University Manila supports a nurturing research ecosystem through its dedicated research centers and faculty expertise, facilitating innovative and interdisciplinary projects. In conclusion, St. Paul University-Manila stands out as a dynamic research locale that combines academic rigor, ethical research practices, multicultural diversity, and a strategic urban setting, empowering scholars to undertake impactful research that contributes to societal well-being.

Participants

The study focused on 20 Chinese international students, representing 33.33% of the international student body in the Graduate School of Business at St. Paul University-Manila. Using a purposive sampling technique, participants were selected based on specific criteria to ensure their experiences were relevant to the research objectives. The demographic profile included a breakdown of gender, age range, and average age, providing insights into the balance and diversity of the sample. Participants' work backgrounds varied, encompassing both fresh graduates and those with professional experience, shedding light on their motivations for pursuing graduate studies abroad. The length of stay in the Philippines ranged from recent arrivals to those who had lived in the country for an extended period, influencing their level of cultural adaptation and academic integration. Additionally, the study explored their reasons for studying in the Philippines, including academic aspirations, cultural exposure, and personal goals. These details provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives, contextualizing their narratives within their personal, cultural, and educational experiences.

Instrumentation

This study used an open-ended interview questionnaire to explore the lived experiences of Chinese students in the St. Paul University-Manila international program. Using a semi-structured interview questionnaire is an effective method for exploring the lived experiences of Chinese students in an international program at St. Paul University, as it offers both flexibility and depth. This provides a framework that guides the conversation while allowing participants the freedom to discuss their personal experiences and insights (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The researcher gathered data through in-depth interviews. This helped the

researcher understand the participants' different perceptions and interpretations regarding their experiences. Hence, this study applied an open-ended question to the participants for them to fondly express their feelings. Through open-ended questions, the researcher could expand the data gathered from the participants. In the process of the interview, the devices included a camera, voice recorder, and pen and paper.

The open-ended interview questionnaire includes questions seeking an understanding of the phenomenon. This inquires about Chinese students' motivation for participating in an international program in a private higher education institution, determines their expectations and overall experiences, and examines their goal achievements in the international program. Finally, these questions were used to generate themes that will serve as a basis for developing a Global Engagement Initiative to improve Chinese students' experiences in the Philippines and other foreign countries.

Data Gathering Procedures

Data collection through interviews was conducted following a procedure that enabled the researcher to seamlessly address the research questions and eventually generate the study's outcomes. Data collection commenced when the researcher acquired permission and approval from St. Paul University to use the company as its research locale and data collection venue. Simultaneously, documentary requirements about this request were accomplished, such as forms approved by the university. Data collection occurred from August 10, 2023, to September 15, 2023. During the interview, the researcher sent the questionnaires to the Chinese students through the WeChat application and asked them to write their responses in English to the best of their ability. The questionnaires were collected from the Chinese students after they had been given adequate time to respond to the questionnaires.

In addition to practicing the utmost ethical considerations during data collection, storing and protecting participant responses and identities were prioritized to safeguard confidentiality and privacy. All data gathered through interviews were securely stored using password-protected digital platforms to prevent unauthorized access. Participants' identities were anonymized during data analysis, and any identifying information were removed to protect their privacy. Moreover, consent forms were obtained from all participants, clearly outlining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

Research Ethics Protocol

To further address ethical considerations, the researcher adhered to the guidelines set forth by the University's Research Ethics Committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards and protect the rights and well-being of the participants. In cases where sensitive or potentially harmful information emerges during interviews, appropriate measures were taken to provide support and referrals for counseling or assistance. Additionally, any potential conflicts of interest or biases was acknowledged and disclosed in the research report, demonstrating transparency and accountability.

The involvement of participants ensured a diversity of perspectives and experiences, enhancing the validity and richness of the data. During the research process, the researcher continuously reflects on their assumptions, biases, and cultural backgrounds to mitigate any potential impact on the data collection and analysis.

The rigorous implementation of ethical considerations, including data protection, confidentiality, informed consent, and participant selection, demonstrates the commitment to conducting an objective and unbiased research study with the highest integrity and respect for the participants' rights and well-being.

Data Analysis

Because the research study is purely qualitative, no statistical treatment was used. Rather, the collected data were analyzed using known qualitative data analytic methods, such as thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one way to examine qualitative information collected from interviews and observations. A thorough data analysis process identifies common themes or recurring topics, concepts, or semantic patterns (Caulfield, 2022). According to Braun and Clarke (2012 in Kiger & Varpio, 2020), thematic analysis is a strong and useful tool for studying a common thread of experiences, ideas, or actions throughout a dataset. It is carried out through a series of steps that lead to the generation of a report regarding the result of the analysis. The thematic analysis process involves familiarization with the data, initial coding, generation of themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents that data from the participants who provided their narratives, insights and accounts of their learning experiences regarding their motivation, expectations, and significant experiences as international higher

education students of St. Paul University Manila, particularly in the Graduate School Business Programs to propose a Global Initiative Program that can enrich students' learning engagement and overall educational experience as they pursue their degrees in foreign shores. The findings and detailed responses from the participants are presented and analyzed in the following tables.

Table 1

Thematic Analysis on the Motivation of International Higher Education Students in Joining St. Paul University-Manila's International Graduate Programs

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Significant Statements
Stature of SPU Manila as a Higher Education Institution	- Catholic Education - Facilities - Quality Education - Academic environment - Cultural Environment	This theme stresses the strong standing of St. Paul University Manila in the international and local academic community as provider of higher quality education in the Philippines and Asia	*"St. Paul University holds an important position in the history of higher education in the Philippines".* *"I chose to join the international student team at St. Paul University-Manila because it provides a unique academic and cultural environment that can help me achieve personal and professional development goals, and enhance my global perspective and cultural adaptability.*
Self-development	- Opportunity for self-growth - Career growth	This theme stresses self-improvement and better career opportunity as motivation in pursuing a higher education	*"Because I want to improve my ability and then have a better development and career. Friends are learning".* *"I want to improve myself more in order to improve my professional knowledge and international perspective, and better enhance work efficiency".*
Higher Learning	- Education - Specialization - Acquisition of new knowledge	This theme stresses the need to intensify learning in higher education.	*"I hope to improve my education and major".* *"learn, more knowledge".*

Promotion	- Job requirements and qualification - Work efficiency	This theme is about higher education as a gateway for job mobility, qualification and promotion	*"The job requires a higher qualification".* *"In order to improve my professional knowledge and work efficiency."*
Cross-cultural Communication	- Multicultural community - Cultural backgrounds - Cultural experiences	This theme is about St. Paul University Manila as a hub of cross cultural communications and learnings amongst international students.	*"The international student team at St. Paul University is a multicultural community, which provides me with a valuable opportunity to understand people from different countries and cultural backgrounds, and learn their perspectives and experiences from them."*
Language Skills	- English communication for socialization	This theme stresses learning and communicating in English as a motivating factor in joining the program.	*" Participating in the international activities of the school can broaden my horizons and increase my understanding of the world, while improving my language skills, making friends with international students and Establishing transnational contacts."*

Table 1 presents the data outlining the motivations and experiences of international students at St. Paul University- Manila through key themes and sub-themes. Each theme illustrates the factors influencing international students' decision to study at SPU-Manila and highlights the institution's appeal.

Stature of St. Paul University-Manila as a Higher Education Institution. This theme underscores the reputation and credibility of SPU Manila as a prominent institution for Catholic education, high-quality academic offerings, and a rich cultural environment. SPU Manila's respected position in higher education is a significant draw for international students seeking a reputable academic institution. Many students view SPU as a place to achieve personal and professional growth within a supportive and well-resourced academic setting (Zhang et al., 2024).

Self-Development. International students at SPU Manila are motivated by personal growth and career development opportunities. Pursuing higher education enables students to develop skills essential for their professional lives,

including self-discipline, resilience, and adaptability. Research shows that self-improvement and skill acquisition are key motivators for international students who wish to enhance their global competitiveness (Shkoler & Rabenu, 2023).

Higher Learning. This theme emphasizes students' importance on acquiring specialized knowledge and expertise in their chosen fields. Higher education provides students with advanced learning and the chance to deepen their subject matter expertise, which they view as crucial for their academic and career success (Zhang & Ma, 2023).

Promotion. Students recognize that higher education can be instrumental for career advancement. Many students cited job qualification requirements and the potential for improved work efficiency as motivations to pursue further studies. Higher qualifications are often associated with increased career mobility and professional growth, as noted in recent studies (Kim & Anderson, 2021).

Cross-Cultural Communication. SPU-Manila's multicultural community offers students a valuable cross-cultural learning and communication environment. This is particularly beneficial for students who aspire to develop a global perspective by interacting with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds (Nguyen, 2018). The opportunity to share cultural experiences enhances students' adaptability and broadens their worldview.

Language Skills. The university's English-speaking environment fosters students' language development, which is crucial for social integration and academic success. English proficiency is critical for international students who aim to improve their communication skills and build transnational relationships, facilitating their integration into the global academic community (Liu & Chung, 2024).

Table 2

Thematic Analysis on Objectives/Expectations of International Higher Education Students in Joining St. Paul University-Manila's International Graduate Programs

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Significant Statements
Certification Qualification	- Graduate Degree - Career growth - Promotion	This theme focuses on the goal of finishing the MBA/DBA degree as a stepping stone for professional growth	*"I hope to complete my master's degree and become a better professional."* *"…complete my studies well for promotion and for my career path."*

Long-term connections	- Collaboration and communication with local and international students - Team work for international projects	This theme emphasizes the lifelong connections that the international students may gain through exposure to a pool of local and international students with different professional and personal backgrounds.	*"Because I want to improve my ability and then have a better development and career. Friends are learning".* *"I hope to make new friends and establish long- term connections through International projects.* *"The connections can provide me with more opportunities and resources to help me achieve my personal and career development goals."*
Educational concepts of foreign countries	- New education experience - Learning from foreign students - Enriching social circle	This theme is about the desire to gain new learnings from the perspective of the education concepts/ system of the host country	*"I hope to study with students from different countries, so that I can understand the educational concepts of different countries, enrich my social circle, and benefit from my future career development."*

Table 2 shows the themes that emerged from Chinese students' narratives, revealing the objectives and expectations of joining the international program at St. Paul University-Manila. The themes include pursuing MBA/DBA degrees, focusing on professional growth, long-term connections, and exposure to diverse educational concepts.

Acquiring certifications for additional qualifications. The goal of obtaining a graduate degree, such as an MBA or DBA, is often seen as a strategic step toward career advancement and increased professional qualifications. Completing these degrees serves as a crucial milestone for students aiming for promotions and enhanced career trajectories. Research suggests that advanced degrees like MBAs and DBAs significantly contribute to career mobility and leadership opportunities, making them attractive for professionals who aspire to higher positions (Huang et al., 2014).

Establishing long-term connections. The opportunity to build lasting relationships with both local and international peers is highly valued among students. Through collaborative projects and shared academic experiences, these students establish a global network that provides access to future resources and career opportunities. This aligns with studies indicating that international education fosters cross-cultural friendships and networks that are invaluable in

today's interconnected job market (Hunter et al., 2023).

Learning educational concepts of foreign countries. Students are motivated by the desire to experience and learn from foreign countries' educational systems and approaches. Engaging with diverse educational philosophies enriches their social and professional perspectives, which benefits future career development. Studies show that international students often gain unique insights into academic and cultural practices abroad, which broadens their worldview and enhances their adaptability (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013).

Table 3

Thematic Analysis of Significant Learning Experiences as an International Student in the Philippines

Theme	Sub-theme	Description	Significant Statements
Government Requirement Compliance	- Visa application - Personnel shortage - Communication barriers	This theme focus on the challenges encountered by the international students in seeking student visas and other government Requirements	*"I encountered some difficulties during the process of applying for student visa mainly due to lack of communication."* *"There is not enough personnel and I think some are difficult to deal with."*
New Environment Adaptation	- New knowledge - Understanding new cultures and lifestyles - Better communication in English	This theme stresses the how the international students higher education journey in a foreign country has enabled them to dramatically adapt with the new environment.	*"During the process of studying abroad, I gained new knowledge, expanded my horizons, and gained an understanding of new cultures and lifestyles."* *"At the beginning, I felt afraid, and then the school and professor helped me a lot. I can get along well with them now."*

Integration in New Society	- Filipino values - Filipino lifestyles	This theme stresses how their presence in the country has enabled them to better understand and appreciate local community culture, values and lifestyles.	*"As an international student, I study and live with students from different countries and cultural backgrounds to gain a deeper understanding of their culture, history, and way of life and understand the lifestyle and values of Filipinos."* *"The feelings I felt during my interactions with them were the most touching. The people here are not as reserved and introverted as Chinese people. They are very real and enthusiastic, and this is something we need to learn from*

Table 3 describes the significant learning experiences of Chinese international students, highlighting themes that focus on navigating government requirements, adapting to a new environment, and integrating into the local society in the Philippines.

Complying with government requirements. International students often face challenges in fulfilling government requirements, particularly in visa applications. Issues such as communication barriers, limited personnel, and bureaucratic complexities can make the process difficult and time-consuming. Research highlights that visa-related challenges and limited institutional support are common hurdles for international students in foreign countries, impacting their transition and overall experience (Oleksiyenko, 2021). Students report that navigating these obstacles requires patience and often results in frustration due to a lack of clarity and assistance (Martirosyan et al., 2019).

Adapting to the new environment. Adjusting to a new educational and cultural environment requires international students to develop new knowledge, embrace diverse cultures, and enhance their communication skills, particularly in English. For many, the process begins with initial fear and uncertainty, which gradually gives way to confidence as they receive support from faculty and peers. This adaptation process aligns with findings that stress the role of institutional support in helping international students adjust to their new surroundings and expand their cultural understanding (Yerken et al., 2022).

Integrating in a new society. Living and studying in the Philippines has given students a deeper appreciation for Filipino values, lifestyles, and interpersonal warmth. Interactions with locals have allowed them to understand cultural differences and reflect on their social norms. Studies indicate that international

students often view cultural immersion as one of the most valuable aspects of studying abroad, as it fosters intercultural competence and personal growth. With globalization and interconnectedness, workplaces are becoming increasingly intercultural, necessitating competent professionals to navigate diverse cultural environments (Guillén-Yparrea & Ramírez-Montoya, 2023). Filipino society's friendly and open nature has particularly impacted students, encouraging them to embrace new perspectives and foster meaningful connections.

Table 4

Thematic Analysis of Goals Achievement of International Higher Education Students

Theme	Participants	Significant Patterns
Learning as a Continuing Process	P1, P3, P4, P12, P16, P18, P19	*"Not yet, but there are expected results, as our learning is continues, the process is long term even after graduation".* *"Yes. I hope to make more progress".*
Personal, Professional and Management Skills Development	P2, P8, P13, P17, P20	*"Yes, I believe that choosing St. Paul University-Manila has achieved the expected goals: personal abilities have significantly improved, relevant knowledge has been enriched, and a more harmonious relationship has been established with teachers and students".* *"By participating in international projects, I have achieved the previously set goals, not only expanding my horizons and experience, improving my leadership, teamwork, and language skills, but also making many new friends and establishing long-term connections."*
Optimism towards Goals Achievement	P5, P6, P10, P14, P15	*"Not yet, but I make sure we can".* *"My course has just started and I am not achieving my goals at the moment".*
Broadening Horizons	P7, P9, P11	*"Although I haven't been through this project for a long time, it has made my life experience more rich and colorful, which has also achieved some of my goals."*

Table 4 recognizes the goals and achievements of Chinese students enrolled in international programs at St. Paul University-Manila. The themes reveal their perspectives on continuous learning, skill development, optimism, and the broadening of horizons as part of their academic journey.

Learning as a Continuing Process. Participants (P1, P3, P4, P12, P16, P18, P19) view learning as an ongoing journey beyond graduation. This theme highlights their belief that education is not confined to the classroom but is a continuous process of growth and discovery. Recent studies support this notion, indicating that international students often seek lifelong learning opportunities and believe that the skills and insights gained during their studies will continue to impact them in the future. This mindset reflects a commitment to evolving academically and professionally over time rather than expecting immediate results.

Personal, Professional, and Management Skills Development. For some participants (P2, P8, P13, P17, P20), their experiences at St. Paul University have significantly contributed to their personal, professional, and management skill development. They reported improvements in leadership, teamwork, and communication skills, along with establishing lasting connections with peers and faculty. Research indicates that participating in international programs enhances students' soft skills, such as adaptability and cross-cultural communication, which are essential for personal and professional success in a globalized world (Yuna et al., 2022). Furthermore, the structured nature of these programs fosters an environment conducive to holistic development, equipping students with a diverse skill set applicable across various career paths.

Optimism towards Goals Achievement. Some participants (P5, P6, P10, P14, P15) expressed optimism about achieving their goals, even if they had not yet reached them. This forward-looking perspective is common among students in the early stages of their academic programs. Optimism has been identified as a crucial factor for international students in adapting to new environments and persisting through challenges. Their determination to stay on course despite initial difficulties reflects a growth mindset, essential for overcoming obstacles and achieving long-term objectives.

Broadening Horizons. Participants (P7, P9, P11) mentioned that their experiences, though relatively short, had already broadened their perspectives and enriched their life experiences. Exposure to diverse cultures and educational practices is one of the main benefits of studying abroad, as it enables students to expand their worldview and adapt to multicultural settings. Studies have shown that international education significantly enhances students' cultural awareness

and prepares them to work in diverse, multicultural environments (Takeuchi & Chen, 2013). By broadening their horizons, these students are achieving personal goals and gaining a more inclusive and global outlook.

Table 5

Thematic Analysis of Advice and Recommendations for Future International Higher Education Students in the Philippines

Theme	Participants	Significant Patterns
Provision of Seamless Communication Channel	P1, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20	*"For SPUM to provide more channels of cooperation and resource allocation so that Chinese students can study and live with greater peace of mind after entering the Philippines by providing convenient communication channels."* *"Yes. I hope to make more progress".*
Pros and Cons of Living Abroad	P2, P9, P11, P12, P14, P15	*"Firstly, learn more about the basic situation of the school and major, read relevant literature, and make a good knowledge reserve; Secondly, abide by the relevant regulations of the school, study diligently, and continuously improve oneself; Thirdly, understand the graduation requirements of this major, and develop a study plan and goals."*
Time Management, Research and Communication, and Language Preparation	P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P13	*"Pay attention to the schedule and establish contact with the teacher in advance".* *"To maintain a positive attitude and mindset, actively integrate into local society, persist in learning English or other languages, seek support and assistance, explore local culture and tourist attractions, and maintain a healthy lifestyle".* *"Recommend them to study business management to broaden their international perspective and strategic."* *Language is the most basic communication tool in the process of studying abroad. It is recommended to learn the language of the target country in advance into the new environment. Taking language classes or learning independently is a good option.*

Table 6 provides the themes of advice and recommendations offered by

Chinese students studying at St. Paul University in Manila to future international students in the Philippines. Their guidance centers around establishing effective communication channels, understanding the pros and cons of living abroad, managing time and research expectations, and the importance of language preparation.

Provision of Seamless Communication Channel. Participants (P1, P16, P17, P18, P19, P20) emphasized the need for SPUM to establish more accessible communication channels to support international students. This recommendation aligns with recent findings that suggest international students benefit from robust communication frameworks, which contribute to a smoother transition into a new academic environment and country (Zhang et al., 2024). By facilitating efficient communication between students and the institution, SPUM can better address students' needs, promote cooperation, and ensure resource accessibility, thus creating a supportive environment that reduces the stress of adjusting to life abroad.

Pros and Cons of Living Abroad. Participants (P2, P9, P11, P12, P14, P15) advised future students to thoroughly research the academic and cultural aspects of studying abroad before arrival. They highlighted the importance of understanding the school's curriculum, graduation requirements, and cultural expectations. This aligns with the literature, which suggests that prior knowledge of the host country's education system and cultural norms enables international students to make informed decisions and adapt more readily (Shkoler & Rabenu, 2023). Additionally, proactively developing a study plan is essential for academic success and contributes to a more positive overall experience in the host country.

Time Management and Prior Knowledge of Research and Communication. Effective time management and prior research were underscored by participants (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P13) as vital skills for navigating the demands of international education. They recommended building a schedule, maintaining proactive communication with teachers, and actively engaging with the local culture. Studies indicate that international students who manage their time efficiently and establish regular communication with faculty members are better equipped to cope with academic pressures. Furthermore, exploring local culture and adopting a positive mindset enhance students' integration, contributing to improved mental well-being and a richer educational experience.

Language Preparation: Participants also advised future students to prepare for language challenges by learning English or the host country's language in advance. This advice is consistent with studies showing that language proficiency is crucial for academic success and effective social integration (Zhu & Smith, 2024). Language preparation not only aids in communication but also fosters

a sense of confidence and belonging within the host culture. Language classes or independent study can bridge gaps in understanding and enable students to thrive in their new environment.

These recommendations underscore the importance of pre-arrival preparation, proactive communication, and adaptability in enhancing the study-abroad experience. The advice given by Chinese students at St. Paul University-Manila reflects a comprehensive approach to navigating the challenges of international education and promoting personal and academic success in a foreign setting.

CONCLUSION

Exploring Chinese students' experiences at St. Paul University-Manila reveals several motivations and expectations that drive their pursuit of international graduate programs. Key motivations include the university's reputation as a high-quality Catholic institution, which is crucial for academic and professional growth. Students also seek self-development and career advancement, viewing higher education as a means to enhance their competitiveness in the global job market. The multicultural environment at St. Paul University-Manila fosters cross-cultural communication and adaptability, while opportunities to improve language skills are also significant. Students expect to obtain advanced degrees like an MBA or DBA, essential for career progression. They also anticipate building long-term connections for professional networking and experiencing diverse educational concepts. Significant learning experiences include navigating bureaucratic challenges related to visa processes and adapting to a new cultural environment facilitated by institutional support. Exposure to Filipino culture enhances their appreciation of local values. Students' goals reflect a commitment to lifelong learning and personal development, focusing on acquiring essential skills for the global job market. Their positive outlook on achieving their goals indicates resilience in adapting to new academic environments. Advice for future students emphasizes the importance of effective communication, understanding program requirements, and preparing for educational and social challenges. Finally, the study proposed a Global Engagement Initiative Program that could enhance international students' engagement and educational experiences not only at St. Paul University-Manila but also in other foreign universities, fostering their academic and professional growth.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The findings of this study offer valuable applications for improving

international education programs, not only within the institution but across similar settings. These programs emphasize specific motivations, expectations, and challenges that Chinese students face, providing a foundation for initiatives to support their adaptation and success. Translating these findings into practical applications will involve implementing programs that address institutional reputation, career development, cross-cultural communication, language skills, and resilience in new academic environments.

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