

Abstract

The increasing trend of Indonesian students pursuing higher education in China raises concerns about the competitiveness of domestic universities. As global competition intensifies and student preferences develop, Indonesian higher education institutions must reassess their strategies to attract and retain students. This study identifies and analyzes the key factors influencing Indonesian students' preference to study life sciences in China rather than domestic universities. Using a quantitative approach, the research examines the statistical significance of financial, economic, academic, institutional, social, geographic, and environmental factors on students' preference-making through survey data and statistical modelling. The findings show that financial and academic factors significantly shape student preferences in the life science fields, with scholarships, future career prospects, and institutional reputation being key motivators. Geographic and environmental factors, such as safety, cultural exposure, and independence, also positively influence students' preference to study abroad. Contrarily, social factors—especially family influence and concerns about religious tolerance—tend to discourage students from studying in China. Therefore, higher education institutions should improve academic infrastructure, expand international partnerships, and enhance financial accessibility to remain competitive. Also, policymakers are to support international study pathways, invest in domestic life science education, and design responsible financial aid programs. Besides, education consultants should provide culturally sensitive guidance and prepare students emotionally and practically for studying abroad. Future research is recommended to explore other influencing factors, such as international research exposure and students' engagement with global academic networks.

Keywords: *Life science education, China higher education, study abroad*