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*Outward and Inward Movement, Job-Seeking Process  
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Chinese International Students Seeking Master's  
Degrees in the UK and Their Counterparts at Home*

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**Outward and Inward Movement, Job-Seeking Process and Labour  
Market Outcomes: A Comparison between Chinese International  
Students Seeking Master's Degrees in the UK and Their  
Counterparts at Home**

Xianan Hu  
PhD Thesis  
School of Education  
Durham University  
2024

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## List of Abbreviations

ISM	International Student Mobility
ERASMUS	European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EEA	European Economic Area
UK	The United Kingdom
US	The United States
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
WTO	World Trade Organisation
N	Number
SD	Standard Deviation
EF	Effect Size
SES	Socioeconomic Status
FOS	Father's occupational status
MOS	Mother's occupational status
BCSPS	Beijing College Student Panel Survey
CCG	Centre for China and Globalisation

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## Abstract

Over the past decade, there has been a growing interest in the labour market outcomes of internationally mobile students. However, little analysis exists beyond Europe and the USA, and most of them have focused on credit-mobile students rather than full-degree seekers. As the largest exporter of international students, China sends many talents overseas for further studies every year, and the number of students studying abroad has been expanding rapidly in recent years. The increasing popularisation of studying abroad is underpinned by a combination of supply and demand for education and resource allocation, two-way push and pull factors from sending and receiving countries, and personal pursuits. However, after completing their studies, returning students are also rising. Most of them are driven by policy incentives and economic and culture-related considerations. Nevertheless, their job-seeking process and labour market outcomes still need to be researched. It is essential to explore how they find employment after returning home and whether their skills and networks accumulated at higher education institutions abroad secure job attainment and high salaries.

This study aims to bring a whole picture of Chinese international students' outward and inward movement. It compares career aspirations and labour market outcomes in the home job market of Chinese international students seeking master's degrees in the UK to their counterparts with domestic degrees. It also includes the discussion of studying abroad intention and motivation, obstacles working abroad, and the hidden factors that impact individuals' decisions. In addition, the job-seeking channels and the mobilisation of social capital in the job-hunt process are included as well.

A survey was conducted regarding the first employment upon graduation between December 2019 and March 2020 among more than 32 higher education institutions. The total sample size is 1420, including 438 postgraduates registered in master's programmes (yet to graduate) and 982 postgraduates who graduated between 2016 and 2019. The regression analysis examines the relationship between studying abroad and graduates' academic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Second, it clarifies how mobile status, demographic and educational background, human capital and social capital predict the likelihood of employment, monthly income and job satisfaction. Results show that those from higher social origins and with better academic backgrounds are more inclined to study abroad. A foreign diploma has beneficial and unfavourable consequences on the labour market. Graduates with master's degrees from abroad encounter tremendous obstacles while joining the workforce. Their job

satisfaction levels are much lower than home graduates, but they earn more wages than their non-mobile peers. Adequate employment information, career support services and internship opportunities may help mobile graduates avoid unemployment dilemmas. The income premium of mobile graduates may be partly explained by the selectivity of social origin and academic background.

**Key words**

International student mobility; Chinese international students; full-degree mobility; postgraduate education; labour market outcome.

# 1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a background discussion of the overall picture of international student mobility (ISM) and the specific situation of the increasing popularity of UK master's programmes among Chinese international students. It then discusses this study's purpose and significance, explaining why it is essential. Lastly, it presents the study's theoretical framework, research questions, and the structure of the following chapters.

## 1.1 Research background and significance

The number of globally mobile students has expanded dramatically in recent decades. Studying abroad, commonly known as international student mobility (ISM), refers to undertaking study-related stays at tertiary education outside one's place of usual residence. In 2017, the number of ISM was 5.1 million, an increase of 143 per cent compared to 2.1 million in 2000 (Choudaha & Wit, 2019). Findlay et al. (2012) identify two basic types of ISM: long-term degree mobility and short-term exchanges or credit mobility.

Rapid growth in the number of international students appears to benefit both sending and receiving nations. On the one hand, it can balance the insufficient enrolment capacity in the sending countries to meet the demands in particular subject areas. On the other hand, the receiving countries can gain more revenue to compensate for the lack of funds. In addition, mobile individuals can get a great deal of additional value by studying abroad. Thus, an overwhelming majority of students engage in overseas higher education (HE) programmes with solid motivations to enhance their language competence, acquire cross-cultural experience and improve future job search and career developments (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Cammelli et al., 2008; European Commission, 2014b; Wiers-Jenssen & Støren, 2020).

However, facing the shortage of funds during the economic crisis and the temptation of international student tuition revenue, many HEIs grew more interested in expanding the enrolment of international students. They started to create additional pathways to recruit students with less intellectual rigour or English language proficiency (Redden, 2013; Benzie, 2010). Emerging challenges connected to the educational preparation of international students are accompanied by a shortage of institutional resources and assistance for international students (Bista & Foster, 2016 xxii). Essential for international students, these additional support services include

academic services such as language and writing help and non-academic services such as career advising and counselling. According to a study, only 2 per cent of overseas students at UK HEIs obtained employment through their university's career services (Universities UK International, 2020). The available data suggest that academic programmes and career support services do not adequately address the requirements of international students and overseas employers. In spite of being highly motivated to get career coaching, Chinese students reportedly make limited use of such services due to their limited comprehension of the domestic labour markets of international students, according to research by Li, Mitts, and Whiston (2021). A similar study was conducted by Huang and Turner (2018), who looked at how Chinese students in the UK felt about university resources, career support and job prospects after graduation. These reports imply that UK higher education institutions are primarily focused on the needs of UK-based students and pay less attention to the employment requirements of overseas students.

The rapidly expanding group of overseas students has challenged resources and services. When the education market for ISM is industrialised, academic qualifications will become "commodities" that could be "bought" by the middle class. People started to doubt the value and quality of overseas study (Ip, 2021). It remains controversial whether such ISM experiences could fulfil students' career prospects.

Some researchers pointed out that ISM could bring employment advantages compared to those without such experiences, such as wage premium (Kratz & Netz, 2018; Lutter & Schröder, 2016; Orrù, 2014; Poot & Roskrüge, 2013; Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005) and shorter transition periods from HE to work (Cammelli et al., 2008). Nonetheless, some contest the common perception that education abroad confers a competitive advantage in the job market. Tuross (2010) pointed out that, even though recruiters praise international experiences, particularly the long-term Western experiences abroad, they only make up a small percentage of their recruitment evaluations. Waibel et al. (2017) concluded that research comparing graduates with and without ISM experience reveals minor or nonexistent impacts on labour market outcomes, such as the duration of the period between graduation and work and employment opportunity acquisition, whereas slight but notable effects are seen on salaries. Nevertheless, data on wage premiums are inconsistent and contradicted by other research (Van Ophem, Hartog & Berkout, 2011; Messer & Wolter, 2006). In addition, some studies demonstrate that ISM has a detrimental effect on post-graduation career prospects, resulting in a delay in employment (Di Pietro, 2015; Krabel & Flöther, 2014; Støren & Wiers-Jenssen, 2009; Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005).

Although many empirical studies have explored various aspects of labour market outcomes, research beyond Europe and the US is exceedingly limited (Netz & Cordua, 2020). Most research on international mobility and career outcomes in Western countries has focused on credit-mobile students (i.e., exchange programme, ERASMUS<sup>1</sup>) rather than full-degree seekers. Most of the previous studies on credit mobility are based on the dataset for organised exchange programmes (e.g., Bremer, 1998; Cammelli et al., 2008; European Commission, 2014b; Sorrenti, 2017; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Data identification and tracking are more challenging for full-degree mobile students, as there is no accurate registration system for graduates studying abroad. As a result, research on the job probability (the likelihood of employment), wages and other long-term impacts of full-degree mobility are relatively scarce.

China is the world's largest exporter of overseas students, with 703,500 studying abroad in 2019 alone (Wang, 2021). Most of the mobile students are full-degree seekers (Wang, 2021). According to the statistics, most Chinese international students at UK HEIs study business, followed by social science and natural science. However, the demand for specialisations in the domestic job market is exactly the opposite, with natural sciences in the greatest demand and business subjects in the least demand. (Xu, 2014; Soysal & Woodman, 2019). The structural differences in supply and demand and limited support for recruitment information and policy guidance may lead to employment difficulties when returning to China. In addition, due to the limitations of visas and the short duration of the courses, mobile graduates usually graduate with no internship experience. Chinese employers may devalue their capacity and productivity as they cannot prove their international qualifications. According to Cao (2008) and Chen (2014), Chinese society is in many ways a "guanxi" (networks) society, in which one's success is not always determined by performance but rather by whom he or she knows. Thus, without the help of the "right person" and proper social networks, mobile graduates could be disadvantaged compared to non-mobile graduates.

Some studies suggest that the decision of Chinese international students to study abroad is career-orientated. Most of them expected their experience of studying abroad to enhance their employability (Huang & Turner, 2018). However, studies focusing on the employment outcomes of Chinese international mobile graduates are relatively limited, with very limited comparisons them with their counterparts from indigenous HEIs. This study focuses on Chinese international students seeking master's degrees in the UK. It clarifies whether overseas study experience, acquired

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<sup>1</sup> ERASMUS refers to the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students funding schemes.

skills, social networks accumulated at the universities and family socioeconomic status (SES) are predicted to find promising jobs and secure wage premiums and whether they are satisfied with their first employment. It also compares the discrepancies between graduates abroad and their counterparts at indigenous HEIs. In addition, the study underlines mobile graduates' intention to study abroad, their return, and the obstacles to working abroad. It also compares the job-hunting process and employment status with their counterparts at home. It also evaluates how overseas or domestic postgraduates' education can fulfil their career expectations and provide reference advice for individuals to achieve employment successfully.

The findings are incredibly crucial. As multiple groups promote the expansion of postgraduate education, the large number of potential postgraduate applicants, UK and Chinese HEIs, and educational and immigration policy-makers to Chinese and British governments need better evidence on these issues. The findings provide implications for future recruitment and employment policies to promote an equitable and supportive career development system for graduates.

This study's findings are crucial not only to Chinese and UK HEIs but also to policy-makers and governments. Although the analysis only focuses on Chinese international postgraduates in UK HEIs and their counterparts in China, this study is relevant to HE outcomes worldwide. The findings provide implications for international full-degree mobility, career paths and return. Furthermore, it also relates to the possible consequences of international postgraduate education, which separates graduates into different employment statuses based on academic achievement, activity participation, internship experience, and family background. While career path selection may adopt distinct forms or job-searching strategies under other specific circumstances, the underlying principle of choice is the same.

## **1.2 Research motivation**

The topics I chose are based on my own experiences and observations. I worked at Qingdao University as an English teacher for more than three years before I pursued a Ph.D. degree. Because of the pressure of employment and diploma inflation, many students continued their studies after undergraduate programmes to extend the time before entering the labour market. I wrote many letters of recommendation for my students, many of whom chose to study in English-speaking countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK. Later on, I also discussed with many students the choice of destination countries and the dilemmas they faced. Some said they chose the UK

for the short study duration and the possibility of travelling to Europe. Many believe the one-year programme in the UK is time-saving and comparatively money-saving, and most are career-oriented. However, some expressed doubts about the one-year study system in the UK, worrying that employers would question and disapprove of the diplomas after graduation. I gradually began to develop an interest in this issue and started to think about whether studying experience in the UK can help students secure ideal professions or whether the experience has career value.

When I came to the UK for my studies, I made a lot of friends pursuing master's degrees at the university. They seemed to mingle with Chinese international students all the time, seldom took the initiative to find opportunities to get in touch with the locals and seemed to have a hard time integrating into the local community. There are undeniably some objective reasons; for example, the number of Chinese students has increased dramatically, especially in the business school, and in some classes, 95% of the students are from China, and often, they can easily complete group discussions without using English. Besides, some students hope to seize the opportunities to travel around Europe. The travelling experience could broaden their horizons, but fewer focus their limited time on expanding their internships and increasing their employability. Only one of my friends found a job in the UK; the rest went back to China, and it took them over six months to find a job. Some of them were trapped in the employment dilemmas. What are their employment situations, and what factors affect their career paths? These questions triggered my thinking and led me to focus my research on one-year master's students studying in the UK and their labour market outcomes in the home market.

### **1.3 International mobility of Chinese students: mobile rationales, support policies and returning**

As the trend toward massification of HE continues, many graduates have bachelor's degrees. The labour market's mismatch between supply and demand creates a highly competitive environment. Issues such as "difficulty obtaining jobs" and "devaluation of education" surfaced. Thus, growing numbers of students are pursuing postgraduate education at domestic or international higher education institutions (HEIs) to increase their employment competitiveness.

In 2022, as many as 4.57 million candidates took the postgraduate entrance examination, but the admission rate was only 24.22 per cent (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2022). When the capacity of HE in China is insufficient

to meet the demand in specific subject areas or a level of education, more and more students are in a surge pursuing master's degrees from overseas HEIs. As the economy grows and living standards continue to climb, more affluent families are ready to invest in their children's education by sending them to study abroad. Thus, the number of self-funded international students has grown dramatically. It has become a strategy for somewhat affluent families to "gild" their children in the job market, as it is commonly called in China (a metaphor for individuals studying abroad only to gain a false reputation (Xiang & Chen, 2009). Obtaining a degree from Western HEIs has become crucial to achieving social mobility (Waters, 2005; Fong, 2011; Kajanus, 2015).

The American sociologist R. Collins developed the theory of status competition. He argues that education is similar to a cultural currency, allowing people to purchase a particular professional and social status. The Australian scholar Markinson (2016) identifies HE certificates as positional goods that determine social status. Students are consumers of positional goods who compete with each other in the global HE market, trying to get into the most desirable universities in order to obtain positional goods with certain advantages. Some scholars argue that students, as education consumers, seek comparative advantage and status value in different forms and types of HE. HE opportunities in global or international markets are significant if the opportunities available to students through competition in domestic markets are limited. However, even in Japan, where quality HE opportunities are plentiful, there is still a strong demand for HE abroad as a location commodity. In most cases, students seek the comparative advantage and status value of HE abroad. Overall, the increase in the international mobility of Chinese students, particularly the boom in graduate studies abroad, is the result of a combination of conflicting supply and demand for education and cross-border allocations, as well as external push and pull factors and their internal factors.

The UK is one of the most preferred destinations for Chinese international students. According to figures released by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the academic year 2020/21, the number of Chinese students studying in the UK reached 143,820, a 50 per cent rise over the past five years (HESA, 2022), becoming the most prominent groups. HEIs in the UK are highly favoured by Chinese students due to their excellent reputation, short length, and relatively simple entry requirements (Sun & Li, 2021).

In addition, this outward export of students also relies on the support of national policies and various scholarship programmes. Mobile students are eligible for

additional aid to pay tuition and living expenses. These public support schemes help to encourage young people to seek educational options that transcend national boundaries, regardless of family SES.

Studying abroad can bring added value. In addition to increased fluency in English and improved intercultural competence (Pinto, 2020; Richter, 2020; Sorrenti, 2017; Zimmermann, 2021), it may also increase opportunities to pursue international careers (Di Pietro, 2012; Parey & Waldinger, 2010; Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2009). However, other statistics indicate that the annual number of Chinese students returning home has grown considerably (Gao, 2016). The tightening of immigration restrictions in the UK, problems getting citizenship and work permits, and cultural incompatibility “drive” overseas students to return home upon graduation (Chen, 2014; Wadhwa, 2009; Zweig, 2006). On the other hand, the rise of China’s economy and various entrepreneurship and resettlement policies have attracted international students to return to China for employment, creating a vast pulling force (Guo et al., 2013; Le Bail & Shen, 2008). Thus, the “reverse migration” phenomenon has emerged (Hao et al., 2017).

The ever-increasing wave of returning has led to debates about the value of investment in overseas education. Due to the “certificate inflation” in China in the past year (Waters, 2005), the importance of education, particularly study abroad, has diminished and is now questionable (Zhao & Cox, 2022). According to a poll, 68.9 per cent of Chinese students who returned and worked in China in 2017 were dissatisfied with their salaries, and nearly half of the respondents thought their education abroad had not helped them advance in their careers (Centre for China and Globalisation, 2017). A report from the UK also indicated that only 2 per cent of overseas students obtained jobs through their university’s career services (Universities UK International, 2020). Mobile students without adequate employment information and valuable networks lead to job-seeking dilemmas when returning to China. Many employers cannot fully trust the abilities and skills mastered by returnees, and one-year master’s degrees have poor recognition for employers (Han, 2013; Wang & Ma, 2018). People have begun to wonder if returnees are “sea turtles” (returning with wisdom) or “seaweed” (job-waiting or unemployment) (Zweig & Han, 2010). Thus, job concerns following graduation are cause for concern.

#### **1.4 Studying abroad and labour market outcomes: theoretical considerations and related studies**

There are a few relevant theories regarding the transition from HE to the work of internationally mobile students. This study undertakes an in-depth analysis of the broad theory of the relationship between education and employment. According to the human capital hypothesis, education is a form of human capital investment. Investing in education can enhance the productive potential of knowledge and skills, thereby increasing the stock of human capital, boosting labour productivity, and generating a more significant wage income (Mincer, 1958; Becker, 1964). Foreign language proficiency and social, intercultural, and mobility abilities can be enhanced by investing in an individual's general human capital. In an increasingly globalised national and worldwide labour market, these acquired skills are anticipated to provide economic rewards, leading to better jobs, brighter career possibilities, and more outstanding wages (e.g., Gerhards & Hans, 2013; King & Findlay, 2015; Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005).

Signalling theory concerns the categorisation and signalling consequences of schooling (Arow, 1973; Spence, 1973; Brown et al., 2004). Educational choice functions as a signal or filter that helps employers classify (unobserved and identifiable) individual qualities that contain information about a worker's productivity (Weiss, 1995). Information asymmetries in the labour market make it difficult for employers to screen those with more ability and potential, and the value of education is to provide a signal that helps select a matching workforce. According to some research, such as Hilmer (2002), prospective employers took into account students' ability to adjust to new situations, as well as their global viewpoint and general competence, when considering whether to offer them a job. Both hypotheses assume a positive relationship between educational attainment and success in the labour market.

Some immigration studies in the literature on the labour market distinguish between country-specific and general human capital (Friedberg, 2000; Duvander, 2001; Chiswick & Miller, 2003). This conclusion is based on the idea that international and domestic education are distinct and that a portion of education is related to the human capital of a particular nation (Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005). Country-specific examples include languages, institutional knowledge, nationally required professional competencies, and information obtained directly or indirectly through networking. Education and skills received at foreign institutions may differ from those acquired at home, making it difficult for graduates with international education to enter the

domestic labour market. Since, within a nation, the education system and labour market are interconnected, knowledge production within the education system reflects labour market demands, including the need for country-specific skills. There is no promise that foreign mobility experiences and acquired skills will increase the productivity of the indigenous labour market. Moreover, the signalling value of a foreign degree may be lessened if it is unfamiliar and less recognised by domestic employers. This may harm the employment prospects of mobile graduates, particularly those from lesser-known HEIs, who may have difficulty joining the profession immediately after graduation.

Conversely, graduates educated abroad may have additional extracurricular talents, such as foreign language proficiency and cross-cultural competence, which employers may view as beneficial. These abilities might be considered generic human capital or international information capital (language skills such as English or French). Specific sectors of the labour market may have a clear need for human capital from other countries (for example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs needs foreign language personnel). Gaining marketable talents relevant to one's own country may increase the value of a degree.

Notably, the premise underlying the human capital theory is a unified and utterly competitive labour market. In contrast, the actual labour market is plagued by issues such as inadequate competition and information asymmetry, and career success is also influenced by additional factors (such as social capital). According to the findings of some studies, such as Wiers-Jenssen and Try (2005) and Orrù (2014), the length of time that young people spend outside of their country's national education system correlates with the likelihood that they will miss out on opportunities to acquire country-specific human capital and to develop professional, institutional, and social networking and relationships in their home countries. When attempting to enter the labour market and acquire employment for the first time after graduation, mobile students may encounter poor human capital and a lack of networks, unlike individuals who undertake education only in domestic HEIs.

Network theory discusses how information is made accessible and credible via interpersonal and institutional connections (Granovetter, 1985, 1995; Rosenbaum et al., 1990). These ideas describe crucial facets of the transition from education to work, such as the significance of information and knowing the proper people (Try, 2005). In this perspective, the absence of home-institutionalised social relationships during study abroad might hinder employment after graduation. Research in Norway

demonstrates that graduates of the country's HE system can gain entrance to HE through their connections inside the HE system (e.g., teachers, mentors, or supervisors). In addition, they might have access to other networks through work arrangements, internships, or social practice combined with education programmes (Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005).

Some academics refer to the social capital built on schools, clubs, and internship organisations as organisational social capital (Li, 2014; Brinton, 2000; Lee & Brinton, 1996). Research in Asia indicated that organisational social capital acquired throughout HE studies positively correlates with graduates' job search and career advancement. It has an even more significant role than private social capital. The greater the level of education is, the more influential the part of organisational social capital is. It may result from sharing helpful information and job-hunting skills between classmates. Also, university teachers can refer students to corporations ready to accept recommendations from professors or institutions. Due to linguistic and cultural obstacles, however, graduates of UK HEIs may have difficulty communicating, forming relationships, and networking with classmates, local friends, and professors. Thus, a lack of domestic employment information and assistance from organisational networks may impede their early entry into the labour market.

Several studies have pointed out that international mobile graduates are a selected group with higher family backgrounds than non-mobile students (Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005). The differences in labour market outcomes may also be attributable to these SES factors. Studies from Asian countries (Hsung & Hwang, 1992; Hsung & Sun, 1988) indicated that fathers' educational attainment and occupational status significantly impact their children's initial occupational choices. Empirical studies in China also illustrated that the employment status of university graduates is closely related to their family background and that family SES has a significant impact on the acquisition of children's occupational status (Zheng, 2004; Chen & Tan, 2004b; Li, 2008). However, some scholars have challenged this argument. For example, Yue et al. (2004) pointed out that parents' years of education and fathers' occupational status do not significantly affect graduates' employment. However, most studies only focus on local graduates and almost none on internationally mobile students.

China has been experiencing a period of economic reshuffling, and the labour market is not integrated between urban and rural areas, regions, industries and different ownership types of enterprises. Due to the institutional segmentation, the labour market is divided into primary and secondary labour markets. The labour force in the

primary labour market can obtain relatively high “segmentation income”, which exists in monetary or non-monetised welfare treatment and social status. Once graduates enter the secondary labour market, all kinds of segmentation income cannot be obtained. As a result, graduates’ employment shows a clear preference for cities, eastern coastal areas, monopoly industries and large enterprises (Meng & Feng, 2005). Most graduates want to work in the primary labour market, such as the city, and the higher the degree, the more they want to work in the primary labour market (Meng & Feng, 2005).

However, jobs in primary labour markets are incredibly scarce and competitive, and human capital alone cannot guarantee job opportunities in major labour markets. Before entering the primary labour market, graduates’ human and social capital must play a role simultaneously, reflecting a complementary relationship. In this case, it can be expected that the function mechanism of social capital in the employment of graduates will gradually change from providing information only to the role of substantial help for hire. The change may indicate that in the employment market of university graduates in transition China, social capital related to parents and close relatives has a significant role in accessing employment in the primary labour market (Granovetter, 1973; Bian, 1997).

The above theoretical explanation offers a foundational framework for analysing the comparative employment outcomes of domestically-educated and internationally-educated students within the local labour market. It examines various factors influencing employment through different theoretical perspectives and provides explanations by referencing diverse theories.

Studying abroad is often beneficial for enhancing employment prospects because it involves the acquisition of both human and social capital (Wiers-Jensen & Støren, 2020). Central to this study is the role of human and social capital in affecting employment opportunities. Students gain academic skills, language proficiency, cultural insights, and professional networks while studying abroad (King & Findlay, 2015; Wiers-Jensen & Try, 2005). These assets are viewed as valuable additions to their skill sets. The human capital theory posits that international education is an investment, enhancing general human capital through skill development in language, cultural adaptation, and mobility.

However, educational qualifications from abroad might not always be aligned with domestic standards, posing challenges for these graduates in entering the local job

market. This misalignment can be attributed to the interdependent nature of educational systems and labour markets, each tailored to meet specific local professional needs (Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005). Thus, there is no assurance that the skills and experiences gained from international education will directly translate to increased productivity in the domestic labour market (Bratsberg & Ragan, 2002; Zeng & Xie, 2004; Krahn et al., 2000; Friedberg, 2000; Chiswick & Miller, 2009).

Many studies have traditionally used years of schooling as a surrogate for measuring human capital due to the inherent difficulty in quantifying the skills and knowledge embedded within individuals. However, this method fails to account for the quality and outcomes of education. Recognising these shortcomings, researchers have explored alternative approaches focusing more on specific skills, offering a fresh and promising direction in human capital research (Hanushek, 2018). Meanwhile, with technological advancement at an unprecedented pace, the concept of human capital is undergoing a significant transformation in the face of technological advancement, as highlighted by Brown et al. (2020) and Keep et al. (2022). Considering the necessity of redefining human capital, this study adopts acquired skills for the measurement of graduate human capital. This skills-based perspective not only captures the quality and outcomes of educational endeavours, particularly at the postgraduate level, but also encompasses the broader spectrum of skills acquired through various life experiences in family, societal, and educational settings.

Additionally, this study will delve into the signalling and market segmentation theories, which are extensions of the human capital theory, in Chapter 6.1. These theories have evolved over time to add depth to the human capital concept and are utilised here merely to enhance explanatory power without being the primary analytical focus.

Social capital is also a critical element linked to employment (Yan & Mao, 2008; Liu & Wang, 2010; Yan & Mao, 2015). When international students return, they lack valuable institutionalised networks in addition to the lack of recognition of their skills and qualifications. Individuals graduating from international study programs might face delays in penetrating the local labour market due to a deficiency in pertinent domestic job knowledge and the absence of aid from institutional networks (Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005; Orrù, 2014). Network theory, or social network theory, includes the concept of the strength of weak ties as proposed by Mark Granovetter in the 1980s, who argued that weak ties are more powerful than “strong ties” within family and friendship (Granovetter, 1973), intersects with social capital theory. One school of social capital theory views social capital as an (institutionalised) network (the

development of social capital theory will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.3). They argued that social networks can be used to measure the social capital of individuals' engagement.

The concept of social capital needs more robust, universally applicable definitions that facilitate comparison across different contexts. This study adopts a mixed approach to defining social capital, utilising static and dynamic elements. It examines social capital in terms of both its stock and its ability to be mobilised. Regarding graduates, their social capital is analysed from two perspectives: firstly, the social-relational resources they derive from family and their ability to leverage them when searching for jobs; secondly, the organisational social-relational resources students accumulate through academic studies and internships and their ability to mobilise them.

This study mainly summarises and analyses the concepts, development, and measurement of social capital theory. Network theory is only discussed in relation to empirical studies pertinent to this research and is not a focal point of investigation.

This section discusses the theories closely related to this study to provide support for the explanations of the comparative analysis. The primary concern of the study is to uncover characteristics that combine with international mobility experiences to affect career outcomes. It shows how demographic, human capital, organisational social capital, and private social capital elements influence the effect of seeking master's degrees in the UK on employment probability, satisfaction and income by using indigenous graduates as a comparison group. The research questions and structure are specifically discussed in the following subsection.

### **1.5 Research questions and structure**

The study focuses on the labour market outcomes of one-year master's students studying in the UK and compares it with that of home graduates in an attempt to analyse whether the study abroad experience, skills acquired, and social networks can fulfil their career prospects. The relationship between mobility status, human capital, social capital and labour market output is explored through logistic regression models. In addition, this study also compares and analyses the motivations for choosing to study abroad or at indigenous HEIs, barriers to employment abroad, job search pathways, and factors affecting employment through descriptive analysis, aiming to summarise a whole picture of international students going abroad, returning home, and the transition from education to employment. On the basis of the above analysis,

the research questions are presented as follows:

1. What are the motivations for postgraduates choosing to study in the UK or indigenous HEIs?
2. What are the differences regarding career aspirations of international postgraduate students registered in master's programmes (yet to graduate) in the UK compared to their counterparts in China?
3. What are the differences regarding academic achievement, family SES and employment status amongst Chinese international postgraduates who obtained master's degrees in the UK compared to their counterparts in China?
4. How is the decision to studying abroad linked to the family SES of graduates?
5. How are mobile status, human capital and social capital linked to job probability (the likelihood of employment)?
6. How are mobile status, human capital and social capital linked to job satisfaction?
7. How are mobile status, human capital and social capital linked to initial monthly salaries?

The remainder of this thesis is structured into eight parts:

- a summary of ISM history, patterns, trends and current research focus (Chapter 2)
- related theories related to the motive of ISM (Chapter 3)
- studies on the labour market outcomes of students studying abroad (Chapter 4)
- the Chinese context of policy, social origin and ISM, and employment of returnees after graduation (Chapter 5)
- the theories related to the central variables of the study (Chapter 6)
- the data and methods used in the study (Chapters 7 to 9)
- the findings relevant to each research question (Chapters 10 to 11)
- the discussion of the main findings, limitations, implications and future research (Chapters 12-15).

The literature part starts with the history and current trend of ISM, providing an overall picture of the formulation and distribution of ISM in general and introducing the main issues that ISM researchers have focused on in recent decades. This is followed by a discussion of the motivation of internationally mobile students and the related theories, including human capital investment, education market demand and trade theories, and push-pull factor theory, which can be used to explain individuals' decision to study abroad.

After that, the study discusses ISM's labour market outcomes, including job probability (employment opportunity acquisition) and income. It mainly focuses on analysing empirical studies and then proposes the research gap that needs to be carried out.

After mapping the broader field, the next part of the literature review focuses on the international mobility of Chinese students. First, it explained the student support policy of outward mobility and returning. This is followed by the discussion of motivations that drive students to return to China and the driving types. In addition, it includes a discussion of the relationships between social origin, ISM and education attainment. Finally, it provides a picture of returning problems and the employment situation of returnees.

The last part of the literature focuses on defining and measuring two terms in this study, including "human capital" and "social capital". First, the concept, development, theories and previous research on human capital and social capital are discussed. This includes the definition and the relationship between human capital, social capital and employment. The literature is followed by a discussion of the measurement and indicator selection of variables applied to internationally mobile and non-mobile students.

After discussing theories and empirical evidence, the methods chapter details the indicator selection, questionnaire design, data collection methods, and the application and choice of statistical approaches at each step. This is followed by the findings chapters, which demonstrate the study's analytical results. First, descriptive analysis was conducted to compare the intention of studying abroad and the motivation to return, followed by a comparison of the job-hunting process and factors related to employment outcomes. The next part of the findings chapter compares the stock of human capital and social capital and the mobilisation of social capital between mobile and non-mobile graduates. The analysis in this part thus addresses the first and second research questions. The second part of the findings chapter presents the opportunity to attend overseas education. Its relationship with graduates' gender, Party membership, prior attainment and family SES is systematically evaluated. After revealing the selectivity of the social origin of students studying abroad, the study explores the link between mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital, private social capital and labour market outcomes regarding job probability

(employment opportunity acquisition), monthly salary and job satisfaction. The findings in this part address the rest of the research questions.

After presenting a detailed statistical analysis based on different models, the last chapter summarises the main findings. The implications for the mobile individual, HEIs and policy-makers, future research, and the limitations of the present study are also discussed in the conclusion chapter.

## **2 International student mobility**

This section starts with the background of international student mobility, including a history introduction, a discussion of the current mobile trends and patterns, and an explanation of problems and research focus.

### **2.1 History and the global context**

The definitions of “international” or “foreign” students vary in different education systems across the world, posing challenges in analysing comparative mobility between nations. To address existing discrepancies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) introduced the concept of “internally mobile students” and defines them as individuals who leave their country or territory of origin and travel to another for the purpose of studying there (UNESCO, 2009, p. 36). This research further defines student mobility within the context of HE and investigates the international mobility of students at the tertiary education level.

The ISM dates back to mediaeval European universities. Medieval HEIs did not have explicit nationality limits for admitting students, based on the fundamental notion that knowledge knew no borders. The standard teaching language is Latin. They encourage students and scholars from various regions and nations to study therein by instituting a unified system of instruction and tests. In addition, numerous academics travelled to different HEIs on “study tours” and “teaching tours”, driven by the pursuit of scholarship and the dissemination of knowledge. However, the international mobility of academics and students during those periods was principally characterised by spontaneity and independence. The exchanges were small-scale and uniform, occurring in restricted geographical regions and predominantly within homogenous cultural groups. For instance, international academics and students in mediaeval HEIs came from Latin-speaking and Christian European nations. Most of Tang Dynasty

China's international students came from Korea and Japan, which were also part of the Confucian cultural circle in East Asia.

In the 19th century, national and ethnic concerns were the driving force behind international education development. After World War II, global political shifts and the influence of the concept of education for peace and development led to the more effective execution of global exchanges and student exchange programmes. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, the major industrialised countries of the West provided technical and financial assistance to developing countries to extend their political influence. Educational exchanges and cooperation emphasised culture, understanding, educational funding, and social, political, economic and cultural relationships. Most international students during this period enjoyed free education or scholarship support according to the national policies of the receiving countries. In the 1980s, the UK and Australia started to charge total tuition fees for international students, with scholarships available for only a few students in particular, beginning in 1980 and 1985, respectively. While the traditional themes of promoting common understanding, maintaining peace and development, strengthening cultural exchange and committing to scientific research and educational cooperation remain irreplaceable in HE, mainstream international student mobility has increasingly shifted from "educational aid" to "educational trade". In the 1990s, competition in the global student market became fierce, with Austria, Britain, Germany, France and Japan gradually gaining ground as the central host countries for international students. However, the dominant position of the US in this field remained unassailable.

With the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a new era of globalisation driven by the revolutionary powers of the internet and communication technologies, an increasing number of students began to engage in cross-cultural travel and foreign professional study worldwide. During this time, international student enrollment surged in science, technology, and engineering-related disciplines, with most students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees (Choudaha, 2017).

The enrollment increase is primarily attributable to the rising demand for highly trained workers, which corresponds to economic and technological growth. Access to research financing, the pursuit of research excellence, and the rising demand for labour in information and communication technologies are the primary motives for HEIs to attract overseas students (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD, 2001). The student groups anticipate greater economic rewards from studying abroad to close the skills gap for technology-related occupations with

solid demand. During this period, receiving institutions and countries were willing to sponsor scientific and technological expertise. Due to its research base and financing opportunities, the US remains one of the most popular locations for science and technology master's and doctorate students (National Research Council, 2005).

Concurrently, the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) got underway to create a more uniform and comparable HE system and to promote student mobility within Europe. In 2006, five of the top ten destinations, including the UK, France, Italy, Austria, and Switzerland, were European. The UK obtains the most mobility from non-European Economic Area (EEA) and EEA nations (European Commission, 2016). According to Choudaha (2017), international students who left the United States also went to other countries, including Canada and Australia, in addition to Europe.

Concerning the primary sending countries, while the number of Chinese students abroad is multiplying, many choose to stay in the region to study in Japan or South Korea (Choudaha, 2017). In the meantime, the number of Indian and South Korean students studying abroad has increased significantly, driven primarily by enrollment in science and engineering programmes (OECD, 2001, 2005). International students during this time are more likely to be academically prepared and self-directed, relying on institutional financial aid and scholarships (Choudaha, 2017).

Numerous international students attended great, research-intensive HEIs that demanded a higher level of proficiency for admission and had more experience recruiting, sponsoring, and supporting international students. Many of ambitious students pursuing master's and doctoral qualifications channel their academic pursuits towards fields experiencing skill shortages within their native countries, aiming to address these gaps in their subsequent professional endeavours. In China, for instance, many foreign returnees profit from favourable government policies and appealing career possibilities resulting from economic growth (Wang, 2004).

The international mobility of students is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including economic and educational determinants (Wei, 2012). This mobility is not limited to a few Western developed countries, as commonly thought, but is influenced by the development of emerging countries and changes in economic and political connections (Hou, 2020). However, the international student exchange network remains relatively stable, with the United States and most Western industrialised countries maintaining their central position (Chen, 2000). This academic hegemony is

consistent with economic and political performance, creating a “centre-margin” hierarchy (Chen, 2000). Nevertheless, the newly emerging countries are doing their best to move from the edge to the centre, and regional hubs are constantly springing up (Hou, 2020; Kondakci et al., 2017). China’s place in the global field of international student mobility is semi-peripheral economically and symbolically, reflecting the uneven nature of the global higher education landscape (Yang, 2022).

## **2.2 Problems and current trends**

The last two decades have seen a dramatic rise in the importance of international student mobility in HE. More than 2.7 million postsecondary students were engaged in education abroad in 2005, a roughly 61 per cent increase from 1999. The rapid expansion can be partly explained by the extensive modernisation made to the infrastructures and capabilities of HE systems worldwide. Most national governments have increased spending on HE in recent years, intending to bolster the availability and standard of higher learning opportunities for their citizens. However, production is still inadequate in the major producing nations. More students from all over the world, particularly those from countries with quickly emerging economies, can participate in HE abroad due to rising household wealth and GDP per capita. There are 40 per cent more people enrolled in HE around the world than in 2000.

Historically, more than 90 per cent of international students have attended HEIs in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries, with the top destinations (the US, the UK, Germany, France, and Australia) attracting more than 70 per cent of these students. However, recent trends over the previous five to six years suggest that the demand for foreign students may shift away from traditional hotspots. There has been a “slump” or “decline” in enrollment growth in the US, UK, and Australia compared to previous years. Many European countries have increased their marketing efforts in an attempt to attract more immigrants from countries with which they share a historical or linguistic relationship. In the meantime, new entrants in Asia and the Middle East have entered the market with the stated goal of becoming regional education hubs by luring as many as several hundred thousand international students to their nations.

As a result of the worldwide financial crisis and recession that began in 2010, many countries have had to make severe cuts to their higher education budgets (Eggins & West, 2010). Since higher education institutions (HEIs) increasingly rely on revenue from international students’ tuition costs (which are often more significant than those

of their local students), there has been a growing interest in luring international students, as reported by the OECD (2010). However, many schools were not ready to accommodate the varying needs of international students (Schulte & Choudaha, 2014). During this time, neither institutions nor governments in the destination countries could afford to provide students with grants or scholarships (Choudaha & Li, 2012). Supporting overseas students became challenging for many HEIs as the global economic downturn spread from the US to Europe and Australia. While top destination countries like the US and the UK have been struggling financially, China's middle class has high hopes for HE abroad. With the country's economy booming, more and more Chinese families could afford to send their children abroad for HE. The majority of students were self-funded and pursued business degrees as research funding dwindled.

Many HEIs have developed extra pathways to attract students with less academic rigour or English language skills in response to the increased interest in expanding international enrollment (Redden, 2013). Benzie (2010, p. 451) argued that in a setting of insufficient government financing and excessive reliance on international student fees, certain recruitment departments may be motivated to admit students with inadequate English language test scores. The modification creates difficulties in measuring and monitoring the English language proficiency of admitted candidates, as well as in offering supplementary support services to overseas students (Andrade et al., 2014; Matthews, 2016).

Emerging issues related to the academic preparation of international students are accompanied by a lack of institutional resources and preparation to support international students (Bista & Foster, 2016, xxi). Academic services like language and writing support and non-academic services like career guidance and counselling are examples of what we mean by "additional support services". For students studying abroad, these support services are crucial. Take the case of Chinese students, who are often stereotyped as being lacking in some way. It may be the case that institutions have not sufficiently supported them by increasing intercultural awareness and enhancing practices and policies that accommodate the needs of diverse students (Heng, 2016).

The international education trade, supported by a sizeable self-funded student population, has become an essential economic safeguard to sustain primary global student-importing nations. Revenue from education-related exports such as international education and English language training is worth almost 20 billion

pounds to the UK economy (Department for Education, 2020; O'Malley, 2019). According to new data released by the Department for Education, the amount earned rose by 3.1 per cent from 2015 to 2016 and 26 per cent from 2010 to 2016. Britain's education sector has remained one of its most lucrative international assets in recent years (Department for Education, 2020; O'Malley, 2019). At the same time, in 2017, the number of international students in the US reached 1.09 million, contributing 42.4 billion dollars to the US economy (International Trade Administration, 2022; Khanna, 2021). The attraction and integration of international students, particularly from China and India, transformed the US HE landscape. US HE became a significant economic export, generating 44 billion dollars in revenue in 2019 alone (International Trade Administration, 2022; Khanna, 2021). In 2020, education service exports ranked sixth among service exports, according to the most recent data released by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the US Department of Commerce. During the 2019/2020 academic year, the US welcomed over one million students and recorded 38.96 billion dollars in education exports, supporting over 415,990 US employment (International Trade Administration, 2022; Khanna, 2021).

Furthermore, in 2020, Chinese international students studying in Australia injected about 10.5 billion Australian dollars into the Australian economy (Statista Research Department, 2022; Tehan, 2019). Overseas students from Colombia provided about 860 million Australian dollars to the Australian economy during the same period. In the previous fiscal year, international education contributed 37.6 billion dollars to the Australian economy, a 5 billion increase (Statista Research Department, 2022; Tehan, 2019).

The temptation of new revenue streams from self-funded Chinese students led to a 75 per cent increase in Chinese pupils. However, Indian students are more price-sensitive and rely more on institutional financial aid and scholarships. They are experiencing financial strain due to diminished funding support (Choudaha, 2014). The worldwide mobility of Indian students is increasing at a rate of 25 per cent, much slower than that of China.

In this age of globalisation, institutions and countries that attract and retain international students stand to reap long-term benefits, which is why the West is employing creative methods to increase the number of international students enrolled. Because of their rapidly dwindling and ageing populations, developed nations seek to recruit talented workers abroad. Countries that make it easier for international students to find work and settle there are more likely to thrive

economically. According to the perceived importance and strategic value of the receiving nations, visa schemes and immigration procedures have become increasingly integrated into recruiting strategies (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007).

Unsurprisingly, after over a decade of development, several industrialised nations in North America and Western Europe continue to hold a comparative edge regarding the proportion of students with global mobility. After nearly two decades of development, some industrialised countries in North America and Western Europe have maintained their comparative advantage in terms of the share of global student mobility. Of these, the US and the UK hold the absolute first and second positions, but their share of the international student population has declined, with the US falling by 6 per cent (Yang & Wang, 2021). The total enrollment of international students has been declining in the UK since 2012 due mainly to the introduction of stringent visa policies (Ortiz et al., 2015). In 2018, Germany, France, and Australia continued to be highly appealing to mobile students, while China, Canada, and Russia have replaced Japan, Spain, and Belgium in the top eight (Yang & Wang, 2021). Global student mobility is highly uneven at the national geographic level, with the majority of international students residing in Europe and North America. Student mobility is far from a balanced development of global networks in scope.

There are comparative advantages to traditional Western study-abroad destinations. First, these nations possess reputable institutions of HE. The quality of education and academic reputation of HEIs are the primary determinants of the mobility of international students, and the pursuit of a better education than in their home country has become a significant factor in students' decisions to study abroad (Ma & Cheng, 2018). In the 2019 QS World University Rankings, 29 American universities joined the top 100 list, demonstrating the international competitiveness of American HE. The UK, which has a higher degree of international education, utilises Oxford and Cambridge universities to establish its brand as a national HEI while promoting HE (Beech, 2019, pp. 132–133). Secondly, the English advantage and immigration policy reforms of major Western nations are favourable to global talent competitiveness. The majority of countries where English is the mother tongue or the language of teaching are the primary destinations for international students. In 2018, approximately half of the world's international students decided to study in one of five English-speaking nations: the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Although the UK and the US continue to dominate the worldwide international student market, the destination nations of student migration are diversifying, and the

study abroad industry is transitioning from global integration to a networked pattern with numerous regional centres (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007; Brimmer, 2018). China, Japan, and South Korea have become the regional centres of East Asia. Singapore and Malaysia have become the regional centres of Southeast Asia. Egypt and South Africa have become the regional centres of Africa. Brazil and Mexico have become the regional centres of Central and South America (Institute of International Education, 2018). In the 2016-2017 academic year, the largest source country of international students, China, sent 869,387 students abroad to pursue HE. Additionally, it is an important destination country. Statistics suggest that there were almost 100,000 international students in 2013, ranking eighth globally (Choudaha, 2017). China will demonstrate a trend of becoming a “sub-centre” of internationalisation of HE as the number of world-class universities, inter-regional academic and educational cooperation initiatives, and the widespread use of English in teaching expands. According to statistics, China has become the most crucial host country for international students in Asia, garnering 62 per cent of international students in the region.

As the quality of HE in China continues to improve, some Chinese students question the value of studying overseas (Choudaha & Hu, 2016). Primarily when neither the immigration policies of the host country nor the institution’s career services can promote access to experience opportunities. International students are poised to develop an array of competencies, such as the ability to navigate cultural differences, a heightened perception of global dynamics, and proficiency in languages beyond their native tongues. These skills are widely regarded as a substantial advantage in enhancing their employability in the future (Bracht et al., 2006; Teichler & Janson, 2007). However, it appears that academic courses and career assistance do not fully grasp the requirements of international students abroad. The majority of international students enrolled in Australian institutions want their university to help them obtain work (Lawson, 2014). Similarly, a lack of internships and work opportunities was identified as the primary source of dissatisfaction among international undergraduates in the US (Schulte & Choudaha, 2014). According to Goodwin and Mbah (2017), who studied the ways in which the UK’s administration, curriculum, and career services facilitate work placements for international students, these services are primarily focused on home students, which leaves many overseas students unprepared for the workforce.

The rising number of scholarship programmes offered by international students’ home countries, as well as accumulated consumer demand in fast-growing economies,

are driving a boost in international student mobility to key receiving countries. As the education market has become more industrialised, diplomas abroad have transformed into a “position commodity” targeted at the upper middle class. By 2017, the global middle class is projected to increase its expenditures on educational goods and services by nearly 50 per cent, from \$4.4 trillion in 2012 to \$6.2 trillion (Ortiz et al., 2015). While gaining economic interests, governments and HEIs should not ignore the value orientation of cultural and academic exchange in promoting peace and understanding. HEIs in the near future must not only innovate to increase international student enrollment but also balance high enrollment with student success support services (e.g., language, employment) to meet international students’ expectations for career success and employment prospects in their host or home countries.

### **2.3 Mobile patterns and primary research focus of the present research**

Globally, international student mobility has expanded considerably during the previous 50 years. Many students choose to study abroad for a complete degree or a short-term study exchange programme.

Two primary forms of international student mobility are distinguished by King et al. (2011). First, degree or diploma mobility refers to the circumstance in which a student engages in a complete degree programme at an HEI in another country. Second, credit, temporary or short-term mobility (also known as student exchange programmes) refers to students who spend a semester or a year studying at an HEI in another nation. In a different context, “vertical mobility” refers to the movement of students from developing countries to “academically advanced” HEIs in wealthy nations. “Lateral mobility” is the movement of students across nations and HEIs with the same economic growth and academic quality (Rivza & Teichler, 2007, p. 458). Lateral mobility occurs more frequently during credit, short-term, or international study exchanges.

The European Commission divides the international mobility of students into degree mobility and credit mobility based on various cross-border purposes (European Commission, 2014a, p. 16). Degree mobility is long-term mobility aiming to acquire a degree by enrolling in the receiving nation. In contrast, credit mobility is the short-term mobility of studying in foreign universities or participating in internship programmes to obtain credits. According to the research, the flow of students seeking full degrees is primarily concentrated in Asia-Pacific, and the proportion of self-funded

students is comparatively large. Nonetheless, engaging in credit exchange programmes is more common for students from Europe and North America.

International student mobility has been examined from multiple angles. Numerous studies have investigated the factors associated with student participation in studying abroad and their motivations (see, for example, Allen, 2009; Brooks & Waters, 2009; Doyle et al., 2009; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; He & Chen, 2010; Madgett & Bélanger, 2008; Pineda et al., 2008; Wei, 2013). Most studies examine the general trends of degree-seeking international students travelling from developing to developed nations. These students are economically motivated and seek a higher quality education that is unavailable in their native country (Woodfield, 2012). Several studies additionally examined the characteristics of international students (e.g., King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Morgan, 1975; Salisbury et al., 2008; Stroud, 2010).

Other major research areas on international student mobility focus on cultural outcomes, such as cultural sensitivity and empathy (e.g., Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Lindsey, 2005; Pedersen, 2010; Ruddock & Turner, 2007; Williams, 2005) and cross-cultural communication skills (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2014; Orahod et al., 2004; Tuleja, 2008). Participation in an international mobility programme, as found by Tuleja (2008), increases students' self-assurance to the point where they are able to interact effectively in an intercultural setting. Moreover, Clarke et al. (2009) discovered that students who participated in international mobility programmes reported higher intercultural communication abilities than those who did not. According to research by Gullekson et al. (2011), students are more willing to engage in intercultural dialogue after participating in foreign exchange. Short-term international mobility initiatives have also been studied for their potential to improve students' linguistic competence and proficiency in a foreign language (e.g., Allen & Herron, 2003; Cubillos & Ilvento, 2012; Cubillos et al., 2008; Martinsen, 2010; Stronkhorst, 2005; Teichert & Janson, 2007). According to these studies, students participating in overseas programmes demonstrate superior linguistic abilities (Allen & Herron, 2003), greater confidence when speaking a foreign language (Teichler & Janson, 2007), and superior social listening skills (Cubillos et al., 2008) than their peers on campus. Nonetheless, a few researchers noted that limited success was achieved by students with already advanced language skills (Stronkhorst, 2005).

Furthermore, other major research areas on international student mobility focus on the "brain drain" (Bhandari, 2019; Findlay et al., 2006; Gérard & Sanna, 2017; Hazen & Alberts, 2006; Siekierski et al., 2018) and the relationship between identity and

international student mobility (Dolby, 2004; Easthope, 2009; Malpas, 1999; Rizvi, 2001).

Research on the labour market performance of mobile students has received increasing attention in the past decade. However, it is still a neglected research area, and comparisons with non-mobile students are often lacking in existing research (Wiers-Jenssen, 2011). With the strengthening of inter-regional cooperation, scholars pay more attention to the flow of students between Western countries, including European countries, as well as between North America and Europe; however, the flow of Asian countries is under-researched. Credit mobility is the most common flowing way, while full-degree mobility is not widespread. An evaluation of the Erasmus programme discusses the career impact of exchange students after graduation. It shows that graduates who are exchange students consider the experience of staying abroad as an advantage in transitioning from HE to work, but it does not guarantee more successful careers (Bracht et al., 2006; Jahr & Teichler, 2002; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996). These studies also indicated that many graduates who hold international employment positions have exchange experience. Few European studies have compared mobile and non-mobile students and found that mobile students are more likely to accept international work assignments and work abroad.

The above studies mainly focus on exchange students. They have mobile capital (e.g., language proficiency, international perspective) and acceptable educational backgrounds. Employers choose them with lower risks; thus, they are more favoured by the employers than the full-degree mobile and non-mobile students. However, the labour market performance of degree mobile students may be different. Wiers-Jenssen (2011) observed that Norwegian graduates pursuing a full degree abroad have a more extended readjustment period than non-mobile graduates or those who have only studied abroad for one or two semesters. Unemployment and overeducation are more prevalent among mobile degree students, but on the positive side, foreign-educated graduates earn higher wages (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008; Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005). A Finnish study examined employers' perceptions of research and work arrangements abroad and found that some employers were sceptical of the value of foreign experience (Garam, 2005). Many employers value Finnish work experience over international experience. The advantages of studying abroad in terms of vocational skills are questioned, but employers acknowledge that studying abroad positively impacts personal growth and internationalisation. According to research conducted by Swedish companies, education abroad is not considered an absolute advantage; they prefer to hire graduates with partial education abroad rather than

graduates with totally foreign or Swedish degrees (Zadeh, 1999, quoted by Wiers-Jenssen, 2013). However, in recent years, studies discussed that studying abroad can positively influence individuals' personality development (Zimmermann et al., 2021) and employment outcomes (Iriando, 2020; Jacob et al., 2019; Kratz & Netz, 2018; Liwiński, 2019a; Petzold, 2020).

Nevertheless, in numerous studies on immigration, the transferability of overseas education to the domestic labour market has been investigated. Studies have found that students who earn degrees from foreign institutions fare worse in the domestic job market than their counterparts who earn degrees from institutions in their native countries (Bratsberg & Ragan, 2002; Zeng & Xie, 2004; Krahn et al., 2000; Friedberg, 2000; Chiswick & Miller, 2009). International mobility students, for instance, may acquire knowledge of accounting procedures and nuances that are prevalent in the country of study rather than in their country of origin (Di Pietro, 2019b). Additional illustrations encompass proficiency in particular languages and familiarity with national statutes and regulations (Wiers-Jenssen & Støren, 2020). Other research has highlighted the challenges faced by international students in foreign institutions and their subsequent transition to the domestic job market. Shin (2014) found that academics with foreign degrees in Korea, Malaysia, and Hong Kong are not more research-productive than their domestic counterparts. Other challenges include language and cultural barriers, limited peer relationships, and difficulties in forming relationships with supervisors (Støren, 2009; Wu, 2015). It is safe to assume that international students encounter some challenges upon returning to their home countries due to a lack of professional networks and poorly recognised qualifications. This implies that the transition from HE to the workforce is more challenging for international mobile graduates. The transferability of foreign education to the domestic job market remains a concern, with graduates from foreign institutions facing a higher risk of unemployment and skills mismatch (Støren, 2009).

The results of existing studies are inconsistent and have some country-specific differences. We anticipate that Chinese internationally mobile students will have more difficulty transitioning from HE to the workforce than non-mobile students but will have higher wages and job satisfaction. Their labour market outcomes may be influenced by contextual factors such as acquired skills, organisational information resources, and family SES.

This section sorts out the history and the general trend of the global mobility of international students. Then, it examines some problems brought about by the

expansion of the scale of international students and outlines the patterns of international mobility students and current research concerns. The following section reviews the theories related to ISM motivation.

### **3 The motivation of ISM and related theories**

As ISM continues to grow, it will have significant political, economic, social and cultural implications for sending and receiving countries. The nature of ISM is the result of multiple factors, including a combination of supply and demand conflicts and cross-border allocations, internal factors within individuals and external push and pull factors (Li, 2008, p. 50). This chapter will analyse the drivers of international student mobility from a theoretical perspective, including human capital investment theory, education market demand, education service trade, and push and pull factor theory.

#### **3.1 Human capital investment**

According to the human capital investment hypothesis, “human capital investment” refers to any activity that increases individuals’ productivity and earning capacity through investments in them. Schultz (1971, p. 8) noted that education is a productive investment activity that drives national economic growth and increased social welfare, resulting in a higher income and social standing for investors.

Higher education (HE) is a specialised education that produces high-level specialists, and investment in it is intended to raise the intellectual level and labour capacity of the existing workforce and increase the level of knowledge and skills in order to achieve the maximum expected return on an individual and societal level. Additionally, investment in HE is among the most expensive and visible individual educational investments (Fang, 2010).

Investment in one’s education increases one’s productive potential, which in turn increases one’s income, as was predicted by early human capital theory (Schultz, 1971, p. 55). Though several of the human capital theory’s assumptions have been called into doubt, the idea that money spent on a person’s education would pay off with more remarkable economic growth is still widely held. According to the initial ideas of human capital, employers are more likely to hire people with higher human capital and pay them higher compensation since they are more productive and can provide more rewards to the business. Signalling theory argues that it does not increase human

productivity and that employers are willing to hire and pay higher wages to people with more human capital because there is information asymmetry in the labour market, making it difficult for employers to identify who has more ability and potential, and that the value of education is to provide a signal that helps to select a matching workforce. The labour market segmentation theory suggests that educational inputs can lead to higher wages for individuals in the primary labour market. HE is the most important and influential form of human capital investment for individuals (Wang, 2007).

The movement of individuals across international borders, combined with the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, constitutes a classic example of the practice of investing in human capital. It is invested by governments or individual families to benefit now or in the future by gaining some monetary and non-monetary, an investment behaviour that tries to pay for the current cost of investment in order to reap future rewards. Investing in human capital, such as sending a set number of students or scholars abroad to complete their education, is essential for governments to thrive in the human resources market. For families and individuals, compared to investing in education at home, studying abroad and receiving HE abroad can improve their language skills and intercultural ability and increase their expected future income, career choice opportunities and adaptability to mobility. Although students invest more in education across borders or nations, the potential benefits are also more significant.

### **3.2 Educational market demand theory and international education service trade**

The theory of market demand for education examines ISM from the perspective of demand and supply. The growing disparity between the rising demand for education and the existing supply capacity for education will become more apparent as people's economic and cultural living standards rise and the importance of lifelong education and degrees in one's profession increases. When education in a country or region is not distributed appropriately, the quality and diversity of educational products cannot match the need for education among the population. This results in a contradiction between the limited education supply and the significant demand among the people. The demand for more and better educational opportunities prompts participants to look to the worldwide education industry. In contrast, when there is an excess of education supply in a country or region, that country or region might export education supply across borders by luring education consumers outside the country, which

encourages the migration of students across borders.

Moreover, there is still an outflow of students even in some countries with an adequate or excess education supply. The demand for education also includes pursuing higher quality and different types of educational products. Therefore, the main reason for the international movement of students is the imbalance between education supply and demand within the country, including the insufficient supply of education or the need for education exceeding the range of services (i.e., diversity and quality) provided by HEIs within the country (Li, 2008, p. 50). This manifests in an excess demand in countries where educational resources are scarce and a surplus in countries with developed economies and abundant educational resources, resulting in the balance achieved through cross-border allocation. International mobility of students is an effective and inevitable way of allocating educational resources through cross-border distribution in order to resolve the contradiction between supply and demand in education.

Marginson (2006) classified the categories of the supply side of the global education market into five categories: world elite universities, national research output universities, national research non-output universities, teaching output institutions and local universities in provinces and cities. The first category is the world's elite universities, which mainly include doctoral training institutions in the USA and prestigious universities in the UK. Their reputation is not for profit but based on the global impact of their research and degrees. The second category is the national research output category which mainly includes research universities in the UK, Canada, Australia, Europe and Japan. They enjoy a high reputation in their home countries and have for-profit degree programmes abroad. The third category is national research export universities operating and having a reputation only in their home country as research universities. A minor export function, competing with institutions in the second category in their home country but unable to compete with the first category. The fourth category is the teaching export category of institutions in education-exporting countries, next to research universities. They operate commercially in the global marketplace and cater to the demand for low-cost quality education abroad. The fifth category is local universities, such as provincial and municipal, which are limited to domestic competition and meeting local needs and have no export function. It is the largest group of institutions, mainly in education-importing countries. Elite universities worldwide are still primarily located in the US and Europe, especially the UK. The limited supply of quality HE dictates that education will persist as a seller's market.

The disparity between the supply and demand for education significantly contributes to students' international mobility. No nation can accomplish talent development and the distribution of supply and demand in its education system. Using China as an example, the enrollment rate in HE increased from 3.4 per cent in 1990 to 19.4 per cent in 2004 and 23.3 per cent in 2008, alleviating the conflict between supply and demand in education. Recent statistics indicate that China's gross enrollment rate in higher education climbed even higher, marking a historical peak. As of 2022, reports from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China demonstrate that the gross enrollment rate in higher education institutions reached approximately 59.6% (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2023). The remarkable uptick in higher education enrollment rates has substantial implications for the nation's socioeconomic landscape. It prepares a larger portion of the population for the demands of a knowledge-based economy, thereby fostering innovation, driving economic growth, and enhancing China's global competitiveness.

Nonetheless, as people's living standards rise and the need for quality human resources for economic development grows, the demand for education has increased. However, the opportunities and levels of HE currently available in China fall far short of meeting people's educational requirements. This contradiction between the supply of HE will continue to be one of the most significant contradictions in the future development of HE. Even countries with highly developed HE, such as the US and the UK, which have reached the popularisation stage, are unlikely to provide sufficient educational opportunities for all, given the demand for quality HE (Fang, 2010). Once there is an imbalance between supply and demand for education in a nation or region, supply and demand allocation will be pursued on a broader scale.

The wave of globalisation and internationalisation, the rapid development of high technology, and the intense competition in the international talent market have all contributed to the high demand for high-quality international HE (Li, 2006), thereby generating differential demand. However, both excess and differential demand contribute to the high appeal of HE abroad among students. The disparity in the world's HE supplies and the diversity of educational requirements are thus primary drivers of international student mobility.

From a supply-and-demand standpoint, trade in education services represents the global consumption of education (Liao, 2008). Import and export of educational services have been conducted between countries (or regions) for economic reasons in a particular manner or in specific educational fields. This consumption is often made

up of members of the education consumer group, which is mostly comprised of students and their families, in addition to governmental and social institutions. The object of consumption is a variety of educational services offered by producers of a certain quality, brand, and personality. Formal academic education as well as non-academic education, such as education and training for adults, are both included in it. This diversity is also reflected in the diverse educational service providers with varying schooling characteristics (Fang, 2010).

HE is the education of future society employees and global citizens. Although HE services are a substantial public benefit, the diversity of educational service products generated by the education brand, teachers, equipment, tuition fees, educational management, and cultural traditions creates a substantial gap between supply and demand and opportunities. The widening chasm enables services under specific educational programmes to become market behaviour activities with commodity exchange relations (Liao, 2008). Information technology is a prime example of how rapidly progress in modern technology has increased the value of education in today's economy. Concurrently, the expansion of the global economy and the rise in people's standard of living have provided the financial foundation for the pursuit of more and better educational opportunities. Transportation improvements made possible by technical breakthroughs have also facilitated cross-border travel for the purpose of international education. Many countries have introduced differentiated fee policies for international student recruiting to attract and satisfy consumers with various demand preferences. ISM is supported by countries because they hope to reap considerable financial rewards from the international trade of educational services.

### **3.3 Push-pull factor theory**

The push-pull factor theory was first used as one of the critical theories to study the causes of migration behaviour, suggesting that migration occurs as a result of a combination of the sending country's "push" and the receiving country's "pull". In recent years, the push-pull factor theory has been a significant theory explaining the dynamics and motives of ISM. Although the cost of education abroad is higher than studying at domestic HEIs, and international students must leave their familiar environment and culture to live and study abroad for some time, the number of international students is still increasing rapidly. This decision to study overseas is based on trade-offs, including the sending country's pushing factors, the receiving country's pulling aspects and the students' specific situations (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001).

McMahon (1992) looked at the movement of students from 18 developing nations to industrialised countries and concluded that the main pushing forces influence talent-exporting countries. Considerations include:

- the GDP per capita (economic development) level,
- the country's level of participation in world economic development,
- the government's emphasis on education as a priority, and
- the availability of educational opportunities within the country.

He explained that the economic size of the talent-receiving country, the economic ties between the talent-exporting country and the talent-receiving country, the political benefits of the talent-receiving country to the student-exporting country through aid to foreign countries or cultural ties, and the support provided by t are all factors that contribute to the talent-receiving country's success in attracting student mobility from developing countries (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001).

The "push-pull" elements influencing ISM were classified by Altbach (1985, 1998) as eight push factors originating in the sending country and seven pull factors originating in the receiving country. Scholarships to study abroad, inadequate indigenous educational resources, an absence of research facilities, a shortage of access, an unfavourable political climate, the more significant market value of degrees earned abroad, discrimination against ethnic minorities, and the realisation that local educational methods are inadequate are all factors that push students to seek education elsewhere. Scholarships for international students, high-quality educational programmes, cutting-edge research facilities, convenient access to higher learning opportunities, a stable political climate, a thriving economy, and enriching cultural exchange all attract students to study in the countries that host them.

Altbach pointed out that in China, political, ideological and economic contexts are the main factors that influence study abroad policy. As overseas study policies are made by the central government and individuals or institutions have limited decision-making power over studying abroad, the procedures are generally formulated with a focus on political coherence and premised on economic development. Nevertheless, that view does not account for the 21st century onwards. Individuals and institutions now have progressively greater decision-making power over study-abroad issues. Central government policy, which regulates study abroad education mainly at a macro level through the development of regulations, has tended to be lenient and liberal. As government power is reduced and policies are gradually improved, the market will become the baton influencing students' choice of HE abroad. In the education market,

the protagonists are the supply and demand side of education, the host institution and the students.

However, the traditional single-way push-pull factor theory cannot explain why some students choose overseas education over local education while others choose local education over overseas education. It also does not satisfactorily explain why students respond differently to the same push and pull factors and choose different destination countries and HEIs. For this reason, Chinese scholar Zheng Xiaohui (2003) proposed a two-way push-pull factor theory by studying Tsinghua University undergraduates' intention to study abroad. He pointed out that the choice to stay in their home country to learn is a combination of negative factors that encourage them to go overseas and positive factors that attract them to stay at indigenous HEIs. Similarly, potential talent-receiving countries and institutions have the positive side of attracting international students and the opposing force of repelling them. The student's final decision depends on two-way push-pull factors and the characteristics and perspectives of the individual student.

Zheng (2003) found that the intention to study abroad is influenced by both domestic push factors and foreign pull factors, as well as domestic pull factors and foreign push factors. Suppose the push factors in talent-exporting countries and the pull factors in talent-receiving countries are the positive push and pull factors that drive students to study abroad. In that case, the pull factors in talent-exporting countries and the push factors in talent-receiving countries are the reversed push and pull factors that limit students' outward mobility. Students' final decision to go abroad is influenced by a combination of positive and negative push and pull factors, which constitute the external two-way push and pull factors of student mobility.

However, Zheng (2003) and Altbach (1985, 1998) both use the push-pull theory to explain the causes of international student mobility from an external perspective. Although they pointed out that external factors drive and stimulate international student mobility, they neglected the internal factors and did not explain the interaction and transformation of internal dynamics and external factors (Tian, 2003). In response, Li Mei (2008), on the basis of the prior theories, analysed the global mobility of Chinese students, extending the traditional push-pull theory to include a "two-way push-pull theory that combines internal and external factors". Li (2008) expanded and added to the two-way push and pull theory by arguing that the decision to go abroad is the result of the interaction of internal and external factors. They include the family's ability to pay, academic knowledge, personal pursuits, career

expectations and planning, and external factors such as the influence of political, economic, educational, social and cultural situations in both receiving and sending countries. Both internal and external factors interact to influence the decision to study abroad (Li & Bray, 2007; Zweig et al., 2004). When the positive aspects of the destination country, including shorter programme durations, higher levels of economic development, and more excellent educational opportunities, surpass the negative aspects of studying abroad and the positive aspects of remaining at home, students are more likely to choose to pursue education overseas (Bodycott, 2009). On the other hand, critical favourable elements inside a person's nation, such as affordable living expenses, proximity to family, and the connection between education and professional advancement, can discourage students from moving abroad (Chen, 2007).

The factors that drive and attract international students are complex and varied. Recent scholarly work has expanded the scope of what influences these movements, moving past basic economic and academic reasons to include social, political, technological, and lifestyle elements. As the international landscape evolves, it is imperative that research keeps pace, delving deeper into how advancements in digital technology and worldwide occurrences affect the trends of student migration.

Sociopolitical events, policy changes, and cultural factors significantly influence student mobility, both domestically and internationally (Rumberger, 2003; Choudaha & Chang, 2012). These factors can act as "push" and "pull" forces, driving students to seek education abroad and influencing their choice of destination (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The attractiveness of a country, including the quality of its universities, plays a key role in this decision-making process (Beine et al., 2014). Wu et al. (2019) found that international students in China are primarily motivated by a desire for learning and a belief in the country's future prosperity. Similarly, Li and Qi (2019) identified academic, individual, overseas experience, and family/friends-related motivations for Chinese tourism doctoral students studying abroad. Oliveira and Freitas (2016) highlighted personal, academic, and professional motivations for international academic mobility, with personal factors being particularly influential for Brazilian students. Ahmad and Buchanan (2015) further emphasised the role of push factors, such as institution and academic reputations, in students' decisions to study at international branch campuses in Malaysia. These studies collectively underscore the complex interplay of push and pull factors in shaping international students' mobility.

In addition, recent literature has highlighted the significant role of digital technology in shaping student mobility choices. Henderson et al. (2015) emphasised the importance of digital technology in the university experience, with students valuing its flexibility, organisation, and learning support. Fuegen (2012) extended this discussion to the impact of mobile technologies on distance education, emphasising their positive effect on student experience. These studies collectively underscored the transformative role of digital technology in shaping student mobility choices and enhancing the overall learning experience.

While push and pull theory provides a guiding framework to explain the decision of ISM, it ignores the nature of mobility as a conflict between supply and demand and cross-border allocation, as well as the intrinsic factors and motivations of educational supply and demand agents. Understanding the nature of ISM in a particular macro context relies on exploring the inherent characteristics of this unique group and its interrelationship with external push and pull factors.

### **3.4 Summary of the related theories and the Chinese context**

The international mobility of students is an investment to pay the current investment cost for future benefit. For governments, overseas students are an important way for countries to develop the human resources needed for construction. For families and individuals, receiving HE abroad can improve the knowledge and quality of individuals and increase their expected future income, career choice opportunities and ability to adapt to life.

From the perspective of education supply and demand, students practise outward movement for education when the domestic education supply cannot meet education demand or when education demand exceeds the range of services provided by HEIs within the country in terms of quantity, variety, and diversity. Allocating educational resources overseas is an effective way to resolve the conflict between education supply and demand. At the same time, the highly uneven nature of the world's education supply and the diversity of demand for education are further motivations for ISM. In addition, trade in educational services is an option for transnational education. Economic factors play an increasingly important role in driving the development of international student mobility. The pursuit of ultra-high profits in the trade of educational services is one of the motivations for the receiving countries to promote international education.

The push-pull theory attributes the international mobility of students to a combination of push factors in the sending country and pull factors in the destination country, as well as individual characteristics. The international mobility of students is influenced not only by the external push and pull of national political and economic cultures but also by internal student factors, including family SES, academic ability, age, gender, motivation and ambition. While external factors can only influence students' behaviour and choices, the final decision depends more on the individual's characteristics.

Despite the continuous restructuring and differentiation of Chinese HE in recent years to accelerate its development, it still needs to meet the rapidly growing and diverse needs, such as educational quality and specialisation, to meet the growing educational needs of students. When Chinese HE fails to meet the needs of students, parents are willing to support their children in demanding more appropriate educational opportunities in the external market. In this sense, educational demand is an important driver for integrating domestic and foreign HE markets. Although students' motivations for choosing HE abroad vary from person to person, the conflict between education supply and demand remains one of the drivers that cannot be ignored.

Factors influencing students' international mobility include individual student factors (e.g., academic performance, educational background, gender) and family factors (family SES, parental occupation, educational attainment); social characteristics of the HE location, education system characteristics and institutional characteristics (e.g., teaching quality, school reputation, tuition fees and costs, market recognition of diplomas). Based on the two-way push and pull theory, this study considers the factors influencing students' choice to study abroad or stay in their home country, including programme length, economic development in the (destination) country, and the university's reputation. The study asks the participant to conduct a self-assessment of the attitudes towards motivation factors to examine how the choices for the postgraduate education destination country (UK or at home) differ by students abroad or at indigenous HEIs, including programme length, economic development in the (destination) country, the reputation of the university, availability of educational opportunity, expenses, staying close with family and adaptability of education and career development. According to the data collected from the survey, the study summarises and analyses how vital the influence factors are and identifies the primary motivations for students choosing to study abroad or at home.

## **4 Labour market outcomes of studying abroad**

This section reviews research on international experience and career paths. In this study, labour market outcomes fell into three categories: transition from HE into employment (possibility of being employed), initial income and job satisfaction. The following section will review the link between their international experience and subsequent professional careers.

Regarding career and employment outcomes in some studies, graduates are asked to self-assess and explain how their study abroad experience assisted them in securing a first job. Alternatively, studies apply objective assessment methods, such as some regression techniques, to examine how the related factors predict the outcomes, including employment rates, time spent job hunting, starting salary, and international employment status.

### **4.1 Transition from study to employment**

The majority of studies that asked graduates to self-evaluate the extent to which their international experience aided them in landing their (first) jobs or getting to the interview stage for potential employment have consistently found that studying abroad contributes to a smoother transition from HE to the workforce. Among them, Abrams (1979) polled Antioch College undergraduates who participated in study abroad programmes. Almost half of them thought that they were able to land a job after graduating with the “marketable skills” they picked up while studying overseas. According to Oppen et al. (1990), two-thirds of American study-abroad alumni reported that their experience abroad supported them in securing their first employment and career advancement (i.e., promotions and transfers). Likewise, two-thirds of Hungarian graduates of the European Union (EU)-funded mobility programme Tempus (Bremer, 1998) and two-thirds of Australian graduates with learning abroad experience (Potts, 2015) reported that their transnational sojourn experience had a positive or very positive impact on employment prospects.

In addition, according to a poll conducted at the end of the 1980s with previous learners of ERASMUS, 71 per cent of those with employment at the time of the survey reported that studying abroad had a favourable effect on their ability to find employment (Teichler, 1996). In subsequent EU mobility evaluations in 1999 and 2005, this proportion fell to 66 and 54 per cent, respectively (Janson et al., 2009; Teichler & Janson, 2007). In addition, recent research has reached the same conclusion.

Involvement in international study abroad programmes was found to be a significant factor in the graduates' ability to secure their first jobs after college, as reported by Shiveley and Misco (2015). Amendola and Restaino (2017) came to a similar conclusion, saying that students with ISM believed that such experience had assisted them in obtaining their first career. However, Carley, Stuart, and Dailey (2011) discovered scant evidence that international mobility programmes helped the participants attain the post.

However, studies that objectively assessed employment conditions using multivariate regression methodologies and control group designs indicate that participation in studying abroad programmes did not affect an individual's present work status or the amount of time required to acquire a job after graduating from university. Logistic regressions are used by Di Pietro (2015), Stren and Wiers-Jenssen (2010), Krabel and Flöther (2014), Oosterbeek and Webbink (2009), Wiers-Jenssen and Try (2005), and Wiers-Jenssen (2011) to determine the likelihood that graduates will be employed (or unemployment) or gain employment in the first five years after graduation. Evidence of benefits stemming from international mobile experience is lacking.

Several studies demonstrate that ISM has a negative impact on post-graduation employment prospects. Wiers-Jenssen (2011) revealed that Norwegian graduates who studied abroad for a full degree have a slightly delayed transition period compared to non-mobile graduates or graduates who studied abroad for only one or two semesters. In addition, Wiers-Jenssen and Try (2005), Wiers-Jenssen (2011), and Støren and Wiers-Jenssen (2010) noted that, even after controlling for a variety of sociodemographic, competence, and contextual factors, Norwegian graduates with an international degree are significantly more likely to experience unemployment in the first five years after graduation than Norwegian graduates with an indigenous degree. A similar finding was adopted by Rodrigues (2013), who used data from a European survey to show that graduates with international mobile learning experience (at least six months abroad) are related to a somewhat extended transition into employment. This adjustment period will be longer if the time spent studying abroad is extensive. Similarly, in a study conducted by Liwiński (2018), it was determined that Polish students who pursued education in foreign countries did not observe an increase in their employment rate upon completing their studies.

However, few studies indicate that study-abroad alumni typically experience shorter transition periods between education and employment than those who did not study abroad (Cammelli et al., 2008; Lianos et al., 2004). This contradictory evidence

originates from nations in Southern Europe, including Italy and Greece, and may be attributable to the local circumstances that young people encounter upon entering the job market. As a result, it is essential to take into consideration the place of origin in any investigation of this topic (Rodrigues, 2013).

## **4.2 Income**

In some research, the participants were asked to evaluate whether or not having experience studying abroad could provide an income premium; the results showed that there was no discernible association between the two factors (Opper et al., 1990; Opper, 1991). For instance, Opper et al. (1990) and Opper's (1991) studies relating to American graduates who studied abroad revealed no difference in starting wages compared to those of their counterparts who did not have study abroad credentials. According to the European Graduate Survey in 2005, only 16 per cent of European graduates believed that their ERASMUS exchange experience led to an increase in salary (Janson et al., 2009; Teichler & Janson, 2007). Twenty per cent of Hungarian Tempus participants reported a salary increase as a result of their exchange experience (Bremer, 1998); twenty-one per cent of Australian students who studied abroad reported a salary increase in Potts (2015).

According to the majority of objective analyses of the financial benefits of studying abroad, graduates with foreign studying experiences are in a better position in terms of average starting salary or earnings a few years after graduation than those without such experiences. Diverse studies investigate the impact of ISM on income using regression techniques that account for background variables (such as gender, type of institution, the field of study, parents' education levels, migration background, working experience, and vocational training prior to the study). According to these studies, Waibel et al. (2017) concluded that spending a period of education abroad (binary indicator) increases one's salary by between 3 and 8 per cent through a systematic review. Despite this, several studies, such as Van Ophem, Hartog, and Berkout (2011) and Messer and Wolter (2006), have found that wage premiums are unjustified. Van Ophem et al. (2011) conducted research on a sample of Dutch college graduates and discovered that studying experiences in another country had no impact on either starting salary or reservation wages. Further, Messer and Wolter (2006), using a mother's educational level as an instrumental variable, argued that the experience of studying abroad has no direct effect on an individual's salary regarding the first employment after graduation. They pointed out that exchange programme participation did not impact starting salaries for Swiss university graduates using a

methodology that controls for selection bias (called Instrumental Variable estimate). However, Studies that used the Instrumental Variable estimation approach, in particular, have led to a theoretical dispute regarding who benefits the most from the mobile experience. This is due to the highly socially selective nature of ISM.

Recent research has sought to establish whether there is a cause-and-effect link between international mobility experience and earnings. Their objective was to ascertain if the salary advantage of mobile students is owing to their mobility or some other factor like inherent ability, ambition, or family SES. In order to establish cause-and-effect relationships and address the issue of self-selection bias, they utilised quasi-experimental techniques, such as Propensity Score Matching (PSM) (Euler et al., 2012; Orrù, 2014; Rodrigues, 2013; Liwiński, 2019; Waibel et al., 2018), and regression interrupted designs (Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2009). Research conducted by Orrù in 2014 and Rodrigues in 2013, which employed PSM as their methodology, indicated that engagement in overseas study schemes did not enhance the chances of securing a job. Additionally, they noted that students with international experience generally took longer to find employment compared to their counterparts who stayed at home. However, these globally mobile graduates enjoyed a higher wage scale than those from local higher education institutions. In a separate study, Waibel and colleagues (2018) applied PSM to determine the effects of at least a one-month sojourn overseas on the job status of German individuals three years post-graduation. Their findings suggest that those with the most minor economic, social, and cultural capital are most likely to reap career advancement from international study experiences. They inferred that international studies are not closely related to socioeconomic inequalities within society. Results also point to the fact that for German individuals who usually are less likely to study abroad, the eventual positive repercussions on their career trajectory are more noticeable. A consensus across numerous investigations has corroborated that the post-graduation income level is positively correlated with the extent of the graduate's international mobility.

A rise in occupational status is a reliable determinant of career development, but there is less evidence for this than there is for pay increases. European Commission (2014b), King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003), and Lutter and Schröder (2016) are among the few studies to evaluate occupational status as a career outcome of ISM; nevertheless, they all use different operationalisations and not any international standard categories. The findings are inconsistent; the European Commission (2014b) and King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) found that mobile graduates are more likely to hold managerial jobs after graduation than their non-mobile peers. Several studies, however, have shown little

evidence that ISM elevates social standing. Teichler (2007) found no status advantages for internationally mobile students in the occupational categories of manager, professional, associate professional, clerk, and others. The likelihood of being hired as a tenured professor of sociology in Germany is not considerably affected by ISM (Lutter & Schröder, 2016).

On average, ISM leads to greater financial rewards in the long run (Kratz & Netz, 2018; Netz & Grüttner, 2021). There are multiple reasons highlighted for this phenomenon. One reason is that individuals who change jobs more frequently have a greater likelihood of experiencing wage gains. Additionally, there is a higher probability of working for large international companies that provide wages that are higher than average. This information is supported by Kratz and Netz (2018). Enhanced linguistic abilities could serve as an additional intermediary (Sorrenti, 2017). However, Wiers-Jenssen et al. (2020) asserted that the existing research on the influence of studying abroad on pay outcomes lacks a definitive conclusion. This presents a formidable issue for both researchers and policymakers, considering the significant allocation of resources towards study abroad programmes. Additionally, the amount of money earned varies based on the type of mobility and whether it occurs during undergraduate or graduate courses. Empirical data suggests that mobile bachelor students experience higher monetary returns, however there is no such evidence for mobile master students (Asankulova & Thomsen, 2024). Nevertheless, when accounting for self-selection, the importance of the impacts is diminished (Van Mol et al., 2021). Moreover, the specific kind of mobility also impacts future income. Although studying abroad is linked to greater financial gains, this correlation does not apply to internships abroad (Van Mol et al., 2021).

### **4.3 Summary of the research gaps**

There is a lack of consensus in the existing literature, with studies revealing both positive and negative effects of overseas studying experience on labour market accomplishments. Evaluations of the ERASMUS programmes have examined the implications of credit mobility on the labour market (Bracht et al., 2006; Jahr & Teichler, 2002; Maiworm & Teichler, 1996). These studies indicate that a sojourn abroad appears to have a more significant impact on a “horizontal career” (such as having an “international job”) than on a “vertical career” (e.g., employability and earnings). The ERASMUS evaluations revolve around exchange students and seldom provide information on students pursuing a complete degree. From the standpoint of the Bologna process, the full-degree group is gaining more and more weight. A primary

objective of the harmonisation of the degree structure is to facilitate a pattern of student mobility that enables students to earn a bachelor's degree in one country and a master's degree in another. Another limitation of ERASMUS studies is that they rarely include control groups of non-mobile students, meaning that the relative effect of higher education abroad cannot be determined (Wiers-Jenssen, 2011).

ISM may be defined differently depending on the country or location, and there are significant differences in the patterns of ISM, student support systems, and economic development between nations and regions. In addition, there are country-specific differences in selectivity, brain outflow, and labour market outcomes. Consequently, it is essential to evaluate the particularities of the country of origin (Rodrigues, 2013). In light of this, it is necessary to examine the labour market performance of mobile international students in China.

This study examines the labour market outcomes of mainland Chinese master's students studying in the UK and compares them with non-mobile graduate students to investigate how the impact of mobility experiences on career success is moderated by human capital, organisational social capital (accumulated at HEIs), and private social capital. Previous empirical studies have been relatively inconsistent in their choice of variables and have shown preferences for background characteristics, which may be due to database limitations. This study has defined each variable and selected indicators based on the definitions. The labour market outcomes are categorised into three measures: job probability, job satisfaction and monthly salary, which combines objective and subjective assessments.

## **5 International mobility of Chinese students**

This section starts with the introduction of the Chinese government's policies regarding studying abroad and returning, followed by a discussion of social class, ISM and higher educational opportunities. After that, it analyses international students' adaptation and employment difficulties after returning to China.

### **5.1 Policy supports for studying abroad**

Since the reform and opening up, China's management of internationally mobile students has experienced a process from start to development and continuous improvement. From national to the local level, HEIs to scientific research institutes, a

set of management and operating mechanisms that correspond to social and economic growth has been gradually established. In the past two decades, the Chinese government has consistently implemented an active policy of encouraging the international exchange of students. It regards studying abroad as an essential aspect of the national talent strategy. The government encourages students to acquire knowledge, experience culture, and cultivate talents with a global vision to gain positions in international competition. The way of ISM has changed from the original one-way outward and government assignment channel to government-funded, employer-funded and self-funded, the three primary media.

In 1992, with the establishment of the socialist market economy, the government deepened the reform of the management system for the selection and management of government-sponsored study abroad and fully opened the self-funded channel to study overseas. The same year, the state promulgated the “Outline of China’s Education Reform and Development”, which stipulated that the study abroad policy is “supporting study abroad, encouraging returning to China, and free to come and go”. In terms of government-funded study abroad, in 1996, the China Scholarship Council was established to implement the new “individual application, expert review, equal competition, and merit-based admission” method for state-sponsored study abroad. A relatively stable number of students are sent to study overseas yearly (Yang, 2015).

Since 2000, the government-sponsored study abroad policy has gradually developed and improved, providing solid and robust support for international students to go overseas. In 2003, China implemented the “Advanced Research Scholars Programme” to cultivate academic leaders and laboratory elites, alongside the “Special Programme for Talent Cultivation in the Western Region” and a state-sponsored study abroad programme in 13 western provinces (Lee et al., 2016). These initiatives were part of a broader effort to develop education and talent in the region of the west of China, which has historically lagged behind the eastern region (Tian & Wei, 2023). The government also sought to attract foreign researchers and scientists through various programs, such as the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Science and Technology and the “Thousand Talents Plan” (Normile, 2018; Jia, 2018). These efforts reflect China’s commitment to developing its scientific and academic capabilities, particularly in the western region.

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Finance further increased scholarships for international students from various countries in 2003 and 2010 to improve international students’ overseas study and living conditions. In 2007, the “National

Construction of High-level University Publicly-Assigned Postgraduate Programme” was established. The critical recipients of state-sponsored programmes began to shift from advanced scholars (e.g., visiting scholars and senior research scholars) to students, and the number of government-funded postgraduate students increased significantly (Donetskaya & Wang, 2021).

On the other hand, self-funded ISM has experienced the stage from zero to initial scale, and now it has become the main body and focus of study abroad education. In the early 1980s, self-funded study abroad was strictly controlled. The age and political position of students studying abroad needs to be rigorously reviewed. Since 1992, the policy of studying abroad at its own expense has been gradually improved. In 1993, the National Education Commission issued a notice stipulating the methods, service periods and training fees for applying to study abroad. The release of this notice has promoted the rapid development of self-funded study abroad. In the twelve years from 1990 to 2002, about 300,000 self-funded students studied abroad. After China acceded to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001, the Ministry of Education not only simplified the procedures and procedures for applying for self-funded study abroad but also abolished the relevant regulations on charging international students a certain training fee in early 2003.

With the deepening of self-funded study abroad, study abroad agents came into being. To regulate the intermediary services for studying abroad, the Ministry of Education and other departments issued regulations in June 1999 to strengthen the examination and supervision of the intermediary services for studying abroad to protect the legitimate rights and interests of self-funded students studying abroad (Lan, 2018). Subsequently, the Ministry of Education launched the “Education Foreign-related Supervision Information Network”, which regularly and timely released early warnings about studying abroad, feedback on the problems of self-funded students and other information on the website to provide high-quality and supportive services for self-funded students (Lan, 2018).

The China Scholarship Council, established in 2003, plays a significant role in the country’s international education strategy (Fedasiuk, 2020). The “National Outstanding Self-Funded International Students Scholarship” is one of the programs it offers, providing financial support to exceptional self-funded international students (Lan, 2018). This initiative is part of China’s broader efforts to attract international students, with the Chinese Government Scholarship program being a key component (Latief & Lefen, 2018). The award is 5,000 dollars, and the number of recipients of this

bonus increased from 95 in 2003 to 305 in 2008.

Policy and financial sponsorship from the government indicate the support for studying abroad. Public support helps narrow the gap between classes to receive overseas education. However, because of the large scale of mobile students, self-funded ISM is still the mainstream. According to the 2019 Survey Report on Chinese Students' Intentions to Study Abroad, students planning to study abroad from families with annual incomes of 110,000 to 200,000 Yuan<sup>1</sup> account for the most significant proportion, 23.45 per cent, followed by the annual income of 210,000 to 300,000 Yuan, accounting for 16.43 per cent; Only 4.03 per cent of students from families with annual incomes of 800,000 Yuan or more. The proportion of working-class families is much higher than the rest. The survey also shows that the highest per cent of individuals who intend to study abroad are those whose parents are ordinary workers, at 42 per cent. Studying abroad has become increasingly popular in terms of cohort profiles (Jing Media, 2019).

## **5.2 Policy incentives for returning**

The number of students studying abroad has dramatically increased in the past three decades; at the same time, the return rate also experienced a significant rise, from 15 per cent in 2001 to 85 per cent in 2013, reflecting the growing need for talent in China and it also attributed to the optimisation management of talent environment (Yang, 2015). In recent years, developed countries such as the US, UK, France, Australia and Canada have become popular destinations for Chinese international students. However, these countries have experienced economic growth slowdowns, with limited job opportunities for international students; thus, many students choose to return home after graduation (Wang & Miao, 2014). Most of the policy-related factors were government incentives, such as China's "Thousand Talents Programme", launched in 2008 and other measures, including establishing study abroad entrepreneurship parks and providing material rewards. The implementation of the measures attracts increasing talent returning from abroad (Wang & Miao, 2014).

Since the reform and opening-up in 1978, the Chinese government has continuously adjusted and optimised the support and service policies for returnees to provide legal protection to attract and bring together talents for socialist construction. Roughly, it has gone through four stages of development.

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<sup>1</sup> The "Yuan" refers to the base unit of account of the "renminbi" (RMB), the currency of China.

China's policies towards international students experienced a considerable shift between 1978 and 1991, focusing on increasing the number of students sent abroad and supporting their return to serve in China (Beijing University & Zhongshan University, 2005). This was part of a broader effort to improve the quality of education for international students, leading to the formation of a macro-administration structure (Zhang & Liao, 2021). At the same time, the government assigned international students to 53 countries in the world in a planned and batch-wise manner by signing legal agreements, stipulating the duration and mode of study, praising those who return on time and requiring compensation for those who do not return on time. These measures aimed to ensure the timely return of government-supported students. In addition, other measures include setting up scientific research funds, piloted post-doctoral research stations, and international conferences to attract self-funded international students to return to China for service. At the same time, the "Study Abroad Service Centre" was established to address the concerns of returnees about family planning, spouse's work and children's schooling and to increase material and honorary rewards for outstanding contributions (Henze & Zhu, 2012). Once the policy was launched, a large number of international students returned to serve in China. The number of international students grew from 860 in 1978 to 2,900 in 1991, with a total of more than 4,000; the number of returnees grew from 248 to 2,069, with a total of 21,955, and more than 50 per cent of international students chose to return to China for development (Ge, 2020).

The second stage of policy improvement was from 1992 to the beginning of the 21st century. During this period, the policy of freedom of outward movement and return was adhered to, encouraging individuals studying abroad to participate in the modernisation process of China. The Ministry of Education launched the "Chun Hui Programme" and the "Yangtze River Scholars Award Programme" to sponsor outstanding overseas students to return to China for lectures, exchanges, participation in the construction of domestic universities, and service to the western and northeastern regions (Hua, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2018a; Wang, 2007). The average annual growth rate of overseas students during this period was 32.8 per cent; the number of returnees increased from 3,611 to 12,243, totalling 68,910 (Ge, 2020).

In the first decade of the 21st century, China's opening up to the outside world has further expanded, attracting a large number of high-level talents to return for development in China. In 2000, more than 150 entrepreneurship parks for overseas

students were established throughout the nation, with more than 8,000 enterprises and over 20,000 international students setting up businesses in the parks (Qin, 2014). In 2008, the “Thousand Talents Programme” was introduced. In addition, the Ministry of Education has also introduced some projects, including the “Scientific Research Start-up Fund for Returned Overseas Students”, the “Changjiang Scholar Award Scheme” and the “Young Teachers’ Fund for Universities”, which have attracted a large number of senior talents to return to China. After China acceded to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), many foreign-related economic and business talents continued to be employed in China. In order to attract high-end talents to return to China for development, the government has opened a green channel for high-level overseas talents to return to China following the principle of “appropriate care and special treatment” and has given policies in various aspects such as settlement, title assessment, work remuneration and scientific research funding. At the same time, proper arrangements were made for spouses and children, forming a more year-round service system for returning overseas students. The number of returnees increased from 17,945 in 2002 to 272,900 in 2012, and the ratio of returnees to returnees peaked at 57.5 per cent in 2008 (Ge, 2020).

In the recent decade, in addition to the government support programmes such as the “Thousand Talents Programme”, “Chang Jiang Scholars Programme” and “National Science Fund for Distinguished Young” have continued flourishing, local governments have also enacted many policies to attract overseas students and support them start their businesses. For example, Shenzhen introduced the “Peacock Plan” to attract high-level overseas talents, giving 800,000-1,500,000 yuan in incentives and subsidies. It also provided special treatment for settlements to high-level overseas skills, which were included in the plan (Shenzu, 2011). Jiangsu Province implemented the “High-level Innovation and Entrepreneurship Talent Introduction Programme” to introduce high-level talents. The city of Wuxi has proposed the “530 Plan” to attract 30 overseas elites to set up businesses in five years (Chen & Ren, 2012). These programmes are dedicated to creating a comprehensive interactive platform for talents, funds, information and projects, creating a favourable employment and entrepreneurial environment for returnee talents; at the same time, promoting innovative and entrepreneurial activities and providing support for international students to realise their talents and values through business guidance and skimming, financing support, tax relief and social security processing. The number of students studying abroad during the period surged from 413,900 in 2013 to 662,100 in 2018, with a total of 3.21 million, while the total number of returnees exceeded 2.56 million during the same period, with nearly 80 per cent of international students choosing to return to, which

shows that returning to China for service has become the mainstream choice of international students (Ge, 2020).

By combing the historical trajectory of China's domestic policies on studying abroad, we find that adjustments and changes in relevant public policies (the relaxation of policies on studying abroad and the adjustment of policies to support repatriation) may be one of the reasons that cause the returning wave. However, despite many government and local support policies, a large number of returnees and their uneven quality have left some of them in the dilemma of pending employment. According to the 2019 China Studying Abroad Returnee Employment and Entrepreneurship Survey Report by the Centre for China and Globalisation (CCG), the advantages of international students in terms of English languages are decreasing. The main disadvantages reported by the returnees are

- a lack of understanding of the employment situation and enterprise needs in China, limited familiarity with the domestic market environment and development needs, inadaptability to the culture of domestic enterprises,
- no market counterpart for their majors,
- weak domestic social connections, and
- missing the centralised recruitment time (Shi, 2019).

The report also pointed out that the recruitment channels for returnees are relatively single, mainly through job websites searching for information and directly submitting CVs to the companies. Nearly 40 per cent of the interviewees said they were dissatisfied with the current job situation in China and generally thought that the salary level was lower than expected and the work pressure was high (Shi, 2019). As studying abroad has become increasingly civilianised, there has been a massive increase in both the number of students going abroad and those returning to study. When talents are no longer scarce, the screening function of studying abroad declines, making it inevitable that they will face employment problems. It is of great practical significance to study the employment status and factors related to the employment of returning individuals; at the same time, it can also provide policy advice for improving the employment service mechanism and building an exchange platform for returnees studying abroad.

### **5.3 Motivation to return**

Since the reform and opening up, the number of internally mobile students returning to China has generally increased. According to data published on the website of the

Ministry of Education, between 1978 and 2009, the cumulative number of Chinese students studying abroad of all types reached 6,560,600, of whom 4,944,400 completed their studies, and 4,231,700 chose to return to China after completing their studies, with a total return rate of 86.28 per cent (Ministry of Education, 2018b). In terms of numbers, China has curbed the intellectual outflow (Zhang, 2022). However, due to the influence of various factors, such as the national policy of studying abroad, political changes and economic development, the number of returned students shows fluctuations and peaks of different sizes. The factors that promote the return of overseas students are also increasingly diversified.

China's overseas intellectual return has a history of more than 170 years. Based on historical data from various stages of development, it can be found that the drivers and types of mobility of overseas intellectual return differ in each period, exhibiting distinct political, social and composite characteristics. Some scholars have pointed out that the overall drivers of intellectual return in contemporary China can be categorised as economically driven, institutionally driven, culturally value-driven and multi-factor composite return (Zhang, 2022).

As China's economy grows and job opportunities increase, many talents choose to return to China in order to use the experience and skills learned in developed countries to obtain higher expected benefits and returns (Bao et al., 2021; Mayr & Peri, 2008; Sun et al., 2005). Many Chinese returnees report that the primary motivation for returning is career development platforms and economic opportunities (Hao & Welch, 2012; Wadhwa et al., 2011, p. 34). Starting salaries in China are higher than in North America and for indigenous talents (Hao & Welch, 2012; Wadhwa et al., 2011, p. 34). Even though salaries are comparable, they have higher purchasing power in China (Zeithammer & Kellogg, 2013). Neoclassical migration theory states that people move from countries or regions with abundant labour and low wages to countries and regions with high wages where labour is scarce (Ranis & Fei, 1961; Todaro, 1980, p. 248). The human capital theory also suggests that individuals develop new skills, knowledge and abilities by investing in education, work experience and training and that in order to realise the return on investment in education, graduates studying abroad either return home or stay abroad to obtain high-level jobs and salaries (Becker, 1964, p. 59-135).

Some international students returned home under the drive of scholarship-funded regulations. Students studying abroad subsidised by the national scholarship, including living expenses and tuition fees, must return to China and work for stipulated years of

service according to relevant regulations. Thus, some of the returning students were institutional-driven. This incentive policy has achieved remarkable results, contributing to the wave of returning overseas students.

In addition, large-scale self-funded overseas students were driven by government employment and placement policy incentives and other factors (Zhang, 2022). In 1992, China's study abroad policy changed dramatically, and the placement issue for returned students received extensive attention. The state began formulating policies encouraging students abroad to serve the country. Compared with 1991, the number of students studying abroad and returnees increased significantly (Miao et al., 2018). The number of returnees increased by 75 per cent. After 2000, the growth rate of returnees accelerated suddenly. In 2002, the growth rate of returned overseas students reached 47 per cent, totalling 17,945 (Zhang, 2022). Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012, the government has implemented innovation-driven development and talent power strategies. The strategies increased its efforts to attract high-level overseas talents and gradually changed the long-term brain drain phenomenon. After that, a new era for China to study abroad and return home was created, setting off the most significant overseas intellectual return tide in history.

The drivers of the overseas study return boom in this period were diverse, with the economically driven return being a key motivator. Western host countries have rejected overseas intelligence as they have experienced slower economic recovery, sluggish economic growth and a tight employment situation after the two financial crises in 1998 and 2008.

Compared to the host country, China's economy has entered a period of rapid development, and faster economic growth has brought more employment and development opportunities. The home country's economic rewards and job opportunities show a strong attraction. Several studies have concluded that economic development, technological progress, increased employment opportunities, and wage levels are critical factors in the return of Chinese overseas intelligence since the 21st century (Tharenou & Seep, 2014). However, some studies suggest that China's economic growth has not had a sustained positive effect on the return of overseas intelligence. They pointed out that a combination of talent incentive policy, cultural, and family factors are critical factors in the return of overseas intelligence (Zhang, 2022). Furthermore, some scholars have pointed out that China has not attracted the return of top-notch intelligence from abroad as the potent attraction from the host

country or even a third country outweighs the domestic economic, cultural, innovative and entrepreneurial environment (Zweig & Wang, 2013).

Hazen and Alberts (2006) and other scholars have studied the mobility of Chinese international students after graduation. They examined the decisions to stay in the US. They argue that international students' plans to stay in the US were either temporary or permanent, leading to four reasons. They are the advantages of staying in the US, the disadvantages of returning home, the advantages of returning home, and the disadvantages of staying in the US. They noted that the decision to move after graduation is influenced by nationality, gender and professional factors. Economic development and career prospects were the main factors influencing the choice to stay. Conversely, personal, family and cultural factors were the main factors influencing international students' choice to return to their home country (Hazen & Alberts, 2006).

However, in a recent empirical study, Bao et al. (2021) criticised the motivational analysis framework that overemphasises economic gains, arguing that it ignored the role of external macro factors on individuals' transnational mobility. They argue that individuals' decisions to return home are influenced by a combination of four forces: overseas push (pull) forces and domestic push (pull) forces. The overseas push and the domestic pull factors motivate talents to return to their home countries. In contrast, the pull of positive factors on talents from overseas and the push of negative factors on talents from their home countries make them leave their home countries to choose other places for employment. The overseas push forces include anti-globalisation, populism and xenophobia, escalating economic and trade frictions, and political tensions, which have led to a rising risk index in the political environment for overseas talents, as well as the existence of limited space for career development overseas. The domestic pull includes good economic development prospects, a stable political environment, and a series of talent attraction policies since the 1980s, which have built a comprehensive "central government-local-university" system for introducing and supporting scientific and technological talents, becoming a critical pulling force in attracting high-end overseas talents back to China. On the contrary, the free and open academic environment and higher quality of life overseas are essential factors in attracting international students to stay there. The fierce competition, strict performance appraisal and overly administrative personnel management in China are problems that constrain the decision of talents to return home. At the same time, environmental pollution and food safety have not eliminated the concerns of returnees, which are factors that prevent them from returning to their home countries.

In addition, some studies pointed out that family ties also play a significant role in the decision to return to international students. The traditional Chinese culture emphasises kinship and family responsibilities. The decision to return to China is not usually the choice of individuals but rather the decision of the whole family after weighing up the situation. The traditional cultural values of caring for family members and respecting parents also play an essential role in the decision to return home (Bao et al., 2021; Shi, 2019).

Overall, the motivations of returnees to China are diversified, including economic-driven, policy-induced, patriotic and cultural-driven. Since the beginning of the 21st century, especially since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has attracted a large number of overseas intellectuals to return home by taking advantage of employment opportunities, more favourable placement treatment, a larger domestic market and more entrepreneurial opportunities brought by rapid economic development. At the same time, the downward economic situation in host countries or other overseas countries, shrinking employment opportunities, restrictive work permits and immigration policies, and racial discrimination have also constrained the overseas employment options of international students (Pottie-Sherman, 2018).

Several studies in Europe have shown that students with overseas learning experience are more likely to obtain international jobs than indigenous students (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2009; Parey & Waldinger, 2010; Teichler, 2015, pp. 15- 32), yet the number of Chinese students returning home is increasing year by year. Apart from China's economic development, policy support, culture and family ties, what factors prevent them from finding suitable jobs abroad? Through the survey, this study attempts to summarise the hidden factors influencing the decision to return and the barriers to working abroad.

#### **5.4 Social origin and studying abroad**

The correlation between parents' SES and their children's educational attainment has been thoroughly researched by many scholars (Scott, 1996; Bourdieu, 1997; Xue & Cao, 2005: pp. 199). Bourdieu (1997) argued that the economic, cultural and social capital of parents can be inherited by their children through education. Education can act as a symbol of cultural capital and a tool for social stratification and mobility. Education reproduces social stratification structures and influences the distribution of social opportunities and resources. The privileged classes have more capital at their disposal and have a significant advantage in accessing educational opportunities,

while the working and peasant classes are at a disadvantage in accessing education and enjoying its fruits.

Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital helps to explain why resources are unequally distributed between different social classes and how various forms of capital are transformed and transmitted between generations. According to Bourdieu, there are three primary forms of capital: economic, cultural and social capital. Economic capital can be converted into money, and this process of conversion is institutionalised in the form of private property rights. Cultural capital can be transformed into economic capital under certain conditions. This conversion process is institutionalised through professional qualifications or educational certificates. Social capital, which consists of social relations, can also be transformed into economic capital under certain conditions. This transformation process is institutionalised as some noble status. In whatever form it takes, parental capital can be passed on to future generations or inherited by children.

Chinese scholars such as Lu (2002) have proposed a fourth form of capital, political or power capital. Political capital refers primarily to having social resources at one's disposal based on the country's political organisation and the ruling Party's organisational system. This capital relies on political positions acquired in government institutions and is held by party cadres, government officials, and middle and senior civil servants. This form of capital plays a vital role in Chinese society. These four forms of capital combine to determine the stratification and mobility of society. Under certain conditions, the various forms of capital are transformed into each other while being able to be inherited or passed on between generations. For example, parents' economic capital can be transformed into their children's cultural capital by investing in their children's HE; parents' political capital can provide opportunities for their children's future employment. Guo & Min (2006) adopted correspondence analysis and logistic models to analyse the effect of family economic and cultural capital on secondary and HE attainment in China by using data from a nationwide town household survey in 2000. They concluded that Students whose parents work in Party and government institutions, state-owned enterprises and in professional and technical positions have more family capital and have a greater chance of receiving HE; those whose families are financially well-off and whose parents have higher qualifications also increase their children's chances of receiving HE.

In accordance with social stratification theory, the established socioeconomic selectivity in study abroad chances can be seen as the outcome of a sense of

distinction, which should motivate students from affluent backgrounds to strive to maintain their (parents') privileged status in society (Bourdieu, 1984). Faced with diminishing opportunities to differentiate themselves vertically through HE degrees due to the substantial educational expansion over the last few decades (Schofer & Meyer, 2005), students from affluent backgrounds should attempt to differentiate themselves horizontally within HE (Lucas, 2001). He argued that the socially advantaged class would seek better quality educational opportunities at any educational stage. Due to the significant differences in resources and facilities of educational institutions, better-off families will choose to receive postgraduate education with higher prestige and better quality. Strategies for standing out in HE include the selection of notable HEIs (Schindler & Reimer, 2011; Triventi, 2013) and lucrative fields of study (Triventi et al., 2017; Van De Werfhorst et al., 2003), as well as the completion of study-related stays abroad (Lörz et al., 2015). Studying abroad requires more direct and opportunity costs, making it more difficult for people with lower social origins to fulfil the opportunity of ISM. Students from privileged backgrounds should be afforded more opportunities to study abroad because of their greater access to financial resources, networks, and cultural experiences (Netz & Finger, 2016). In conclusion, this viewpoint illustrates why students from privileged backgrounds should have easier access to the opportunities presented by studying abroad.

Studying abroad may necessitate more significant financial, cultural, and personal resources than enrolling in a college or university in one's home country (Netz & Grüttner, 2021; Wiers-Jensen, 2011). There is some inconsistency in the findings of earlier studies on the family cultural capital and ISM in Europe. As stated by Maiworm and Teichler (2002), mobile students engaged in the ERASMUS programme come from families with similar educational backgrounds to those of other students. Contrarily, another study concluded that students from non-academic homes make much less use of possibilities for studying abroad than those from families with highly educated pupils, as stated in the Eurostudent 2005 report (2005, p. 157). In addition, multiple studies conducted in Nordic nations found a link between family economic conditions and participation in overseas education. They pointed out that students studying abroad come from wealthier backgrounds than their counterparts who stay-at-home HEIs. It has been demonstrated in the countries of Denmark and Sweden (Munk, 2009), Finland, Iceland, Norway, and the Faroe Islands (Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jensen, 2010).

The majority of recent research has likewise indicated that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to study abroad (Di Pietro, 2019a; Hauschildt et al., 2018; Lingo 2019; Netz & Finger, 2016; Salisbury et al., 2008; Wiers-Jenssen, 2011). In this context, some researchers have suggested that ISM contributes to maintaining social stratification (Di Pietro, 2019a; Kratz & Netz, 2018; Lingo, 2019; Schnepf & Colagrossi, 2020).

HE drives social stratification through the mobility of graduates. It is a source of motivation for social stratification and changes in the social structure (Zhang, 2020). Educational stratification can be divided into vertical and horizontal stratification, with vertical stratification referring to differences in the level or quantity of education and horizontal stratification referring to different types or qualities of education within the same educational stratum. Both vertical and horizontal stratification can be reflected in differences in education due to differences in predispositions such as family background (Li, 2016; Zhang, 2020). These differences could perpetuate social inequalities.

The Maximally Maintained Inequality (MMI) and Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI) hypotheses focus on explaining the perpetuation of inequality in terms of the vertical and horizontal stratification of education, respectively. The MMI hypothesis, as proposed by Boliver (2011), suggests that differences in education obtained by different socioeconomic groups are unlikely to be reduced by simply expanding educational opportunities. This is supported by the findings of Boliver's study, which showed that despite the expansion of higher education in Britain, social class inequalities persisted. Educational inequality at this level only declines when the demand for a particular educational stage is close to saturation for families with high SES. However, new inequalities emerge at the following educational stage (Raftery & Hout, 1993). EMI, on the other hand, is further concerned with level differentiation at equivalent stages of education. The Effectively Maintained Inequality (EMI) hypothesis, proposed by Lucas (2001), posits that families with high social status will seek higher levels of education to maintain their advantage, and will switch to higher-quality education when there is a more pronounced difference in quality. This theory, however, has been criticised for its operationalisation and focus on modal educational destinations (Boliver, 2011; Boliver, 2016). Despite these criticisms, EMI remains a valuable resource for understanding and addressing educational inequality (Lucas, 2001). Even if education at a given stage is made available to households in the upper middle class, only lower-quality educational resources are expanded to households in the lower strata of society. In the context of HE expansion, the impact of the horizontal

dimension of educational stratification remains significant. In the face of stratified education provision, middle and upper-class households are more likely to choose the top of the HE system (or prestigious foreign universities). In contrast, lower social status households are more likely to make more secure and predictable education choices directly related to employment due to financial constraints.

However, the merit-based selection hypothesis assumes that in modern societies, individuals acquire social status primarily based on performance principles such as education and qualifications and that the role of antecedent factors such as gender and family background fades away (Bell, 1972; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1997; Breen & Goldthorpe, 1999; Treiman & Yip, 1989). The role of family background in access to postgraduate education is diminished or even eliminated by the fact that academic achievement, rather than family background, is the main criterion for selection to postgraduate education as a source of advanced talents. Some empirical studies of American society also support the hypothesis of reduced inequality; for example, Mare (1980) found that fathers' education and SES had no significant effect on access to graduate education after controlling for academic achievement. Stolzenberg (1994) also found that fathers' education and occupation had no significant effect on whether or not university students took the North American graduate entrance examination. In the UK case, Gorard et al. (2006) found little evidence of social class inequalities in access to postgraduate study through a comprehensive review of the participation literature in the UK.

Nevertheless, relevant research shows that since China's reform and opening up, the role of family background in individuals' access to undergraduate education opportunities has shown an upward trend, and its influence has not weakened with the expansion of HE enrollment (Deng & Treiman, 1997; Zhou et al., 1998; Li, 2006; Liu, 2008; Li, 2010; Wu, 2009; Wu & Zhang, 2010; Wu, 2012). As more and more members of society have access to undergraduate education, higher levels of graduate education may become an important distinction in "educational advantage": members from advantaged classes are more likely to choose postgraduate education to maintain their status advantage. A study on the expectations of graduate students in Xi'an found that family income and the father's education level had a significant positive impact on the aspirations of undergraduate students to pursue postgraduate education (Li et al., 2007). Bao & Zhang (2009) analysed data from a survey on the "Academic Development of College and University Graduates" conducted by the School of Education, Peking University, in 2008. They concluded that students from

more privileged family socioeconomic backgrounds and parents with more cultural capital are more inclined to choose postgraduate education.

In addition, some studies discuss the relationship between the intention of studying abroad and family socioeconomic background. By using data from the Beijing College Student Panel Survey (BCSPS), Li (2016) conducted an empirical study and found that after controlling for university type and academic performance that parental SES significantly affects the choice between domestic and overseas study, with higher parental SES associated with a greater likelihood of choosing to study overseas. Parental SES has a significant effect on the choice of mobility experience. After controlling for academic performance, parental education and household income still have a significant positive impact on children's choice to study overseas, suggesting that the higher the relative cost of postgraduate education, the more influential the role of parental SES. Li (2018) then carried out the studies using the same BCSPS dataset. He pointed out that access to postgraduate study in China is relatively equitably distributed, while opportunities to study overseas are significantly influenced by family cultural and economic capital. Children with advantaged classes tend to have more options to carry on their studies. Meanwhile, Min et al. (2018) drew on a similar conclusion to the previous research.

The high cost of mobility required for overseas HE, which entails more direct and opportunity costs, makes it more difficult for people of lower social origin to have the chance to move across borders. If the government provides financial support for education, it can help to reduce disparities in access to overseas education. If not, it can exacerbate the gap between different social classes and increase social inequality. China is in a period of social transition, and with the gradual deepening of market economy reforms, the differentiation and reproduction of different social classes have been transformed. The role of HE, including overseas HE, in the differentiation and mobility of social class cannot be underestimated.

With the expansion of HE, access to HE has expanded rapidly in quantitative terms, with a significant increase in access for different social classes on the surface. While more socially inclusive than an elite system, a highly participatory HE system does not mean all people have equal access to education. Qualitative differences are gradually replacing quantitative differences in HE. With a stratified education provision, middle and upper-class families are committed to choosing institutions at the top of the HE system. In contrast, lower social-status families are more likely to be constrained by financial constraints to make more secure and predictable educational choices related

to future employment (Marginson, 2016). Thus, in the context of the expansion of HE, the impact of the horizontal dimension of educational stratification is becoming apparent. With the rapid expansion of HE in China, studying abroad has gradually become essential for the middle class to solidify their social status.

Recent European empirical literature on international exchange reveals that its participants are a select group. For instance, they come from a more affluent family, as evidenced by their parent's level of education (Cammelli et al., 2008; Salisbury et al., 2008; Orr et al., 2011; Wiers-Jenssen, 2011; Rodrigues, 2013). In the meantime, they have excellent abilities and skills, proven by educational successes, a good command of foreign languages, and educational proactiveness (Salisbury et al., 2008; Rodrigues, 2013; Lörz et al., 2015). However, the existing research on academic background, family SES and the possibility of studying abroad for Chinese international students are under-researched.

A few studies have explored the relationship between the intention to study abroad and their family origins. However, the participants generally come from a particular region or university, and the sample size is small, without a domestic control group. For example, Pan and Jiang (2015) analysed the factors related to the intention of studying abroad for undergraduates and junior college students through an investigation in Beijing. By establishing logit regression models, the study concluded that the economic and social background of the family significantly influences students' intention to study abroad. The higher the father's level of education, the higher the family's income level, and the more developed the city in which the family is located, the more likely students are intended to study abroad (Pan & Jiang, 2015). The study also found that students from high-quality universities are more likely to choose to study abroad. Recent studies have explored a range of factors that influence Chinese students' intention to study abroad. Lu (2023) and Wang (2020) both highlight the role of family background, with intellectual capital and social status being significant motivators. Traditional values, particularly Confucianism and the one-child policy, also play a role (Lee & Morrish, 2012). However, there is a distinction between the intention to study abroad and the eventual decision and action to study abroad. It is necessary to explore whether entry to postgraduate education in the UK HEIs correlated to graduates' prior academic background and family SES. This study analyses the relationship between academic background, family background and the probability of studying abroad through logistic regression to figure out, after controlling for gender and undergraduate HEIs type, whether the probability of studying abroad is positively related to parents' cultural, economic and political capital.

With numerous scholarship programmes and policy support, whether students from working-class families have more possibilities to study abroad will be examined.

### **5.5 Problems after returning**

Many studies discuss the post-return adaptation of returnees. For example, David Zweig (2015) argued that the difficulty in finding employment for returnees stems from a decline in the quality of international students who have left China. Only a small proportion of graduates from the top 500 HEIs worldwide means that the quality of their diplomas is not high. Thus, their quality and competence are questionable. Xiang and Shen (2009) discussed the structural changes and stage characteristics of the returnee population in mainland China from the perspective of social stratification. They pointed out that the situation of the returnee population in China has also undergone corresponding changes during the transition from the “wealth generation” stage to the “wealth accumulation” stage. The situation of the returnees has changed due to the unevenness of overseas universities. Some lower-qualified diplomas may not be detectable by employers, which has led some returnees to the dilemma of being unemployed after their return to China.

In addition, some scholars have pointed out that the study abroad policies of some developed countries are commercially oriented, industrialising study abroad and attracting Chinese self-funded students by lowering their standards, which harms the quality and employment of returnees. In the past, Western universities recruited Chinese postgraduate students based on their research potential (Xiang & Shen, 2009). Today, many Western educational institutions, particularly in the UK and Australia, see education as a commodity sold to the new Chinese middle class, which has both removed the scarcity of HE overseas and created problems with the quality of students that can arise from commercialised education. The international education community criticised the action of lowering standards and expanding the recruitment of international students to reverse the education funding gap (Ip, 2021).

According to the overseas newspaper Sing Tao Daily (2005), many returnees in mainland China have a vague self-positioning and sometimes have an exaggerated sense of their abilities. In the context of the scarcity of returnees and the absence of a market-based allocation of talent resources, the status of returnees can quickly become a unique signal in the workplace. However, as the labour market system continues to improve and competition in the job market intensifies, the relationship between overseas and local talents has become competitive. In the face of domestic

graduates who are more familiar with the local market, the status of returnees is becoming less critical in the job search process. Some scholars highlight the challenges faced by these individuals. Among them, Hao et al. (2016) noted the complexity of the current job market and Mok et al. (2019) emphasised the need for adaptive skills.

Nonetheless, several studies highlighted the fact that international study experience is highly valued by various employers. For instance, the British Council conducted a survey of 350 Chinese companies to learn more about their views on the benefits and drawbacks of hiring graduates with a degree abroad. According to the poll, 86 per cent of companies see studying abroad as a benefit (British Council, 2018). Chinese international students were found to have notable advantages over their domestic peers in areas such as creativity, problem-solving and analytical capabilities, and interpersonal and communication abilities after studying abroad (British Council, 2018). However, it also found that graduates who had studied abroad were viewed as less disciplined and loyal to their positions because they may have more job-hopping opportunities. In addition, they had less knowledge of the local market and fewer connections to develop functional job-related networks compared to graduates who had studied in their home country (British Council, 2018). Centre for China and Globalisation (CCG) (2017) found that over half of international graduates lacked knowledge of the domestic employment scenario, with 46 per cent claiming they were unable to adapt to the local working environment. According to a paper published in 2016 by Hao et al., returning graduates studying abroad may have trouble readjusting to the workplace culture in China, which places a strong focus on interpersonal networks. It was concluded that studying abroad had several upsides and some negatives (Xiong & Mok, 2020). However, Wu et al. (2018) provided a more positive outlook. He pointed out that returnees are more likely to become self-employed in rural areas. Meanwhile, Zhao (2023) identified advantages in family background and job placement for return individuals. These findings suggest a nuanced picture of the job market for returnees in China, with both challenges and opportunities.

Employers increasingly view work experience as an essential asset for internationally mobile graduates due to its importance in determining a candidate's employability (Gribble et al., 2017). However, international students may have difficulty securing relevant job placements or internships due to immigration and visa rules imposed by host countries and a lack of built-in placement options within academic programmes (Goodwin & Mbah, 2017; Jackson, 2017). Due to a lack of formal job experience and placement possibilities in their study abroad programmes, Gribble, Rahimi, and Blackmore (2017) stated that international students have a hard time justifying their

overseas qualifications in the competitive labour markets in their home countries.

The education systems in China and the UK are different. Master's degrees in China generally take two to three years, requiring thesis publication. Also, set aside at least one semester for students to participate in internships in companies and enterprises. In contrast, UK master's degrees are only one year long, and it is hard to develop relevant professional experience. Compared to international students, non-mobile graduates with more employable skills and networks are highly favoured in the job-searching process.

Compared with indigenous graduates, the job-seeking advantage of returnees in the job market has been weakened for mobile graduates. Despite the existence of national and local policies to support the employment and entrepreneurship of international students (as discussed in Chapter 5.2), returnees still have difficulties in finding employment. So, what are the factors that affect the employment of returnees? Can returnees make the transition from education to work? Do they differ from non-mobile graduates in employment rates, initial monthly salaries, and job satisfaction? Do they still need private social capital to help with employment? These are the questions that this study attempts to explore.

## **5.6 Employment outcomes of returnees**

Research on the mobility of Chinese international students has focused chiefly on macro policy analysis, brain drain and migration. In the recent two decades, cultural and social adaptability and employment competencies, as well as comparison with indigenous talents, have gained attention.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the topic of employment competencies, and they have produced contradictory findings. Salary increases upon return from studying abroad were documented by Zweig and Han (2010). In addition, working for an international firm improves their outlook since they believe these businesses offer the best payback on human capital investments (Zweig & Han, 2010, p.103). However, a number of studies found that many returning workers were paid less than they had anticipated. In Karen, Guo and Ping's study in 2003 (as cited in Tharenou & Seet, 2014), some Chinese returnees from Australia were dissatisfied because their importance in the workplace and their career opportunities fell below their expectations. In a similar vein, those who had previously lived in Singapore and subsequently returned to their home countries voiced their dissatisfaction with the fact that their incomes had not

been increased to the level that had been guaranteed (Xiang & Shen, 2009). These results suggested that returnees' income might be lower than commonly believed.

Employers highly value personnel who possess foreign language proficiency, connections in the global market, and a comprehensive understanding of different cultures and perspectives (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Welch & Hao, 2013; Yi, 2011). Nevertheless, returnees have a significant disadvantage due to their little knowledge of the local market (Yi, 2011). Research has shown that returnees possess vision and determination but have limited political influence and are significantly underrepresented in top leadership roles compared to local individuals with similar abilities (Li, 2005, 2006).

In addition, a range of recent studies have explored the impact of studying abroad on the job outcomes of Chinese international students. Wu (2020) found that a positive study abroad experience can significantly influence career decision-making, with family influences, overseas social life, and personal improvement being key factors. Similarly, Huang (2021) found that studying abroad can enhance graduates' employability, job search process, and early careers. Besides, Singh and Fan (2021) found that studying in Australia provided Chinese students with a range of capital, including the acquisition of human, cultural, psychological, and identity capital, facilitating their employment upon return to China. However, the lack of social capital in China was identified as a potential weakness. Upon returning to China, the returnees face challenges in the job market, with international qualifications no longer guaranteeing employment success (Hao et al., 2016). Some scholars underscored the need for different forms of intellectual capital and the important function of *guanxi* (networks) in the competitive Chinese labour market (Hao et al., 2016; Singh & Fan, 2021). Hayes et al. (2013) and Tran et al. (2021) further emphasised the importance of possessing indigenous insights and the capacity to adjust to local contexts, alongside recognising the significance of cultivating both dual *guanxi* and transnational networks. These studies collectively suggest that while international qualifications may provide an initial advantage, they are insufficient for successful employment in China due to the loss of domestic social networking.

Moreover, some scholars indicate the essential function of career guidance services in leading graduates to be employed. For example, Yang (2011) emphasised the importance of aligning study abroad goals with intercultural, personal, and academic/career development, as well as the role of host country experiences in achieving these goals. Huang (2018) further underscored the need for universities to

provide tailored support to Chinese international students, particularly in enhancing their employability through international experiences. Meanwhile, Huang and Turner (2018) highlighted the need for UK universities to better support for Chinese international students in enhancing their employability. These findings suggest a need for further research and support for returnees in navigating the competitive job market in China.

These studies reveal the positive and negative effects of studying abroad. The employment obstacles include a lack of employment information, career guidance and loss of proper networking. Most studies on the employment of Chinese students are macro-level analyses and lack micro-level studies in terms of student characteristics, skills and social networking. In addition, most of the studies focused on Chinese returnees and did not tell fresh graduates and other immigrant returnees. The employment and difficulties among different groups may vary. Whether a postgraduate degree leads to an advantage in the labour market still requires further proof. We take Chinese one-year master's students studying in the UK as the participants of our study, comparing them with local master's students in terms of academic achievement, professional networks, family background, employment process and employment outcomes, and trying to analyse the relationship between human capital, organisational social capital, individual social capital and employment outcomes.

## **6 Central variable definitions and related theories**

This section discusses the development of human capital and social capital concepts, and the theories related to employment. After that, it analyses the empirical studies of human capital, social capital and employment.

### **6.1 Human capital: concept and development**

The human capital theory emerged in the late 1950s, and economists like Theodore W. Schultz and Gary S. Becker did much of the heavy lifting in developing and refining it. Investments in education, training, and healthcare are all mentioned as ways to increase human capital, but education is emphasised as particularly important. According to this view, education should not be regarded as a consumer good; rather, it should be regarded as an investment that develops personal capabilities as well as society output.

Schultz initiated the concept of human capital in the 1960s. In the course of a systematic study of economic growth and social development, he found that the rapid increase in productivity in the capital-poor countries of the post-World War II period could not be explained by considering only the two major factors of physical capital input and labour force. Only by considering human capital as an essential factor of production can we explain the rapid recovery and growth of resource-poor countries such as Switzerland and West Germany after the crisis more comprehensively and rationally (Schultz, 1961). Schultz uses a wealth of empirical material to demonstrate that the role of land and other resource factors, which contribute to the modernisation of the economy, is decreasing (Schultz, 1961). The role of technology and learning is increasing, regardless of the country's income level.

He criticises the long-standing traditional views of neglecting human capital in constructing economic growth models and insisting on the homogeneity of capital and labour. He explains the general properties of human capital, the qualitative differences between human capital and physical capital, and the role of human capital accumulation in the development and economic take-off of modern societies (Schultz, 1971). He also emphasises the crucial importance of human capital in explaining income disparity.

He pointed out that people acquire valuable skills and knowledge, forms of capital resulting from careful investments. Investment in education, health care and other direct expenses can improve the quality of individuals, increase labour productivity and increase income indirectly, thus alleviating the problem of uneven income distribution (Schultz, 1971). According to Schultz, human capital is the knowledge, wisdom and skills people demonstrate through labour work. These are acquired through investment rather than innate ability and are formed through education, training, health care and migration (Schultz, 1971). Schultz also highlights that investment in human capital is the most rewarding of all types of investment. Schulz's pioneering research on human capital developed human capital theory and laid a solid foundation for developing endogenous growth theory.

However, Schulz's theory also has certain limitations and needs further development and improvement. His definition of human capital is only an understanding, and the concept is vaguely defined. He only emphasises the external causes of human capital formation, ignoring the internal causes of the formation process, and the conceptual analysis is not deep enough. In his analysis of the relevant economic growth issues, Schultz focused relatively on qualitative macro-analysis and lacked the database for

micro-analysis. The relative weakness of micro-analysis and the inadequate consideration of form factors made Schultz unable to construct a generalised human capital model.

Another economist, Gary Becker, made outstanding contributions to improving human capital theory by providing a solid foundation for microeconomic analysis. He applied the theory of neoclassical economics to the empirical study of various investments in human capital and their rates of return, human capital and economic growth, human capital and family fertility, income distribution patterns, the relationship between age and income, the inequality between men and women in education, and the duration of unemployment. It has also developed essential theories on human capital production, the distribution of returns to human capital, and the analysis of human capital and career choice. He defined human capital as the collection of productive skills embodied in a person that can be used to generate earnings in the labour market and to augment a household's consumption options (Becker, 1975).

Becker believes that education and training are the most critical human capital investments and that human capital investments can sustainably contribute to economic growth. He argues that sustained growth in a country's per capita income comes primarily from human capital, i.e., the growth of knowledge, skills and the spread of scientific and technological developments that allow scientists, technicians, managers and others to apply knowledge to the production of goods systematically. He defined human capital investment as activities that affect a person's future monetary and psychological income by adding resources. They include education and training, purchasing health care, spending time seeking the best-paid jobs (rather than doing whatever jobs come along), relocating, and taking a low-paid job alternatively to learn from it. Although they significantly impact the economy, these forms of investment activities are not always easy to achieve. These forms of investment activities vary in terms of their impact on individual income and consumption, the amount of investment, return and the closeness of the link between investment and income. However, all have different degrees of impact in improving skills and qualities, enriching knowledge and experience, thus improving physical and mental health and increasing monetary or psychological income. His points of view have been widely accepted and used until nowadays.

However, American economists presented by Michael Spence pointed out that the expansion of education in developing countries in the 1950s and 1960s did not

accelerate the economic development of these countries but rather put educated individuals out of work. This suggests that human capital theory is incorrect in its assertion that improving human cognitive ability increases labour productivity and economic growth. They argue that the role of education is not to raise cognitive levels but to screen people for different abilities (Spence, 1973; Brown et al., 2004). When they meet a candidate in the labour market, they need to gain direct knowledge of the candidate's ability to fill a vacancy. They can, however, learn about personal attributes and characteristics such as gender, family background and education level. Gender and family background are referred to as "markers", while education (e.g., a degree or certificate from a prestigious university) is referred to as a "signal", which employers can use to understand a candidate's capabilities, particularly in terms of education. The level of education reflects a person's ability, and employers can use a candidate's diploma or level of education to identify and place him or her in the appropriate position. There is a positive relationship between educational attainment and wage levels, meaning that the higher the level of education, the higher the wage level. Human capital, or the educational level of a degree, is a highly effective market signal that directly impacts a worker's initial choice of employment, employment and re-employment.

In addition, new branches, such as the labour market segmentation theory, emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. The sociologist Piore was the first person to make the distinction between a main and a secondary market for work, and this distinction is utilised by the dual structure hypothesis. While the primary market is distinguished by high salaries, good working conditions, secure employment, and possibilities for progress, the secondary market is characterised by low earnings, undesirable working conditions, job instability, and no opportunities for advancement (Doeringer, 1986; Doeringer & Piore, 1985). This theory contends that the conventional theory of the labour market is unable to account for the rising income disparity between employees as well as the numerous forms of discrimination that may be seen in the employment market. The labour market segmentation theory heavily emphasises the market's segmentation properties and the critical role played by institutional and social factors in determining wages and job opportunities. Segmentation theories provide an alternative explanation for the value of human capital investment compared to more conventional conceptions of human capital. They argue that human capital investment is merely a signal that serves a screening function and that workers are educated only to enter the primary labour market and provide employers with a signal of high training potential, whereas those with less education are considered to have low training potential and can only work at the bottom of the labour ladder or in the

secondary labour market. During the economic transition period in China, institutional segmentation is the primary manifestation of labour market segmentation. Labourers with high levels of education and high human capital stocks can easily occupy the top of the labour ladder or remain in the primary labour market within the system (e.g., public enterprises and government departments). In contrast, individuals with low stocks of human capital levels are considered to have low training potential and contribute little. They can only enter the secondary labour market outside the system, which is unstable, with few benefits and poor treatment.

However, in a world where technological advancement accelerates at an unprecedented pace, the obsolescence of skills is a stark reality. The concept of human capital (one's stock of knowledge, habits, and personality attributes, embodied in the ability to perform labour to produce economic value) faces a threat like never before. The notion of the "death of human capital" speaks to this phenomenon, where what was once a robust accumulation of skills and knowledge becomes rapidly outdated, depreciated, and, in the harshest sense, worthless. The concept of human capital is undergoing a significant transformation in the face of technological advancement, as highlighted by Brown et al. (2020) and Keep et al. (2022). This transformation is driven by the need for quality jobs and the emergence of a new, more fluid and diverse human capital. However, this redefinition is not without its challenges, as Khristolyubova (2020) pointed out: the changing role and quality of human capital in the context of digitalisation and the increasing complexity of life. These studies collectively underscore the need to reevaluate human capital in the modern world economy. The death of human capital is a dramatic redefinition of the concept in the face of technological advancement. It is not an end but a transformation. As with any death, it is accompanied by a rebirth: the emergence of a new kind of human capital, one that is fluid, diverse, and continually evolving. The challenge for individuals, educators, and policymakers is to understand this transformation and to ensure that the value of human capital is not lost but reimagined for a new era.

Although human capital research has been quite fruitful, there is still a significant theoretical gap. Scholars have conducted a great deal of research on the relationships among individuals' human capital. However, many problems related to capital and other production factors cannot be comprehensively explored without considering the complicated social relationships among groups. Human capital theory cannot be used to explain organisational relationships formed by people working together, the interactions between various social groups, and the unique role of group relationships in the growth of social wealth. Although human capital is an essential factor of

production and the subject of various factors, people appear not only as individuals in using resource factors but also as social groups in most cases. As social groups, there are various complex social relationships between individuals. When studying people or human capital, it is vital to examine the social relations closely related to individuals; otherwise, human capital cannot be studied thoroughly.

The introduction of social capital theory has further deepened the research connotation of human capital theory, extending it from the study of the individual to the study of social groups and even social relations. When social capital theory studies people at the level of social relations, the tentacles of human capital theory research extend to a broader space and research prospect. The social capital theory opens a window for studying human capital theory and promotes the development of capital theory.

## **6.2 Graduates' human capital and employment**

Blau and Duncan began early research on human capital with their seminal study in 1967, the *Structure of American Occupations*, which emphasised the impact of individual education on compensation received and conducted a rich empirical investigation of it (Blau & Duncan, 1967). Through extensive research, they found that education and prior occupational status significantly impacted status attainment more than parental status. Social resources acquired later in life had a relative advantage in status attainment over those endowed earlier. Since then, most of the evolved studies have affirmed their findings and built on them to refine and add to this initial conclusion. However, some scholars also point to the declining role of the antecedents of family background in social stratification and mobility, but its role in status acquisition remains significant (Hauser & Featherman, 1976; Grusky & Hauser, 1984; Ganzeboom et al., 1991). After this time, aspects of the link between human capital and employment have developed into sophisticated theories and models.

As the employment difficulties of university graduates have come to the fore, scholars have shifted the perspective of human capital research to the employment of new graduates, and there is a growing body of literature applying human capital theory to discuss the related issues.

Human capital theory suggests that education is an investment that has a significant impact on employment. The higher the level and quality of education received, the higher the marginal productivity generated by the labour force, and therefore, the

more likely they are to achieve good occupational status. In the case of university graduates, the main channels for acquiring and accumulating human capital are a continuous investment in education and their continuous efforts. Education is an essential indicator of knowledge and skills among the different dimensions of human capital. The level of education can be a fundamental signal in the labour market, which can be seen as a sign or a filter that can clearly distinguish the level of competence of different job seekers in the united and fully competitive labour markets.

Educational status refers to the level of education received by an individual, including the individual's academic performance at university, the various qualifications obtained, and the experience of student leaders. It can signal the potential productivity of a job seeker in the employment process. In addition, it can also show some of the characteristics of an individual, including insight, quality, and social network. These characteristics, in turn, can influence information about an individual's social status evaluation. Thus, employers can use the indicators to judge the scale of benefits an individual can bring.

A range of studies have explored the concept of human capital in the context of university graduates. Kharchenko (2019) and Ma'dan et al. (2019) both emphasised the importance of human capital in enhancing the competency and employability of graduates. Kharchenko (2019) proposed a methodology for assessing human capital, while Ma'dan et al. (2019) highlighted the need for a conceptual framework to increase competency. However, the theory has been criticised for its limitations, including its inability to explain the increasing wage inequality and the role of social background in graduate outcomes (Marginson, 2019). Despite these limitations, the theory remains relevant in understanding the role of education in economic growth, particularly in terms of improving productivity, enhancing innovation, and facilitating technology adoption (Dabla-Norris et al., 2014). Su and Meng (2012) added to this by underscoring the significance of both human and social capital in employment, with human capital being particularly important in determining starting salaries. Benati and Fischer (2020) took a more holistic approach, considering not just human capital but also social, cultural, and psychological capital in preparing students for graduate life. Similarly, Grayson (2004) suggested that broader social dynamics also play a significant role in graduates' job outcomes, indicating a more complex interplay between these factors. These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of human capital and its role in shaping the outcomes of university graduates.

Currently, there is very little research on human capital and employment outcomes for

Chinese internationally mobile students; however, most studies focus on employment studies of indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate students in China. Meanwhile, the indicators of human capital used vary in different studies, and the findings from the existing empirical literature are inconsistent. Most of the literature found that university graduates with good academic performance, scholarships and student leadership are more likely to be successfully employed after graduation by adopting regression techniques (Yue et al., 2004; Min et al., 2006; Fan et al., 2005). However, some researchers, such as Qiao et al. (2011), pointed out that academic performance plays an insignificant role in job probability. They speculated that it might be because employers disregard graduates' academic achievement but only value the reputation of the HEIs they graduated from when recruiting employees (Qiao et al., 2011). Some studies even found a significant negative effect of academic achievement on access to employment opportunities (Chen & Wang, 2009).

In addition, some studies adopted being a Communist Party member (or not) as an indicator of human capital. They found that whether graduates are Party member is irrelevant to graduates' employment attainment, but it is positively related to their initial salaries (Chen & Tan, 2004a). Meng et al. (2012) also found that graduates who were Communist Party members were more inclined to be hired by state-owned departments. It is because Communist Party members have vital learning, verbal and communication skills, a stronger sense of community and teamwork, matching the selection and hiring criteria of the state-owned sectors. In China, students who are Communist Party members are generally pioneers who study well and have leadership qualities, so many studies have used whether being a Party member as one of the indicators of human capital but the Communist Party as an organisation, where group members are linked and share information. It also has the attribute of social capital. This study, therefore, treats it as a control variable, which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 7.1.

Much literature examined the role of the two indicators, English certificates (i.e., CET-4<sup>1</sup> and CET-6) and other occupational certificates (i.e., computer and accounting), in predicting employment attainment (Yue et al., 2004; Hu et al., 2007; Li & Tan, 2011). It is generally agreed that having an English certificate such as CET-4 or CET-6 does not significantly affect job search outcomes compared to other certificates. Most universities have made English certificates, such as CET 4, a requirement for awarding

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<sup>1</sup> The CET (College English Test) test-takers are undergraduates in China who are majoring in any discipline except English. It examines the English proficiency of HE students in China. The CET-4 is mandatory for university students and a prerequisite for a bachelor's degree. Those students who have passed the CET-4 (with a score of at least 425), usually third-year undergraduate students, take the CET-6.

undergraduate degrees. In this case, the presence of other certificates becomes an essential signal for employers to examine the human capital of graduates. In addition, almost all studies that use HEI types (elite or not) as a measure of human capital find that university reputation significantly and positively affects the job search outcomes of university graduates. However, some scholars have questioned the HEI type as an indicator of human capital. They pointed out that HEI type (e.g., prestigious or not) is a dual factor related to the stock of human capital and the quantity and quality of the social capital of graduates (Lai et al., 2012). On the one hand, attending a prestigious HEI is more conducive to the accumulation of knowledge and the ability to deploy productive capacity; on the other hand, the better the reputation of the school, the better the quality of the university-based social network (e.g., alumni networking) built up during the education process, and the more and better the quality of employment information that graduates receive through the HEIs.

Research on human capital and the starting salary of graduates has found that academic performance, whether or not one has received a scholarship, and Communist Party membership are irrelevant to graduates starting salary. However, those who take part-time working experience as an indicator of human capital find that it plays a decisive role in having high salaries (Chen & Tan, 2004a; Qiao et al., 2011). In addition, the vast majority of studies have found that having English certificates is related to high starting salary levels, while other occupational certificates have a less significant effect. Some studies have also found significant positive relationships between HEI type (i.e., elite or not) and field of study on starting salary levels (Hu et al., 2007; Li & Tan, 2011; Hu & Qiu, 2011). However, Chen and Tan (2004a) investigated and analysed the employment status of undergraduates in 2003 and 2004 through logistic and linear regression models. They found that university reputation has no significant effect on the acquisition of career status and earnings of graduates.

Most of the studies mentioned above refer to undergraduate graduates, while some refer to HE graduates in general, without distinguishing between different levels of education. Regarding the studies on postgraduate employment, Xu (2002) and Li and Tan (2011) pointed out that the contribution of human capital is dominant in the employment process of postgraduate education. The role is more significant than that of social capital. Moreover, according to a survey of 56 HEIs, Zhang (2017) concluded that the role and impact of human capital on employment opportunities and starting salary are significant. Wang's (2020) study also indicated that human capital stock significantly affects graduates' job-major matching rates and job satisfaction. However, studies by some scholars have shown that as human capital depreciates due to

increased competition for employment and the expansion of postgraduate education, the social capital possessed by individuals in the employment process becomes dominant and gradually becomes more prominent in the job search process (Liu & Ma, 2019; Ma & Ding, 2010; Zhang et al., 2007; Zhao, 2012).

Overall, the findings on the impact of contributing factors of human capital on job probability and starting salaries are inconsistent. However, generally, a positive predictive effect of human capital on occupational status attainment and starting salaries can be seen. Meanwhile, the selection of human capital indicators based on different research purposes is more arbitrary, with fewer studies strictly based on definitions. Furthermore, existing research, to our knowledge, needs an examination of the relationship between human capital and employment outcomes among graduates with internationally mobile experience. Since education and skills obtained at foreign institutions may differ from those acquired at home, several studies on the labour market of immigrants discriminate between country-specific and universal human capital (Friedberg, 2000; Duvander, 2001; Chiswick & Miller, 2003). Human capital may be somewhat attributable to a country's educational system (Wiers-Jensen & Try, 2005). Languages, institutional knowledge, nationally mandated professional competencies, and information gained through direct or indirect networking are country-specific examples. There is no guarantee that work experience and education gained abroad would improve productivity in the home country. However, graduates who have had an education in a foreign country may have additional extracurricular talents, such as proficiency in a foreign language and cross-cultural competency, which employers may regard as a positive in the hiring process.

Consequently, it is necessary to investigate whether the knowledge learned and the skills obtained at UK HEIs contribute in any way to the employment attainment and initial wages of graduates. This study adopts knowledge and acquired skills as the measurement of human capital stock (which will be further discussed in Chapter 7.1) for graduates with internationally mobile experience at UK HEIs, and compare it with their counterparts at indigenous HEIs to figure out the contribution of human capital in predicting labour market outcomes.

### **6.3 Social capital: concept and development**

The economist Glenn Loury criticised that scholars have placed too much emphasis on human capital and relatively little on social network relations. To better explain the racial income gap, Loury introduced the concept of social capital in economics to argue

for the critical influence of social resources on human capital accumulation (Loury, 1976). However, he did not systematically analyse the concept of social capital and, therefore, received little attention from economists. Since the 1970s, numerous challenges and issues have revolved around social capital. Educators, psychologists, economists, and sociologists have extensively explored it from various angles. However, academic circles have yet to agree on a definition of social capital. The theoretical research still needs to be mature, and empirical studies need to be more profound. Social capital is an instrumental but complicated concept, and diverse opinions promote complexity (Claridge, 2021; Paldam, 2000; Lyberaki & Paraskevopoulos, 2002). Nevertheless, the concept contains a mighty interpretive power, making it a popular multidisciplinary path to analyse many problems. After reviewing the explanations of different scholars, it can be summarised into the following schools.

Many scholars define social capital from a sociological perspective and use “networks” as an essential element of social capital. One school of thought sees social capital as an investment in many resources that can bring returns, according to Bourdieu (1986), who defined social capital in terms of class and network and pioneered the study of social capital from the perspective of social networks. He pointed out that social capital is a collection of actual or potential resources appropriated through institutionalised networks of relationships. It is shared by a specific group of people who form enduring networks and provide resources to support each group member. Bourdieu’s definition is essentially instrumental, as he argues that capital consists of two components: the social relations through which individuals can access the resources owned by the group and the quantity and quality of these resources (Portes, 1998).

Bourdieu also provided an explanation for how monetary, cultural, social, and symbolic capital can be transformed into one another. For example, Bourdieu (1990, p. 109) claimed that engaging in social interactions is to convert egocentric, individualistic, and illegitimate specific interests into more altruistic, collective, shared, and legitimate general goals. As a result, individuals and groups can get access to material resources, enrich their cultural capital, and strengthen their ties to formal organisations by fostering and cultivating social capital. Individuals’ economic, cultural, and symbolic capital and the extent of their social networks determine how much and how well social capital is accumulated and invested. Investing one’s time and experience, as well as using up one’s direct and indirect economic capital, is necessary for the creation and maintenance of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249-251). However, Bourdieu’s concept converts all forms of capital into economic capital, discounting the unique

value of other forms of capital. This analysis has a streak of materialism from the economic basis controlling the superstructure.

Bourdieu's definition of social capital influenced the later Robert Putnam. He moved the concept of social capital from the microsphere to the macrosphere, defining social capital as the trust, norms, and networks that contribute to social efficiency through coordinated activity (Putnam, 1993). In Putnam's view, social capital, occupied by social networks, is a society-wide resource that can positively affect those in the network. He pointed out that social capital stocks such as trust, practices and networks have a tendency to be self-reinforcing and accumulative. Networks of civic engagement breed solid norms of general communication and facilitate the generation of social trust, which facilitates coordination and communication, as well as reputation and the resolution of collective action dilemmas. Putnam equated social capital with the level of civiness in a community. He argued that the stock of social capital is the level of people's involvement in associations in a community, measured through participation in voluntary organisations and trust in political authority. Although there is no authoritative definition of social capital, Putnam's purpose is primarily accepted by all. After him, social capital began to receive wide attention from various disciplines, such as sociology and economics.

In the social resource theory, Lin Nan (1982, 2001) highlighted that social capital is anchored in social networks and consists of resources embedded in personal networks and interconnections. He defined social capital as resources embedded in social networks that can be accessed or mobilised in purposeful action (Lin, 2017). This definition emphasises the resources embedded in social networks, the ability of individuals to access social resources, and the mobilisation of these resources in purposeful action. Social capital can be obtained through direct or indirect social relations, but individuals cannot directly occupy it. If actors invest capital into value-added-oriented efforts, they can receive benefits and returns; social capital is an investment that can bring returns.

Later, Lin Nan revised the concept of social capital. He argued that social capital, an investment in social relations expected to be rewarded in the market, can be defined as acquired and used resources embedded in social structures in the instrumental and emotional actions on purpose (Lin, 2017) Lin Nan elaborated on the three elements of social capital: 1) resources, 2) embedded in the social structure, and 3) actions. He considered resources to be the core of the social capital theory.

Another scholar Bian (2004), also argued that social capital exists in the form of a network of relationships between social actors, the essence of which is the transferable resources embedded in this network of relationships between social actors. No social actor can own this resource unilaterally but must develop, accumulate and use it through a network of relationships.

However, another school defined social capital from a structuralist perspective. The representative figure among them is James S. Coleman. He was the first sociologist to put the concept of social capital in American sociology. He was also the first to speak on social capital theoretically and initiate a comprehensive and specific definition and analysis. He pointed out that social capital is capital property owned by individuals and a social structural resource. It mainly exists in interpersonal relationships and structures and provides convenience for individuals within the structure (Coleman, 1988).

Coleman discussed the concept of social capital from the perspective of the meaning of social structure. Social capital is defined in terms of its function as a socially structured resource owned by an individual. In his view, social networks are the carrier and manifestation of social capital and can provide people with resources at different levels. Coleman believed that social relations constitute resources that are useful to actors. Different forms of social capital can be formed through the conscious creation of various autonomous organisations that help the members of the organisation to achieve their stated goals (Coleman, 1988, 1990). He regarded the concept of social capital as a resource of action and believed that social capital could introduce social structure into the paradigm of rational action. Social capital, as opposed to other types of capital, is found in the structure of interpersonal interactions; it is not dependent on autonomous persons or involved in the production of tangible assets (Coleman, 1998, p. 98, 1990, p. 302). Coleman's detailed description of the individual interpretation of social capital has made significant progress in measuring social capital from a micro perspective, with social networks as the core.

However, Coleman's social capital theory has some limitations. To begin, he provides a relatively ambiguous definition of social capital. The concept takes into account not only the processes that lead to the accumulation of social capital but also the results of that accumulation, as well as the social organisations that can offer a setting in which the causes and effects can be brought into tangible existence. To him, there is no difference between having resources and having access to those resources based on one's social structure. Second, his function-based definition of social capital

logically confounds cause and effect and is tautological and repetitive. Only when it is utilised can social capital be measured; only from its consequences can society's prospective outcomes be calculated. It is possible that two distinct causes could both result in the same effect, but verifying this would require extensive empirical investigations of categorisation. Coleman's research on social capital is undoubtedly innovative and illuminating; some conceptual definitional flaws need to be fixed (Brown, 1999).

In addition to Coleman, other scholars also defined it from the perspective of social network structuralism. For example, Flap and other scholars believe that as a resource, social capital is embedded in social relations and social structure (Erikson & Jonsson, 1998; Flap & Boxman, 2017). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) defined social capital as the sum of actual or potential resources embedded in the relationship network owned by individuals or social individuals through the relationship networks. Determining social capital from the perspective of structuralism can eliminate the contradictory dilemma of logical synonymy and measurement of social capital theory.

Besides, some other sociologists believe that social capital is the ability to access resources. They defined it in terms of externalities, emphasising the ability and extent to which the holders of social capital can take in help from the social structure. For example, Ronald Burt (1992), in his comprehensive analysis of social capital, argued that social capital is the extent and ability of a network structure to provide information and control resources to the various nodes that are the actors in the network.

However, American sociologist Portes (1998) focused on defining social capital from a functional perspective, arguing that social capital is the result of "embedding" (rational or structural embedding). He emphasised the ability and extent to which an individual can access scarce resources within a network or broader social structure by embedding membership. From the perspective of social functioning, he proposed that social capital serves as a source of social control; from within the family, as a source of family support—within the family or from the family to the children; and from outside the family, as a source of earnings through networks outside the family (Portes, 1998), which can be used to explain issues of employment, upward mobility in the career advancement (Li & Yang, 2000, p. 121). However, this school of thought has problems defining whether social capital is a resource, the ability to take in the resource, or whether the definition is from the concept of social capital or the function of social capital. As a result, fewer scholars support the views.

The vast majority of scholars consider social capital as a resource, a capability, a mode of existence and a context, and include social structures and networks as well as some cultural elements in the connotation of social capital, expanding the definition's abstraction level.

In the same way that sociologists have debated the definition of social capital, economists have failed to reach a consensus on the definition. They defined social capital more from a macro perspective. Some linked social capital to social networks and defined social capital as a network of social relations (Fafchamps & Minten, 2002; Dasgupta, 2005); others defined social capital as norms and networks from the economic development perspective (Evans & Syrett, 2007). From the new economics perspective, other scholars argued that social capital represents an "inventory" generated by networks of organisations working together in solidarity to promote productive efficiency mutually. Furthermore, through the concept of embedded resources, economist Mouw (2006) argued that social interactions arising from cohort or community effects could be included in the definition of social capital, i.e., the characteristics, behaviours or outcomes of reference groups that can influence individual behaviour or outcomes can be considered as embedded resources, and such embedded resources are social capital. In short, from an economic point of view, social capital can be used as a means of generating economic benefits that derive from the positive externalities of social networks or social perceptions.

As can be seen, sociology and economics have different focuses on social capital. Sociology is primarily concerned with its social nature, as norms, including the structure of social networks and trust, are rooted in the social interaction of actors. In economics, however, researchers are concerned with its economic outcomes. Social capital is embodied as a current tool and element whose role is to generate future economic value for its owners. Apart from the above differences, some essential characteristics of social capital are agreed upon, including the objectivity of its existence, the subjectivity of its judgment, and the functionality of capital. To sum up, the current academic views on social capital are

- 1) the social nature of social capital, which relies on the relationship network of social members;
- 2) the elements of social capital, including networks, trust, participation, institutions, norms, and
- 3) the role of social capital is a resource that can yield returns.

The concept of social capital has been widely discussed in the literature, with scholars emphasising its role in social networks and its potential for improving public policy outcomes (Lin, 2017; Paraskevopoulos, 2010). However, most scholars have failed to clarify the discursive relationship between social capital, social practices, and social relations. They overwhelmingly considered social capital as a resource embedded in social networks. This focus on social networks has led to a neglect of the underlying premise of social practice activities (Lin, 2017). Social practices, as defined by Reckwitz (2002), are the shared routines, behaviours, and norms that shape everyday life and are key to the generation and expenditure of social capital. These practices are not only individual actions but also the interactions and relationships that form social networks (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). They are deeply ingrained in the body, mind, and material culture and are crucial for the reproduction of group values and norms (Schatzki, 1996). Therefore, social practices play a significant role in reinforcing an individual's membership and status within a particular social network. This oversight has been particularly problematic in the context of community development, where social capital has been criticised for its narrow definition and lack of clarity in its relationship with research findings (Kilpatrick et al., 2003). This study argues that social networks cannot be considered a form of social capital in a general way, meaning that social networks are not necessarily social capital. Knowing someone does not necessarily guarantee that effective interactions will result, and membership in an organisation does not necessarily make one a beneficiary. We can only say that positively valued and mobilised social networks are social capital, which is the production of social practice.

The concept of social capital has yet to be universally defined. However, an analysis of the theories of different schools of thought shows that social networks are a fundamental component of social capital, which is created and transmitted through social networks. The acquisition of social capital points to a particular purpose and requires social actors with a specific purpose to continuously construct and mobilise relevant social networks in order to obtain social capital and achieve the purpose they seek. In addition, the mobilisation of social capital usually aims at a particular outcome. It is important to note that social capital is not a static collection of elements of social networks, actors and resources. It should be understood as a dynamic process in which actors use their relational networks strategically to achieve their actions.

For this reason, this study combines static and dynamic approaches to defining social capital in terms of social capital stock and mobilisation. It also classifies social capital into organisational and private social capital based on the specificity of the participants

and the different education environments (the UK or China) they have. The so-called private social capital is the social network or social resources that individuals have acquired through their families or other private channels, for example, parents and relatives; the so-called organisational social capital is the social capital that individuals have built up through the organisations they belong to, such as HEIs, clubs, (internship) companies and the military (Lee & Brinton, 1996). Social network resources include classmates, teachers, club members, leaders, and comrades, which are typical organisational social capital that can be mobilised.

#### **6.4 Graduates' social capital and employment**

Initially, research on the impact of social capital on employment focused on status attainment, and these studies began in the 1970s. The general conclusion of the studies was that social capital significantly impacted status attainment and that this impact went beyond what could be explained by human capital theory. Granovetter (1973) introduced the concept of “embeddedness”, arguing that the behaviour of individuals is embedded in social structures and constrained by existing social relationships. He argued that within an individual’s social network relationships, “strong ties” correspond to a uniform level of interpersonal relations, with a high degree of homogeneity of resources that are of little significance to the individual. The people who can provide important information and help are those with weaker, more heterogeneous relationships. Through a series of studies, he explores the role of “weak ties” in acquiring occupational status. He noted that weak ties provide less repetitive information in the job search process and can be an effective bridge for individuals to connect with groups or individuals in the social system with whom they are unfamiliar (Granovetter, 1973). Lin Nan developed and modified the weak tie hypothesis on this basis. He argued that what is meaningful to the actor is the social resource of relational links obtained through individuals’ direct or indirect social relationships. The weaker the relationship, the higher the heterogeneity of the information provided, and the better the social capital acquired by the individual in instrumental action (Lin, 1981). He elaborated on the function of bridges in linking the resources of two groups and proposed the proposition of positional strength. He stated that the closer one is to the bridge in the network, the better the social capital acquired by the individual in instrumental action (Lin, 2017).

Subsequently, research in this area was conducted in many North American, European, and Asian countries. The hypothetical proposition that social capital plays an essential role in status attainment and the effect goes beyond that of human capital was

consistently confirmed by the results of these studies. The evidence from Europe and North America shows that the occupation, social status and educational level of the parents, especially the father's occupation, social status and educational level, have a significant positive relationship with children's career acquisition (both first job and current occupation) (Barbieri, 1996; Moerbeek et al., 1995). Meanwhile, studies in other Asian countries have shown that fathers' education level and occupational status are also significantly positively linked to children's career choices regarding their first employment after graduation (Hsung & Sun, 1988; Hsung & Hwang, 1992). Rosenbaum et al. (1990) concluded that social connections did not give job seekers a salary advantage when they first graduated but that family social connections would give them a higher salary later in their careers. The study used Employer Opportunity Pilot Project data showing similar findings. The results illustrated that those who use social relationships have better chances of salary increases and promotions in their first year of employment (Coverdill, 1998). However, some researchers maintained there is little effect of family background on the employment of their offspring. Albert and Wayne (1979), for example, used empirical data to study the effect of parental ability (e.g., occupation, education) on children's employment by adopting regression models. The results of the study did not prove the original hypothesis. American scholar Sabrina (2000) studied the effect of parental financial support on their children's employment. The results showed that the amount of financial support had a negative impact on their offspring's employment.

Traditional Chinese culture emphasises the priority of society and the individual's subordination to the interests of the family and the group. Social relations play an essential role in the allocation of resources. Social capital is intangible, and the family and its network of relationships are the vehicles. The peculiarities of Chinese social and cultural traditions determine that the core of social capital in the Chinese context is the family and that most social relations are essentially extensions of blood ties and are highly inheritable. Although the social changes and transformations in contemporary times have significantly impacted traditional culture and values, the relationship-based social tradition has yet to fade. Through complex social interaction activities, people can draw on their networks of relationships and the everyday authority within them to gain access to employment information and opportunities and thus enhance their status (Zhai, 2005, p. 78). Some researchers found that the family social background, including the parents' occupational status, education level, and family income, is strongly associated with their children's career path, including location, income, and job satisfaction (e.g., Wen, 2005; Zheng, 2004).

Chen and Tan (2004b) adopted data from a survey of 1,200 graduates from 14 universities in the central and southern regions of China to analyse the impact of social capital on university graduates' employment possibilities and income levels. They operationalised the concept of social capital into four elements: school career guidance centre, parents' social status, relatives' social status and network size as independent variables and whether or not they were employed as dependent variables. The results illustrated a significant effect of parents' social status and career guidance service on graduates' access to employment opportunities, with the most significant contribution being parents' social status. However, the effect of these factors on the level of employment wages was not significant. In addition, some scholars also found that the use of social capital does not have a significant effect on the attainment of high wages by university graduates and that human capital plays a more significant role than social capital in predicting starting salaries upon graduation (Su & Meng, 2012; Lai et al., 2012). However, some scholars have come to the opposite conclusion through empirical analysis. They pointed out that social capital is more critical in predicting starting salary (e.g., Du & Yue, 2010).

In addition, several studies have selected different indicators (such as parent's education level and family income) to measure social capital and have explored the relationship between social capital and graduates' starting salaries. For example, Yue et al. (2004), Wen (2004) and Hu and Qiu (2011) found that the higher the father's education level, the higher the graduate's starting salary level. Some studies have confirmed the significant positive effect of family income and graduate starting salary (Li & Tan, 2011). However, some studies have shown that social capital indicators do not positively link to starting salary (Chen & Tan, 2004b; Qiao et al., 2011).

Social capital theory suggests that the resources embedded in social networks that rational actors acquire and use in their actions can lead to the success of individual actions or benefit individual actions. Resources embedded in social networks enhance the effectiveness of actions. In the case of the labour and employment sector, information and opportunities related to employment are flowing and transmitted through the labour market and, more importantly, through people's social networks of relationships. The social resources individuals possess help address information asymmetries in the labour market, facilitating the flow of information and helping individuals access employment information and opportunities. However, there are also unfavourable functions of social capital. For example, within a group, the networks of relationships that generate gains for group members may prevent others outside the group from accessing the social resources controlled by the group (Portes,

1998). At the same time, the closed nature of the group or community to which an individual belongs will prevent members from being innovative or further developing their careers. In addition, whole groups benefit from social capital at the expense and restriction of individual freedom. Strengthening social ties will inevitably lead to a situation where the individual is subordinated to the group (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). For graduate job seekers, the excessive pursuit and use of social capital may undermine the fair competition mechanism of two-way choice and independent job selection, resulting in social class solidification and causing graduates from disadvantaged social classes to be unemployable or only to have lower-quality employment (Zhou, 2017). This is not conducive to social equity and mobility in the long run.

Many studies have used family social capital, centred on SES (parents' occupational level, education level and income), as the measurement of graduates' social capital. As for university graduates about to leave HEIs, the family is the primary source of their social capital. Thus, many studies take graduates' family SES as social capital to explore the relationship between social capital and employment attainment. Family social capital, particularly socioeconomic status, significantly influences a graduate's employment behaviour and success (Zheng, 2004). This is further supported by the positive impact of family capital on the quantity and quality of higher education obtained by individuals (Zhimin & Yao, 2015). Unlike the non-inherited nature of human capital, social capital can be transmitted between generations. Thus, on the one hand, the SES of parents can influence or provide resources for their children's social network activities in the university, which in turn affects the accumulation of interpersonal capital in the university and ultimately on job search outcomes; on the other hand, job seekers from better-off families with more educated parents are more likely to have a wealth of relational resources to help with job acquisition (Lin, 1981, 2001; Zheng, 2004). However, the role of social capital in job outcomes is less pronounced, with cultural and human capital having more independent effects (Grayson, 2004). Despite this, both family and personal social capital have a significant positive impact on graduates' job placement rate, starting salary, and job satisfaction (Yan & Mao, 2015).

Some studies examined the link between family SES and graduates' occupational aspirations. The results show that family SES has a particular influence on graduates' career prospects (Jiang & Wang, 2008; Li & Zhang, 2008; Wen, 2005). For example, Zheng (2004) pointed out that the higher the family's SES, the more likely graduates are to continue their studies rather than rush into the labour market.

Chinese scholars have empirically tested Lin Nan's status acquisition theory. Specifically, the impact of family SES on graduates' occupational status acquisition: empirical studies illustrated that the employment status of university graduates is closely related to their family background and that family SES has a significant impact on children's occupational status acquisition (Zheng, 2004; Chen & Tan, 2004b; Li, 2008). For example, Li (2008) pointed out that the higher the parents' educational level is, the higher the probability of employment the graduates will have. Family SES is conducive to enhancing the job probability of graduates and even becomes the most critical factor influencing their social capital level (Zheng, 2004). However, some scholars challenge this argument. The findings of Yue et al. (2004) show that their parents' years of education and their fathers' occupational status do not significantly affect graduates' employment.

Research also found evidence of the correlation between family SES and graduates' initial salaries. For example, Zheng (2004), Bian (1997) and Wen (2005) confirmed through empirical studies that family SES is positively related to graduates' employment income. It is because the SES determines the occupational level of the "interlocutor" or "helper" in the employment process to a certain extent. A higher level of "right people" may possess more resources to provide helpful information that may help graduates get desirable employment. In addition, a number of studies have confirmed the positive impact of family SES on graduates' employment satisfaction (Yan & Mao, 2008; Liu & Wang, 2010).

Overall, the studies taking family SES as social capital have uncovered the relationships between social capital and graduates' employment attainment. Most studies have proved that social capital positively links to graduates' job probability and salary. However, most of the studies focus on the level of undergraduate students, and so far, no research has been found to explore the employment of internationally mobile postgraduates. It may be due to the difficulties in data tracking about full-degree seekers without attending organised programmes. Thus, this study was conducted to make up this gap.

In addition, postgraduates have a more comprehensive social network and more social network resources than undergraduates while their human capital increases. Their social capital does not only come from their families; they may also depend on the networks based on club activities, internship enterprises and university. Given this, this paper argues that the social capital stock of postgraduate students is mainly composed

of private social capital operationalised as family SES and organisational social capital built up based on universities, clubs, and internship companies. In addition, regarding the mobilisation of social capital, private and organisational social capital are also included.

Combined with the above analysis, the social capital of postgraduate graduates in this study includes family-based and organisation-based social capital. It refers to social resources embedded in the structure of their family and organisational networks and can be mobilised and influence the employment process of mobile and non-mobile Chinese graduates.

## **7 Data and variables**

This study seeks to identify whether mobile learning experience correlate with career success, wage and job satisfaction, by using non-mobile graduates as a reference group. Baseline variables include demographics, human capital, organisational social capital, and private social capital. Following a discussion of the relevant theories and research in the preceding parts, this section shows how the data were measured, gathered, and used, as well as the statistical methods chosen to answer the study questions.

### **7.1 Human capital measurement**

Many studies have used years of schooling as a proxy variable for human capital since knowledge or skills condensed in an individual are challenging to measure directly. One of the limitations is that years of schooling do not reflect education quality and outcomes. Also, it is not easy to synthesise the human capital that individuals have accumulated in different settings such as school, family and society. To remedy the limitations of traditional measurement, some scholars have proposed new human capital studies based on the concept of “skills”, creating a unique and promising area of research (Hanushek, 2018).

With the continuous improvement of survey tools and instruments and the enrichment and refinement of databases, limitations to using years of schooling to measure human capital have emerged. Firstly, years of schooling only reflect the length of schooling received, but not the quality of schooling and outcomes. Individuals with the same number of years of schooling can have vastly different educational outcomes

depending on the school quality they attend or the level of effort they put in. At the same time, years of schooling only reflect the human capital acquired during formal schooling and do not reflect the dynamic process of growth or decline in human capital during extra-curriculum periods. Eric Hanushek, a professor at Stanford University and a leading economic researcher, points out that the findings of previous empirical studies based on the years of schooling indicator and the policy analysis based on these findings are worth rethinking (Hanushek, 2010).

The use of acquired skills as a measure for postgraduates' human capital can reflect the quality and outcomes of schooling; it can also provide a comprehensive picture of the sum of human capital accumulated during postgraduate school, after school and in different venues such as society. If the individual possesses the skills the labour market requires, they may obtain employment and high income.

Indicators of human capital stock have been chosen arbitrarily in previous studies, with some using university type and field of study (Ma & Ding, 2010; Hu & Qiu, 2011; Li & Tan, 2011) and others including gender (Li & Tan, 2011). The best way to pick these indicators is still up for debate. According to the research of Lai et al. (2012), a number of academics have demonstrated that the university type is endowed with both human and social capital. Attending a well-respected university improves one's chances of acquiring knowledge and developing productive skills, and it also improves the quality of the social network (e.g., alumni network); meanwhile, individuals may enjoy better career services, such as the quantity and quality of employment information from tertiary institutions.

Based on the above analysis, this study defines postgraduates' human capital as the sum of knowledge and skills acquired during postgraduate study. It is the resource in return on their education investment, which can be recognised and paid for by employers in employment. Based on the definition, this study operationalises human capital as postgraduates' academic performance, whether receiving scholarships, being student leaders (or not), having professional qualifications (or not) and the number of English certificates they held during postgraduate education. Among them, academic performance and scholarship can reflect the knowledge level of postgraduates and directly measure the quality of human capital; student leadership, professional qualifications, such as accounting, computer, and the number of English certificates is also taken into account as indicators of acquired skills, which can reflect the stock of human capital.

For non-mobile graduates, there are no class differences in their diplomas. Therefore, academic performance is indicated by the ranking on the last semester's postgraduate final exams. Ranking top 25 per cent indicates distinction, 25 to 75 per cent represents merit, and the bottom 25 per cent is a pass. In addition, the measurement of English language certificates is based on participants' report of the overall number of different English certificates, including CET-4<sup>1</sup>, CET-6, TEM-4<sup>2</sup>, TEM-8, IELTS<sup>3</sup>, TOFEL<sup>4</sup>.

Table 7.1 Human capital variable indicators

Indicator	Variable	Description
Knowledge	Academic achievement (mobile)	Distinction, Merit, Pass.
	Academic performance (non-mobile)	Top 25%, 25%-50%, 50%-75%, bottom 25%.
	Scholarship	Yes/ No
Acquired Skills	Student leadership	Yes/ No
	Professional qualification certificate (e.g., accounting, computer, law)	Yes/ No
	The number of English language certificates	CET-4, CET-6, TEM-4, TEM-8, IELTS, TOFEL.

## 7.2 Social capital measurement

Based on the study of the idea of social capital in the preceding chapter (6.3), it is evident that the use of social capital was hindered by a lack of consensus over its precise meaning and application, particularly in empirical investigations. Most academics view social capital as a resource, a capacity, a mode of living, or a

<sup>1</sup> The CET (College English Test) test-takers are undergraduates in China who are majoring in any discipline except English. It examines the English proficiency of HE students in China. The CET-4 is mandatory for university students and a prerequisite for a bachelor's degree. Those students who have passed the CET-4 (with a score of at least 525), usually third-year undergraduate students, take the CET-6.

<sup>2</sup> The TEM (Test for English Majors) aims to measure the English proficiency of Chinese university undergraduates majoring in the English Language. The test consists of written and oral tests. The TEM-4 (Test for English Majors-Band 4) usually carry out at the end of their second year at university, while TEM-8 is the last year.

<sup>3</sup> IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is an international standardized English language proficiency test for non-native English speakers to pursue HE and global migration. It is jointly managed by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and Cambridge Assessment English and was established in 1989.

<sup>4</sup> TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is a standardized test to measure the English language ability of non-native speakers wishing to enrol in English-speaking universities. The test is accepted by more than 11,000 universities and other institutions in over 190 countries and territories.

background. In addition, some academics incorporate social structures, social networks, and a few cultural aspects inside the definition of social capital, raising its degree of abstraction.

There are no robust, widely applicable and consistent ways to measure social capital that allow for comparison between different contexts. The main reasons are a lack of consistent definitions and differences between levels of analysis and context. Social capital cannot be measured directly but can be inferred from its determinants or manifestations. The determinants impact social interactions and therefore allow social capital to come about. Manifestations are the outcomes of social capital. We measure social capital using indicators or “proxies” theoretically linked to social capital.

The term social capital covers an expansive terrain. We need to define which part and context of social capital we are talking about before embarking on the research. This study takes a combination of static and dynamic approaches to defining social capital in terms of social capital stock and mobilisation, and classifies social capital into organisational and private social capital based on the specificity of the participants and the different education environments non-mobile and mobile students located in. postgraduate graduates’ social capital in this study, including family-based and organisation-based social capital, refers to social resources that are embedded in the structure of their family and organisational networks and can be mobilised and have some influence or effect on the employment process of university graduates.

According to previous analyses, most studies have only examined social capital based on family social relationships (e.g., family SES as a measure of social capital). Some studies have not considered social capital accumulated at the university as a category (e.g., Lai et al., 2012); however, they have also noted that factors such as university type may contribute to the accumulation of social relationship resources among university graduates. The social capital of university students consists of two aspects: the social relationship resources from family and the extent to which they can mobilise them when seeking employment; the other is the organisational social relationship resources accumulated by graduates during their studies and internships. For postgraduate students, in particular, the social capital they have accumulated based on their organisations is more affluent than undergraduates, and they have more resources to mobilise than graduates with lower education levels. Simultaneously, their social independence is better than that of undergraduates. In analysing the impact of social capital on employment, their “acquired” social capital through

education should be taken into account. For graduates who have studied in the UK, away from their families, organisational-based social capital may contribute to finding a job.

Organisational social capital is accumulated through interaction with members of the organisations, such as classmates, teachers, colleagues, club members and alumni. They are the intermediary with the essential characteristics of trust, networks and norms, which can improve social efficiency by promoting coordinated and cooperative actions and thus increasing the return on investment. This study operationalises postgraduates' organisational social capital stock as whether they participated in student clubs/organisations and have had internship experiences. Besides, it also uses the evaluation of the employment support services provided by the HEI and the mobilisation of organisation-based social capital during their job search. Five-point Likert scales have been used to measure sub-item indicators (see Table 7.2) to determine the difference between mobile and non-mobile students in terms of career support service and mobilisation of organisational social capital.

Table 7.2 Organisational social capital variable indicators

Indicator	Variable	Description
Community-based social capital	Had you ever participated in any student organisation or club during postgraduate study?	Yes/ No
Corporation-based social capital	Were you ever employed as an intern or part-time?	
University-based social capital (Employment guidance services)	The HEIs provided very excellent guidance of the designing and making of CV.	"disagree at all", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", "strongly agree".
	The HEIs provided very excellent guidance of the skills in the interviews.	
	The HEIs provided very excellent guidance of career planning.	
	The HEIs provided very excellent psychological guidance.	
	The HEIs provided very excellent guidance of the explanation of employment situation.	
	The HEIs released very excellent employment information.	
The mobilisation of social capital	I extremely mobilised my supervisor or teachers at the university in the job-seeking	"disagree at all", "disagree",

process.	“neutral”,
I extremely mobilised my friends in the job-seeking process.	“agree”,
I extremely mobilised my classmates in the job-seeking process.	“strongly agree”.
I extremely mobilised friends of my friends in the job-seeking process.	

Many studies adopted an individuals’ family background to reflect on an private social capital stock, using family SES. The concept of SES has been widely used in various fields, including sociology and psychology, to measure family background or social capital by using one or a combination of several indicators, depending on the purpose of the study. It includes parents’ education level, unit, occupational status, and household income.

This study selects five indicators, namely the father’s and mother’s possession of HE certificates, occupational status and annual income, to measure the family SES of postgraduate students and how it links to their employment. In terms of mobilising private social capital, it adopts the five-point Likert scales in the questionnaire, with an even point scale of five (disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) to evaluate the mobilisation of family social network resources, including parents, relatives and friends of parents in the job-searching process.

Table 7.3 Private social capital variable indicators

Indicator	Variable	Description
SES	Does your father have HE certificate?	Yes/ No/ don’t know
	Your father’s occupation status is_	Middle or senior managers or professionals, Government officials or civil servants, Self-employment or common workers, Laborers or laid-off workers or others.
	Does your mother have HE certificate?	Yes/ No/ don’t know
	Your mother’s occupation status is_	Middle or senior managers or professionals, Government officials or civil servants, Self-employment or common workers, Laborers or laid-off workers or others, Others.

	Your parent's annual income is_	Below 50000 Yuan, 50001 to 100000 Yuan, 100001 to 150000 Yuan, 150001 to 200000 Yuan, 200001 to 250000 Yuan 250001 to 300000 Yuan, Above 300001 Yuan Don't know
The mobilisation of private social variables	I extremely mobilised my immediate family in the job-seeking process. I extremely mobilised my relatives in the job-seeking process. I extremely mobilised friends of my parents in the job-seeking process.	"disagree at all", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", "strongly agree".

### 7.3 Labour market outcomes

In the current studies, several indicators involve employment status, for example, wage levels, working hours, and working environment. The common feature of these indicators is that they all take the employment outcome (e.g., salary) as the leading indicator of employment status, neglecting the consideration of the transition from education to work. This study considers both the job search process and the employment outcome in assessing employment status.

In addition, the measurement of employment outcomes is divided into objective and subjective measures in this study, as shown in Table 7.4. Objective indicators include participants' reports of whether being employed (or not) and their monthly salaries. The subjective indicator refers to graduates' self-assessment of job satisfaction.

This study uses job satisfaction as one of the crucial indicators of employment quality and measures overall job satisfaction through the five-point Likert scaling questionnaire, with an even point scale of five (not satisfied at all, not satisfied, not so satisfied, satisfied, very satisfied).

Table 7.4 Employment outcome

Indicator		Variable
Employment outcome/ quality	Objective indicators	Job probability; Initial monthly salary.
	Subjective indicators	Job satisfaction level.

#### 7.4 Questionnaire design and pilot study

Following the discussion of the definition and measurement of basic concepts in the study, this section provides a snapshot of the overall design of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part includes employment-related questions, such as job-seeking process, time, employer type, location and job satisfaction. In the second part, study and life during postgraduate education have been focused on, including academic performance, participation in activities, certificate acquisition and internship experience. The third part is related to individuals' demographic and family backgrounds. Information such as gender, Communist Party membership, parents' education level, and annual income are included. The overall structure is shown in Table 7.5.

Among them, some of the questions have adopted five-point Likert scales, including motivations to pursue a master's degree in UK/ home HEIs, the use of job-seeking channels (see table 7.6), the mobilisation of social networking, the employment guidance service, and job satisfaction provided by the HEIs. Each question offers some sub-items for the participants to present their attitudes to compare the differences between postgraduates who graduated from UK and China HEIs.

In addition, the career aspirations of the students registered in the master's programmes when the survey was conducted are also covered in the data collection process. The relevant questions were set in the same way as for graduates generally. However, most questions are presented on five-point Likert scales to evaluate their attitudes toward career plans.

Table 7.5 The overall structure of the questionnaire

Section	Outline of the questions
1. Transition from HE to work and employment status	Graduation year
	What did you do after graduation? (reasons)
	Motivations to pursue a master's degree in UK/ home HEIs
	The use of job-seeking channels (see table 7.6)
	The mobilisation of social networking
	Employment guidance services provided by your postgraduate HEIs
	Time
	Employer type
	Location
	Reasons for choosing the location
	Factors prevent you finding jobs in the UK
	Monthly income
	Job satisfaction
	2. Postgraduate study experience
Field of postgraduate study	
Academic achievement	
Scholarship	
student cadre/ student representative	
professional certificates/qualifications	
English language certificates	
student organisation	
internship or part-time work	
3. Demographic and family socio-economic status	Gender
	Communist Party member
	Father's education level
	Father's profession
	Mother's education level
	Mother's profession
Parents' annual income	

Table 7.6 The use of job-seeking channels

Indicator	Variable	Description
The use of job-seeking channels	The employment information released by university	
	Recruitment fair;	
	Online recruitment;	“The least important”,
	Job-seeking agency;	“Not so important”,
	Recommendation from family members and relatives;	“Neutral”,
	Recommendation from classmates and friends;	“Important”,
	Internship or social practice;	“The most important”.
	Social recruitment examination;	
	Recommendation from supervisor.	

At the stage of the pilot study (between August and October 2019), in order to test the feasibility and availability of the questionnaire, the prepared version was sent to fifteen international scholars, including ten PhD researchers and five experts in the related field (three professors from China and two from the UK). We proposed the questions to be predicted and the relevant requirements to the scholars, with the required background information and related materials. The researchers and experts assess the content of the questionnaire based on the materials, make their predictions and assess the objectivity and feasibility of the questionnaire. After that, the results were sent back to them so they could compare their views with those of other experts and revise their opinions and judgements after reference. After that, the results were sent back to them to compare their views with other experts to revise their opinions and judgements after reference. The process was repeated three times. After four rounds of revisions, the official questionnaire was finally created.

Specific improvements mainly include:

- Further reordering of the questions to make the questionnaire more logical. Employment-related questions were placed at the top of the list, and questions about personal background were placed in the last section to ensure that the most central information was obtained.
- In order to gather a broader range of participant information, master’s students who were registered in the programs were covered, and relevant questions about the expectations of their career paths were added. The options of the questions were similar to those of graduates; however, the questions were transformed into attitude questions, presented through five-dimensional Likert scales.

- Questions related to the measurement of social network size were removed. The social breadth for the students abroad may be far more extensive than that of indigenous students, as they tend to have more opportunities to mingle with students with diverse cultural backgrounds; however, it does not mean that they have access to “useful” employment information or “right person” for the employment.
- Deleted questions related to age and domicile (rural or urban) due to privacy concerns.
- Deleted questions related to the number of papers published; as for students abroad, they don’t have publication requirements.
- Deleted questions related to the frequency of the usage language, including Chinese and English.
- Added questions related to factors influencing employment.
- Added questions related to motivation to study abroad, barriers to finding a job, and asked participants’ attitudes towards the importance of related factors through five-dimensional Likert scales.
- Simplified the categorisation of the fields of postgraduate study as “Science and Technology”, “Humanity and Social science”, “Business and Management”, and “Others”.
- Simplified the options for parental qualifications, from “below primary school”, “junior middle school”, “senior high middle school/ technical secondary school/ Vocational School”, “university and above”, “don’t know” to whether your father/mother have any higher education qualifications, such as a degree, diploma or certificate of higher education (yes/no).
- Simplified the options of father’s/mother’s profession to “middle or senior managers”, “professionals (such as researchers, doctors, lawyers or engineers)”, “government officials or civil servants”, “self-employed workers”, “common workers”, “laid-off workers or unemployed”, “farmers or labourers”, and “don’t know”.
- Deleted questions related to the type of employer of your father’s/mother’s company and father’s/ mother’s national administrative level.
- Made reduction of parents’ annual income from eleven to seven classifications, “Below 50000 yuan”, “50001-100000 yuan”, “100001-150000 yuan”, “150001-200000 yuan”, “200001-250000 yuan”, “250001-300000 yuan”, “Above 300001 yuan”, and “don’t know” (based on the annual household income report published by China in 2019).

## **7.5 Ethical concerns and positionality statement**

A paragraph was presented before filling out the questionnaire to ensure that participants are fully informed about the purpose of the study, how their answers will be used, and how their confidentiality and privacy will be protected. All the data collected from the research will not be disclosed to third parties. All the design questions are clear, unbiased, and sensitive to privacy concerns. The questionnaire was presented in both English and Chinese, and participants were free to choose the language to meet the needs of different cultural backgrounds. Questions related to gender, political status, parental occupation, and household income were set up with options such as “prefer not to say”, “don’t know”, or “others”; meanwhile, simplify options as much as possible to make them more universal. During the data analysis process, I was always straightforward, fair dealing, and honest in ensuring that authentic research results were obtained.

I, a female, grew up in Qingdao, Shandong Province, China. I am of Han nationality, which is the majority group in China. I am a PhD candidate at a university with international students and faculty. I am a former university English teacher with four years of experience teaching Chinese undergraduate students from different nationalities. My research is mainly conducted at 32 HEIs in the UK and China. It focuses on Chinese international students seeking master’s degrees in the UK, illustrating their study motivations, job-seeking channels, career aspirations and labour market outcomes and compares the results with those of their counterparts from Chinese HEIs. Most of the students mastered Chinese and have some ability to communicate in English. I am fluent in English and Chinese. Communicating, writing, and processing data in English or Chinese are within my skill range. My research is funded by grants from the China Scholarship Council.

## **7.6 Sampling**

In this section, the sampling procedure has been discussed, including selecting target HEIs and distributing and collecting questionnaires. The investigation started in December 2019 and lasted for three months. Most questionnaires were distributed through an online questionnaire system called WENJUANXING in Chinese and English versions.

The samples were mainly collected in 32 randomly selected HEIs across the UK and

China. The target UK HEIs consists of 8 Russell Group HEIs<sup>1</sup>. The randomly selected China HEIs in China were made up of 8 “Project 985” or “Project 211” HEIs<sup>2</sup>. After selecting the target HEIs, snowball sampling was adopted to distribute the questionnaire. For the China HEIs from China, the first step was to contact the employment department through emails and phone calls to assist in distributing the questionnaire. 12 out of 16 HEIs gave prompt responses. Then the questionnaire was distributed through email and other social media, including Microblog, WeChat and other available platforms, among which graduates WeChat group, a popular social media to build the Alumni network among Chinese graduates. Concerning the other 4 HEIs, the contact information of the secretaries of the Students’ Associations had been obtained through official accounts of Microblog or WeChat. With the assistance of the secretaries of each Students Associations, the questionnaire was sent out through the graduates’ WeChat groups.

However, it is more challenging to reach the target group of Chinese graduates from UK HEIs. Generally speaking, campus emails were the most common connections between international students and HEIs. However, most emails were no longer available after graduation. Fortunately, as the Chinese student community has been rapidly growing in recent years, many alumni associations are springing up on social media, such as WeChat alumni groups, official accounts and Douban alumni groups. They provide effective channels to reach the target graduates. With the assistance of the secretaries or coordinators of the students’ associations, the online link of the questionnaire was posted to the alumni groups on WeChat or Douban for at least three days. The questionnaire was distributed to more than 60 groups, each containing at least 50 postgraduates.

In addition to the centralised questionnaire distribution, other means were used to promote the questionnaire as extensively as possible. The automatic distributing services through the WENJUANXING online questionnaire systems were also used for the potential participants who meet the requirements. They would receive emails or notifications from the APP (if they had downloaded one on the phone). The use of this method allowed more postgraduates to participate in this investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> The Russell Group HEIs refers to 24 world-class, research-intensive universities with substantial social, economic and cultural impacts locally, across the UK and around the globe.

<sup>2</sup> “Project 211” was a higher education development and sponsorship scheme of the Chinese central government for preparing approximately 100 universities for the 21st century, initiated in November 1995. There were 115 elite universities and colleges selected to be part of this program. The purpose of “Project 985” is to create world-class universities from the 39 universities under the “Project 211”.

## **8 Research methods**

After the process of the investigation, the data collected throughout the study were analysed by different statistical methods using SPSS (R 23.0.0.0), a statistical software, and Excel.

### **8.1 Descriptive analysis**

This study adopted statistical methods including frequency, mean and standard deviation, and effect size to compare the differences between Chinese international postgraduate students in UK HEIs and their counterparts in China HEIs in terms of their human capital stock, social capital stock and mobilisation, job-seeking process and employment outcome.

#### **8.1.1 Frequency and percentage**

Frequency and percentage have been used to illustrate the overall situation of the variables, including personal background information and the stock of human capital and social capital. In addition, the percentage distribution of all the five-point Likert scales has also been displayed. The categorical responses have been converted into variables that assign numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to each response.

#### **8.1.2 Mean and standard deviation**

Means and standard deviation (SD) were mainly stated in quantitative data: the number of English certificates and all the variables measured by five-point Likert scales, including the mobilisation of social networks, usability of job-seeking channels, employment guidance services provided by the HEIs, and job satisfaction level, so as to compare the differences between postgraduates graduated from UK and indigenous HEIs.

#### **8.1.3 Effect size**

To determine the differences between the two groups, postgraduates from the UK and China HEIs, effect sizes were calculated to measure the magnitude of the relationship between the variables (mentioned in the Mean and SD section).

In this study, to calculate the effect size values, subtract one group from the other (Mean1-Mean2) means of each group and divide the result by the overall standard deviation (SD) of the population of the sampling groups. The calculation was conducted manually in Excel. According to Cohen's *d*, the differences have been examined for the appropriate effect size to compare the two means. Cohen stated that  $d=0.2$  represents a small effect size, 0.5 has been considered a medium effect size and 0.8 stands for a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). It shows that a more significant effect size means a tremendous difference, and if the means of the two groups do not differ by 0.2 standard deviations or more, the difference is trivial. However, some scholars argue that the effect sizes scale depends on the research design, sample size, measurement and the expected outcome, which should be varied in various research (Bakker et al., 2019; Kraft, 2020). Kraft (2020) pointed out that, in education research, for causal studies examining the effects of interventions: less than 0.05 is considered negligible, 0.05 to less than 0.20 is considered medium, and 0.20 or more is considered significant.

## **8.2 Regression analysis**

This section discusses the methods of evaluating 1) how postgraduates' demographic, academic background and family SES link to mobile status; 2) how human capital and social capital predict the employment probability, job satisfaction rate and monthly income, and estimate the difference in labour market outcomes associated with different mobile status. Binary logistic and multinomial logistic regression models were adopted according to the nature of outcome variables.

### **8.2.1 Mobile status, academic background and socioeconomic status**

A binary logistic regression model has been adopted to predict whether the possibility of studying abroad links to academic background and family origin. The variables in the table (together with their values/levels or range of values) are derived from the questionnaire. They have been treated as dummy variables for males contrasted with females; Communist Party members contrasted with non-Party members; for top undergraduate HEIs graduates contrasted with non-top ones; for the parents of postgraduates who have HE diplomas contrasted with those who do not; for those parents working as self-employed or ordinary workers equalling 2, government officials or civil servants equalling 3, middle or senior managers or professionals

equalling 4, as opposed to those who are manual labourers, laid-off workers, or others equalling 1 (taking as the reference group). Parents' annual income variable is ordinal and has seven categories. After testing, it is basically following a normal distribution. Thus here, we consider it as a continuous variable. Less than 50000 Yuan in annual parental income corresponds to 1, 50001 to 100000 Yuan corresponds to 2, 100001 to 150000 Yuan corresponds to 3, 150001 to 200000 Yuan corresponds to 4, 200001 to 250000 Yuan corresponds to 5, 250001 to 300000 Yuan corresponds to 6, and more than 300001 Yuan corresponds to 7.

The binary outcome variables applied in the logistic regression models are whether they studied in the UK, with mobile students equalling 0 and non-mobile students equalling 1. When running the regression models, all eight variables, including gender, Party member, academic background, parents' HE diplomas and professional status and annual income, are added (more details related to the coding process in Table 8.2).

Table 8.1 Description and distribution of variables (N=855)

Variable	Item coding	Share in %
Gender	0=female	52.5
	1=male	47.5
Party Member	0=no	56.0
	1=yes	44.0
Undergraduate HEIs	0=non-top HEIs	61.3
	1=Russel Group UK HEIs*/ Project "211" or "985" Chinese HEIs* or elite HEIs in other countries	38.7
Father's HE qualification	0=no	54.9
	1=yes	45.1
Father's occupational status (FOS)	1=laborers or laid-off workers or others	16.4
	2=self-employment or common workers	35.1
	3=government officials or civil servants	35.2
	4=middle or senior managers or professionals	13.3
Mother's HE qualification	0=no	60.9
	1=yes	39.1
Mother's occupational status (MOS)	1=laborers or laid-off workers or others	21.1
	2=self-employment or common workers	49.2
	3=government officials or civil servants	24.6
	4=middle or senior managers or professionals	5.1
Parents' annual income	1=below 50000 Yuan	9.9

2=50001 to 100000 Yuan	19.5
3=100001 to 150000 Yuan	19.4
4=150001 to 200000 Yuan	15.1
5=200001 to 250000 Yuan	12.2
6=250001 to 300000 Yuan	17.0
7=Above 300001 Yuan	6.9

Table 8.2 Outcome variable coding

Outcome variable	Measure	Value	
Mobile status	Dichotomous variable	Mobile	0
		Non-mobile	1

## 8.2.2 Labour market outcomes, human capital and social capital

To predict the transition from HE to employment and job satisfaction, multi-stage logistic regression models are employed, whereas multi-stage linear regression models are used to predict the initial income. The control variables and explanatory variables in these models are set in the same way.

### 8.2.2.1 Control variables

In addition to human capital and social capital, this study applies demographic factors (including gender and Communist Party membership) and academic backgrounds as control variables. Some studies categorise Communist Party membership and university type (top or non-top) as human capital indicators. However, this study argues that the variables of Communist Party membership and university type have human and social capital attributes. For one thing, outstanding students with excellent academic performance and leadership could be selected as Party members and could attend elite HEIs. Another, Bourdieu (1986) pointed out that social capital is a collection of actual or potential resources appropriated through institutionalised networks of relationships. The institutionalised networks are commonly recognised and linked through the membership of a group that supports each member from the perspective of collective ownership of capital and provides them with credentials to earn prestige. For example, families can support their members; universities can earn prestige for their students; Communist Party can obtain credentials for the Party members. Therefore, Party membership and HEI type can impact the human capital and social capital stock. Assigning them to either category would affect the accuracy

of the study. In addition, the variable of the field of study also possesses the attribute of “skills” and “networks”. Students from different academic circles could bring different networking and resources. For example, science and engineering students may engage in more group experiments and cutting-edge lectures that could provide more social resources that will benefit their future careers. Thus, this study has treated gender, Communist Party membership, HEIs type, and field of study as control variables when running the regression models. The variables shown in the table (with the values/ levels or range of their values in parentheses) are based on the questionnaire. They have been treated as dummy variables for males contrasted with females; Communist Party members contrasted with non-Party members; for top undergraduate and postgraduate HEIs graduates contrasted with non-top ones; for Social Science and Science postgraduates contrasted with Business group (taking as the reference group).

Table 8.3 Control variable description and distribution (N=855)

Variable	Item coding	Share in %
Gender	0=female	52.5
	1=male	47.5
Party Member	0=no	56.0
	1=yes	44.0
Undergraduate HEIs	0=non-top HEIs	61.3
	1=Russel Group UK HEIs/ Project “211” or “985” Chinese HEIs or elite HEIs in other countries	38.7
Postgraduate HEIs	0=non-top HEIs	36.1
	1=Russel Group UK HEIs/ Project “211” or “985” Chinese HEIs	63.9
Postgraduate major	1=business	37.2
	2=humanities and social science	39.9
	3=science and technology	22.9

### 8.2.2.2 Explanatory variables

In addition to the control variables, the coding of explanatory variables has been shown below in Table 8.4. The values or ranges are based on the questionnaire.

Table 8.4 Description and distribution of variables (N=855)

Variable	Item coding	Share in %	Mean (SD)
Mobile status	0=mobile	36.1	-
	1=non-mobile	63.9	-
<b>Human capital</b>			
Academic achievement	1=pass/ bottom 25%	33.7	-
	2=merit/ 25%-75%	60.0	-
	3=distinction/ top 25%	6.3	-
Scholarship	0=no	57.5	-
	1=yes	42.5	-
Student leadership	0=no	64.1	-
	1=yes	35.9	-
Professional qualification certificates	0=no	49.0	-
	1=yes	51.0	-
English certificates quantity	0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	-	2.55 (1.05)
<b>Organisational social capital stock</b>			
Student organisation	0=no	46.9	-
	1=yes	53.1	-
Part-time or internship	0=no	48.4	-
	1=yes	51.6	-
<b>Private social capital stock</b>			
Father's HE qualification	0=no	54.9	-
	1=yes	45.1	-
FOS	1=laborers or laid-off workers or others	16.4	-
	2=self-employment or common workers	35.1	-
	3=government officials or civil servants	35.2	-
	4=middle or senior managers or professionals	13.3	-
Mother's HE qualification	0=no	60.9	-
	1=yes	39.1	-
MOS	1=laborers or laid-off workers or others	21.1	-
	2=self-employment or common workers	49.2	-
	3=government officials or civil servants	24.6	-
	4=middle or senior managers or professionals	5.1	-

Parents' annual income	1=below 50000 Yuan	9.9	-
	2=50001 to 100000 Yuan	19.5	-
	3=100001 to 150000 Yuan	19.4	-
	4=150001 to 200000 Yuan	15.1	-
	5=200001 to 250000 Yuan	12.2	-
	6=250001 to 300000 Yuan	17.0	-
	7=Above 300001 Yuan	6.9	-

Table 8.5 Description and distribution of variables

Attitude questions (Rated from 1=very disagreed to 5= very agreed)			Mean	SD
1	In the job-searching process, I extremely mobilised	immediate family.	3.24	1.25
2		Relatives.	2.34	1.10
3		friends of parents.	2.68	1.15
4		supervisor or teacher at the university.	2.48	1.14
5		my friends.	3.21	1.00
6		Classmates.	2.92	1.08
7		friends of your friends.	2.32	1.07
8	The HEIs provided very excellent	guidance of the designing and making of CV.	3.01	0.99
9		guidance of the skills in the interviews.	2.89	0.84
10		guidance of career planning.	2.94	0.93
11		psychological guidance.	2.96	0.85
12		guidance of the explanation of employment situation.	2.89	0.94
13		employment information.	3.17	0.98
<b>Variables compute from the above variables</b>				
14	Organisational social capital mobilisation scale (item 4 + item 5 + item 6 + item 7)/4		2.71	0.78
15	Private social capital mobilisation scale (item 1 + item 2 + item 3)/3		2.69	0.95
16	Guidance service scale (item 8 + item 9 + item 10 + item 11 + item 12 + item 13)/6		2.88	0.79

All the categorical variables were converted into dummy variables. The first dummy variable is graduation country (mobile status) for the postgraduates from home HEIs contrasted with those from UK HEIs. This is a binary variable with graduates abroad equalling 0 and home ones equalling 1.

For the set of human capital variables, merit and distinction postgraduates are contrasted with the pass group; those having scholarships are contrasted with the non-scholarship postgraduates; postgraduates possessing professional certificates (i.e., accounting or computer) are contrasted with the non-certificate group. The sum of the number of English certificates from 1 to 6 was calculated as a numerical variable.

Then the set of organisational social capital variables includes dummy variables for the postgraduates participating in student organisations contrasted with those who did not; those who have internship or part-time job experience contrasted with those who did not have the experience. The other variables are numerical. We convert the categorical responses into variables and assign a number to each attitude response by taking on the value 1 corresponds to the response “disagree at all”; 2 to “disagree”; 3 to “somewhat”; 4 to “agree”; 5 to “agree very much”. The employment guidance provided by the HEIs was computed from the mean of the six attitude variables, item 8 to item 13 (see Table 8.5). The mobilisation of organisational social capital was computed from the mean of the four attitude scales of the mobilisation of supervisor or teacher at the university, friends, classmates, and friends of the friends in the job-searching process (items 4 to 7 from the table).

The set of individual social capital variables includes dummy variables for the postgraduates’ fathers or mothers who have HE diplomas contrasted with those who do not have ones; for those parents are self-employment or ordinary workers equalling 2, government officials or civil servants equalling 3, middle or senior managers or professionals equalling 4, contrasted with the group who are labourers, laid-off workers or others equalling 1 (taking as the reference group). The parents’ annual income has been coded into ordinal numbers and considered as a continuous variable, with less than 50000 Yuan annual income equalling 1, 50001 to 100000 Yuan equalling 2, 100001 to 150000 Yuan equalling 3, 150001 to 200000 Yuan equalling 4, 200001 to 250000 Yuan equalling 5, 250001 to 300000 Yuan equalling 6, more than 300001 Yuan equalling 7. The mobilisation of the private social capital was computed from the mean of the three scales of the mobilisation of immediate family, relatives and friends of parents in the job-searching process (items 1 to 3).

All the explanatory variables are chronologically added into the multi-stage binary logistic regression or multinomial logistic regression models. In the multi-stage logistic regression, the first stage includes mobile status. The second stage adds demographic and academic background variables. The third stage controls for the set of human capital variables. The fourth stage adds organisational social capital level variables.

Then the last stage introduces private social capital level variables in addition to the baseline mentioned above variables. For the multinomial logistic regression models in SPSS, we cannot add different sets of variables in each level of the models. We can only conduct the analysis separately for different sets of variables. The models will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 9.

### **8.2.2.3 Outcome variables**

The two binary outcome variables applied in the logistic regression models are 1) whether postgraduates have access to employment and 2) whether postgraduates are satisfied with the employment. The coding details of the outcome variables are shown in Table 8.6.

The graduates were asked about their first employment when they received their graduation certificates, approximately five months after graduation for graduates from UK HEIs. However, graduates from home HEIs, obtain their certificates during the same month of graduation. Hence, it is difficult to compare their employment status due to the different curriculum duration, dissertation submission time, and internship arrangements. Usually, the course duration is longer (two to three years) for home graduates, including dissertation writing and internship practice. In order to give a realistic picture of labour market outcomes, we focus on more extreme forms of maladjustment, that is, unemployment after graduation (obtaining certificates). Thus, the binary variable is unemployed when receiving the graduation certificates equalling 0 and obtaining jobs when receiving the certificate equalling 1.

Concerning job satisfaction, a five-point Likert scale was recoded to binary variables, with not satisfied at all, not satisfied, and not entirely satisfied equalling 0, satisfied and very satisfied equalling 1. The third outcome variable is the initial monthly salary for the multinomial logistic regression models. The four categories for this variable are: below 5000 Yuan, 5001 to 10000 Yuan, 10001 to 15000 Yuan, and more than 15001 Yuan, with below 5000 Yuan as the reference group.

After the explanation of the coding of the variables, the following section turns to the link between human capital, social capital and employment status.

Table 8.6 Outcome variable coding

Outcome variable	Measure	Value	
Job probability	Dichotomous variable	In unemployment	0
		In employment with payment	1
Job satisfaction	Dichotomous variable	Dissatisfied at all	0
		Dissatisfied	0
		Not quite satisfied	0
		Satisfied	1
		Very satisfied	1
Monthly salary	Multinomial variable	Below 5000 Yuan	1
		5001 to 10000 Yuan	2
		10001 to 15000 Yuan	3
		Above 15001 Yuan	4

### 8.3 Missing data

The missing data were mainly academic achievement, the father's HE qualification and employment status, the mother's HE qualification and employment status, and the parent's annual income. However, they only accounted for a small proportion of the total cases. Only 3 chose the option "I do not know" for the academic achievement, so blanks, the SPSS system missing value, were used for the variables. Regarding the father's and mother's education level, 3 per cent and 4 per cent chose "do not know", classified as "0=does did not have a HE qualification". Those who do not know their father's and mother's jobs (approximately 3 per cent each) were categorised into "1=labourers, laid-off workers or others". For the postgraduates who did not know their parent's annual income (4 per cent), means were used to substitute the missing values. As the ranges of postgraduates' family SES vary in the two groups of postgraduates from China and UK HEIs, "3=100001 to 150000 Yuan" (for the non-mobile group) and "5=200001 to 250000 yuan" (for the mobile group) were adopted separately to replace the missing data.

## 9 Regression analysis of labour market outcomes

This section discusses the methods of evaluating how the labour market outcomes (job probability, satisfaction and monthly income) regarding the first employment can be explained by mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital and private

social capital. Logistic regression is distinguished from linear regression by the dichotomous (or categorical) nature of the outcome variables. Binary logistic regression is applied to estimate the probability of an event occurring between two possibilities (e.g., attending HE or not attending) as a function of determined explanatory variables (Fritz & Berger, 2015). This study uses multi-stage binary logistic regression analysis to quantitatively explain the correlation between variables and graduates' job probability and high job satisfaction probability. Multi-stage binary logistic regression combines the characteristics of hierarchical regression and logical regression. By gradually adding core variables to the logistic model, the contribution of this variable to the outcome variable is determined, excluding the contributions of other variables. Multinomial logistic regression is a simple extension of binary logistic regression that allows for more than two categories of the dependent or outcome variable. It uses maximum likelihood estimation to evaluate the probability of categorical membership. The multinomial logistic regression analysis has been adopted to explain the correlation between variables and graduates' monthly income.

### **9.1 Job probability**

Multi-stage binary logistic regression models are applied to control for different sets of baseline variables at each stage to examine the connection between capital variables and job probability. The first stage enters the mobile status, non-mobile (vs mobile student), a binary variable flagging graduates from Chinese or UK HEIs. The second stage includes control variables, the demographic and academic background, including gender (vs female), Communist Party member (vs not), top undergraduate HEIs (vs not), top postgraduate HEIs (vs not) and postgraduate major (converted to dummy variables in reference to business major). Then the next stage adds academic achievement (converted to dummy variables in reference to pass grade), scholarship (vs not), student leadership (vs not), professional qualification certificates (vs not), and the number of English certificates (continuous variable), which are considered the human capital variables. The following stage introduces organisational social capital variables into the model:

- Student organisation (vs not)
- Internship or part-time work experience (vs not)
- The score of HEI's employment guidance service (continuous variable)
- The mobilisation of organisational social capital (continuous variable)

In the final stage, private social capital variables were added to the model, including the father's HE (vs not), father's occupational status (FOS) (converted to dummy

variables in reference to labourers, laid-off workers or others), mother's HE (vs not), mother's occupational status (MOS) (converted to dummy variables in reference to labourers, laid-off workers or others), parents' annual income (continuous variable), the mobilisation of individual social capital (continuous variable).

Multi-stage logistic regression model predicts the probabilities of a binary outcome and provides the relative odds, e.g., likelihood of being employed/ probability of not being employed. The most significant outcome indicators in the model are 1) an increase in the percentage correctness, which reveals how knowing certain sets of variables increases the predictive ability of the model, and 2) the Exp(B) of each baseline variable, which compares the odds of being employed for one group of postgraduates with the odds for another postgraduates group, producing an odds ratio. The Exp(B) compares the odds for each subgroup with the reference category for categorical independent variables. For numerical variables, it shows the odds ratios change with one unit increase in the independent variables. For the analysis, 750 postgraduates who graduated between 2016 and 2018 and 105 fresh postgraduates who just graduated in 2019 were chosen. Thus, the total case number of this analysis is 855.

After adding graduates' demographic factors, human capital, organisational social capital and private social capital at each stage, the growth in the predictive accuracy of the model presents how capital variables at each stage explain graduates' later chances of obtaining employment.

The binary outcome variables are applied in the logistic regression models to flag whether postgraduates obtain their first jobs when receiving the master's certificates, coding being in employment equalling one and being in unemployment equalling 0.

In addition, multi-stage binary logistic regression has also been conducted separately for graduates abroad and graduates from home. We focus on the improvement of the percentage correctness after adding the five-set variables individually. The comparison between mobile and non-mobile graduates provides evidence of which set of factors is more powerful in predicting job probability. Meanwhile, the coefficient and odds ratio for the last stage of the models by different mobile statuses, including all the independent variables, have been presented to compare the various impacts of human capital and social capital on job probability for graduates abroad and at home.

## 9.2 Job satisfaction

This section details the relationship between human capital, social capital and the satisfactory level for the first employment. Since job satisfaction is only relevant to employed postgraduates, those unemployed are excluded from the model. Thus, the analysis includes 750 cases with accurate records of job satisfaction.

Multi-stage binary logistic regression models are applied to control for different baseline variables at each stage. The five sets of explanatory variables, including mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital, and private social capital, were added to the multi-stage logistic regression models, which are the same as those in the previous logistic regression models.

The multi-stage logistic regression model predicts the probabilities of a binary outcome and provides the relative odds, the likelihood of being satisfied with the employment or not being satisfied. The most significant outcome indicators in the model are the same as the previous models discussed in section 9.1.

After adding academic background, human capital, organisational social capital, private social capital, and graduation countries variables at each stage, the growth in the predictive accuracy of the model presents how academic background and capital variables at each stage explain the later chances of being satisfied with their employment. Thus, the comparison between UK and China postgraduates provides evidence on whether human capital, organisational social capital during the postgraduate stage and private social capital are associated with their future job satisfaction.

In this analysis, the binary outcome variable of whether they were satisfied with their first employment was applied in the logistic regression models. The satisfactory level scales (not satisfied at all, not satisfied, not entirely satisfied, satisfied, very satisfied) were converted into dichotomous variables, with those who were not satisfied at all, not satisfied, and not entirely satisfied equalling 0 and those who were satisfied and very satisfied equalling 1.

In addition, multi-stage binary logistic regression has also been conducted separately for graduates abroad and graduates from home, the same as the last part of the previous section (see Chapter 9.1).

### 9.3 Monthly salary

This section details the relationship between human capital, social capital and initial monthly income. Similar to the sample set of job satisfaction, the initial monthly salary is also only relevant to those postgraduates who were in employment. Those who had not been employed are excluded from the model. Thus, the analysis includes 750 cases. Multinomial logistic regression models are adopted to predict the probabilities of the different possible outcomes of category membership on a dependent variable based on multiple independent variables (also known as explanatory variables) (Coughenour et al., 2015), and estimate the difference in monthly salary associated with the UK or China HEIs.

Graduates' monthly income is the dependent variable for the multinomial logistic regression models. The four income categories for this variable are: below 5000 Yuan, 5001 to 10000 Yuan, 10001 to 15000 Yuan, above 15001 Yuan, with below 5000 Yuan as the reference group.

For the multinomial logistic regression models in SPSS, we cannot add different sets of variables in each level of the models. We can only conduct the analysis separately for different sets of variables. Thus, overall, fifteen models have been present in five tables.

The first three models only include mobile status, a binary variable flagging graduates from UK or home HEIs. It reveals the likelihood for graduates abroad of having salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan by contrast with those from home HEIs, compared to earnings below 5000 Yuan.

The next three models add mobile status and control variables, the demographic and academic background, including gender (vs male), Communist Party member (vs yes), top undergraduate HEIs (vs yes), top postgraduate HEIs (vs yes) and postgraduate major (converted to dummy variables in reference to business major). Note that the default reference group for the dummy variables are the highest-numbered category.

After that, for the following three models, mobile status, control variables and human capital variables are controlled for. Academic achievement (converted to dummy variables in reference to "pass" grade), scholarship (vs yes), student leadership (vs yes), professional qualification certificates (vs yes), and the number of English certificates (continuous variable), which are considered the human capital variables. Continuous variables are included in the model as covariables, with the lowest-valued coding as

the default reference level.

The following three models introduce the previous variables and organisational social capital variables, including student organisation (vs yes), internship or part-time work experience (vs yes), HEI's employment guidance service (continuous variable), and the mobilisation of organisational social capital (continuous variable)

In the final three models, all the previous variables and private social capital variables were added, including the father's HE diplomas (vs yes), father's occupational status (FOS) (converted to dummy variables in reference to labourers, laid-off workers or others), mother's HE (vs yes), mother's occupational status (MOS) (converted to dummy variables in reference to labourers, laid-off workers or others), parents' annual income (continuous variable), and the mobilisation of individual social capital (continuous variable).

The multinomial logistic regression model predicts the probabilities of multicategory outcomes and provides the relative odds for each category compared to the reference group. The most significant outcome indicators in the model are 1) an increase in the percentage correctness, which reveals how knowing certain sets of variables increases the predictive ability of the model, and 2) the  $\text{Exp}(B)$  of different sets of variables, which compares the odds of having salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan for one group of graduates with the odds for another group, producing odds ratios, compared to earning salaries below 5000 Yuan. The ratio of the probability of choosing one outcome category over the probability of choosing the baseline category is often referred to as relative risk. The parameters are used to make predictions about the probability of an event occurring compared with the reference category (Umaña-Hermosilla et al., 2020).

Overall, the analysis in this study is mainly based on data from the investigation, without randomly selecting samples from the population. Therefore, discussing issues such as significance tests or standard errors is irrelevant to this study's estimation.

Despite the fact that statistical significance is frequently employed in sociology, similar to other fields, to describe quantitative findings, its meaning is frequently misconstrued (Gorard, 2016). Methods specialists in the fields of medicine, psychology, sociology, and education have been petitioning journal editors and professional associations for assistance in prohibiting the publication of significance tests and their outcomes for some time. According to Engman (2013), sociology gains very little from

reporting statistical significance, and the consequences of misinterpreting significance values outweigh the benefits of their use. In 2015, statements regarding significant differences or their absence, statistical significance, null hypothesis significance testing (NHST), and p-value were prohibited by the editors of the journal *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*. They deemed NHST to be invalid and noted that the  $p < 0.05$  threshold is excessively low-barrier and is occasionally used to justify poorer-quality research.

Owing to the rigorous criteria for the application of significance tests, their utilisation in the intended manner is exceedingly uncommon. The conventional practice involves starting with the hypothesis that there is an absence of disparity, association, or discernible patterns in the broader population and that the subjects involved in the study were selected or assigned in a manner that is entirely haphazard from the said population. The architecture of the investigation must not be marred by partiality, inaccuracies in measurement, instances of non-participation, or the loss of participants from the sample. The methodology to figure out the outcome of a significance test hinges on these premises. Despite meeting every single stipulation, doubts about the rationale behind significance tests persist. Gorard (2016) pointed out the absurdity in the logic of significance tests through examples, asserting that the p-value loses its relevance in practical situations, even when all conditions are met. Calls to prohibit the use of significance tests in the realm of psychological science have been raised by scholars such as Hunter (1997), who criticised their ineffectiveness in the social sciences and highlighted their detrimental impact on the research evaluation process. Nelder (1999) argued for dismantling the entrenched P-value tradition, cautioning that the relentless chase for P-values can conceal crucial insights in scholarly inquiries.

It is evident that employing inferential statistics on populations or incomplete data is erroneous. Such conditions preclude the possibility of standard error. An essential prerequisite is the total randomisation of the cases being examined (Shaver, 1993; Camilli, 1996; Glass, 2014). It is useless to estimate the p-value for any type of non-random sample (Filho et al., 2013).

In light of the aforementioned analysis and discussion, the significance test and standard error are not pertinent to the estimation in this study. After explaining the steps entailed in answering this study's research questions, the next chapter discusses the statistical results of these questions, following each step as described in this chapter.

## 10 Results of descriptive analysis

The online survey started in December 2019 and lasted three months, collecting data from 438 students registered in master's programmes (yet to graduate) and 982 postgraduate master's students who graduated between 2016 and 2019. More than 30 HEIs were engaged in the poll. All factors are self-reported via the research questionnaire. The analysis covers 637 abroad and 783 home postgraduate students. Table 10.1 shows the share in per cent of gender and employment destinations. The survey includes female students abroad 145, accounting for 22.8 per cent of the overall mobile students; female students from domestic HEIs are 293, making up 37.4 per cent of the indigenous students. For practical reasons, non-probability sampling methods have been adopted. Although the questionnaire was distributed as extensively as possible, the data obtained shows that the proportion of graduate working overseas is merely low and information on international-related working experience and situation is not known. This is due to the difficulty of data collection and the fact that the current means of collecting information are still comparatively limited. Because of the non-random selection methods, any statistical inferences about the broader population will be weaker than with a probability sample. However, this study covers graduates and current students from more than 30 colleges and universities, and the information provided by them still possesses great value and gives a glimpse of the employment situation of the graduates.

Table 10.1 Distribution of gender and work location, by mobile status

	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	637	783
Female	22.8	37.4
Work overseas	0.003	0.0

The results from Table 10.2 show that most of the graduates sought employment after graduation, with 376 mobile and 374 non-mobile graduates finding jobs with payments. When the survey was conducted, 105 new graduates were unemployed, with 65 abroad and 40 at home. Besides there are a small proportion of graduates chose to carry on their studies after graduation, accounting for 8.0 per cent and 9.7 per cent of overall mobile and non-mobile students, respectively.

Table 10.2 Percentage of graduates in each trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	637	783
Students registered in the programmes	22.8	37.4
Graduates carrying on studies	8.0	9.7
Graduates in unemployment	10.2	5.1
Graduates in employment	59.0	47.8

The comparisons have been conducted separately for those registered in the programme (yet to graduate) and graduates not seeking employment (carrying on their studies) or in different employment statuses by mobile and non-mobile status. Career prospects will be mainly analysed for the students who were registered in the programmes, whereas for the graduates continuing their studies, the demographic and academic background has been considered.

Regarding motivations for choosing overseas/ home HEIs, obstacles in finding a job overseas, career prospects, job-searching process and expected labour market outcomes for the students registered in the programmes (yet to graduate), two groups are compared:

- Mobile students registered in the UK HEI programmes, here labelled mobile (full-degree) students or students abroad (N=145);
- Non-mobile students registered in indigenous HEI programmes, here labelled non-mobile students or students at home (N=293).

For the graduates carrying on their studies after graduation, the two groups are compared:

- Mobile graduates continuing studies after graduation (N=51);
- Non-mobile graduates (N=76).

Regarding motivations, obstacles, demographic and educational background, human capital stock, social capital stock and mobilisation for graduates seeking employment, the comparisons have been conducted by different mobile statuses and employment statuses:

- Employed mobile graduates from UK HEIs, here labelled mobile graduates or graduates abroad with employment (N=376);
- Unemployed (or jobless) mobile graduates from UK HEIs (N=65);
- Employed non-mobile graduates from indigenous HEIs (N=374);
- Unemployed non-mobile graduates from indigenous HEIs (N=40).

However, labour market outcomes, including the job-seeking channels, time to be employed, employer, location, monthly salary, and job satisfaction, have been analysed only for those hired with payments.

### **10.1 Students registered in the programmes (yet to graduate)**

This section discusses the study motivation of master's students who registered in the programmes when the survey was conducted, and the predicted obstacles in finding jobs overseas. Finally, it compares the career prospects and possible job-searching channels between students from UK HEIs and their counterparts at home.

#### **10.1.1 Motivation for choosing overseas/ home HEIs**

Tables 10.3 and 10.5 shows the percentage distribution of a five-point scale (disagree at all, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) to evaluate the participants' attitudes regarding the intention to study abroad or at-home HEIs. The value of 1 corresponds to the response "disagree at all", 2 to "disagree", 3 to "neutral", 4 to "agree", and 5 to "strongly agree". More than 85 per cent of the participants registered in UK HEIs reported positively that programme length is one of the crucial motivations upon consideration, while it is not that significant for their home peers, with more than 90 per cent reporting "disagree at all" or "disagree". The percentage of educational opportunity availability shows the same distribution.

However, students from home HEIs are much more price-sensitive than students abroad, with nearly 70 per cent of them reporting that the expense is one of the crucial reasons to stay at home HEIs. By contrast, almost 50 per cent of students abroad were neutral toward expenses. In addition, staying close to family and adaptability to education and career development are essential elements that influence the decision of students to choose master's study at home HEIs, with more than half of students scoring "agree" or "strongly agree". Nevertheless, they seem to be less critical for students abroad, with more than 60 per cent of the participants reporting "disagree" or "disagree at all".

Table 10.3 Percentage of motivation in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Programme length	Mobile (N=145)	0.0	0.7	13.8	49.0	36.6
	Non-mobile (N=293)	22.9	70.0	5.5	1.4	0.3
Economic development in the (destination) country	Mobile	0.0	2.1	18.6	48.3	31.0
	Non-mobile	8.2	6.5	29.4	40.3	15.7
Reputation of the university	Mobile	0.0	0.0	15.9	58.6	25.5
	Non-mobile	5.1	3.1	15.7	51.5	24.6
Availability of educational opportunity	Mobile	0.0	2.1	20.7	49.7	27.6
	Non-mobile	14.3	72.7	11.6	1.0	0.3
Expenses	Mobile	2.1	10.3	49.7	32.4	5.5
	Non-mobile	2.4	4.8	23.5	54.6	14.7
Staying close to family	Mobile	36.6	31.0	28.3	2.1	2.1
	Non-mobile	4.1	7.2	34.1	45.4	9.2
Adaptability to education and career development	Mobile	37.9	31.7	27.6	1.4	1.4
	Non-mobile	4.4	6.8	36.5	43.3	8.9

The results in Table 10.4 show that the motivations for choosing overseas or home HEIs vary significantly between mobile and non-mobile students. In the table, the categorical responses of motivations have been converted into continuous variables that assign a number (1 to 5) to each response. The differences between the two groups have been compared using statistical measures such as mean, standard deviation, and effect size.

It shows that the short programme duration, more educational opportunities and economic development in the UK are the most crucial factors “pull” the students to study abroad; however, reasonable expenses, the wish to stay with families and the adaptability of education and career development seem to be the most vital driving force for those to study at home HEIs. In addition, both groups of students considered HEI’s reputation a significant motivation for postgraduation education; however, the mean for mobile students (4.10) is even higher than that of non-mobile ones. More than 70 per cent of students considered HEI reputation essential when carrying on their studies (see Table 10.3).

Table 10.4 Mean, SD and ES of motivation for studying abroad or at home, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Programme length	Mobile	145	4.21	0.70	1.27	1.85
	Non-mobile	293	1.86	0.59		
Economic development of the destination country	Mobile	145	4.08	0.76	1.03	0.57
	Non-mobile	293	3.49	1.09		
Reputation of the universities	Mobile	145	4.10	0.64	0.89	0.26
	Non-mobile	293	3.87	0.99		
Availability of educational opportunities	Mobile	145	4.03	0.75	1.15	1.7
	Non-mobile	293	2.00	0.58		
Expenses (e.g., living and tuition)	Mobile	145	3.29	0.81	0.86	-0.52
	Non-mobile	293	3.74	0.85		
Staying close to families	Mobile	145	2.02	0.96	1.15	-1.27
	Non-mobile	293	3.48	0.91		
Adaptability to education and career development	Mobile	145	1.97	0.92	1.15	-1.29
	Non-mobile	293	3.45	0.91		

### 10.1.2 Obstacles in finding jobs overseas

In Table 10.5, different forms of obstacles that the participants may face when finding jobs overseas are displayed. Nearly 70 per cent of the students abroad strongly agree (scoring “4” or “5”) that the difficulties in getting a work permit in one of the essential factors that hinder them from finding employment overseas, but the percentage distribution is lower for students at home HEIs. In addition, more than 70 per cent of students abroad and 80 per cent at home considered loneliness and family the crucial factors to working in their home country. However, a large proportion (more than 65 per cent) of students studying in the UK believed language barriers are an essential factor preventing them from working overseas.

Table 10.5 Percentage of obstacles in finding jobs overseas, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulties in getting a work permit	Mobile (N=145)	0.0	4.8	26.9	42.1	26.2
	Non-mobile (N=293)	4.8	6.1	43.3	34.8	10.9
Loneliness, being far away from families and friends	Mobile	6.9	9.7	19.3	42.8	21.4
	Non-mobile	4.1	3.1	21.8	41.3	29.7
Less work opportunities for the international students	Mobile	3.4	0.7	25.5	43.4	26.9
	Non-mobile	4.8	3.8	39.9	37.2	14.3

Language barrier	Mobile	0.7	8.3	25.5	45.5	20.0
	Non-mobile	5.5	3.8	41.3	35.2	14.3
Culture differences	Mobile	2.1	11.0	39.3	42.1	5.5
	Non-mobile	3.8	5.1	35.2	42.7	13.3
Major and development prospect	Mobile	1.4	17.2	44.8	29.0	7.6
	Non-mobile	4.1	8.5	40.6	35.8	10.9

When converting the categorical responses of obstacles into continuous variables that assigns a number (1 to 5) to each response, the mean, standard deviation and effect size have been calculated to show the overall situation and to compare the difference between the two groups. The results show that difficulties in getting work permits and fewer work opportunities are the most crucial reasons for the students abroad, with the means scoring 3.90 (see Table 10.6), much significantly higher than that of students from home. However, non-mobile students tend to consider family and friend ties and cultural differences when choosing jobs overseas, which are less crucial for mobile students.

Table 10.6 Mean, SD and ES of obstacles in finding jobs overseas, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Difficulties in getting a work permit	Mobile	145	3.90	0.85	0.93	0.53
	Non-mobile	293	3.41	0.93		
Loneliness, being far away from families and friends	Mobile	145	3.62	1.13	1.05	-0.26
	Non-mobile	293	3.89	1.00		
Less work opportunities for the international students	Mobile	145	3.90	0.93	0.96	0.39
	Non-mobile	293	3.53	0.95		
Language barrier	Mobile	145	3.76	0.89	0.95	0.28
	Non-mobile	293	3.49	0.97		
Culture differences	Mobile	145	3.38	0.83	0.89	-0.21
	Non-mobile	293	3.57	0.92		
Major and development prospect	Mobile	145	3.24	0.88	0.92	-0.18
	Non-mobile	293	3.41	0.94		

### 10.1.3 Career planning and expected labour market outcomes

Tables 10.7 and 10.9 show the percentage distribution of the five-point scale (disagree at all, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) to evaluate the attitudes of the participants regarding career aspirations for students abroad or at home HEIs. The

value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response “disagree at all”, “disagree”, “neutral”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”, respectively.

The Table 10.7 displays the participants’ attitudes toward the expected types of employers. Of the students registered at UK HEIs, more than 75 per cent of the students are intensely interested in “Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture”. However, for their counterparts from home HEIs, “government or public institution” tends to be extremely popular, with nearly 80 per cent of students reporting “agree” or “strongly agree”. In addition, “State-owned/State-controlled enterprise” and “Private enterprise/ Individually-owned business” seem to have similar distribution for the two groups of students.

Table 10.7 Percentage of expected employer type in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Government/Public institution	Mobile (N=145)	7.6	17.9	36.9	28.3	10.3
	Non-mobile (N=293)	1.0	2.7	20.1	47.8	28.3
State-owned/State-controlled enterprise	Mobile	4.1	9.7	38.6	39.3	8.3
	Non-mobile	1.7	5.5	32.4	44.1	15.4
Private enterprise/ Individually-owned business	Mobile	2.8	11.7	41.4	34.5	9.7
	Non-mobile	4.8	13.3	47.8	31.1	3.1
Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture	Mobile	0.0	0.0	23.4	51.7	24.8
	Non-mobile	5.1	11.6	42.3	34.8	6.1
Self-employed	Mobile	15.2	21.4	43.4	16.6	3.4
	Non-mobile	9.9	26.3	43.0	16.7	4.1
Individual enterprise of your family or relatives	Mobile	19.3	34.5	39.3	6.9	0.0
	Non-mobile	15.7	24.9	44.4	12.6	2.4

Table 10.8 illustrates the differences, similarities, and how strong they are between students abroad and at home in the preferences for future employer types. The categorical responses of preferred employer types have been converted into continuous variables that assign a number (1 to 5) to each response. Following this strategy, mean, standard deviation and effect size have been calculated to compare the two groups’ differences.

The results illustrated that the top two significant differences located in the choice of “Government/public institution” and “Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture”, with the effect size 0.84 and 0.82, respectively. Non-mobile students tend to

be much more likely to choose government or public institutions than those studying abroad, with a mean of 4 out of 5. By contrast, mobile students are more inclined to join enterprises invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture, with a significantly higher mean than non-mobile students. In addition, the choice of state-owned or state-controlled enterprises is also a widespread preference for non-mobile students, with a mean scoring of 3.67, much higher than their mobile peers. Nevertheless, self-employed and individual enterprises of family or relatives are the least popular options among students of different mobile statuses.

Table 10.8 Mean, SD and ES of preferred employers, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Government/Public institution	Mobile	145	3.16	1.08	1.00	-0.84
	Non-mobile	293	4.00	0.83		
State-owned/State-controlled enterprise	Mobile	145	3.38	0.92	0.89	-0.33
	Non-mobile	293	3.67	0.86		
Private enterprise/ Individually-owned Business	Mobile	145	3.37	0.91	0.88	0.26
	Non-mobile	293	3.14	0.86		
Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture	Mobile	145	4.01	0.70	0.93	0.82
	Non-mobile	293	3.25	0.92		
Self-employed	Mobile	145	2.72	1.03	0.99	-0.07
	Non-mobile	293	2.79	0.97		
Individual enterprise of your family or relatives	Mobile	145	2.34	0.87	0.95	-0.28
	Non-mobile	293	2.61	0.98		

Table 10.9 includes information on the choice of job locations between students abroad and at-home HEIs. Non-mobile students tend to be more eager to work in the city where family members live or large and well-developed cities around their hometown, with a more significant proportion of students reporting “agree” or “strongly agree”. Specifically, more than 75 per cent of the students from home HEIs show clear preferences for cities closely with family members; however, that proportion is just half among students abroad. In addition, more than 70 per cent of non-mobile students are expected to work in “the provincial capital or prefecture-level city in the province of hometown”, the more economic-developed cities in China. That percentage for mobile students is less than half.

However, the two groups of students tend to have similar options for the “seaside city of the eastern part of China”, with around 60 per cent of the students reporting a solid

intention to work there. However, students with and without ISM experience show unfavourable intentions to work overseas. A larger proportion (around 25 per cent) of students with such experience positively indicate the possibility of working in the UK, while that percentage is only around 13 per cent for those without the experience. The possibility of working in the cities in other foreign countries shows a similar distribution.

Table 10.9 Percentage of expected job location in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
	Mobile (N=145)	6.9	4.1	38.5	26.9	23.4
The city where family members live	Non-mobile (N=293)	1.4	3.1	19.5	44.4	31.7
The provincial capital or prefecture-level city in the province of your hometown	Mobile	7.6	11.7	33.8	28.3	18.6
	Non-mobile	3.8	4.1	21.2	49.1	21.8
The county-level city in the province of your hometown	Mobile	26.9	26.2	31.7	4.8	10.3
	Non-mobile	9.6	13.7	31.1	34.8	10.9
Seaside city of eastern part of China	Mobile	2.1	7.6	23.4	37.2	29.7
	Non-mobile	4.8	4.1	34.1	43.0	14.0
Other provincial capital city or municipality directly under the central government	Mobile	4.8	9.0	31.0	38.6	16.6
	Non-mobile	4.4	14.0	41.3	29.4	10.9
The prefecture-level city or county-level city in other provinces	Mobile	28.3	24.8	32.4	8.3	6.2
	Non-mobile	17.1	24.6	41.3	13.0	4.1
City in the UK	Mobile	24.1	24.1	26.2	17.9	7.6
	Non-mobile	53.2	14.0	19.5	9.6	3.8
City in other foreign countries	Mobile	31.0	22.1	27.6	15.2	4.1
	Non-mobile	51.5	16.7	20.1	9.2	2.4

Table 10.10 shows the mean scoring of the intended location preferences and the effect size between mobile and non-mobile students. Overall, large, more developed and eastern seaside cities are very favourite places for all the students, but some options still have significant differences. Non-mobile students are more intended to go to cities where family members live or large cities in their hometowns, with means of 4.02 and 3.81, respectively, which are significantly higher than that of mobile students. It shows that family ties are still crucial for non-mobile students when choosing planned workplaces. By contrast, the mean score of seaside cities (3.85) is the highest among all the options for mobile students and is significantly higher than that of non-

mobile students. Working in the cities with family members or in their hometowns possess comparatively higher mean scores but significantly lower than non-mobile groups. In addition, the intention to work overseas is low, especially for non-mobile students. The means are 1.97 and 1.94 respectively for the option of working in the UK and other countries, significantly lower than that of mobile students, although the means for mobile groups are also comparatively low among all the options.

Table 10.10 Mean, SD and ES of the choice of location, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
The city where family members live	Mobile	145	3.56	1.10	0.98	-0.47
	Non-mobile	293	4.02	0.87		
The provincial capital or prefecture-level city in the province of your hometown	Mobile	145	3.39	1.14	1.04	-0.40
	Non-mobile	293	3.81	0.95		
The county-level city in the province of your hometown	Mobile	145	2.46	1.23	1.21	-0.64
	Non-mobile	293	3.24	1.12		
Seaside city of eastern part of China	Mobile	145	3.85	1.00	0.97	0.29
	Non-mobile	293	3.57	0.95		
Other provincial capital city or municipality directly under the central government	Mobile	145	3.53	1.03	1.01	0.25
	Non-mobile	293	3.28	0.99		
The prefecture-level city or county-level city in other provinces	Mobile	145	2.39	1.16	1.09	-0.21
	Non-mobile	293	2.62	1.04		
City in the UK	Mobile	145	2.61	1.24	1.25	0.51
	Non-mobile	293	1.97	1.20		
City in other foreign countries	Mobile	145	2.39	1.19	1.18	0.38
	Non-mobile	293	1.94	1.14		

Regarding the expected monthly salary (see Table 10.11), mobile students tend to have a much higher expected monthly salary than non-mobile groups. 66.3 per cent of mobile students are expected to earn more than 10000 Yuan, while 66.9 per cent of non-mobile students intend to have incomes between 5001 to 10000 Yuan. When treating it as a continuous variable, the result from the table shows that there is a significant difference in the average expected monthly salaries between mobile and non-mobile students, with the effect size being 0.53 (see Table 10.12).

Table 10.11 Percentage of expected monthly salary range, by mobile status

	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	145	293
Below 5000 Yuan	3.4	3.8
5001-10000 Yuan	30.3	66.9
10001-15000 Yuan	49.7	19.8
Above 15001 Yuan	16.6	9.5

Table 10.12 Mean, SD and ES of the expected monthly salary, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Monthly salary	Mobile	145	2.87	0.91	0.89	0.53
	Non-mobile	293	2.40	0.84		

#### 10.1.4 Job-seeking channels and employment guidance services

Tables 10.13 to 10.16 show how different job-searching channels and career guidance services will help the participants obtain jobs. Concerning the job-seeking channels predicted by students registered in the master's programme, Table 10.13 displays the percentage distribution of five-point scales to evaluate the attitudes of the participants regarding how helpful the channels will be for students abroad or at-home HEIs. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response "least helpful", "not helpful", "somewhat", "helpful", and "the most helpful" channels, respectively.

A large proportion of students at home HEIs reported that they may depend on the employment information released by the university, accounting for more than 65 per cent; however, that proportion is smaller for students abroad, only around 40 per cent. More than 65 per cent of non-mobile students pointed out that a recommendation from a supervisor is one of the helpful channels they may use when looking for jobs, while the proportion is less than 40 per cent for mobile students. In addition, the "social recruitment examination" is another helpful channel for indigenous students, with nearly 80 per cent admitting the value of it. However, that percentage is less than 60 per cent for students abroad.

For the online recruitment channels, both groups of students value the significance, with nearly 75 per cent of students abroad reporting "helpful" and "very helpful" and around 55 per cent of indigenous students. Meanwhile, the two groups of students believe the Internship or social practice is one of the most significant channels that may help them obtain employment, with more than 60 per cent of them reporting

“helpful” and “very helpful.”

Table 10.13 Percentage of job-seeking channels in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
The employment information released by university	Mobile (N=145)	0.7	14.5	44.1	31.0	9.7
	Non-mobile (N=293)	1.7	4.4	25.9	43.7	24.2
Recruitment fair	Mobile	4.1	12.4	26.9	38.6	17.9
	Non-mobile	1.4	7.5	27.3	45.4	18.4
Online recruitment	Mobile	2.8	4.1	19.3	39.3	34.5
	Non-mobile	2.4	10.6	30.4	36.9	19.8
Job-seeking agency	Mobile	4.8	39.3	37.2	14.5	4.1
	Non-mobile	13.3	42.7	28.0	11.9	4.1
Recommendation from family members and relatives	Mobile	2.2	13.1	26.9	43.4	14.5
	Non-mobile	2.7	14.7	30.0	43.0	9.6
Recommendation from classmates and friends	Mobile	0.0	9.0	38.6	39.3	13.1
	Non-mobile	2.7	7.2	34.8	46.8	8.5
Internship or social practice	Mobile	2.8	6.9	24.1	53.8	12.4
	Non-mobile	3.4	7.2	25.6	51.2	12.6
Social recruitment examination	Mobile	2.1	6.2	33.8	29.0	29.0
	Non-mobile	0.7	3.1	17.7	48.8	29.7
Recommendation from supervisor	Mobile	6.2	22.1	33.8	28.3	9.7
	Non-mobile	3.4	7.2	24.6	43.3	21.5

Table 10.14 displays the differences, similarities, and how helpful they are between students abroad and at home regarding the channels they may use when looking for employment. In the table, the categorical responses of job search channels have been converted into continuous variables that assign numbers 1 to 5 to each response. Mean, standard deviation and effect size have been computed to evaluate the disparities between the two groups. Online recruitment is the most crucial channel for mobile students, scoring 3.99. In contrast, the score of non-mobile students is 3.61, significantly lower than their mobile peers ( $ES=0.38$ ). Another two channels seem essential to mobile students, including internships or social practice and social recruitment examinations. However, the scoring of internships or social practice for non-mobile students is 4.04, dramatically higher than that of mobile students. It is the most crucial channel reported by non-mobile students. In addition, non-mobile students predicted that they might rely much more on the employment information released by the HEIs, with a score of 3.84. By contrast, for the mobile graduates, the

predicted usage of employment information released by the HEI channel is only scoring 3.34, significantly lower than that of non-mobile students (ES=0.54).

Moreover, the predicted use of recommendations from classmates and friends is almost the same in both groups of students. In contrast, supervisor recommendations show significant differences between the two groups (ES=0.56). The mean scoring of mobile students is only 3.13, the second least essential channel.

The job search strategies of mobile and non-mobile students are different. In addition to social recruitment examinations, home students are more likely to obtain jobs by information released by the HEIs. By contrast, mobile students were predicted to find jobs through online recruitment.

Table 10.14 Mean, SD and ES of job-seeking channels, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
The employment information released by university	Mobile	145	3.34	0.87	0.92	-0.54
	Non-mobile	293	3.84	0.90		
Recruitment fair	Mobile	145	3.54	1.05	0.95	-0.19
	Non-mobile	293	3.72	0.90		
Online recruitment	Mobile	145	3.99	0.98	1.00	0.38
	Non-mobile	293	3.61	1.00		
Job-seeking agency	Mobile	145	2.74	0.91	0.98	0.23
	Non-mobile	293	2.51	1.00		
Recommendation from family members and relatives	Mobile	145	3.55	0.96	0.95	0.14
	Non-mobile	293	3.42	0.95		
Recommendation from classmates and friends	Mobile	145	3.57	0.83	0.85	0.07
	Non-mobile	293	3.51	0.85		
Internship or social practice	Mobile	145	3.66	0.88	0.90	0.04
	Non-mobile	293	3.62	0.92		
Social recruitment examination	Mobile	145	3.77	1.01	0.89	-0.30
	Non-mobile	293	4.04	0.81		
Recommendation from supervisor	Mobile	145	3.13	1.06	1.05	-0.56
	Non-mobile	293	3.72	0.99		

Table 10.15 shows the percentage distribution of the five-point scale to evaluate the attitudes towards the career service provided by the HEIs for students abroad or at home HEIs. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response “very poor”,

“poor”, “neutral”, “good”, and “excellent”, respectively.

Overall, the grading of students from indigenous HEIs is higher than that of students from UK HEIs, with a more significant proportion of students reporting “good” and “excellent”. However, all the proportions are generally less than 40 per cent, showing the little attention the HEIs paid to the employment guidance service.

For the service of “CV designing”, “interview skills”, “psychological counselling”, and “employment policy explanation”, UK HEIs seem to provide little guidance, with more than 90 per cent reporting “very poor” or “poor”.

Table 10.15 Percentage of career guidance services in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
	Mobile (N=145)	39.3	26.2	29.0	4.1	1.4
The designing and making of CV	Non-mobile (N=293)	4.1	12.6	51.5	25.9	5.8
The guidance of the skills in the interview	Mobile	35.9	23.4	30.3	7.6	2.8
	Non-mobile	6.1	18.8	46.4	22.2	6.5
The guidance of career planning	Mobile	22.8	19.3	42.8	13.8	1.4
	Non-mobile	1.4	14.3	44.7	30.0	9.6
Psychological guidance	Mobile	33.1	35.2	26.2	4.8	0.7
	Non-mobile	3.4	15.7	50.5	23.9	6.5
The explanation of employment situation	Mobile	32.4	41.4	19.3	6.2	0.7
	Non-mobile	0.7	14.7	49.1	28.3	7.2
The releasing of employment information	Mobile	29.0	26.9	21.4	19.3	3.4
	Non-mobile	3.8	8.5	48.5	30.0	9.2

The table displays 10.16 the differences and similarities between students abroad and at home regarding the employment guidance service provided by the HEIs. In the table, the categorical responses of the factors have been converted into continuous variables that assign numbers 1 to 5 to each response. To evaluate the similarities and disparities between the two groups, we computed their means, standard deviations, and effect sizes. For mobile students, the average scoring of career services is dramatically lower than that of non-mobile students, which shows the poor service the HEIs provided. The top three significant differences in the employment policy explanation are CV designing and psychological counselling guidance, with an effect size of 1.21, 1.08, and 1.06, respectively. According to the report from mobile students, UK HEIs may provide insufficient career support services for international students, even though they have

yet to graduate.

Table 10.16 Mean, SD and ES of career services, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
The designing and making of CV	Mobile	145	2.02	0.99	1.06	-1.08
	Non-mobile	293	3.17	0.87		
The guidance of the skills in the interview	Mobile	145	2.18	1.09	1.08	-0.80
	Non-mobile	293	3.04	0.96		
The guidance of career planning	Mobile	145	2.52	1.03	1.01	-0.79
	Non-mobile	293	3.32	0.88		
Psychological guidance	Mobile	145	2.05	0.92	1.03	-1.06
	Non-mobile	293	3.14	0.88		
The explanation of employment policy	Mobile	145	2.01	0.91	1.04	-1.21
	Non-mobile	293	3.27	0.82		
The releasing of employment information	Mobile	145	2.41	1.19	1.09	-0.83
	Non-mobile	293	3.32	0.90		

### 10.1.5 Factors related to employment

The survey also includes the self-assessment of the factors influencing career choice in the job-searching process. Table 10.16 shows the percentage distribution of five-point scales to evaluate the participants' attitudes regarding each factor for students abroad or at-home HEIs. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response "not important at all", "not important", "neutral", "important", and "very important", respectively.

According to the results (see Table 10.17), factors including major, diploma, HEI reputation, career guidance service, and working/ internship experience seem to be essential for job attainment for both groups of students, with more than three-quarters of students reporting "important" and "very important". Another factor, such as fortune, is essential in the job search. More than half of the students take it as a crucial factor.

Table 10.17 Percentage of factors related to employment in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Social networking	Mobile (N=145)	0.7	7.6	33.1	36.6	22.1
	Non-mobile (N=293)	1.7	8.9	32.4	39.9	17.1
Major	Mobile	0.0	1.5	20.0	55.9	22.8
	Non-mobile	0.7	1.7	14.3	56.7	26.6
Diploma	Mobile	0.0	0.0	11.7	65.5	22.8
	Non-mobile	0.0	1.0	11.3	57.3	30.4
Fortune	Mobile	0.0	6.9	38.6	33.8	20.7
	Non-mobile	0.3	10.6	37.5	38.9	12.6
Academic achievement	Mobile	1.4	2.8	34.5	51.0	10.3
	Non-mobile	0.3	4.8	31.7	47.4	15.7
The reputation of the university	Mobile	0.0	0.0	17.0	53.8	28.3
	Non-mobile	0.3	1.4	14.0	55.3	29.0
Career guidance service	Mobile	0.0	9.0	11.7	54.5	24.8
	Non-mobile	0.3	3.4	15.7	52.2	28.3
Acquired skills	Mobile	0.0	26.9	6.2	34.5	32.4
	Non-mobile	0.0	1.0	6.5	48.8	43.7
Working/ internship experience	Mobile	0.0	0.0	11.7	59.3	29.0
	Non-mobile	0.3	1.4	15.7	54.3	28.3
Family background	Mobile	0.0	2.8	44.8	30.3	22.1
	Non-mobile	2.0	7.2	49.5	34.5	6.8

Table 10.18 displays the differences, similarities, and how important they are between students abroad and at home regarding the evaluation of factors related to their future employment. In the table, the categorical responses of the factors have been converted into continuous variables that assign a number (1 to 5) to each response. The mean, standard deviation, and effect size have been determined to compare how different the two groups are.

The results show that required skills, working experience, HEI reputation, diploma and field of study are the critical factors related to employment attainment, with the mean scoring larger than 4 for different mobile statuses. The top two striking different opinions are located in acquired skills and family background, with a significantly high effect size of 0.69 and 0.42, respectively. Non-mobile students tend to value required skills (mean=4.35) more remarkably than their peers abroad; however, students abroad regard their family background (mean=3.72) as an essential factor related to

future career development more than their counterparts at home.

Table 10.18 Mean, SD and ES of factors related to employment, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Social networking	Mobile	145	3.72	0.92	0.92	0.11
	Non-mobile	293	3.62	0.93		
Major	Mobile	145	4.00	0.70	0.72	-0.09
	Non-mobile	293	4.07	0.73		
Diploma	Mobile	145	4.11	0.58	0.63	-0.10
	Non-mobile	293	4.17	0.66		
Fortune	Mobile	145	3.68	0.88	0.87	0.18
	Non-mobile	293	3.53	0.86		
Academic achievement	Mobile	145	3.66	0.76	0.78	-0.09
	Non-mobile	293	3.73	0.79		
The reputation of the university	Mobile	145	4.10	0.67	0.70	-0.01
	Non-mobile	293	4.11	0.71		
Career guidance service by HEIs	Mobile	145	3.95	0.85	0.80	-0.12
	Non-mobile	293	4.05	0.78		
Acquired skills	Mobile	145	3.72	1.18	0.91	-0.69
	Non-mobile	293	4.35	0.65		
Working/ internship experience	Mobile	145	4.17	0.62	0.69	0.12
	Non-mobile	293	4.09	0.72		
Family background	Mobile	145	3.72	0.84	0.83	0.42
	Non-mobile	293	3.37	0.80		

### 10.1.6 Career value of postgraduate education

The survey asked participants how their postgraduate education would fulfil their career prospects. Table 10.19 shows the percentage distribution of the five-point scale to evaluate whether postgraduate education can enhance career aspirations. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response “not at all”, “not important”, “neutral”, “important”, and “very important”, respectively.

Less than 30 per cent of mobile students reported that their master’s studies have significant career value; however, more than 63 per cent of non-mobile students affirmed the professional value of postgraduate education. Converting the categorical responses into continuous variables assigns a number (1 to 5) to each response. The

results from Table 10.20 show a significant difference in the attitude to career value between the different mobile statuses, with the effect size being 0.67. Students from indigenous HEIs placed a higher career value on postgraduate education than their peers abroad.

Table 10.19 Percentage of career value in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

Mobile status	N	1	2	3	4	5
Mobile	145	0.0	21.4	49.0	28.3	1.4
Non-mobile	293	1.4	7.2	28.0	51.5	11.9

Table 10.20 Mean, SD and ES of the career value, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Career value	Mobile	145	3.10	0.74	0.84	0.67
	Non-mobile	293	3.66	0.83		

## 10.2 Graduates continuing studies after graduation

As the study focuses on the employment status attainment of the postgraduates, and those who chose to carry on their study may never have job-seeking experience, variables related to employment have yet to be collected. However, the following two tables illustrate the differences and similarities between graduates with and without ISM experience in the reasons for carrying on their studies after postgraduate education and the demographic and academic background.

It is seen from Table 10.21 that pursuing more knowledge, with a percentage of 41.2 and 50, respectively, for the mobile and non-mobile graduates is the most important reason. Another one, to avoid entering the competitive labour market, is the second important reason, with 15 and 17 graduates from the UK and Chinese HEIs reporting it as a crucial reason accounting for 29.4 per cent and 22.4 per cent, respectively.

Table 10.21 Percentage of reasons for carrying on studies after graduation, by mobile status

	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	51	76
Being ambitious to pursue advanced knowledge	41.2	50.0
Performing potential in academic study	19.6	19.7
Avoiding entering into the labour market	29.4	22.4
Awarding by scholarship	2.0	3.9
Others	7.8	3.9

Table 10.22 shows the percentage distribution of background information for those carrying on their studies after graduation. For the academic background, 37 females who graduated from UK HEIs carried on their studies, accounting for 72.5 per cent; however, both genders were almost equally distributed among non-mobile graduates. While more than 60 per cent of non-mobile graduates continuing their studies are Communist Party members, only 19.4 per cent of mobile graduates are. More than half of graduates choosing to carry on their studies graduated from non-elite undergraduate HEIs. In China, many recruiters value undergraduate certificates very much, also called the first diplomas after National Entrance Examination. Thus, those choosing to continue their studies may be because their first degree is insufficient to fulfil their employment prospects. Nevertheless, graduates from top postgraduate HEIs account for a much more significant proportion of continuing their studies and both mobile statuses show the same situation. In addition, more graduates majoring in humanity and social science chose to carry on their studies, with 51 per cent and 50 per cent for the mobile and non-mobile groups, respectively.

Table 10.22 Percentage of demographic and academic background, by mobile status

	Classification	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	-	51	76
Gender	Female	72.5	51.3
	Male	27.5	48.7
Communist Party member	No	80.4	39.5
	Yes	19.6	60.5
Top undergraduate HEI	No	54.9	57.9
	Yes	45.1	42.1
Top postgraduate HEI	No	7.8	34.2
	Yes	92.2	65.8
The field of your postgraduate major	Business	33.3	18.4
	Social science	51.0	50.0
	Science	15.7	31.6

### 10.3 Graduates seeking employment

This section discusses the studying motivation, job-seeking process and labour market outcomes for graduates who sought employment with payment after graduation.

### 10.3.1 Main reasons for unemployment

In Table 10.23, different forms of reasons for being unemployed after graduation are displayed. The mobile and non-mobile graduates reported that the main reason for being unemployed is the high competition in the labour market, accounting for 46.2 per cent and 58.5 per cent, respectively. Meanwhile, graduates with overseas experiences in the UK have missed the golden recruitment period, taking up 23.1 per cent. The recruitment peak for graduates in China usually occurs between April and October, when UK students have not yet received their graduation certificates. This poses some challenges for the overseas postgraduates looking for employment after returning to China.

In addition, a small proportion of graduates are not rushing to seek employment. They chose to get some rest or travelling before access to work, with 15.4 per cent and 7.5 per cent of mobile and non-mobile graduates, respectively.

Table 10.23 Percentage of reasons for being unemployment after graduation, by mobile status

	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	65	40
Just graduated and missed the golden period of recruitment.	23.1	0.0
Plan to get some rest or travelling	15.4	7.5
Other objective factors such as family calamity, looking after sick parents	0.0	0.0
High competition in the labour market	36.2	58.5
High work expectations (i.e., salary)	25.4	29.0
Others	0.0	5.0

### 10.3.2 Motivation for choosing overseas/ home HEIs

Table 10.24 shows the percentage distribution of the five-point scale to evaluate the participants' attitudes regarding the intention to study abroad or at-home HEIs. The value of 1 corresponds to the response "disagree at all", 2 to "disagree", 3 to "neutral", 4 to "agree", and 5 to "strongly agree". More than 80 per cent of the graduates from UK HEIs reported positively that programme length is one of the crucial motivations upon consideration, while it is not that significant for their home peers, with nearly half of them reporting "disagree at all" or "disagree".

However, staying close to family is an essential element that influences the decision to

pursue a master’s study at home HEIs, with more than 80 per cent of the graduates scoring “agree” or “strongly agree”. However, they seem less important for graduates abroad, with around 45 per cent of the participants reporting “disagree” or “disagree at all”.

In addition, graduates with and without the ISM experiences pointed out that the “economic development in the destination country” is an essential factor that they may take into consideration when pursuing postgraduate education, with more than 80 per cent of the participants grading “agreeing” and “strongly agree”.

Table 10.24 Percentage of motivation for overseas/ home HEIs in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Programme length	Mobile (N=441)	0.2	1.1	15.2	39.7	43.8
	Non-mobile (N=414)	9.4	36.5	21.5	14.7	17.9
Economic development in the (destination) country	Mobile	0.0	3.2	15.9	45.8	35.1
	Non-mobile	1.4	13.5	12.1	46.6	26.3
Reputation of the university	Mobile	2.5	12.5	29.9	36.7	18.4
	Non-mobile	8.9	7.2	37.2	41.5	5.1
Available of educational opportunity	Mobile	2.9	2.7	37.0	39.7	17.7
	Non-mobile	4.1	33.1	27.1	24.2	11.6
Expenses	Mobile	2.3	28.1	14.7	26.3	28.6
	Non-mobile	5.1	4.8	17.4	30.0	42.8
Staying close to family	Mobile	0.9	44.4	7.3	26.8	20.6
	Non-mobile	1.4	13.8	12.1	46.6	26.1
Adaptability to education and career development	Mobile	2.5	29.6	25.2	24.5	18.1
	Non-mobile	5.7	4.3	26.3	29.0	34.5

In Table 10.25, the differences and similarities between graduates abroad and indigenous HEIs regarding motivations for choosing overseas or home HEIs are displayed. The categorical responses of motivations have been converted into continuous variables that assign numbers 1 to 5 to each response. To assess the similarities and disparities between the two groups, we estimated the mean, standard deviation, and effect size of each scale.

The results show that the means for mobile graduates are much higher than that of non-mobile graduates regarding the short programme duration, more educational

opportunities and economic development in the destination country. They seem to be crucial factors that “pull” students to study abroad. Among them, one of the most significant differences is the opinion on “programme length”, with an enormous effect size of 1.06.

However, reasonable expenses, the wish to stay with families and the adaptability of education and career development are the most critical driving forces for those studying at home HEIs. The means are much higher than graduates abroad, with the effect size being 0.41, 0.51 and 0.48, respectively. In addition, both groups of graduates consider HEI’s reputation an essential motivation for postgraduation education; however, the mean for mobile graduates (3.56) is much higher than that of non-mobile ones. Nearly 55 per cent of mobile students consider HEI reputation essential when pursuing master’s degrees (see Table 10.24).

Table 10.25 Mean, SD and ES of the motivation for overseas or home HEIs, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Programme length	Mobile	441	4.26	0.77	1.23	1.06
	Non-mobile	414	2.95	1.27		
Economic development in the destination country	Mobile	441	4.13	0.79	0.92	0.30
	Non-mobile	414	3.83	1.01		
Reputation of the universities	Mobile	441	3.56	1.01	1.01	0.29
	Non-mobile	414	3.27	0.99		
Availability of educational opportunities	Mobile	441	3.66	0.90	1.04	0.58
	Non-mobile	414	3.06	1.10		
Expenses (e.g., living and tuition)	Mobile	441	3.51	1.23	1.21	-0.41
	Non-mobile	414	4.00	1.12		
Staying closely with family members	Mobile	441	3.22	1.24	1.17	-0.51
	Non-mobile	414	3.82	1.02		
Adaptability of education and career development	Mobile	441	3.26	1.14	1.17	-0.48
	Non-mobile	414	3.82	1.13		

### 10.3.3 Obstacles in finding jobs overseas

In Table 10.26, different forms of obstacles that the graduates faced when finding jobs overseas are displayed. Numbers 1 to 5 refer to how strong the hinder is, scoring 1, not an obstacle at all, and 5, the most significant obstacle. Nearly 80 per cent of the graduates abroad strongly agree (scoring “4” or “5”) that the difficulties in getting a

work permit in one of the essential factors that hinder them from finding employment overseas, but the percentage distribution is lower for students at home HEIs, with around 70 per cent. In addition, more than 60 per cent of graduates abroad and at indigenous HEIs considered loneliness, or being far away from families and friends, one of the crucial factors to working in their home country. Meanwhile, more than half of the graduates reported that cultural differences and career development prospects are essential factors preventing them from obtaining employment overseas.

Table 10.26 Percentage of obstacles in working overseas in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulties in getting a work permit	Mobile (N=441)	2.7	3.2	14.5	37.6	42.0
	Non-mobile (N=414)	5.1	4.3	22.7	33.6	34.3
Loneliness, being far away from families and friends	Mobile	6.8	6.3	19.0	35.6	32.2
	Non-mobile	2.4	4.8	20.3	43.7	28.7
Less work opportunities for the international students	Mobile	3.6	3.2	10.9	43.5	38.8
	Non-mobile	1.9	6.0	27.5	47.1	17.4
Language barrier	Mobile	5.0	11.8	36.7	26.5	20
	Non-mobile	3.9	21.5	34.8	26.3	13.5
Culture differences	Mobile	6.8	9.5	28.1	37.0	17.7
	Non-mobile	3.1	8.0	30.2	44.2	14.5
Major and development prospect	Mobile	7.7	7.7	38.5	34.7	11.3
	Non-mobile	2.4	12.1	33.3	41.1	11.1

When converting the categorical responses of obstacles into continuous variables, we assign numbers 1 to 5 to each response. The mean, standard deviation and effect size have been calculated to show the overall situation and to compare the difference between the two groups. The results in Table 10.27 show that difficulties in getting work permits and fewer work opportunities are the most crucial reasons for the graduates from UK HEIs, with the means scoring 4.13 and 4.11, respectively, much significantly greater than those of graduates from home. However, non-mobile graduates tend to consider family and friend ties and cultural differences when choosing jobs overseas, which are less critical for mobile graduates, with effect sizes 0.11 and 0.09, respectively, indicating less apparent differences between the two groups.

Table 10.27 Mean, SD and ES of obstacles working overseas, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Difficulties in getting a work permit	Mobile	441	4.13	0.96	1.03	0.24
	Non-mobile	414	3.88	1.09		
Loneliness, being far away from families and friends	Mobile	441	3.80	1.16	1.06	-0.11
	Non-mobile	414	3.92	0.95		
Less work opportunities for the international students	Mobile	441	4.11	0.97	0.95	0.41
	Non-mobile	414	3.72	0.89		
Language barrier	Mobile	441	3.45	1.09	1.08	0.19
	Non-mobile	414	3.24	1.06		
Culture differences	Mobile	441	3.50	1.10	1.02	-0.09
	Non-mobile	414	3.59	0.94		
Major and development prospect	Mobile	441	3.34	1.03	0.99	-0.12
	Non-mobile	414	3.46	0.93		

### 10.3.4 Career value of postgraduate education

The survey asked participants to evaluate how their postgraduate education would fulfil their career prospects. In Table 10.28, the value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response “not important at all”, “not important”, “neutral”, “important”, and “very important”, respectively. Around 30 per cent of mobile graduates reported that their master’s studies have important career value; however, more than 70 per cent of non-mobile graduates affirmed the professional value of postgraduate education. When taking the scale as a continuous variable, the mean and effect size have been calculated. The results show a significant difference in the attitude to career value between the different mobile statuses, with the effect size being 0.67 (see Table 10.29).

Table 10.28 Percentage of the career value in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

Mobile status	N	1	2	3	4	5
Mobile	411	2.3	14.7	49.4	29.3	4.3
Non-mobile	414	1.2	5.3	22.0	60.4	11.1

Table 10.29 Mean, SD and ES of career value, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Career value	Mobile	441	3.19	0.82	0.84	0.67
	Non-mobile	414	3.75	0.77		

### 10.3.5 Factors related to employment

Table 10.30 indicates different factors that influence career choice in the job-searching process according to the self-assessment of the graduates abroad and at-home HEIs. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response “not important at all”, “not important”, “neutral”, “important”, and “very important”, respectively.

The results show that (see Table 10.30) factors including major, diploma, HEI reputation, career guidance service, required skills and work/ internship experience seem to be essential for job attainment for both groups of graduates, with more than 80 per cent of graduates abroad and at home reporting “important” and “very important”. Other factors, such as fortune, are also essential in the job search process. There are more than half of the students take it as a crucial factor. In addition, 70 per cent of mobile graduates take social networking as a significant factor, while the proportion is lower for home graduates, around 65 per cent.

In addition, 52 per cent of graduates abroad reported that family background is another essential factor that may influence their career paths. By contrast, that proportion is only 40 per cent for graduates at home HEIs. 70 per cent of mobile graduates take social networking as a significant factor, while the proportion is lower for home graduates, around 65 per cent. However, academic achievement seems to be a less critical factor related to career, as around 40 per cent of graduates with and without ISM experience reported it is “important” and “very important”.

Table 10.30 Percentage of factors related to employment in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Social networking	Mobile (N=441)	5.0	10.9	14.1	51.9	18.1
	Non-mobile (N=414)	4.1	4.8	25.4	38.9	26.8
Major	Mobile	0.9	6.6	17.2	47.6	27.7
	Non-mobile	1.0	6.8	19.6	49.3	23.4
Diploma	Mobile	0.5	0.9	8.6	36.1	54.0
	Non-mobile	0.0	1.4	20.0	51.7	28.8
Fortune	Mobile	1.4	4.1	37.6	37.0	20.0
	Non-mobile	2.2	11.1	33.8	43.0	9.9
Academic achievement	Mobile	0.9	12.7	42.9	30.8	12.7
	Non-mobile	4.3	10.1	36.7	36.7	12.1
The reputation of the university	Mobile	0.5	1.4	7.0	47.6	43.5

Acquired skills	Non-mobile	1.9	1.4	14.5	45.7	36.5
	Mobile	0.0	0.5	2.3	37.9	59.4
Career guidance service	Non-mobile	1.9	1.4	10.4	35.3	51.0
	Mobile	0.0	9.3	2.3	34.2	54.2
Working/ internship experience	Non-mobile	1.9	1.9	11.4	38.6	46.1
	Mobile	0.5	1.8	7.7	46.0	44.0
Family background	Non-mobile	2.4	5.8	18.1	43.7	30.0
	Mobile	1.6	15.6	30.4	18.1	34.2
	Non-mobile	2.4	17.4	39.6	31.2	9.4

Table 10.31 displays the differences and similarities between students abroad and at home regarding the factors influencing their career paths. The results show insignificant differences in attitudes towards the aspects between mobile and non-mobile students, as the absolute effect size values are comparatively low. Most graduates pointed out that acquired skills, working experience, reputation, diploma, and major are the crucial factors related to employment attainment, with the mean scoring larger than 4 for different mobile statuses. However, the means are much higher for graduates from indigenous HEIs than their peers studying abroad.

In addition, significantly different attitudes between mobile and non-mobile graduates toward influencing factors also generate from family background and social networking. Mobile graduates considered family background a much more significant factor related to career development than non-mobile graduates; however, non-mobile graduates valued more about social networking more.

Table 10.31 Mean, SD and ES of the related factors in the job-seeking process, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Social networking	Mobile	441	3.67	1.05	1.04	-0.12
	Non-mobile	414	3.79	1.02		
Major	Mobile	441	3.95	0.89	0.89	0.08
	Non-mobile	414	3.87	0.88		
Diploma	Mobile	441	4.42	0.73	0.75	0.51
	Non-mobile	414	4.04	0.73		
Fortune	Mobile	441	3.70	0.88	0.89	0.25
	Non-mobile	414	3.47	0.90		
Academic achievement	Mobile	441	3.42	0.90	0.94	0.00
	Non-mobile	414	3.42	0.98		

The reputation of the university	Mobile	441	4.32	0.70	0.78	0.24
	Non-mobile	414	4.13	0.85		
Acquired skills	Mobile	441	4.56	0.57	0.73	0.33
	Non-mobile	414	4.32	0.86		
Career guidance service	Mobile	441	4.33	0.91	0.89	0.09
	Non-mobile	414	4.25	0.87		
Working/ internship experience	Mobile	441	4.31	0.73	0.87	0.44
	Non-mobile	414	3.93	0.96		
Family background	Mobile	441	3.68	1.15	1.07	0.37
	Non-mobile	414	3.28	0.94		

### 10.3.6 Demographic and academic background, by mobile status and employment status

In Table 10.32, different demographic and academic backgrounds for graduates with and without ISM experience by different employment statuses are displayed.

For those who were unemployed, the results show that females possess a higher proportion (67.7 per cent) than males; however, male graduates from home HEIs account for a slightly more considerable proportion, with 55 per cent. The ratio of unemployed graduates who graduated from prestigious HEIs to those from non-top ones is comparatively lower than that of employed graduates. Business graduates from UK HEIs may experience difficulties accessing employment, accounting for 61.5 per cent. By contrast, science graduates seem to be the most manageable group to find jobs, taking up merely 4.6 per cent of the unemployed graduates with ISM experience. However, for the unemployed graduates from indigenous HEIs, business and social science share a similar proportion.

For graduates with employment, female and male mobile graduates are equally distributed. However, female graduates from home HEIs are 6 per cent larger than males. More than half of the graduates without ISM experience are Communist Party members, while only 38.6 per cent of mobile ones are members. In addition, regarding the academic background of graduates abroad, nearly half of them are from elite undergraduate HEIs (47.9 per cent), and around 70 per cent graduated from prestigious postgraduate HEIs. While non-mobile graduates share a lower proportion of those with elite undergraduate HEI diplomas (31.3 per cent), more than 60 per cent graduated from top postgraduate HEIs. For the fields of postgraduate study, business graduates from UK HEIs take up 52.7 per cent, while the science group only accounts for 15.4 per cent. Non-mobile graduates majoring in business only account for 17 per

cent; in contrast, social science graduates occupy nearly 50 per cent.

Table 10.32 Percentage of demographic and academic background, by employment and mobile status

	Classification	Unemployment		Employment	
		Mobile	Non-mobile	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	-	65	40	396	374
Gender	Female	67.7	45.0	50.0	53.2
	Male	32.3	55.0	50.0	46.8
Communist Party member	No	90.8	72.5	61.4	42.8
	Yes	9.2	27.5	38.6	57.2
Top-HEI (undergrad)	No	63.1	75.0	52.1	68.7
	Yes	36.9	25.0	47.9	31.3
Top-HEI (postgrad)	No	67.7	65.0	30.3	33.4
	Yes	32.3	35.0	69.7	66.6
The fields of postgraduate study	Business	61.5	40.0	52.7	17.1
	Social science	33.8	37.5	31.9	49.2
	Science	4.6	22.5	15.4	33.7

### 10.3.7 Human capital, by mobile status and employment status

It has been demonstrated conclusively from Table 10.33 that jobless graduates possess less human capital stock, especially mobile ones. More than half of mobile graduates earned a “pass” grade, while only 3.1 per cent earned a distinction. A tiny percentage of jobless graduates from UK HEIs were awarded scholarships. Meanwhile, only a few had student leadership experience or professional certifications. However, the share of unemployed non-mobile graduates with scholarships or professional certifications is nearly equal.

The employed graduates with non-mobile education tend to possess a higher stock of human capital. 74.1 per cent of the employed graduates from indigenous HEIs were granted scholarships, 51.1 per cent were student leaders, and 64.4 per cent had professional certifications. In comparison, just 14.9 per cent of mobile graduates with employment had ever given scholarships, and only 24.2 per cent were selected as student leaders.

However, regardless of unemployment and employment conditions, mobile graduates

own more English language certifications than non-mobile groups. The difference is substantially more significant between the two employed groups than the unemployed ones, with an enormous effect size of 0.69 (see Table 10.34).

Table 10.33 Percentage of human capital stock, by employment and mobile status

	Classification	Unemployment		Employment	
		Mobile	Non-mobile	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	-	65	40	376	374
Academic performance	Pass	52.3	27.5	30.6	34.0
	Merit	44.6	67.5	63.0	58.3
	Distinction	3.1	5.0	6.4	7.0
Scholarship	No	81.5	55.0	85.1	25.9
	Yes	18.5	45.0	14.9	74.1
Student leadership	No	83.1	65.0	75.8	48.9
	Yes	16.9	35.0	24.2	51.1
Professional certificate	No	75.4	45.0	58.2	35.6
	Yes	24.6	55.0	41.8	64.4
English certificate	0	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0
	1	0.0	0.0	5.9	18.2
	2	81.5	87.5	18.1	58.8
	3	18.5	12.5	59.0	9.6
	4	0.0	0.0	3.5	10.7
	5	0.0	0.0	10.1	1.3
	6	0.0	0.0	2.4	1.3

Table 10.34 Mean, SD and ES of English certificate number, by employment and mobile status

	Employment status	Mobile	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
		status					
English certificate	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.18	0.39	0.37	0.14
		Non-mobile	40	2.13	0.34		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.98	1.08	1.11	0.69
		Non-mobile	374	2.22	1.00		

### 10.3.8 Organisational social capital stock and mobilisation, by mobile status and employment status

Table 10.35 shows different forms of organisational social capital stock for unemployed and employed graduates by mobile status. It is revealed that unemployed

postgraduates with different mobility statuses have almost the same percentage distribution for student organisation members and non-participants. Only 33.8 per cent of jobless individuals who attended UK HEIs had internships or part-time employment experiences. However, more than half of unemployed graduates with non-mobile education worked as interns or part-time workers.

On the other hand, more than half of non-mobile graduates with employment had ever engaged in student organisations and internship or part-time work experiences, accounting for 66.6 per cent and 74.9 per cent, respectively. However, the proportion is higher than that of graduates abroad. Only 31.1 per cent of mobile graduates had worked as interns or part-time, and 41 per cent participated in the student organisation.

Table 10.35 Percentage of organisational social capital stock, by employment and mobile status

Classification	Unemployment		Employment	
	Mobile	Non-mobile	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	65	40	376	374
Student organisation	No	50.8	59.0	33.4
	Yes	49.2	41.0	66.6
Internship or part-time	No	66.2	68.9	25.1
	Yes	33.8	31.1	74.9

Tabulation 10.36 shows the self-assessment of how the graduates mobilised the organisational social capital in the job search process. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response “not at all”, “not mobilised”, “neutral”, “mobilised”, and “extremely mobilised”, respectively.

Around 7 per cent of mobile graduates with employment reported that they mobilised their supervisors in the job-seeking process. More than 75 per cent of them pointed out that they hardly gain help from their supervisors or university teachers. However, around 40 per cent of non-mobile graduates with jobs pointed out that supervisors or teachers at the university could be mobilised when looking for jobs. In contrast, nearly half of the mobile graduates with jobs suggested that their friends were more frequently mobilised, while the proportion is around 30 per cent for their non-mobile peers.

Table 10.36 Percentage of organisational social capital mobilisation, by employment and mobile status

		Employment status	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5	
Supervisor or teacher at the university	Unemployment		Mobile (N=65)	27.7	21.5	32.3	15.4	3.1	
			Non-mobile (N=40)	0.0	50.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	
	Employment		Mobile (N=376)	37.2	37.8	18.1	6.9	0.0	
			Non-mobile (N=374)	12.8	16.3	32.4	34.2	4.3	
	Friends	Unemployment		Mobile	9.2	47.7	29.2	13.8	0.0
				Non-mobile	0.0	47.5	10.0	37.5	5.0
Classmates	Employment		Mobile	5.9	9.6	35.6	38.3	10.6	
			Non-mobile	7.8	17.6	41.4	29.1	4.0	
	Unemployment		Mobile	12.3	53.8	29.2	4.6	0.0	
			Non-mobile	0.0	25.0	65.0	10.0	0.0	
	Friends of friends	Employment		Mobile	13.3	16.5	36.7	23.9	9.6
				Non-mobile	9.6	25.1	41.7	19.0	4.5
	Unemployment		Mobile	16.9	55.4	21.5	6.2	0.0	
			Non-mobile	5.0	27.5	40.0	27.5	0.0	
	Employment		Mobile	31.9	31.9	25.5	3.7	6.9	
			Non-mobile	21.1	28.1	38.2	11.8	0.8	

Table 10.37 displays the differences and similarities between students abroad and at home regarding the self-evaluation of social capital mobilisation. In the table, the categorical responses of the factors have been converted into continuous variables that assign numbers 1 to 5 to each response. Following this strategy, mean, standard deviation and effect size has been calculated to compare the difference between the two groups.

The effect size of each indicator shows prominent differences between mobile and non-mobile graduates in the organisational social capital mobilisation, regardless of different employment statuses. Organisational social capital is much less mobilised among jobless graduates with overseas education than those without experience. The overall mean of mobilisation for jobless non-mobile graduates is 2.88, which is significantly higher than the mobile group. For those with employment, the overall effect size is 0.24, also indicating a moderately significant difference between different mobile statuses. Specifically, for graduates with employment, their friends are more

frequently mobilised in the job-seeking process. It shows the importance of employment information sharing among graduates. While supervisors or teachers from the university are more utilised for the non-mobile graduates with work, classmates are more mobilised for the mobile group.

Table 10.37 Mean, SD and ES of organisational social capital mobilisation, by employment and mobile status

	Employment status	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Supervisor or teacher at the university	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.45	1.15	1.05	-0.29
		Non-mobile	40	2.75	0.84		
	Employment	Mobile	376	1.95	0.91	1.14	-0.93
		Non-mobile	374	3.01	1.09		
Friends	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.48	0.85	0.96	-0.54
		Non-mobile	40	3.00	1.04		
	Employment	Mobile	376	3.38	1.00	1.00	0.34
		Non-mobile	374	3.04	0.97		
Classmates	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.26	0.74	0.74	-0.80
		Non-mobile	40	2.85	0.58		
	Employment	Mobile	376	3.00	1.15	1.08	0.15
		Non-mobile	374	2.84	0.99		
Friends of your friends	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.17	0.78	0.88	-0.82
		Non-mobile	40	2.90	0.87		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.22	1.14	1.07	-0.20
		Non-mobile	374	2.43	0.98		
Dimension reduction (mean)	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.34	0.65	0.65	-0.83
		Non-mobile	40	2.88	0.49		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.64	0.81	0.80	-0.24
		Non-mobile	374	2.83	0.78		

Table 10.38 shows the percentage distribution of the five-point scales to evaluate the attitudes towards the career service provided by the HEIs for graduates abroad or at home HEIs. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response “very poor”, “poor”, “neutral”, “good”, and “excellent”, respectively.

Overall, graduates with employment have a higher rating than jobless graduates in each service. Meanwhile, the gradings of employed graduates from indigenous HEIs are higher than those from UK HEIs, with a more significant proportion of graduates reporting “good” and “excellent”. The proportions in each trajectory for graduates with

employment are generally less than 50 per cent, showing the little attention the HEIs paid to employment guidance services. Less than 20 per cent of mobile graduates with jobs reported that the university provides good service on “the designing and making of CV”, “the guidance of the skills in the interview”, and “the explanation of employment situation”. However, indigenous graduates’ proportions are much higher, around 30 to 40 per cent.

Nevertheless, more than 56 per cent of graduates from indigenous HEIs reported that their universities provide good service on “the releasing of employment information”, while that proportion is merely 21 per cent for their counterparts abroad.

Table 10.38 Percentage distribution of career guidance services in each scoring trajectory, by employment and mobile status

	Employment status	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
The designing and making of CV	Unemployment	Mobile (N=65)	24.6	67.7	7.7	0.0	0.0
		Non-mobile (N=40)	0.0	47.5	52.5	0.0	0.0
	Employment	Mobile (N=376)	12.2	22.3	45.2	19.4	0.8
		Non-mobile (N=374)	3.2	18.2	34.0	36.9	7.8
The guidance of the skills in the interview	Unemployment	Mobile	43.1	46.2	10.8	0.0	0.0
		Non-mobile	0.0	52.5	47.5	0.0	0.0
	Employment	Mobile	3.7	33.2	46.0	16.2	0.8
		Non-mobile	3.2	23.0	49.5	18.7	5.6
The guidance of career planning	Unemployment	Mobile	26.2	55.4	18.5	0.0	0.0
		Non-mobile	2.5	40.0	50.0	7.5	0.0
	Employment	Mobile	7.7	27.7	42.6	21.3	0.8
		Non-mobile	7.5	23.5	41.2	23.5	7.5
Psychological guidance	Unemployment	Mobile	15.4	67.7	16.9	0.0	0.0
		Non-mobile	2.5	22.5	72.5	2.5	0.0
	Employment	Mobile	4.0	32.4	47.1	16.0	0.5
		Non-mobile	2.7	18.4	43.6	30.7	4.5
The explanation of employment situation	Unemployment	Mobile	15.4	63.1	21.5	0.0	0.0
		Non-mobile	5.0	62.5	32.5	0.0	0.0
	Employment	Mobile	12.5	32.2	38.8	16.5	0.0
		Non-mobile	3.7	14.4	47.1	28.9	5.9
The releasing of	Unemployment	Mobile	16.9	58.5	24.6	0.0	0.0

employment		Non-mobile	0.0	35.0	57.5	7.5	0.0
information	Employment	Mobile	8.8	32.2	37.8	17.6	3.7
		Non-mobile	0.8	5.1	38.0	46.0	10.2

In Table 10.39, the categorical responses of the factors have been converted into continuous variables that assign numbers 1 to 5 to each response. All indicators show that domestic HEIs provided more satisfying services than UK HEIs, with significantly better means, irrespective of employment conditions. Graduates with overseas education who are unemployed receive less assistance from universities, with considerably lower mean scores than the non-mobile categories. The findings are consistent with previous research. International students have fewer resources available to them in terms of career guidance (Goodwin & Mbah, 2017; Huang & Turner, 2018). The most noticeable difference for the graduates with employment is in the employment information released by the HEIs. The scoring of non-mobile graduates is much higher than the mobile group, with an effect size of 0.87, indicating a significant difference.

Table 10.39 Mean, SD and ES of the career guidance services provided by HEIs, by employment and mobile status

	Employment status	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
The designing and making of CV	Unemployment	Mobile	65	1.83	0.55	0.63	-1.11
		Non-mobile	40	2.53	0.51		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.74	0.94	0.98	-0.55
		Non-mobile	374	3.28	0.96		
The guidance of the skills in the interview	Unemployment	Mobile	65	1.68	0.66	0.72	-1.11
		Non-mobile	40	2.48	0.51		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.77	0.79	0.84	-0.28
		Non-mobile	374	3.01	0.88		
The guidance of career planning	Unemployment	Mobile	65	1.92	0.67	0.75	-0.95
		Non-mobile	40	2.63	0.67		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.80	0.89	0.93	-0.30
		Non-mobile	374	3.08	0.94		
Psychological guidance	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.02	0.57	0.66	-1.10
		Non-mobile	40	2.75	0.54		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.77	0.78	0.85	-0.46
		Non-mobile	374	3.16	0.87		
The explanation of employment situation	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.06	0.61	0.60	-0.37
		Non-mobile	40	2.28	0.55		

The releasing of employment information	Employment	Mobile	376	2.59	0.91	0.94	-0.64
		Non-mobile	374	3.19	0.89		
	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.08	0.65	0.70	-0.93
		Non-mobile	40	2.73	0.60		
Dimension reduction (mean)	Employment	Mobile	376	2.75	0.97	0.97	-0.87
		Non-mobile	374	3.60	0.77		
	Unemployment	Mobile	65	1.93	0.43	0.49	-1.30
		Non-mobile	40	2.56	0.28		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.74	0.77	0.78	-0.62
		Non-mobile	374	3.22	0.71		

### 10.3.9 Private social capital stock and mobilisation, by mobile status and employment status

For the unemployed graduates with different mobile statuses, only a tiny proportion of their parents possess HE diplomas. More than half of mobile graduates' parents are self-employed or workers, while most of the non-mobile graduates' parents are labourers or laid-off workers. Around 80 per cent of the mobile graduates come from wealthier families, with parents' annual incomes ranging from 100001 to 200000 Yuan. However, most non-mobile graduates' parents earn less than 100000 Yuan annually, accounting for 85 per cent (see Table 10.40).

For those with employment, generally speaking, many mobile graduates come from better-off family origins with more cultural, political and economic capital than the non-mobile group. Although non-mobile graduates' parents tend to have lower occupational status, more than half of their mothers obtained HE (53.7 per cent), much larger than mobile graduates. Parents' annual incomes vary between different mobile statuses. High annual earnings range from 200001 to 300000 Yuan, accounting for 51.1 per cent and merely 13.1 per cent for mobile and non-mobile graduates, respectively.

Table 10.40 Percentage of individual social capital stock, by employment and mobile status

Classification		Unemployment		Employment	
		Mobile	Non-mobile	Mobile	Non-mobile
Number	-	65	40	376	374
Father's	No	63.1	77.5	45.7	60.2
HE	Yes	36.9	22.5	54.3	39.8

FOS	Labourers or laid-off workers or others	6.2	55.0	3.7	26.7
	Self-employment or common workers	69.2	32.5	30.9	33.7
	Government officials or civil servant	23.1	10.0	44.7	30.5
	Middle or senior manager or professionals	1.5	2.5	20.7	9.1
Mother's HE	No	66.2	80.0	72.7	46.3
	Yes	33.8	20.0	27.3	53.7
MOS	Labourers or laid-off workers or others	15.4	52.5	4.5	35.3
	Self-employment or common workers	63.1	40.0	56.6	40.4
	Government officials or civil servants	16.9	5.0	31.6	20.9
	Middle or senior managers or professionals	4.6	2.5	7.2	3.5
	Parents' annual income	Below 50000 Yuan	0.0	42.5	0.0
	50000 to 100000 Yuan	7.7	42.5	9.0	29.7
	100001 to 150000 Yuan	29.2	10.0	12.8	25.4
	150001 to 200000 Yuan	50.8	2.5	15.4	9.9
	200001 to 250000 Yuan	7.7	2.5	19.7	6.4
	250001 to 300000 Yuan	3.1	0.0	31.4	6.7
	Above 300001 Yuan	1.5	0.0	11.7	3.7

The mean and effect sizes have been calculated when taking the scale as a continuous variable. Table 10.41 shows a considerable difference in annual family income between non-mobile and mobile graduates for both unemployed and employed status. Mobile graduates come from much wealthier families than their non-mobile peers, while unemployed graduates have lower average family incomes than employed ones.

Table 10.41 Mean, SD and ES of parents' annual income, by employment and mobile status

	Employment status	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Parents' annual income	Unemployment	Mobile	376	3.74	0.94	1.32	1.47
		Non-mobile	374	1.80	0.91		
	Employment	Mobile	376	4.87	1.50	1.83	1.06

Table 10.42 shows the private social capital mobilisation. It has been demonstrated that graduates without jobs less frequently mobilised private social capital than their peers with employment in the job-seeking process. Jobless graduates from indigenous HEI could hardly use private social capital, with no one reporting their immediate family or friends of parents have been “mobilised” or “extremely mobilised”.

For graduates with employment, more than half of mobile ones mobilised the immediate family, and more than 35 per cent mobilised parents’ friends when looking for jobs. However, the proportions for graduates from indigenous HEIs account for around 30 and 20 per cent, respectively.

Table 10.42 Percentage of private social capital mobilisation in each scoring trajectory, by employment and mobile status

		Employment status	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
Immediate family	Unemployment (N=105)		Mobile (N=65)	0.0	60.0	21.5	16.9	1.5
			Non-mobile (N=40)	7.5	90.0	2.5	0.0	0.0
	Employment (N=750)		Mobile (N=376)	9.6	12.8	27.1	35.6	14.9
			Non-mobile (N=374)	10.4	27.5	21.1	18.4	22.5
Relatives	Unemployment		Mobile	15.4	46.2	30.8	6.2	1.5
			Non-mobile	37.5	57.5	2.5	0.0	2.5
	Employment		Mobile	29.3	29.3	26.1	11.2	4.3
			Non-mobile	21.9	40.9	20.3	14.7	2.7
Friends of parents	Unemployment		Mobile	12.3	29.2	46.2	12.3	0.0
			Non-mobile	25.0	45.0	30.0	0.0	0.0
	Employment		Mobile	19.7	16.5	28.2	32.4	3.2
			Non-mobile	20.9	28.9	29.7	17.4	3.2

Table 10.43 displays the calculation of mean, standard deviation and effect size when taking the scales as continuous variables to compare the difference between graduates with different mobility and employment status. Unemployed graduates abroad tend to mobilise private social capital significantly more than their peers at-home HEIs. The differences in the mobilisation of private social capital in each trajectory between unemployed graduates are much higher than between employed graduates, with the effect sizes much higher (more than 0.6) than that of graduates with employment. For

graduates with employment, the mobilisations of immediate family and parents' friends are moderately higher than that of their peers at indigenous HEIs.

Table 10.43 Mean, SD and ES of the private social capital mobilisation, by employment and mobile status

	Employment status	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Immediate family	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.60	0.83	0.75	0.87
		Non-mobile	40	1.95	0.32		
	Employment	Mobile	376	3.34	1.16	1.25	0.15
		Non-mobile	374	3.15	1.33		
Relatives	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.32	0.87	0.87	0.68
		Non-mobile	40	1.73	0.75		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.32	1.13	1.10	-0.04
		Non-mobile	374	2.36	1.06		
Friends of your parents	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.58	0.86	0.86	0.62
		Non-mobile	40	2.05	0.75		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.83	1.17	1.15	0.26
		Non-mobile	374	2.53	1.10		
Dimension reduction (mean)	Unemployment	Mobile	65	2.50	0.62	0.64	0.98
		Non-mobile	40	1.88	0.451		
	Employment	Mobile	376	2.83	0.95	0.97	0.15
		Non-mobile	374	2.68	1.00		

#### 10.4 Job-seeking channels for graduates with employment

Concerning the usage of different job-seeking channels when searching for employment for graduates with and without ISM experience, Table 10.44 displays the percentage distribution of the five-point scale to evaluate the participants' attitudes regarding how helpful the channels will be for graduates abroad or at-home HEIs. The value of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 corresponds to the response "least helpful", "not helpful", "somewhat helpful", "helpful", and "the most helpful" channels, respectively.

A large proportion of graduates at indigenous HEIs reported that they relied on the employment information released by the university, accounting for around 55 per cent; however, that proportion is much smaller than that of graduates from UK HEIs, only merely 7.5 per cent. Nevertheless, for the online recruitment channels, both groups of graduates value the significance, with more than 90 per cent of graduates abroad reporting "helpful" and "very helpful", higher than that of indigenous graduates

(around 70 per cent).

Around 45 per cent of graduates abroad pointed out that recommendation from family members and relatives was one of the virtual channels that helped them obtain employment, higher than that of graduates from home HEIs. By contrast, nearly 60 per cent of non-mobile graduates obtained jobs through social recruitment examinations, while only 30 per cent of graduates from abroad used that channel. In addition, the recommendation from a supervisor was one of the helpful channels indigenous graduates use when looking for jobs, with more than 35 per cent of graduates reporting it as “helpful” and “very helpful”. However, the proportion is only 3.2 per cent for the graduates from UK HEIs.

Table 10.44 Percentage of job search channels in each scoring trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile status	1	2	3	4	5
The employment information released by university	Mobile (N=376)	31.4	40.4	21.7	6.4	1.1
	Non-mobile (N=374)	12.0	9.1	24.3	34.5	20.1
Recruitment fair	Mobile	17.0	25.5	27.7	14.9	14.9
	Non-mobile	13.1	10.2	30.2	37.4	9.1
Online recruitment	Mobile	2.1	1.1	4.3	25.0	67.6
	Non-mobile	4.0	6.7	17.4	38.2	33.7
Job-seeking agency	Mobile	49.5	34.6	8.0	4.3	3.7
	Non-mobile	40.1	21.9	19.5	16.3	2.1
Recommendation from family members and relatives	Mobile	15.4	18.1	21.3	34.0	11.2
	Non-mobile	23.0	19.3	25.4	23.8	8.6
Recommendation from classmates and friends	Mobile	14.4	12.8	32.4	34.0	6.4
	Non-mobile	12.0	16.8	31.6	35.3	4.3
Internship or social practice	Mobile	23.4	20.2	19.1	28.7	8.5
	Non-mobile	15.2	13.6	28.9	28.6	13.6
Social recruitment examination	Mobile	23.4	28.2	16.5	24.5	7.4
	Non-mobile	9.9	9.1	25.1	37.7	18.2
Recommendation from supervisor	Mobile	67.0	21.3	8.5	3.2	0.0
	Non-mobile	19.5	16.8	27.5	31.3	4.8

Table 10.45 displays the calculation of mean, standard deviation and effect size when taking the scale as continuous variables to compare the difference between graduates with different employment statuses regarding the channels they used when looking for employment.

The results show that online recruitment is the most crucial channel for both mobile and non-mobile graduates. However, it seems much more critical for mobile graduates, with the mean being 4.55 out of 5, more extensive than non-mobile graduates. However, the non-mobile graduates relied much more on the employment information released by the HEIs (3.41) and social recruitment examination (3.41) than their mobile peers, with large effect sizes between the two groups, 1.05 and 0.63, respectively. For the mobile graduates, the usage of employment information released by the HEI is only scoring 2.05, a less crucial channel. It corresponds to the analysis in the previous section; the HEIs in the UK provided lesser support for employment guidance services. In addition, using social recruitment channels seems more critical for non-mobile graduates, with the mean being 3.45, much higher than that of mobile graduates (2.64).

The use of recommendations from classmates and friends is almost the same in both groups of graduates. In contrast, supervisor recommendations show significant differences between the two groups (effect size=1.12). The mean scoring of mobile graduates is only 1.48, which is the least important channel.

The job search strategies of mobile and non-mobile graduates are different. In addition to online recruitment, local students are more likely to obtain jobs by participating in social recruitment examinations or via the employment information released by the HEI. By contrast, mobile graduates mostly find jobs through recommendations from family members, relatives, classmates, and friends.

Table 10.45 Mean, SD and ES of job-seeking channels for graduates with employment, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
The employment information released by university	Mobile	376	2.05	0.93	1.29	-1.05
	Non-mobile	374	3.41	1.25		
Recruitment fair	Mobile	376	2.85	1.29	1.24	-0.28
	Non-mobile	374	3.19	1.15		
Online recruitment	Mobile	376	4.55	0.81	1.00	0.64
	Non-mobile	374	3.91	1.07		
Job-seeking agency	Mobile	376	1.78	1.02	1.12	-0.36
	Non-mobile	374	2.18	1.19		
Recommendation from family members and relatives	Mobile	376	3.07	1.26	1.28	0.24
	Non-mobile	374	2.76	1.28		
Recommendation from classmates and friends	Mobile	376	3.05	1.14	1.11	0.02

	Non-mobile	374	3.03	1.08		
Internship or social practice	Mobile	376	2.79	1.31	1.29	-0.26
	Non-mobile	374	3.12	1.25		
Social recruitment examination	Mobile	376	2.64	1.28	1.30	-0.63
	Non-mobile	374	3.45	1.18		
Recommendation from supervisor	Mobile	376	1.48	0.78	1.22	-1.12
	Non-mobile	374	2.85	1.20		

### 10.5 Labour market outcomes for graduates with employment

Table 10.46 demonstrates the time, employer, location, monthly salary and job satisfaction regarding the first employment for the graduates. The results show that when graduates first enter the workforce, most graduates from local universities get their first jobs faster than those who study in the UK. More than 60 per cent of local graduates were successfully employed before graduation, and more than 95 per cent of graduates found employment within six months after graduation. In contrast, mobile graduates often find jobs within a year after graduation, with only 53.2 per cent finding jobs within six months and 22.6 per cent within six months to one year.

In terms of initial monthly salary, the percentage of mobile graduates with a monthly salary ranging from 5001 to 15000 Yuan is around 60 per cent, while the starting salary range for non-mobile graduates is between 5001 and 10000 Yuan per month, accounting for 58 per cent. When using monthly salary as a continuous variable, the result shows that the average salary of mobile graduates is much higher than non-mobile graduates. The effect size is 0.50, suggesting a significant difference in the average monthly salary between the two groups of graduates (see Table 10.47).

Regarding the types of employers, the survey finds that private enterprises and foreign capital or joint ventures are the most prevalent options among mobile graduates, accounting for 65.4 per cent. In contrast, non-mobile graduates are more inclined to choose public institutions and state-owned enterprises, accounting for 65.8 per cent. In addition, as shown in the table, both mobile and non-mobile graduates prefer to work in well-developed cities or coastal areas in China. Of mobile graduates from the UK, nearly 95 per cent prefer to work in economically developed municipalities, seaside cities and provincial capitals. Among non-mobile graduates, the proportion is 75 per cent, and another 21.7 per cent of the graduates choose to work in prefecture-level cities in China. The ratio of work overseas is meagre.

As for location preference, most participants cited the potential promotion opportunity as the main factor in settling in the region. Nearly half of mobile and around 30 per cent of non-mobile graduates attribute the reason to this. It is worth noting that “family members living there” is also an important reason, with 18.1 per cent and 27.3 per cent of mobile and non-mobile graduates, respectively. It reflects that Chinese society is tied to “family” and that even after leaving home to study, one still returns to one’s place of origin and chooses to stay close to their parents.

Regarding job satisfaction, 40 per cent of graduates with studying abroad experience reported that they are “satisfied” and “very satisfied” with their employment; however, the proportion of graduates from indigenous HEIs is higher, at around 60 per cent. Treating this variable as a continuous variable shows that the average job satisfaction of mobile graduates (3.25) is significantly lower than that of their non-mobile peers (3.57), with an effect size of 0.38, indicating a moderately significant difference between the non-mobile and mobile status (see Table 10.47).

Table 10.46 Percentage of labour market outcomes in each trajectory, by mobile status

	Mobile, N=376	Non-mobile, N=374
<b>Time to be employed</b>		
Before graduation (or before receiving the certificate)	24.2	60.4
Within six months after graduation	53.2	35.3
Six to twelve months	22.6	2.9
More than 1 year	0	1.3
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Below 5000 Yuan	11.4	25.9
5001-10000 Yuan	22.9	32.1
10001-15000 Yuan	34.8	24.9
Above 15001	30.9	17.1
<b>Employer section</b>		
Government/Party	0.5	7.2
Public institution	10.1	39.6
State-owned/State-controlled enterprise	23.4	26.2
Private enterprise/ Individually-owned Business	35.6	22.7
Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture	29.8	4.3
Others	0.5	0
<b>Location</b>		
Municipality directly under the central government in China	51.6	32.4

Seaside city of eastern part of China	20.2	27.8
Provincial capital city in China	22.3	14.7
Prefecture-level city in China	5.3	21.7
County or countryside in China	0.0	2.7
Overseas city	0.5	0.8
<b>Reasons for choosing the location</b>		
Attractive talents policies for graduates	21.3	21.7
Expansive development platform (e.g., more promotion opportunity)	48.9	32.1
High salary	5.3	6.4
Family members living there	18.1	27.3
Partners or lovers living there	5.3	9.1
Others	1.1	3.5
<b>Job satisfaction</b>		
Not satisfied at all	1.1	2.1
Not satisfied	19.9	7.0
Not so satisfied	36.2	31.0
Satisfied	38.8	51.9
Very satisfied	4.0	8.0

Table 10.47 Mean, SD and ES of monthly salary and job satisfaction, by mobile status

	Mobile status	N	Mean	SD	Overall SD	ES
Monthly salary	Mobile	376	2.85	0.99	1.05	0.50
	Non-mobile	374	2.33	1.04		
Job satisfaction	Mobile	376	3.25	0.86	0.85	-0.38
	Non-mobile	374	3.57	0.82		

## 11 Results of empirical analysis

This section presents the multi-stage logistic regression models predicting pupils' probability of attending HEIs first. While previous chapters have revealed evidence of the descriptive results about the motivation, obstacles, job-seeking channels and labour market outcomes, this chapter focuses on the regression results. It starts with discussing whether the probability of studying abroad is correlated to graduates' academic background and SES status. This is followed by statistical results of the logistic regression models predicting the relationship between the labour market outcomes, including job probability, high job satisfaction probability and monthly

salary, and graduates' baseline (mobile status, demographic and academic background, human capital, organisational social capital, private social capital).

### 11.1 The link between academic, family background and mobile probability

The results show the logistic coefficient (B) for each predictor variable for each alternative category (e.g., studying abroad or not studying abroad) of mobile probability. Females are more likely to study in the UK. However, graduates of the Communist Party tend to be much less mobile. They are 5 times more likely to study at home HEIs than the others. Concerning academic background, graduates with undergraduate degrees from prestigious universities are less likely to stay in China for postgraduate education and are more inclined to study abroad.

Regarding family background, almost all variables show that participants of high family origin are more inclined to study abroad. The only exception is the variable of the father's HE, which shows that students whose fathers have HE diplomas are more likely to stay in China for postgraduate studies. However, the higher the annual household income, the higher the probability of going abroad. With other variables held constant, each level of family annual income increases, and the probability of studying in China drops 47 per cent (the probability of studying abroad increases 2.1 times).

Table 11.1 The logistic regression model of mobile probability

Variables	B	Exp(B)
Gender (vs female*)	0.48	1.61
Communist Party member (vs not*)	1.65	5.20
Top HEI-- Undergrad (vs not*)	-0.33	0.72
Father's HE (vs not*)	0.25	1.29
Father's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)		
FOS 2	-0.48	0.62
FOS 3	-0.53	0.59
FOS 4	-0.57	0.57
Mother's HE (vs not*)	-0.65	0.52
Mother's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)		
MOS 2	-1.24	0.29
MOS 3	-0.73	0.48
MOS 4	-0.59	0.56
Parents' annual income	-0.76	0.47
No. of Observation	855	855

Note: \*refers to reference groups.

### 11.2 The link between mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital, private social capital and job probability

This section presents the multi-stage logistic regression models predicting postgraduate's probability of being employed (when receiving graduation certificates) to elucidate the relationship between the opportunity to be employed and mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital and private social capital. Different levels of baseline variables are added to the model, as explained in the methods chapter. The detailed results of each stage of the regression models are given to present changes in predictive accuracy and coefficients when different sets of baseline variables are controlled for.

Table 11.2 Predictive accuracy of logistic regression models of job probability

	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained
Base figure	63.1	-
Mobile status	67.3	4.2
Demographic and academic background	73.9	6.6
Human capital	73.1	-0.8
Organisational social capital	75.6	2.5
Private social capital	77.6	2.0
Overall improvement	-	14.5

According to the classification table above (Table 11.2), after knowing the mobile status of graduates, there is an informative increase in the employment rate, with a 4.2 per cent growth in predictive accuracy at this stage. However, the most pronounced growth in predictive accuracy (6.6 per cent) is when graduates' demographic and academic background variables are entered into the model. In contrast, when considering human capital variables, including academic performance, scholarship, leadership, language and occupational certificates, there is a slight decrease (0.8 per cent) in predictive accuracy at this stage. Nevertheless, including organisational social capital and private social capital variables leads to more informative increases in the overall accuracy, which are 2.5 per cent and 2.0 per cent growth, respectively. After controlling for all the baseline variables mentioned above, there is a significant overall improvement with 14.5 per cent of the variation in outcome explained.

The table below (11.3) presents the results of the logistic regression models predicting graduates' possibility of being employed. As mentioned in the methods chapter, the most critical outcome indicators are 1) the increase in the percentage correctness at each stage, which reveals how knowing certain sets of "capital" variables increases the predictive ability of the model, and 2) the Exp (B) of each baseline variable in the right column, which provides the odds ratio of the probability of transition from HE to employment after accounting for other variables in the model.

Table 11.3 Multi-stage logistic regression models of job probability

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)
Non-mobile (vs mobile*)	1.52	4.56	1.50	4.48	1.31	3.70	0.91	2.49	1.66	5.26
Male (vs female*)			-0.11	0.89	-0.15	0.86	-0.24	0.79	-0.36	0.70
Communist Party (vs no*)	-	-	0.93	2.53	0.87	2.40	0.72	2.06	0.66	1.94
Top HEI- Under (vs no*)	-	-	0.33	1.39	0.26	1.30	0.17	1.19	0.23	1.25
Top HEI- Post (vs no*)	-	-	1.01	2.73	0.96	2.61	0.96	2.62	0.91	2.48
Social Science (vs Business*)	-	-	0.05	1.05	-0.06	0.94	0.07	1.08	-0.05	0.96
Science (vs Business*)	-		0.58	1.79	0.56	1.75	0.51	1.67	0.37	1.44
Merit (vs pass*)	-	-	-	-	-0.16	0.86	-0.27	0.76	-0.45	0.64
Distinction (vs pass*)	-	-	-	-	0.44	1.55	0.43	1.54	0.27	1.31
Scholarship (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	0.19	1.21	0.16	1.17	0.17	1.19
Student leadership (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	0.42	1.53	0.29	1.34	0.24	1.27
Professional certificate	-	-	-	-	0.03	1.04	-0.11	0.90	-0.19	0.83
English certificate No.	-	-	-	-	0.01	1.01	-0.08	0.92	-0.13	0.87
Student organisation (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.24	0.79	-0.34	0.71
Internship or part-time (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.47	1.61	0.42	1.52
Employment guidance	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.72	2.05	0.58	1.78
Organisational social capital mobilisation	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.08	1.08	0.19	1.21
Father's HE (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.29	1.33
Father's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)										

FOS 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.36	0.70
FOS 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.01	1.01
FOS 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.16	0.85
Mother's HE (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.02	1.02
Mother's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)										
MOS 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.56	0.57
MOS 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.51	0.60
MOS 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.02	0.98
Parents' annual income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.31	1.36
Private social capital mobilisation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.03	1.04
No. of Observation	855	855	855	855	855	855	855	855	855	855

Note: \*refers to reference groups.

### 11.2.1 Job probability and mobile status

The first logistic regression model (Model 1 in Table 11.3) only includes mobile status. It shows that non-mobile graduates have a much higher probability of being employed and are more than four times more likely to realise the transition from education to employment successfully.

### 11.2.2 Job probability, mobile status and demographic and academic background

The second logistic regression model (Table 11.3) includes gender, the Communist Party membership and academic background variables. As explained in the methods chapter, Communist Party membership and educational background can impact the stock of human capital and social capital, which have dual attributes that make it unreasonable to classify them as human or social capital. Thus, unsurprisingly, adding these variables into Model 2 produced significant growth in predictive accuracy by 6.6 per cent, a comparatively large proportion of the variation in the opportunity to be employed explained.

After accounting for demographic and academic background, the results reveal that postgraduates who are members of the Communist Party of China are more likely to be employed. They are much more likely than the others to obtain jobs, with the odds ratio for Communist Party member scores being 2.53. Similarly, participants who

graduated from elite undergraduate and postgraduate HEIs are more likely to access work than the others, with the odds ratio scores being 1.39 and 2.73, respectively. In addition, postgraduates majoring in social science and science have a higher employment rate than those studying business. Science graduates are more likely to be employed than business graduates, with an odds ratio of 1.79.

However, it is surprisingly noted that for postgraduates with similar academic backgrounds and mobile statuses, females enjoy better chances of being employed compared to males. When knowing the demographic and academic background, non-mobile graduates still have a greater probability (4.48) of being employed compared to those mobile graduates, though with a slight odds ratio decrease.

### **11.2.3 Job probability, mobile status, demographic and academic background and human capital**

Model 3 includes human capital variables in addition to mobile status and demographic and academic background variables.

Considering human capital characteristics, social science graduates become more disadvantaged in the probability of being employed than business graduates. However, science graduates still enjoy the most remarkable employment rate, though a slight decrease is shown in the possibility.

The odds ratios of these human capital variables are consistent with the general perception that more outstanding, competent and skilled postgraduates tend to be associated with a higher probability of being employed. The ones with scholarships, student leadership, professional qualification certificates and language certificates are more likely to access work. However, while graduating with distinction academic achievement enjoys the highest possibility of employment, postgraduates with merit grades are less likely to be used than those with lower academic achievement.

After controlling for the human capital variables, non-mobile students have a continuously decreased probability (3.7) of employment upon graduation, but the positive effect of being graduated domestically remains unchanged.

#### **11.2.4 Job probability, mobile status, demographic and academic background, human capital and organisational social capital**

The fourth stage includes organisational social capital into the model to test whether networking and services based on university and clubs are associated with a higher employment rate for equivalent postgraduates (Model 4 in Table 11.3). After considering organisational social capital, graduates with professional qualification certificates and English language certificates are less likely to be employed. When other elements are equal, the number of English language certificate increase by 1, and the probability of being hired will drop by 8 per cent.

The analyses show that postgraduates with an internship or part-time working experience are 1.61 times as likely as those without the experience to be hired when they have equivalent academic backgrounds and human capital stock. In addition, it is within expectations that postgraduates whose graduation HEIs provide better employment guidance services are more probability of accessing work. When other elements are equal, the scoring increases by 1, and the odds ratio of being employed will increase by 105 per cent. Meanwhile, for organisational social capital mobilisation, the scoring increases by 1, and the odds ratio of being hired will increase by 8 per cent.

These analyses show that non-mobile students have dropped the probability of employment after graduation when the background, human capital and organisational social capital variables are controlled for. However, the positive effect of graduating from home HEIs is still untouched.

#### **11.2.5 Job probability, mobile status, demographic and academic background, human capital, organisational social capital and private social capital**

In Model 5, private social capital variables are also controlled for (Table 11.3). The results present whether family SES, including parents' education level, occupation status, and annual income, is associated with a difference in accessing employment for postgraduates with equivalent characteristics in academic background, knowledge, skills, and university life. The odds ratio for being employed seems uneven, possibly due to the different family origins between non-mobile and mobile graduates.

It is within expectations that postgraduates from wealthier families are more likely to be employed, with its odds ratio being 1.36. When other factors are equal, the parents'

annual income level increases by 1, and the probability of being employed will increase by 36 per cent. Meanwhile, the more private social capital is mobilised, the more likely postgraduates will be hired. When other factors are equal, the score of private social capital mobilisation increases by 1, and the probability of being employed will increase by 4 per cent. In addition, postgraduates whose fathers have HE diplomas are 33 per cent more likely to be used than those without the credentials. Postgraduates whose fathers are civil servants or public institution staff are more likely to be employed compared to the group of labourers, laid-off workers or others. However, all the other levels of fathers' and mothers' occupational status are disadvantaged in the probability of being employed, compared to labourers, laid-off workers, or others. After postgraduate education, graduates with lower parents' occupational status can still obtain jobs successfully and enjoy a higher employment rate.

After including all the baseline variables, non-mobile students have prominently raised the probability of employment after graduation. They are 5.26 times more probability of achieving the transition from HE to employment successfully.

#### **11.2.6 Findings from logistic regression models**

After controlling for demographic factors, human capital and social capital, indigenous graduates are five times as likely as graduates abroad to achieve employment. Graduates abroad reported that the main reasons for being unemployed are high competition in the labour market and high expectations for salaries and welfare. In addition, they also point out that missing the golden period of recruitment is also an important reason. It is because the recruitment peak for graduates in China usually occurs around April and October (usually known as "spring recruit" and "autumn recruit") when UK students still need to receive their graduation certificates, which may bring some challenges for the graduates abroad looking for employment after returning to China.

From the classification form (Table 11.2), we can see that graduates' organisational social capital and private social capital are more significant factors than human capital in predicting the job probability, as the predictive accuracy of the model increased by 2.5 per cent and 2.0 per cent, respectively, when the two sets of variables were added. However, adding human capital variables decreases the predictive accuracy slightly.

In addition to the prediction accuracy, the Exp(B) for job probability is also examined.

The results indicate that females, Party members, and prestigious HEI graduates are more likely to be employed. In contrast, graduates holding vocational qualifications and English certificates are negatively related to job probability. In terms of organisational social capital, internships, career guidance and the mobilisation of organisational social capital are all positively associated with employment rates.

In addition, graduates whose parents have a HE degree are positively associated with job probability, and whose fathers are government officials or civil servants are more likely to be employed. However, graduates with other parental occupational statuses had lower employment rates than those with labourer or worker parents. It suggests that graduates with lower parental occupational status could still find employment successfully. This may be due to the higher proportion of indigenous graduates whose parents are farmers or labourers. They tend to be employed before graduation or within a shorter period than graduates abroad. However, yearly family incomes and the mobilisation of private social capital are positively correlated with employment probability.

### 11.2.7 Job probability by mobile status

Separate multi-stage logistic regression analyses were conducted on mobile and non-mobile graduates, respectively. Table 11.4 shows the increase in the percentage correctness, which reveals the model's predictive ability after knowing certain variables. The four-stage logistic models control for demographic factors, human capital, organisational social capital and private social capital.

Table 11.4 Predictive accuracy of the logistic regression models of job probability by mobile status

	Non-mobile		Mobile	
	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained
Base figure	54.3	-	79.4	-
Demographic and academic background	68.1	13.8	79.4	0
Human capital	68.9	0.8	79.4	0
Organisational social capital	72.3	3.4	80.0	0.6
Private social capital	76.4	2.1	81.9	1.9
Overall improvement	-	22.1	-	2.5

The model's explanatory power is more substantial for home graduates than graduates abroad, with an overall improvement of percentage correctness being 22.1 per cent, while for graduates abroad, it is only 2.5 per cent. For home graduates, entering demographic and academic background variables significantly increases the model's accuracy by 13.8 per cent. In contrast, human capital is the least significant factor in predicting the outcome, as the predictive accuracy of the model only increased by 0.8 per cent when the set of variables was added. However, when adding organisational social capital and private social capital variables into the model, the models' percentage accuracy has moderately increased by 3.4 per cent and 2.1 per cent, respectively. On the other hand, after controlling for the organisational social capital variables, the model percentage accuracy has been raised by 0.6 per cent for graduates abroad. In addition, adding private social capital variables has significantly increased by 1.9 per cent. However, human capital variables seem to have little effect on the increase in accuracy. Adding these variables leads to no increase in predictive accuracy. It can be seen that organisational and private social capital are more significant factors in predicting job probability than human capital for graduates studying abroad and at home.

Model 5a and 5b in Table 11.5 show the results of job probability for non-mobile and mobile graduates separately, and they are the last stage of the multi-stage logistic regression models, including all sets of baseline variables. Mobile graduates with scholarships, professional qualifications and student organisation experiences enjoy higher employment rates, while non-mobile graduates with these characteristics are disadvantaged in job probability. Mobile graduates majoring in science tend to be slower to get jobs than business peers; by contrast, non-mobile science graduates are the fastest to obtain jobs, followed by business graduates. Non-mobile graduates and graduates abroad with internship experience and excellent employment guidance are positively related to high employment rates; however, the likelihood of a job probability is less significant among graduates abroad than at home. Mobile peers who mobilised more organisational social capital tend to have higher job probability. When other factors are constant, the scoring increases by 1, and the likelihood of being employed will increase by 72 per cent. Non-mobile graduates whose parents have lower occupational status are expected to have higher job probability. By contrast, mobile graduates whose fathers are government officials or civil servants and mothers with higher occupational levels are positively related to higher job probability. Besides, the more private social capital is mobilised for mobile graduates, the quicker they will be employed.

Table 11.5 Last stage of multi-stage logistic regression models predicting job probability by mobile status

Variables	Model 5a, non-mobile		Model 5b, mobile	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Male (vs female*)	-0.56	0.57	-0.23	0.80
Communist Party (vs no*)	1.05	2.84	-0.14	0.87
Top HEI- Under (vs no*)	0.38	1.47	0.09	1.09
Top HEI- Post (vs no*)	1.09	2.99	0.96	2.62
Social Science (vs Business*)	-0.56	0.57	0.31	1.36
Science (vs Business*)	0.27	1.31	-0.25	0.78
Merit (vs pass*)	-1.12	0.33	0.07	1.07
Distinction (vs pass*)	0.02	1.02	0.28	1.32
Scholarship (vs no*)	-0.18	0.83	0.69	1.99
Student leadership (vs no*)	0.26	1.30	0.45	1.56
Professional certificate (vs no*)	-0.62	0.54	0.03	1.03
English certificate No.	-0.29	0.74	-0.05	0.95
Student organisation (vs no*)	-0.72	0.49	0.33	1.40
Part-time or internship (vs no*)	0.86	2.37	0.11	1.12
Employment guidance	0.91	2.49	0.47	1.59
OSC mobilisation	-0.02	0.98	0.54	1.72
Father's HE (vs no*)	1.10	3.01	-0.03	0.97
Father's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)				
FOS 2	-0.01	0.99	-1.43	0.24
FOS 3	-0.31	0.73	0.16	1.18
FOS 4	0.00	1.00	-0.42	0.65
Mother's HE (vs no*)	-0.09	0.91	-0.34	0.71
Mother's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)				
MOS 2	-0.94	0.39	0.66	1.93
MOS 3	-0.32	0.72	0.41	1.51
MOS 4	-0.51	0.60	1.24	3.46
Parents' annual income	0.29	1.34	0.50	1.64
PSC mobilisation	-0.11	0.90	0.27	1.31

Note: \*refers to reference groups.

### 11.3 The link between mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital, private social capital and job satisfaction

This section details the process of using multi-stage logistic regression models to

compare the opportunity to be satisfied with the first employment between graduates with overseas study experiences and those without the experiences, focusing on whether attending UK HEIs is positively predictive of achieving a particular employment satisfaction rate. Unlike in the prior logistic regression models predicting job probability, the analyses of employment satisfaction apply to 750 cases and only include graduates who were in employment with payment when the survey was conducted. The detailed results of each stage of the regression models are given to present changes in predictive accuracy and coefficients when different sets of baseline variables are controlled for.

Table 11.6 Predictive accuracy of logistic regression models of job satisfaction

	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained
Base figure	51.3	-
Mobile status	58.5	7.2
Demographic and academic background	57.4	-1.1
Human capital	62.5	5.1
Organisational social capital	65.9	3.4
Private social capital	72.6	6.7
Overall improvement	-	21.3

After introducing the dataset, the evaluation process for job satisfaction between non-mobile and mobile graduates is described below. Different levels of baseline variables are added to the model, as explained in the methods chapter. According to the classification table above, the most significant growth in predictive accuracy is when the mobile status is entered into the model, which is 7.2 per cent. However, adding the demographic and academic background variables bring a slight decrease (1.1 per cent) in the predictive accuracy. Then after knowing postgraduates' human capital stock, including academic performance, scholarship, leadership, language and occupational certificate, it is also informative about the job satisfaction rate, with 5.1 per cent growth in predictive accuracy at this stage.

Meanwhile, including organisational social capital also leads to a moderate rise (3.4 per cent) in overall accuracy. After controlling for private social capital variables, there is still more significant growth, with an additional 6.7 per cent variation in outcome explained. The table below presents the results of the multi-stage logistic regression models predicting postgraduates' opportunities of being satisfied with their

employment.

Table 11.7 Multi-stage logistic regression models of job satisfaction

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)
Non-mobile (vs mobile*)	0.69	1.99	0.80	2.22	0.28	1.32	0.11	1.12	1.4	4.04
Male (vs female*)	-	-	0.12	1.12	0.18	1.20	0.14	1.15	0.06	1.07
Communist Party (vs no*)	-	-	0.44	1.55	0.39	1.47	0.27	1.31	0.07	1.07
Top HEI- Under (vs no*)	-	-	0.48	1.62	0.41	1.51	0.39	1.48	0.41	1.51
Top HEI- Post (vs no*)	-	-	0.38	1.47	0.33	1.39	0.31	1.36	0.25	1.28
Social Science (vs Business*)	-	-	-0.17	0.85	-0.29	0.75	-0.25	0.78	-0.35	0.70
Science (vs Business*)	-	-	-0.18	0.83	-0.28	0.75	-0.31	0.73	-0.48	0.62
Merit (vs pass*)	-	-	-	-	0.38	1.47	0.44	1.56	0.28	1.32
Distinction (vs pass*)	-	-	-	-	0.83	2.30	0.72	2.06	0.61	1.84
Scholarship (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	0.81	2.24	0.78	2.19	0.74	2.09
Student leadership (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	0.08	1.09	0.02	1.02	-0.08	0.92
Professional certificates (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	0.25	1.29	0.18	1.20	0.01	1.01
English certificate No.	-	-	-	-	-0.05	0.95	0.02	1.02	-0.10	0.90
Student organisation (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.88	2.41	0.77	2.16
Internship or part-time (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.05	0.95	-0.22	0.80
Employment guidance	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.21	1.24	0.02	1.02
Organisational social capital mobilisation	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.02	1.02	0.20	1.22
Father's HE (vs no*)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.35	1.42
Father's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or other*)										
FOS 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.26	0.77
FOS 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.12	1.13
FOS 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.10	0.90
Mother's HE (vs no)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.03	1.03
Mother's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)										
MOS 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.23	1.26
MOS 3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.40	1.49
MOS 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.32	1.38
Parents' annual income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.39	1.48

The mobilisation of individual social capital	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.07	0.93
No. of Observation	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750	750

Note: \*refers to reference groups.

### 11.3.1 Job satisfaction and mobile status

Model 1 in Table 11.7 only includes mobile status, which show that non-mobile graduates are approximately twice as likely as mobile ones to be satisfied with the employment.

### 11.3.2 Job satisfaction, mobile status, demographic and academic background

The second logistic regression model adds postgraduates' demographic and academic background variables. The results reveal that after accounting for gender and Communist Party membership, postgraduates from more advantaged HEIs have a higher probability of high job satisfaction. Those who graduated from elite undergraduate and postgraduate HEIs are more likely to be satisfied with their first employment, with an odds ratio of 1.62 and 1.47, respectively. Meanwhile, graduates majoring in business tend to have the highest satisfaction rate among the three fields of study when other factors are equal. However, the satisfaction rates for social science and the equivalent science graduates are almost the same. In addition, for graduates with similar academic backgrounds, males are more likely to be satisfied with their first employment than females, with an odds ratio of 1.12. Postgraduates who are Communist Party members have advantages over those who do not have membership within similar academic backgrounds, with the Exp (B) of Communist Party membership being 1.55.

When knowing the demographic and educational background, non-mobile graduates still have a greater probability (2.22) of being satisfied with the first job compared to those mobile graduates, with a slight increase of the odds ratio than the previous stage.

### **11.3.3 Job satisfaction, mobile status, demographic and academic background and human capital**

The third model includes the human capital variables, including academic achievement, scholarship, student leadership, professional and English certificates, mobile status, and demographic and educational background variables (Model 3 in Table 11.7).

Considering human capital characteristics, except for the number of English certificate variables, all the other attributes of human capital variables positively related to a higher job satisfaction rate, showing that a more outstanding, competent and skilled postgraduate tend to be associated with a higher probability of being satisfied with their employment. Postgraduates with distinction and merit grades enjoy higher possibilities to be happy with their jobs than those with lower academic achievement, with the odds ratio for distinction graduates' scores being 2.30 and merit groups 1.47. Meanwhile, postgraduates awarded the scholarship are twice more likely to be satisfied with the first employment, with an odds ratio of 2.24. Similarly, graduates with student leadership experience and professional certificates are more likely to be content with the profession, with the odds ratios being 1.09 and 1.29, respectively. However, when other elements are equal, the number of English language certificate increase by 1, and the probability of being satisfied with their employment will drop by 5 per cent.

After controlling for the human capital variables, non-mobile students have moderately decreased the probability of satisfaction upon employment, but the positive effect of being graduated domestically remains unchanged.

### **11.3.4 Job satisfaction, mobile status, demographic and academic background, human capital and organisational social capital**

The fourth stage includes organisational social capital into the model to test whether university life, working experience and career support service are associated with a higher job satisfaction rate (Model 4 in Table 11.7). After adding organisational social capital variables, the number of English certificates variable positively links to a higher job satisfaction rate, with an odds ratio of 1.02.

Consistent with the strong predictive ability of organisational capital as presented in the table, the odds ratio for student organisation participation, HEIs employment

guidance and the mobilisation of organisational capital are more prominent than 1. Postgraduates engaged in any organisation activity are twice more advantaged in their employment satisfaction opportunities than equivalent peers without the experiences, with an odds ratio of 2.41.

It is within expectations that graduates who gained better employment guidance would enjoy higher job satisfaction, with its odds ratio being 1.24. When other factors are equal, the scoring of career support guidance increases by 1, and the odds ratio of being satisfied with the first employment will increase by 24 per cent. Meanwhile, when other factors are equal, the scoring of organisational social capital mobilisation increases by 1, and the odds ratio of being satisfied with the employment will increase by 2 per cent. However, graduates with part-time or internship experience seem to have a lower satisfaction rate, with an odds ratio of 0.95.

These analyses show that the probability of being satisfied with employment for non-mobile graduates has dropped to 1.12 when the background, human capital and organisational social capital variables are controlled. However, the positive effect of graduating from home HEIs is still untouched.

#### **11.3.5 Job satisfaction, mobile status, postgraduate demographic and academic background, human capital, organisational social capital and private social capital**

In Model 5, private social capital variables are also added to the model. The results present whether family SES is associated with a difference in employee satisfaction for postgraduates with equivalent characteristics in mobile status, academic background, human capital and organisational social capital.

Introducing parents' education level, occupation, and annual income into the model, the results surprisingly present that postgraduates with more English certificates have lower opportunities for job satisfaction. When other factors are equal, the number of English language certificate increase by 1, and the probability of being satisfied with their jobs will drop by 10 per cent. Graduates who were student leaders are now slightly disadvantaged in their opportunities of higher job satisfaction than equivalent peers without the experiences, with the odds ratio dropping to 0.92.

Postgraduates from wealthier families are more likely to be satisfied with their first employment, with the odds ratio for parents' annual income being 1.48. When other

factors are equal, the level of parents' yearly income increases 1 class, and the probability of being satisfied with the first employment will increase by 48 per cent. However, the more private social capital is mobilised, the less likely postgraduates will be content with their first employment after graduation. When other factors are equal, the score of private social capital mobilisation increases by 1, and the probability of being satisfied with the profession will decrease by 7 per cent.

In addition, postgraduates whose parents have HE qualifications tend to be more likely to be satisfied with their first employment than their peers' parents without diplomas. Graduates whose fathers are government officials or civil servants are the most advantaged group with the highest job satisfaction rate. They are also 13 per cent more likely to be satisfied with their employment than those fathers who are labourers, laid-off workers or others. However, graduates whose fathers hold middle or senior managers positions, who are self-employed or workers tend to possess a lower satisfaction rate, compared to the labourers, laid-off workers or others, with the odds ratio of 0.9 and 0.77, respectively. However, graduates whose mothers have higher social status, including managers or professionals, civil servants, or self-employed, are more likely to be satisfied with their first employment than labour workers.

After including all the baseline variables, non-mobile graduates prominently raised the probability of job satisfaction upon their first employment. They are more likely to enjoy a high level of job satisfaction.

### **11.3.6 Findings from logistic regression models**

Graduates from indigenous HEIs have higher job satisfaction rates than graduates abroad. After controlling for demographic factors, human capital and social capital.

The classification (Table 11.6) shows that graduates' private social capital is the most crucial factor in predicting the job satisfaction outcome, as the predictive accuracy of the model increased by 6.7 per cent when the variables were added.

In addition to the prediction accuracy, the Exp(B) for high job satisfaction probability is also examined. The results indicate that male graduates, Party members, and those from prestigious HEIs are more likely to have a high probability of job satisfaction. Business graduates possess the highest job satisfaction rates. A high job satisfaction rate is positively related to outstanding academic performance, scholarship and

professional qualification owners. In contrast, graduates who were student leaders and their number of English certificates are negatively correlated with employment. In terms of organisational social capital, graduates with internship experience lower job satisfaction, while participation in clubs, excellent career guidance and mobilisation of organisational social capital are all positively correlated with high job satisfaction probability.

In addition, having parents with a HE degree was positively associated with high job satisfaction rates, and having a father and mother who were government officials was positively associated with job satisfaction. Although graduates with lower parental occupational status have higher job probability, they may be dissatisfied with their jobs. In addition, family income and job satisfaction were positively correlated, but the more the use of private social capital, the lower their job satisfaction. This may be due to the fact that the use of private social capital increases career expectations.

### **11.3.7 Job satisfaction by mobile status**

This section conducted multi-stage logistic regression analyses on graduates with different mobile statuses. Table 11.8 shows the increase in the percentage correctness, which reveals the model's predictive ability after knowing certain variables. The model's explanatory power for home graduates is similar to that of graduates abroad, with an overall improvement of percentage correctness being 18.1 and 18.3 per cent, respectively. For home graduates, entering demographic and academic background variables increases the model's accuracy by 4.4 per cent. However, adding organisational social capital variables has decreased the accuracy by 1.4 per cent. However, introducing organisational social capital variables into the model dramatically increased the model's percentage accuracy by 10 per cent. The accuracy increased by 5.1 per cent after including private social capital variables.

On the other hand, after controlling for the demographic and academic background variables, the model percentage accuracy has been raised by merely 1 per cent for graduates abroad. However, adding human capital and organisational social capital variables moderately increased the accuracy by 5.6 per cent and 3.8 per cent, respectively. In addition, adding private social capital variables has gained a significant increase of 7.9 per cent. In addition, human capital variables have little effect on the increase in accuracy.

Overall, the most important factor in predicting job satisfaction for graduates is

organisational social capital; however, it is private social capital for graduates abroad.

Table 11.8 Predictive accuracy of logistic regression models predicting job satisfaction by mobile status

	Non-mobile graduates		Mobile graduates	
	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained
Base figure	59.8	-	57.2	-
Demographic and academic background	64.2	4.4	58.2	1.0
Human capital	62.8	-1.4	63.8	5.6
Organisational social capital	72.8	10.0	67.6	3.8
Private social capital	77.9	5.1	75.5	7.9
Overall improvement	-	18.1	-	18.3

In Table 11.9, the results show the coefficient and the likelihood of having a higher job satisfaction level. Mobile graduates with scholarships, professional certificates and student organisation memberships enjoy higher job satisfaction; non-mobile graduates with these characteristics have similar situations. Mobile graduates majoring in business tend to have the highest job satisfaction, while non-mobile graduates studying business have the lowest job satisfaction. Surprisingly, non-mobile graduates with “distinction” grades are less satisfied with their employment than those with “pass” grades. By contrast, mobile graduates with distinguished academic achievements are 6.78 times more satisfied with their jobs than graduates with “pass” grades.

Non-mobile graduates with excellent employment guidance and mobilised organisational social capital are positively related to high job satisfaction; however, the link is negative among mobile graduates. Surprisingly, internship working experience is negatively related to job satisfaction for students with different mobile statuses. In addition, mobile graduates whose fathers possess higher occupational statuses tend to have lower job satisfaction levels. Nevertheless, non-mobile graduates whose fathers are government officials enjoy higher job satisfaction and are 3.65 times more likely to be satisfied with employment. For mobile graduates, private social capital mobilisation is positively linked to job satisfaction; however, the link is negative for non-mobile graduates.

Table 11.9 Last stage of multi-stage logistic regression models predicting job satisfaction by mobile status

Variables	Non-mobile		Mobile	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Male (vs female*)	0.16	1.17	-0.16	0.86
Communist Party member (vs no*)	0.34	1.41	0.04	1.04
Top HEI- Under (vs no*)	1.46	4.32	0.04	1.04
Top HEI- Post (vs no*)	0.04	1.04	0.39	1.48
Social Science (vs Business*)	0.78	2.19	-1.14	0.32
Science (vs Business*)	0.20	1.22	-0.66	0.52
Merit (vs pass*)	0.48	1.61	0.58	1.78
Distinction (vs pass*)	-0.22	0.80	1.91	6.78
Scholarship (vs no*)	0.80	2.22	0.19	1.21
Student leader (vs no*)	-0.20	0.82	-0.49	0.62
Professional certificate (vs no*)	0.09	1.09	0.60	1.83
English certificate No.	-0.02	0.98	-0.07	0.93
Student organisation (vs no*)	1.16	3.18	0.69	1.98
Part-time or internship (vs no*)	-0.31	0.73	-0.16	0.85
Employment guidance	0.40	1.49	-0.41	0.66
Organisational social capital mobilisation	0.50	1.64	-0.07	0.94
Father's HE (vs no*)	-0.21	0.81	1.16	3.20
Father's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)				
FOS 2	0.21	1.23	-0.76	0.47
FOS 3	1.29	3.65	-0.70	0.50
FOS 4	1.02	2.78	-0.63	0.54
Mother's HE (vs no*)	0.13	1.14	0.18	1.20
Mother's occupation status (vs laborers, laid-off workers or others*)				
MOS 2	0.01	1.01	0.40	1.50
MOS 3	1.02	2.78	0.25	1.28
MOS 4	0.63	1.87	0.95	2.59
Parents' annual income	0.09	1.09	0.62	1.86
Private social capital mobilisation	-0.32	0.73	0.08	1.09

Note: \*refers to reference group

#### 11.4 The link between mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital, private social capital and the monthly income

In order to figure out how postgraduates' mobile status, possession and mobilisation

of different capital are associated with their initial monthly income regarding the first employment after graduation, this section uses multinomial logistic regression models to control for different sets of baseline variables. The four income categories for this outcome variable, 1= below 5000 Yuan, 2= 5001 to 10000 Yuan, 3= 10001 to 15000 Yuan, and 4= above 15001 Yuan, are predicted from five baseline variables, including mobile status, demographic and academic background, human capital, organisational social capital and private social capital. Tables 11.11 to 11.15 below present the results of the logistic regression models predicting postgraduates' possible incomes below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan. As mentioned in the methods chapter, the most critical outcome indicators are 1) the increase in the percentage correctness at each stage, which reveals how knowing certain sets of "capital" variables increases the predictive ability of the model, and 2) the coefficient and Exp (B) of each baseline variable in the column.

According to the classification in Table 11.10, after knowing the mobile status of postgraduates, there is an informative increase in the prediction correctness of monthly income, with a 3.6 per cent growth in predictive accuracy. However, when postgraduates' demographic and academic background variables are entered into the model, there is only a 1.2 per cent growth in predictive accuracy. In contrast, after considering human capital variables, including academic performance, scholarship, leadership, language and occupational qualifications, there is a moderate increase (2.9 per cent) in predictive accuracy. Then, adding organisational social capital variables into the models brings another 1.5 per cent improvement in the correctness. Including private social capital variables leads to the most pronounced increases in the overall accuracy, which is 4.9 per cent growth. After controlling for all the baseline variables mentioned above, there is a significant overall improvement, with 14.1 per cent of the variation in outcome explained.

Table 11.10 Predictive accuracy of logistic regression models of the probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan

	Percent correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained
Base figure	29.9	-
Mobile status	33.5	3.6
Academic and demographic background	34.7	1.2
Human capital	37.6	2.9
Organisational social capital	39.1	1.5

Private social capital	44.0	4.9
Overall improvement	-	14.1

#### 11.4.1 Monthly income and mobile status

Models in each table present the parameter estimates for the effects of mobile status, human capital, organisational social capital, and private social capital on monthly incomes. The results of multinomial regressions are shown in Tables 11.11 to 11.15. The number of observations is 750, only including the graduates who had found jobs when they received their graduation certificates.

The first three regression models in Table 11.11 only include mobile status. It shows that mobile graduates are more likely to receive higher wage categories than local graduates. The odds of earning salaries above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is increased by a factor of about 4.09 by being graduates abroad rather than indigenous ones, controlling for other variables in the model.

Table 11.11 The probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan

Variables	5001-10000 Yuan		10001-15000 Yuan		Above 15001 Yuan	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
	Mobile students (vs non-mobile*)	0.48	1.62	1.16	3.18	1.41

Note: the reference category is “below 5000 Yuan”.

\* refers to the reference groups.

#### 11.4.2 Monthly income, mobile status and demographic and academic background

The three logistic regression models in Table 11.12 includes gender, the Communist Party membership and academic background variables. When knowing the demographic and academic background, graduates from UK HEIs still have a greater probability of earning higher salary categories (5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan, above 15001 Yuan) than those graduates from home HEIs, compared to having salary below 5000 Yuan. The odds ratio of having a salary above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is increased by a factor of about 4.71 by being graduates abroad rather than home graduates when the other variables are constant.

Compared to earning a salary below 5000 Yuan, males are more likely to earn salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan than females. The odds of having salaries above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is reduced by a factor of 0.78 by being female rather than male when the other variables are constant. Being non-Party members rather than Party members increases by a factor of 1.52 the odds of having salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan.

In addition, the results of the variables related to academic backgrounds show that graduates from prestigious undergraduate and postgraduate HEIs are more likely to earn higher wage categories than graduates from non-prestigious HEIs. Business and social science graduates are less likely to receive high wage categories than science and engineering graduates. The probability of earning salaries above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is reduced by a factor of 0.50 and 0.86, respectively, by being business and social science graduates rather than science ones.

Table 11.12 The probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan

Variables	5001-10000 Yuan		10001-15000 Yuan		Above 15001 Yuan	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
	Mobile students (vs non-mobile*)	0.34	1.40	0.97	2.64	1.55
Female (vs male*)	-0.12	0.89	-0.07	0.93	-0.25	0.78
Party member (vs yes*)	0.17	1.19	0.42	1.52	0.06	1.06
Top HEIs (under) (vs yes*)	-0.66	0.52	-0.99	0.37	-0.38	0.68
Top HEIs (post) (vs yes*)	-0.33	0.72	-0.53	0.59	-0.47	0.62
Business (vs Science*)	-0.16	0.86	-0.20	0.82	-0.68	0.50
Social science (vs Science*)	-0.36	0.70	-0.22	0.80	-0.15	0.86

Note: the reference category is "below 5000 Yuan".

\* refers to the reference groups.

### 11.4.3 Monthly income, mobile status, demographic and academic background and human capital

The logistic regression models in Table 11.13 include human capital variables in addition to mobile status and demographic and academic background variables. Considering human capital characteristics, the positive effect of studying in the UK

rather than home HEIs on the likelihood of having higher salary categories (5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan) rather than salary below 5000 Yuan remains unchanged. The odds ratio of having a salary above 15001 Yuan for mobile graduates has dramatically increased to 7.17, compared to a salary below 5000 Yuan. It means that graduates abroad are more than seven times more likely to enjoy a salary above 15001 Yuan than their peers from home, compared to those below 5000 Yuan.

Compared to receiving wages below 5000 Yuan, the more English certificates the graduates have, the more likely they will obtain wages between 10001 and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan. At the same time, those with scholarships and professional qualifications are more likely to have higher salaries. The graduates without scholarships are only 65 per cent as likely to receive salaries above 15001 Yuan as those with scholarships, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan. The probability of receiving salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan for those without professional qualifications is 47 per cent lower than those with a qualification, compared to earning salaries below 5000 Yuan.

However, graduates with pass and merit academic achievements are more likely to receive a higher salary category rather than below 5000 Yuan. Compared to having salaries below 5000 Yuan, graduates with merit academic achievements are 3.39 times more likely to receive salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan than graduates with distinction performance, and 1.84 times more likely to receive salaries above 15001 Yuan than distinction graduates, when other variables are fixed. Having pass grades rather than distinction will increase by factors of 1.91 the odds of earning above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan.

Table 11.13 The probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan

Variables	5001-10000		10001-15000		Above 15001	
	Yuan		Yuan		Yuan	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
English certificate No.	-0.04	0.96	0.11	1.12	0.02	1.11
Mobile students (vs non-mobile*)	0.80	2.23	1.31	3.72	1.35	7.17
Female (vs male*)	-0.16	0.85	-0.03	0.98	-0.42	0.81
Party member (vs yes*)	0.21	1.23	0.51	1.66	0.32	1.18
Top HEIs (under) (vs yes*)	-0.68	0.51	-0.90	0.41	-0.28	0.73
Top HEIs (post) (vs yes*)	-0.31	0.74	-0.44	0.64	-0.10	0.70

Business (vs Science*)	-0.21	0.81	-0.22	0.80	-0.82	0.49
Social science (vs Science*)	-0.38	0.68	-0.32	0.73	-0.20	0.75
Pass (vs distinction*)	0.77	2.16	0.44	1.54	0.59	1.91
Merit (vs distinction*)	1.22	3.39	0.63	1.88	0.68	1.84
Scholarship (vs yes*)	-0.67	0.51	-0.38	0.69	-0.38	0.65
Student leadership (vs yes*)	0.04	1.05	-0.16	0.85	-0.09	0.74
Professional qualification (vs yes*)	-0.11	0.90	-0.63	0.53	-0.25	0.56

Note: the reference category is “below 5000 Yuan”.

\* refers to the reference groups.

#### **11.4.4 Monthly income, mobile status, demographic and academic background, human capital and organisational social capital**

In Table 11.14, the three regression models add organisational social capital variables in addition to the previous variables. The positive effects of studying abroad on the likelihood of earning a salary between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan remain constant when controlling for graduates’ organisational social capital.

In comparison to a salary of below 5000 Yuan, the more social capital the graduates mobilised, the more likely they are to receive a salary of 5001-10000 Yuan and 10001-15000 Yuan. However, the likelihood of receiving a salary above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is lower by being graduates abroad rather than at home ones.

At the same time, graduates with student organisation and internship or part-time experience are more likely to receive a higher salary category. Those without student organisation experience were only 68 per cent as likely to receive salaries of 10001-15000 Yuan as those with that experience, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan when other variables are constant. Those without internship experience are 86 per cent and 84 per cent more likely to receive a salary of 5001-10000 Yuan and 10001-15000 Yuan than those with a qualification, compared to a below 5000 Yuan.

Table 11.14 The probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan

Variables	5001-10000 Yuan		10001-15000 Yuan		Above 15001 Yuan	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
	English certificate No.	-0.04	0.96	0.12	1.13	0.14
OSC mobilisation	0.15	1.16	0.20	1.22	-0.25	0.78
Career services	-0.09	0.91	-0.08	0.92	0.00	1.00
Mobile students (vs non-mobile*)	0.86	2.35	1.40	4.07	1.99	7.30
Female (vs male*)	-0.12	0.89	0.04	1.04	-0.29	0.75
Party member (vs yes*)	0.18	1.20	0.51	1.67	0.13	1.14
Top HEIs (under) (vs yes*)	-0.71	0.49	-0.94	0.39	-0.26	0.77
Top HEIs (post) (vs yes*)	-0.30	0.74	-0.43	0.65	-0.36	0.70
Business (vs Science*)	-0.19	0.83	-0.17	0.84	-0.82	0.44
Social science (vs Science*)	-0.36	0.70	-0.27	0.76	-0.42	0.66
Pass (vs distinction*)	0.82	2.26	0.51	1.66	0.66	1.94
Merit (vs distinction*)	1.28	3.60	0.73	2.07	0.65	1.91
Scholarship (vs yes*)	-0.58	0.56	-0.29	0.75	-0.38	0.69
Student leadership (vs yes*)	0.08	1.08	-0.11	0.90	-0.29	0.75
Professional qualification (vs yes*)	-0.13	0.88	-0.63	0.53	-0.59	0.55
Student organisation (vs yes*)	-0.25	0.78	-0.38	0.68	-0.34	0.71
Internship (vs yes*)	-0.15	0.86	-0.17	0.84	0.01	1.01

Note: the reference category is "below 5000 Yuan".

\* refers to the reference groups.

#### 11.4.5 Monthly income, mobile status, demographic and academic background, human capital, organisational social capital and private social capital

In Table 11.15, the three regression models include all sets of baseline variables. The advantages of studying in the UK HEIs on the likelihood of earning salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan remain unchanged. However, the odds ratios have decreased slightly.

The higher the parents' annual incomes, the higher the probability that the graduate will receive wages between 10001 and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan, compared to below 5000 Yuan. However, the higher the use of private social capital, the higher the probability of earning low wages below 5000 Yuan.

In addition, graduates whose parents have HE diplomas tend to have a higher probability of receiving higher incomes. The probabilities of receiving wages between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan for the graduates whose fathers without HE diplomas are 51, 21 and 43 per cent, respectively, lower than that of those having the diplomas, rather than salaries below 5000 Yuan. The likelihood of earning salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan for those whose mothers are without university diplomas is 34 per cent lower than that of those having degrees, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan.

Graduates whose fathers were manual workers or laid-off are inclined to have fewer opportunities to earn higher wages than those whose fathers were managers or executives. They were more likely to earn salaries of less than 5,000 Yuan. However, graduates whose parents are government officials or civil servants tend to have obvious advantages in having high salaries. The possibilities for graduates whose fathers are civil servants to earn between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan are 2, 2 and 1.66 times more than those fathers were managers or executives, in comparison to receiving salaries below 5000 Yuan, when other variables are equal. Graduates whose mothers are government officials or civil servants also have a higher probability of receiving higher salaries than those with less than 5000 Yuan.

Table 11.15 The probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan

Variables	5001-10000		10001-15000		Above 15001	
	Yuan		Yuan		Yuan	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
English certificate No.	-0.18	0.83	0.00	1.00	0.01	1.01
OSC mobilisation	0.38	1.47	0.34	1.40	0.10	1.10
Career services	0.00	1.00	-0.01	0.99	-0.09	0.92
Parents' annual income	-0.18	0.84	0.09	1.09	0.12	1.13
PSC mobilisation	-0.35	0.70	-0.09	0.92	-0.37	0.69
Mobile students (vs non-mobile)	0.81	2.24	0.92	2.50	1.26	3.54
Female (vs male)	-0.23	0.80	0.00	1.00	-0.34	0.71
Party member (vs yes*)	0.42	1.52	0.82	2.28	0.51	1.67
Top HEIs (under) (vs yes*)	-0.70	0.50	-0.80	0.45	-0.18	0.83
Top HEIs (post) (vs yes*)	-0.35	0.70	-0.39	0.68	-0.31	0.73
Business (vs Science*)	-0.38	0.68	-0.33	0.72	-0.96	0.38
Social science (vs Science*)	-0.33	0.72	-0.23	0.79	-0.45	0.63

Pass (vs distinction*)	0.81	2.25	0.75	2.12	0.97	2.64
Merit (vs distinction*)	1.43	4.20	1.04	2.83	0.88	2.42
Scholarship (vs yes*)	-0.50	0.61	-0.35	0.70	-0.39	0.68
Student leadership (vs yes*)	0.21	1.23	0.15	1.16	-0.06	0.94
Professional qualification (vs yes*)	-0.02	0.98	-0.41	0.66	-0.36	0.70
Student organisation (vs yes*)	-0.10	0.90	-0.29	0.75	-0.18	0.84
Internship (vs yes*)	-0.17	0.84	-0.19	0.83	0.02	1.02
Father's HE (vs yes*)	-0.71	0.49	-0.24	0.79	-0.57	0.57
FOS 1 (vs managers, or professionals*)	-0.27	0.76	-1.31	0.27	-1.80	0.17
FOS 2	0.60	1.81	0.08	1.08	0.01	1.01
FOS 3	0.69	2.00	0.71	2.04	0.50	1.66
Mother's HE (vs yes*)	-0.19	0.83	-0.42	0.66	-0.01	0.99
MOS 1 (vs managers, or professionals*)	-0.02	0.98	0.64	1.90	-0.14	0.87
MOS 2	0.42	1.52	0.35	1.42	-0.49	0.61
MOS 3	1.02	2.76	0.36	1.43	0.04	1.04

Note: the reference category is "below 5000 Yuan".

\* refers to the reference groups.

After accounting for all of the five-set baseline variables, the conclusion is consistent with the earlier descriptive analysis that graduates with UK studying experiences tend to obtain higher monthly salaries than those who graduated from Chinese HEIs.

The detailed results of each stage of the regression models are given to present changes in coefficients when different sets of baseline variables are controlled for.

#### 11.4.6 Findings from logistic regression models

After controlling for demographic factors, human capital, organisational and private social capital, mobile graduates are more likely to earn 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan, and above 15000 Yuan than non-mobile graduates, rather than wages below 5000 Yuan.

The classification (Table 11.8) shows that graduates' private social capital is the most crucial factor in predicting the job satisfaction outcome, as the model's predictive accuracy increased by 4.9 per cent when the variables were added.

In addition to the prediction accuracy, the Exp(B) for monthly income categories is also examined. Female graduates tend to have lower salaries than male ones. Being non-Party members rather than Party members increases by a factor of 2.28 the odds of having salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan. In addition, graduates from prestigious HEIs enjoy higher salaries than their non-top HEIs peers. Business and social science graduates are less likely to receive high wage categories than science and engineering graduates. Graduates of prestigious schools are more likely to receive high salary categories than those from non-prestigious schools. The highest salaries are found in science and engineering graduates. However, pass and merit-grade graduates' salaries are higher than distinction graduates. Although low academic achievement graduates are less likely to be employed than high achievers, they can still earn higher wages when they get a job. Scholarships and vocational certificates can lead to high wages.

Those with scholarships and professional qualifications are more likely to have higher salaries. Although graduates with pass and merit academic achievements possess lower job probability than distinction graduates, they are more likely to receive a higher salary after finding a job. Scholarships and professional qualifications are more likely to have higher salary categories.

Regarding organisational social capital, the more social capital the graduates mobilised, the more likely they are to receive a salary of 5001-10000 Yuan and 10001-15000 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan. At the same time, graduates with student organisation and internship experience are more likely to receive a higher salary.

In addition, graduates whose parents have HE diplomas tend to have a higher probability of receiving higher incomes. Graduates whose fathers were manual workers or laid-off are inclined to have fewer opportunities to earn higher wage categories than those whose fathers were managers or executives. However, graduates whose parents are government officials or civil servants tend to have obvious advantages in having high salary categories. Graduates whose mothers are government officials or civil servants also have a higher probability of receiving higher salary categories rather than having salaries less than 5000 Yuan. The higher the parents' annual incomes, the higher the probability that the graduate will receive wages between 10001 and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan rather than earning below 5000 Yuan. However, the higher the use of private social capital, the higher the probability of earning low-wage categories below 5000 Yuan.

### 11.4.7 Monthly income by mobile status

Multinomial logistic regression models were conducted on the probability of having monthly salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan of mobile and non-mobile graduates, respectively. The classification in Table 11.16 shows the increase in percentage correctness, which reveals the model's predictive ability after knowing certain variables. The model's explanatory power is more substantial for home graduates than graduates abroad, with an overall improvement of percentage correctness being 16.7 per cent, while for graduates abroad, it is only 11.5 per cent. For home graduates, entering demographic and academic background variables only increases the model's accuracy by 2.1 per cent. After knowing human capital and organisational social capital characteristics, there are moderate increases in the prediction correctness of monthly income, with 3.0 per cent and 3.2 per cent growth in predictive accuracy, respectively. When adding private social capital variables into the model, the models' percentage accuracy has experienced an informative increase of 8.4 per cent.

On the other hand, controlling for demographic and academic background and human capital characteristics for graduates abroad brings minor growth of the prediction accuracy, with 1.4 per cent and 1.3 per cent, respectively. After adding organisational social capital variables, the model percentage accuracy has been raised by 2.7 per cent for graduates abroad. However, adding private social capital variables has significantly increased by 6.1 per cent. After knowing different sets, the increases in predictive accuracy for the two groups of graduates show that private social capital contributes a more significant role than human and organisational social capital in achieving monthly salaries.

Table 11.16 Predictive accuracy of logistic regression models predicting monthly income categories by mobile status

	Non-mobile student		Mobile student	
	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained	Percentage correctness	The improvement of percentage of variation explained
Base figure	32.1	-	34.8	-
Demographic and academic background	34.2	2.1	36.2	1.4
Human capital	37.2	3.0	37.5	1.3
Organisational social	40.4	3.2	40.2	2.7

capital				
Private social capital	48.8	8.4	46.3	6.1
Overall improvement	-	16.7	-	11.5

Models in Tables 11.17 and 11.18 show the multinomial variable monthly salary (1= below 5000 Yuan, 2=5001-10000 Yuan, 3=10001-15000 Yuan, 4=above 15001 Yuan) is predicted from all sets of baseline variables for graduates abroad and indigenous graduates separately. The odds of receiving salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is increased by a factor of 1.4 by females rather than males, controlling for other variables in the model. However, female graduates tend to have fewer possibilities of earning wages above 15001 Yuan. The odds of receiving salaries above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is reduced by a factor of 0.59 by females rather than males. Graduates who are Party members are more likely to make higher salary categories compared to a wage below 5000 Yuan.

In addition, the results of the variables related to academic backgrounds show that graduates from prestigious undergraduate and postgraduate HEIs are more likely to earn higher salary categories than graduates from non-prestigious ones. Like home graduates, science and engineering graduates abroad are more likely to receive high wages than their social science and business peers.

The probability for pass and merit grades graduates to earn salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 Yuan and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan are much higher than graduates with distinction grades, compared to a wage below 5000 Yuan. Having pass and merit grades rather than distinction grades increase by a factor of 2.33 and 1.93, respectively, the odds of earning above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan. Meanwhile, the odds of receiving salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is increased by a factor of 1.45 and 1.40, respectively, by those without scholarships rather than having the awards, controlling for other variables in the model. In addition, graduates without student leadership and organisation experience are more likely to have salaries of 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan rather than wages below 5000 Yuan. However, those with professional qualifications are advantaged in having a higher possibility of receiving salaries between 10001 Yuan and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan.

Graduates with an internship or part-time experience are more likely to receive salaries between 10001 Yuan and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan. Meanwhile, graduates whose HEIs provide better career

service guidance are more likely to receive salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan and 10001-15000 Yuan rather than having salaries below 5000 Yuan.

In addition, the higher the parents' annual incomes, the higher the probability that the graduates from home HEIs will receive wages above 15001 Yuan rather than salaries below 5000 Yuan. However, the higher the use of private social capital, the higher the probability of earning a low wage category below 5000 Yuan. Moreover, graduates whose fathers have HE diplomas tend to have a higher probability of receiving higher income categories. However, the odds of receiving salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is increased by a factor of 1.56 by graduates whose mothers are without HE diplomas rather than those possessing the credentials when other variables in the model are fixed.

Graduates whose parents are manual workers or laid-off and self-employed are inclined to have fewer opportunities to earn higher wage categories than those whose fathers were senior managers or executives. They are more likely to earn salaries of less than 5,000 Yuan. By contrast, graduates whose parents are government officers or civil servants rather than senior managers or professionals have higher probabilities of receiving salary categories of 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan.

Table 11.17 The probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan (UK graduates)

Variables	5001-10000		10001-15000		Above 15001	
	Yuan		Yuan		Yuan	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
English certificate No.	-0.04	0.96	-0.07	0.93	-0.02	0.98
Career service	-0.55	0.58	-0.67	0.51	-0.66	0.52
OSC mobilisation	0.49	1.64	0.61	1.84	0.36	1.44
Parents' annual income	-0.38	0.68	-0.07	0.94	0.07	1.07
PSC mobilisation	-0.50	0.61	-0.04	0.96	-0.59	0.56
Female (vs male)	-0.11	0.90	0.34	1.40	-0.53	0.59
Party member (vs yes*)	-0.59	0.56	-0.04	0.96	-0.29	0.75
Top HEIs (under) (vs yes*)	-0.68	0.50	-1.22	0.29	-0.62	0.54
Top HEIs (post) (vs yes*)	-0.52	0.59	-0.54	0.59	-0.10	0.91
Business (vs Science*)	-0.78	0.46	-1.03	0.36	-1.27	0.28
Social science (vs Science*)	-0.81	0.44	-1.15	0.32	-1.01	0.37
Pass (vs distinction*)	0.38	1.46	0.93	2.54	0.85	2.33

Merit (vs distinction*)	1.09	2.98	1.12	3.06	0.66	1.94
Scholarship (vs yes*)	-0.16	0.85	0.37	1.45	0.34	1.40
Student leadership (vs yes*)	1.10	2.99	0.76	2.14	0.92	2.51
Professional qualification (vs yes*)	0.00	1.00	-0.85	0.43	-0.53	0.59
Student organisation (vs yes*)	0.58	1.79	0.49	1.62	0.53	1.69
Internship (vs yes*)	0.38	1.46	-0.09	0.92	-0.02	0.98
Father's HE (vs yes*)	-1.34	0.26	-0.62	0.54	-1.13	0.32
FOS 1 (vs managers, or professionals*)	-1.22	0.30	-2.53	0.08	-0.69	0.50
FOS 2	1.88	6.57	1.10	3.01	1.46	4.30
FOS 3	0.60	1.82	0.64	1.90	0.65	1.92
Mother's HE (vs yes*)	-0.22	0.80	0.44	1.56	0.11	1.12
MOS 1 (vs managers, or professionals*)	-0.09	0.92	-0.69	0.50	-0.61	0.54
MOS 2	-0.12	0.89	-0.46	0.63	-0.92	0.40
MOS 3	0.85	2.33	0.53	1.71	0.08	1.08

Note: the reference category is "below 5000 Yuan".

\* refers to the reference groups.

In Table 11.18, the detailed results of the regression models are given to present the coefficients and Exp (B) for indigenous graduates when different sets of baseline variables are controlled for.

Compared to earning a salary below 5000 Yuan, male graduates are more likely to make salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan. However, female graduates tend to have more possibilities of earning wages above 15001 Yuan. The odds of having salaries between 10001 and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan are increased by a factor of 3.45 and 2.34, respectively, by being non-Party members rather than Party members, controlling for other variables in the model.

In addition, the results of the variables related to academic backgrounds show that graduates from prestigious postgraduate HEIs are more probability to earn higher salary categories than graduates from non-prestigious HEIs. However, graduates from non-top undergraduate HEIs tend to have more possibility of earning salaries above 15001 Yuan, compared to having salaries below 5000 Yuan. Science and engineering graduates are more likely to receive high wages than social science and business graduates.

Surprisingly, the probability for pass and merit grades graduates to earn salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 Yuan and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan are much higher than graduates with distinction grades. Graduates with a master's degree, even if their academic performance is poor, are likely to receive higher salaries. By contrast, graduates with scholarships are more advantageous than those without scholarships in having a higher possibility to earn salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan, 10001 Yuan and 15000 Yuan, and above 15001 Yuan, rather than having wages below 5000 Yuan. In addition, graduates with student leadership experience and professional certificates are more likely to have salaries above 15001 Yuan rather than wages below 5000 Yuan. However, those with more English certificates are disadvantaged in having a higher possibility of receiving salaries between 5000 Yuan and 10000 Yuan, and 10001 Yuan and 15000 Yuan, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan.

Graduates with student organisation and internship or part-time experience are more likely to receive salaries between 5000 Yuan and 10000 Yuan and 10001 Yuan and 15000 Yuan, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan. However, the odds of receiving salaries above 15001 Yuan rather than below 5000 Yuan is increased by a factor of 1.28 by being graduates without any internships rather than having this experience, controlling for other variables in the model. Graduates whose HEIs provide better career service guidance are more likely to receive salaries between 5001 and 10000 Yuan and 10001-15000 Yuan rather than earning salaries below 5000 Yuan.

The higher the parents' annual incomes, the higher the probability that the graduates from home HEIs will receive wages between 10001 and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan, rather than earning salaries below 5000 Yuan. However, the higher the use of private social capital, the higher the probability of earning low wages below 5,000 Yuan.

In addition, graduates whose parents have HE diplomas tend to have a higher probability of receiving higher income categories. The possibilities of receiving wages between 5001 and 10,000 Yuan, 10001 and 15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan for those fathers without diplomas are 7 per cent, 4 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, lower than those with credentials, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan. The likelihood of earning wages between 10001 and 15000 Yuan for those whose mothers are without university diplomas is 73 per cent lower than that of those having degrees, compared to salaries below 5000 Yuan.

Graduates whose fathers are manual workers or laid-off and self-employed are

inclined to have fewer opportunities to earn higher wages than those whose fathers were senior managers or executives. They are more likely to earn salaries of less than 5,000 Yuan. By contrast, graduates whose mothers are senior managers or professionals have lower probabilities of receiving higher salary categories than those with less than 5000 Yuan.

Table 11.18 The probability of having salaries below 5000 Yuan, 5001-10000 Yuan, 10001-15000 Yuan and above 15001 Yuan (home graduates)

Variables	5001-10000 Yuan		10001-15000 Yuan		Above 15001 Yuan	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
English certificate No.	-0.31	0.73	-0.08	0.92	0.05	1.05
Career service	0.04	1.04	0.25	1.28	-0.09	0.92
OSC mobilisation	0.27	1.31	-0.11	0.89	-0.14	0.87
Parents' annual income	-0.07	0.93	0.14	1.15	0.04	1.05
PSC mobilisation	-0.34	0.71	-0.07	0.93	-0.21	0.81
Female (vs male)	-0.10	0.91	-0.11	0.89	0.08	1.09
Party member (vs yes*)	0.67	1.95	1.24	3.45	0.85	2.34
Top HEIs (under) (vs yes*)	-0.56	0.57	-0.35	0.71	0.18	1.19
Top HEIs (post) (vs yes*)	-0.47	0.62	-0.60	0.55	-0.66	0.52
Business (vs Science*)	-0.39	0.68	-0.19	0.83	-1.13	0.32
Social science (vs Science*)	-0.50	0.61	-0.01	0.99	-1.01	0.36
Pass (vs distinction*)	0.91	2.49	0.15	1.16	1.01	2.76
Merit (vs distinction*)	1.61	4.99	0.57	1.78	0.77	2.15
Scholarship (vs yes*)	-0.32	0.72	-0.86	0.42	-0.40	0.67
Student leadership (vs yes*)	0.12	1.13	0.42	1.52	-0.53	0.59
Professional qualification (vs yes*)	0.00	1.00	0.05	1.05	-0.17	0.84
Student organisation (vs yes*)	-0.32	0.73	-0.49	0.61	-0.61	0.54
Internship (vs yes*)	-0.81	0.45	-0.43	0.65	0.25	1.28
Father's HE (vs yes*)	-0.07	0.93	-0.04	0.96	-0.18	0.84
FOS 1 (vs managers, or professionals*)	-0.87	0.42	-1.87	0.15	-3.92	0.02
FOS 2	-0.53	0.59	-0.95	0.39	-2.02	0.13
FOS 3	-0.04	0.96	-0.11	0.90	-0.92	0.40
Mother's HE (vs yes*)	-0.47	0.62	-1.31	0.27	-0.04	0.96
MOS 1 (vs managers, or professionals*)	0.27	1.31	1.31	3.70	0.35	1.41

MOS 2	0.94	2.56	0.96	2.60	-0.06	0.94
MOS 3	1.44	4.24	0.71	2.04	0.23	1.26

Note: the reference category is “below 5000 Yuan”.

\* refers to the reference groups.

So far, all the results of this study have been presented. The following chapters start to summarise the main findings, and then discuss the limitations of this study, implications for future research, and implications for individuals, HEIs and policy-makers.

## **12 Summary of the main findings for students registered in the programmes (yet to graduate)**

In this chapter, we discuss the findings of the previous chapters for students who have not graduated yet, including studying abroad motivation, working abroad obstacles, job-seeking channels and career aspirations.

### **12.1 Motivation and obstacles**

The decision-making process for graduate students contemplating whether to study abroad or remain at domestic HEIs can be understood through the lens of the two-way push and pull theory, which posits that a combination of both positive and negative factors in the home and host countries influence this choice (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Research corroborates the idea that the balance of these factors determines the direction of student mobility (Li & Bray, 2007). Students are more inclined to pursue education overseas when the allure of positive factors in the destination country, such as shorter program durations, higher levels of economic development, and greater educational opportunities, as found in the UK, outweigh the negative aspects of studying abroad and the positive aspects of staying at home (Bodycott, 2009). Conversely, significant positive domestic factors, including reasonable living costs, proximity to family, and the alignment of education with career development, can deter students from leaving their native country (Chen, 2007).

The results of the research on motivation essentially validate this view. There were significant differences in the motivations of current students studying in the UK and home students in choosing to study abroad or at home. The means of the attitude scales show that for students studying in the UK, short programme duration, economic

development, and more educational opportunities in the UK are the most crucial positive factors that “pull” the students to study abroad. The extended programme duration, lower economic development, and lack of educational opportunities at home are vital negative factors in keeping them away from indigenous HEIs. On the other hand, for those opting for domestic HEIs, the prohibitive cost of studying abroad, the emotional hardship of family separation, and the uncertain transferability of educational qualifications and career development in foreign HEIs serve as substantial deterrents. The results are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Findlay et al., 2012). In summary, the interplay of these push and pull factors, as evidenced by the attitudes and motivations of students, underscores the complexity of the decision to study either at home or abroad. The balance of these factors thus plays a crucial role in shaping the educational trajectories of graduate students in an increasingly globalized educational landscape.

In addition, both groups of students consider HEI’s reputation a fundamental motivation for postgraduate education; however, the mean for students abroad is even higher than that of non-mobile ones.

Regarding the obstacles in obtaining jobs overseas, most participants predict that the main obstacles to finding employment overseas lie in difficulties getting a work permit and fewer work opportunities for international students. The findings are in line with prior research. (e.g., Chen, 2014; Wadhwa, 2009; Zweig, 2006). Meanwhile, some students also point out that being afraid of loneliness and separating from family members, language barriers, and cultural differences are essential factors that prevent them from working overseas.

## **12.2 Job-seeking channels and career services**

In the context of job-seeking tactics, research indicates a notable divergence in expectations between students from UK HEIs and local students. Specifically, UK HEI students anticipate that their primary channel for job applications will be online, exhibiting significantly greater average scores on attitude scales toward this method compared to their local counterparts. Conversely, indigenous students place their expectations on a broader spectrum of recruitment strategies. They particularly emphasise the value of university-released employment information, social recruitment examinations, and referrals from academic supervisors. The mean values associated with these recruitment methods among indigenous students were observed to be substantially higher than those recorded for students who study

abroad. The outcomes align with earlier studies (e.g., Støren, 2009; Wu, 2015).

The overall mean rating of students yet to graduate was lower than that of graduates on the evaluation of the HE careers service, which may be because most students have yet to step into the job-seeking stage. However, the findings of the study still show that the careers service in UK HEIs needs to be more satisfactory. The mean values for all ratings are much lower than those for home students.

### **12.3 Career aspirations**

Regarding the prediction of the employer types, the results illustrate that the top two significant differences are located in the choice of “Government/public institution” and “Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture”. Non-mobile students tend to be much more likely to choose government or public institutions than those studying abroad; however, mobile students are more inclined to join enterprises invested by Foreign Capital or joint ventures.

Both students from the UK and indigenous HEIs prefer to work in larger cities. However, local students are more family-oriented and have an increased tendency to choose cities where they can be with their families, while students abroad prefer economically developed cities and open coastal cities. In addition, their intention to choose to work overseas is significantly higher than that of local students.

Regarding salary expectations, international students have significantly higher salaries than local students, with over 70 per cent stating that they would like to earn more than 10000 Yuan, which is higher than the average salary graduates earn. However, students from indigenous HEIs tend to be more realistic. Nearly 70 per cent reported the expected monthly salary for the first employment period between 5001 and 10000 Yuan. Their average expected salaries are much lower than that of non-mobile groups.

## **13 Summary of the main findings for graduates**

After summarising the finding for students registered in the postgraduate programmes, this chapter focuses on the findings for graduates, answering this study’s research questions.

### 13.1 Who is studying abroad?

Pursuing higher education abroad has become a marker of socioeconomic status, mainly because it demands extensive economic, social, cultural, and personal resources not as necessary when attending local universities (Netz & Grüttner, 2021; Wiers-Jenssen, 2011). Research indicates that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to pursue master's degrees abroad, a trend mirrored by various European studies (Di Pietro, 2019a; Hauschildt et al., 2018; Lingo, 2019; Netz & Finger, 2016; Salisbury et al., 2008; Steenstrup, 2009; Wiers-Jenssen, 2011). This correlation between social origin and mobility in education persists despite policies designed to equalise access to international study opportunities, suggesting that these students form a distinct demographic that tends to come from families with more substantial socioeconomic resources. The findings of this study align with those of earlier research.

Social stratification theory offers an insight into this phenomenon, suggesting that the observed social selectivity in study abroad participation is driven by an aspiration to maintain or enhance one's social standing, a factor particularly relevant for students from privileged backgrounds (Bourdieu, 1984). As HE has grown exponentially over the past few decades, it has become increasingly difficult to differentiate oneself by pursuing higher degrees (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). Therefore, students from privileged backgrounds should seek out even more horizontal ways to stand out in higher education (Lucas, 2001). Some ways to stand out in higher education include attending a prestigious institution (Schindler & Reimer, 2011; Triventi, 2013), majoring in a lucrative field (Triventi et al., 2017; Van De Werfhorst et al., 2003), and completing of study-related stays in other countries (Lörz et al., 2015). In theory, students from affluent families should have a greater chance of being allowed to pursue their education in another country, provided that the economy is in better shape and sufficient resources exist. The results indicates that the selectivity also demonstrates academic achievement before studying abroad. A higher proportion of mobile students abroad graduated from prestigious universities than their peers from home HEIs. Students who are successful during their undergraduate studies are more likely to study abroad to carry on their studies.

In addition to the regression analysis, the study also asked the participants how important each listed motivation related to their choice to study abroad (or at indigenous HEIs). There are significant differences in the motivations of mobile and non-mobile graduates in choosing to study abroad or to study at home HEIs. The mean

values of the attitude scales show that for students studying in the UK, short programme duration, more educational opportunities and economic development in the UK are the most crucial factors “pull” the students to study abroad. However, reasonable expenses, the wish to stay with families and the adaptability of education and career development seem to be the most important driving force for those to study at home HEIs. This result is generally consistent with the reports of students registered in the master’s programmes (yet to graduate). In addition, both groups of students consider HEI’s reputation a significant motivation for postgraduation education; however, the mean for mobile students is even higher than that of non-mobile ones.

### **13.2 Why returning?**

The phenomenon of international students returning to China has been on the rise since the reform and opening up, with factors influencing this decision spanning a complex array of push and pull dynamics. The theory of two-way push and pull factors, as described in the literature, posits that motivations from both the host and home countries play a significant role (Zweig et al., 2004). In China, economic incentives such as increased wage levels, abundant employment opportunities, and promising career prospects serve as significant pull factors (Tharenou & Seep, 2014). Additionally, institutional frameworks, such as the implementation of the “Thousand Talents Programme”, have been instrumental in not only attracting high-level students but also in fostering a conducive environment for their talent development upon their return (Wang & Miao, 2014).

Cultural and policy-driven elements further contribute to this trend, with the establishment of entrepreneurship parks and the promotion of talent policies providing a platform for returnees to thrive (Wang & Miao, 2014; Qin, 2014). In addition, the results indicate that traditional cultural values, particularly the notion of filial piety and the ideal of serving one’s country post-study, also exert a profound influence, reinforcing a sense of national identity and belonging. These factors, coupled with the desire to reunite with family, create a compelling in-country pull. The findings are consistent with the previous studies (e.g., Bao et al., 2021; Shi, 2019). Conversely, challenges in the host country, such as limited job opportunities, stringent immigration policies, and cultural barriers, act as push factors. These issues and the loneliness that can stem from being away from one’s family amplify the reverse push effect, resulting in a surge of returning international students.

It is clear that the decision to return is multifaceted, with economic, institutional, familial, and cultural motivators all playing a critical role. The combined impact of these elements not only underscores the importance of economic factors but also highlights the significance of the social and policy context within which international students make their return decisions. The interplay of these factors creates a dynamic that encourages and compels international students to return to China, with the overarching trend reflecting a complex tapestry of individual aspirations, policy influences, and cultural ties.

### **13.3 Human capital, organisational and private social capital stock**

The human capital stock of graduates from the UK is lower than that of indigenous graduates. They have fewer scholarship owners, student leaders and vocational qualification owners than local graduates. However, they have a significantly higher number of English language certificates than their counterparts at indigenous HEIs. Studying abroad can bring added value, such as English skills (Pinto, 2020; Richter, 2020; Sorrenti, 2017; Zimmermann, 2021). Despite this linguistic proficiency, UK graduates seem to lag in organisational social capital. Only a limited portion, about 30 per cent, have participated in internships, starkly contrasting the 75 per cent participation rate among domestic graduates. This disparity extends to career services provided by UK HEIs, which are significantly less comprehensive than those offered by domestic institutions, potentially impacting graduates' transition into the workforce. The findings prove earlier surveys and studies that career guidance services are mainly provided for UK-centred graduates, neglecting the need for international graduates (e.g., Universities UK International, 2020; Li, 2021; Huang & Turner, 2018). In addition, the support network also appears weaker for UK graduates during the job-seeking process; they are less likely to receive help from academic supervisors or university teachers compared to indigenous graduates.

However, the stock of private social capital is higher for UK graduates than for indigenous graduates. More UK graduates have parents with university degrees than indigenous graduates. Also, the professional status of their parents is higher than that of at-home graduates. Around 27 per cent of non-mobile graduates have fathers who are labourers or manual workers. The proportion of those whose mothers are labourers is 35 per cent. In addition, the average annual household income of graduates abroad is significantly higher than that of their peers at home HEIs.

### **13.4 Job seeking channels**

Concerning job search strategies, graduates from indigenous HEIs have more extended channels than graduates abroad. Online recruitment is the most crucial channel for both mobile and non-mobile graduates. However, it seems much more critical for mobile graduates.

The job search strategies of mobile and non-mobile graduates are different. In addition to online recruitment, domestic graduates are more likely to obtain jobs by participating in social recruitment examinations or by using the employment information released by the HEI. By contrast, mobile graduates mostly find jobs through recommendations from family members, relatives, classmates, and friends. Graduates abroad can hardly rely on the employment information released by the universities.

### **13.5 Labour market outcomes**

Regarding their choice of employment destination, mobile graduates prefer foreign-owned or joint venture companies, while non-mobile graduates prefer to go to enterprises and public institutions. However, graduates from both groups choose to go to medium, large or coastal cities, with a low proportion going overseas. It may also be due to data preference failing to reach more of those who stay overseas.

The preference for large cities is mainly due to the labour market segmentation in China. It has been experiencing a period of economic reshuffling, and the labour market is not integrated between urban and rural areas, regions, industries and different ownership types of enterprises. Due to institutional segmentation, the labour market is divided into primary and secondary labour markets. The labour force in the primary labour market can obtain relatively high “segmentation income”, which exists in monetary or non-monetised welfare treatment and social status. The existence of institutional segmentation between urban and rural areas, regions and industries causes the dualistic segmentation of China’s labour market. Once graduates enter the secondary labour market, all kinds of segmentation income cannot be obtained (Lai et al., 2012). As a result, graduates clearly prefer working in the primary labour market, and they prefer large cities, eastern coastal areas, monopoly industries and large enterprises. Highly-educated graduates are reluctant to get stopgaps, resulting in a temporary unemployment problem after graduation.

Graduates in the UK have lower job probability than domestic graduates, which aligns with general assumptions derived from economic and sociological theory. Internationally mobile students face many problems returning to their home countries after graduation, such as a lack of professional networks and (some country-specific) skills. They may lose the advantages of private social networking as they are separate from their family members. At the same time, employers may also have a lower recognition of overseas diplomas. These factors may result in some initial hindrance to employment upon return. This makes the transition from HE to work more difficult for graduates with a UK master's degree, and they perform worse in their initial entry into the labour market. This finding is consistent with many other studies (Di Pietro, 2015; Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), 2009; Janson et al., 2009; Krabel & Flöther, 2014; Orrù, 2014; Støren & Wiers-Jenssen, 2009; Teichler, 2007; Wiers-Jenssen, 2013; Wiers-Jenssen, 2011; Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005).

According to the investigation, the primary reasons for graduates from the UK and indigenous HEIs lie in high competition in the labour market and high expectations for salaries and welfare. Simultaneously, some graduates abroad report missing the golden period of recruitment. The recruitment peak for graduates in China usually occurs between April and October, when UK students have not yet received their graduation certificates (Shi, 2019). This poses some challenges for overseas graduates looking for employment after returning to China.

Other possible explanations regarding the delaying obtaining employment could be, first of all, because of the one-year programme duration, graduates from UK HEIs are generally younger than in domestic universities, with relatively little employment anxiety. The short course duration and low age bring certain disadvantages regarding interview techniques and work experience. In addition, the unfamiliarity with the indigenous employment environment and limited access to recruitment information is also attributed to the delayed transition from education to work (Hao et al., 2016; Singh & Fan, 2021).

Moreover, the existence of employment rate assessment targets in domestic universities puts a certain amount of pressure on graduates, leading them to seek employment before graduation. In contrast, graduates abroad are not under this pressure; some even choose to travel for a while or have a short break before entering the labour market. At the same time, international students tend to have higher salaries and welfare expectations.

However, once graduates abroad have a job, employers may be less biased and sceptical of them. They may have come to appreciate the competence and efficiency of graduates from abroad, which has led to higher average monthly earnings for graduates abroad compared to their counterparts at homegrown HEIs (Hilmer, 2002).

### **13.6 University reputation and employment**

Graduates from prestigious undergraduate and postgraduate HEIs are positively related to higher job probability, job satisfaction and monthly income. Several studies (e.g., Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005) disagree with the findings. As in some countries, Employers may not appreciate overseas institutional prestige as a distinct advantage. However, China ranks local HEIs traditionally; thus, institutional reputation may be more known. However, for those graduates from lesser-known HEIs, the signalling value of degrees may be lessened, leading to difficulty finding jobs immediately after graduation. For graduates emerging from HEIs with less recognition, the degree's capability to signal competence to potential employers may be diminished. This attenuation of perceived value increased challenges for these individuals when seeking employment shortly after completing their academic programs. Research indicates that the prestige of the educational institution can significantly influence employment opportunities after graduation (Brown et al., 2004; Spence, 1973).

When choosing an overseas HEI, it is vital to attend a reputable one that can help achieve high employment rates and monthly wages. More importantly, students can gain quality educational resources to increase their productivity and, therefore, their wages. Meanwhile, the prestigious HEI can bring a more influential alumni network that will benefit future development. Moreover, it may also provide a wealth of extra-curricular activities, and practical programmes can help students build up more human and social capital, enabling them to achieve employment more quickly. Another possible explanation is that universities with famous reputations may have a more substantial "signalling" effect on employers, who can identify and recruit graduates from prestigious universities.

### **13.7 Human capital, social capital and employment**

Regarding demographic factors and academic background, the results show that females are more likely to be employed, but their job satisfaction and monthly wages are lower than those of males. Science and engineering are the fastest to find jobs and

enjoy the highest wage pay without distinguishing different mobile statuses.

This study proposes a new approach to defining human capital based on the skills graduates acquire, which represents a significant innovation. This holistic method allows a more precise evaluation of an individual's human capital. Moving from a model centred purely on years of schooling to one that emphasises skills offers a more comprehensive perspective on human capital, better suited to address real-world complexities. However, the results show that human capital's function in predicting employment outcomes has been weakened since it brings less significant improvement for the increase of the regression models' predictive accuracy. The diminishing significance of human capital in forecasting job prospects may stem from an outdated definition that fails to evolve over time. It is crucial to re-evaluate the importance of human capital within the modern global economic landscape. Recent technological advancements have sparked a significant rethinking of human capital, now seen as a dynamic entity marked by its adaptability, diversity, and continuous growth, as suggested by researchers like Brown et al. (2020) and Keep et al. (2022). The challenge now is for individuals, educators, and policymakers to understand and adapt to this change, ensuring that the value of human capital is not just preserved but redefined for the future.

Graduates with outstanding academic achievement are positively linked to higher job probability and job satisfaction levels, but they tend to have lower monthly salary categories. Scholarship owners enjoy higher job probability and satisfaction; however, it cannot bring high monthly salaries. Moreover, graduates with student leadership skills are positively related to higher job probability and monthly incomes, but their job satisfaction levels are lower than those without leadership experience. Surprisingly it is noted that owners with professional qualifications are inclined to have lower job probability and lower monthly incomes. Simultaneously, the English language certificate number is no longer an advantage in predicting employment. It is negatively related to labour market outcomes. It may be because English certificates or language scores obtained do not represent current foreign language proficiency. The evaluation needs to provide a before-and-after comparison before enrolment and upon graduation.

On the contrary, the study shows that organisational and private social capital contributes more to predicting labour market outcomes, including job probability, satisfaction and monthly income, than human capital. The study further proves that the positive impact of organisational social capital in predicting job probability is

consistent with several Asian studies. Graduates with higher levels of education are expected to achieve employment by using organisational social capital channels rather than private social capital (Brinton, 2000; Lee & Brinton, 1996; Li, 2014). Graduates with internship experience and high-quality career services have higher employment rates but do not bring high wages. Postgraduate education and outstanding organisational social capital are inclined to compensate for the disadvantage of private social capital since the study finds that graduates with lower parental occupational status could still achieve employment more quickly. Nevertheless, they still earn lower monthly salaries than graduates from higher SES. In addition, the regression results show that organisational social capital mobilisation is positively associated with high employment, satisfaction and monthly wages. When measuring social capital, the study thoroughly considers the practical attributes of social capital. It contends that merely knowing someone does not ensure effective interactions, nor does belonging to an organisation automatically confer benefits. Social networks that are positively valued and actively mobilised can be considered social capital, which emerges from social practices. This approach considers the unique attributes of the participants and the varied educational contexts of both mobile and non-mobile students. The study measures social capital by using capital stock and capital mobilisation, which is a new attempt to provide a new idea and direction for future research.

A diploma abroad has beneficial and unfavourable consequences on the labour market. Graduates studying abroad tend to have lower job probability and job satisfaction than their indigenous peers; however, they enjoy higher salaries than non-mobile graduates. The results are consistent with previous findings (e.g., Di Pietro, 2015; Krabel & Flöther, 2014; Støren & Wiers-Jenssen, 2009). When returning home after graduation, internationally mobile students confront various problems, such as a lack of helpful job information, restricted peer connections and professional networks, and issues in establishing rapport with supervisors, which might hinder employment (Støren, 2009; Wu, 2015).

The results show that mobile graduates with scholarship, leadership and professional certificates are more likely to be employed than the non-holders, suggesting the transferability of the acquired skills to the home labour market is not as weak as expected. It contradicts the results of some other studies (e.g., Bratsberg, 2002; Krahn, 2000; Friedberg, 2000). Although internship experience, career services, and the mobilisation of organisational social capital for mobile graduates all positively correlate with job probability, the mean scoring of the evaluation is inferior to those of non-mobile peers. This implies that adequate employment information, career

support, and more internship opportunities can help mobile graduates avoid unemployment dilemmas. Thus, it would be of great value if HEIs could provide more counselling services and applicable work arrangements related to programmes for international students.

Mobile graduates studying business, one of the most prominent groups of ISM, have lower wages than peers in science and social science. However, they enjoy higher job probability than science graduates, and their job satisfaction levels are the highest among different fields of study. It is partly consistent with previous research that business students are most optimistic that their foreign experience translates into improved career opportunities and benefits in moving from HE to work (Janson et al., 2009; Opper, 1991). Regarding academic achievement, graduates with “pass” and “merit” ratings are more rewarded on salaries than their “distinction” grade peers. In part accordance with this, Liwiski (2016) discovered that the pay premium associated with studying abroad is substantial among Polish graduates with lower average grades. Hence, it seems that a master’s study abroad may compensate for poor school performance. In addition, the result also shows the positive role of ISM in narrowing the gender gap. Mobile females enjoy higher job probability and similar wages.

Consistent with past research findings, it is anticipated that mobile graduates would have higher salaries than their non-mobile counterparts (e.g., Kratz & Netz, 2018; Lutter & Schröder, 2016; Poot & Roskrug, 2013). Kratz and Netz (2018) claimed that studying abroad, which has financial, mental, and emotional expenses, signals high skills and productivity (Spence, 1973). After graduates secure a job, employers may be less biased and sceptical towards international students. They may recognise the ability and productivity of overseas graduates, which leads to higher average monthly salaries for international students than domestic graduates. After controlling for demographic, human capital and social capital variables, there is still a significant wage differential between the two groups, which indicates a higher economic return for the group with studying experience in the UK. This wage premium for graduates abroad may also be due to the disproportionate share of overseas graduates working in enterprises invested by foreign capital or joint ventures, which offer higher-than-average wages.

The starting salary level of graduates is, to a certain extent, a proxy for the quality of employment. The analysis above shows inconsistencies in the variables affecting employment opportunities and starting salary levels. This may also be due to the inconsistency between the mechanisms of job attainment and job quality

determination in China's HE labour market during the economic transition period (Meng et al., 2012). The significant segmentation gains from employment in primary labour markets, such as large cities, coastal cities, government and state-owned sectors (or enterprises), and its limited job positions have led to considerable competition for jobs in the primary labour markets (Lai & Meng, 2008). The primary labour market is dominated by employers who set the recruitment requirements, and graduates' bargaining power is weak. In the selection process, apart from the fundamental factors of university reputation, education level and fields of study, employers tend to select graduates with overall solid qualities and a high potential for career development, so university graduates with good academic performance, scholarships, student leadership and part-time work experience are more likely to be favoured by employers. However, some variables that significantly affect job opportunities do not necessarily affect the starting salary of university graduates. Because regardless of the type of enterprise (state-owned or non-state-owned), the starting salary for a new employee is generally set according to the level and type of employment. It is unlikely that a new university graduate will start in a middle or senior position, so those with overall solid qualifications and a high potential for career development will not necessarily have a higher starting salary.

### **13.8 Family cultural, economic, political capital and employment**

Research shows that whether parents possess HE diplomas is positively correlated with the labour market performance of graduates. Graduates whose parents have a university degree have higher job probability, job satisfaction and monthly wages. It suggests that HE qualifications, as institutionalised cultural capital, play a vital role in employment attainment and the upward mobility of social classes between generations (Bourdieu, 1997). In addition, graduates with higher economic capital (parental income) perform better in the labour market. It shows the convertibility between different forms of capital and its intergenerational inheritance and transmission. The middle and upper classes, including government officials, professionals and business owners, are in an advantageous position to acquire professional status due to their possession of cultural, economic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Economic-disadvantaged groups, including labourers and peasants with lower capital stock, thus received fewer education returns.

In addition, family political capital in China is strongly and positively associated with graduates' job attainment and high incomes. Graduates whose fathers were Party cadres, government officials and middle or high-level civil servants had significantly

higher job probability, job satisfaction, and wages than other groups. This result validates the view of scholars such as Lu (2002) that political capital plays a vital role in Chinese society. Parents' political capital can provide opportunities for their children to seek better professional status. In addition, graduates with higher parental income, i.e., higher family economic capital, perform better in the labour market outcomes; they have high job probability, high satisfaction rates and high monthly earnings.

Different forms of capital are convertible and can be inherited and transmitted between generations. The middle and upper classes, including government cadres, professionals and business people, are in an advantageous position in occupational status acquisition due to their possession of cultural, political and economic capital. The working and peasant classes are disadvantaged and marginalised due to their lack of capital. Their occupational status acquisition and upward mobility are at a disadvantage. This social stratification exists not only within a country's HE system but also in transnational HE, as it costs more to study abroad.

### **13.9 Factors related to employment**

In addition to the regression analysis, the study also asked participants to evaluate how vital employment-related factors are when seeking employment. The highest mean of attitude scale for graduates studying in the UK was required skills. Other factors such as institution prestige, diplomas, career services and internships have also received high ratings. However, family background and social networks were rated relatively low. This subjective assessment is not consistent with the results of the regression.

Indigenous graduates scored almost all relevant factors (nine out of ten) lower than those studying abroad. Graduates from home HEIs value diplomas, university reputation, skills, internships and employment services. However, the lowest mean score was 3.28 for family background. Graduates' self-assessments seem not to value family background, but in fact, labour market outcomes are related to parental education, occupational status and family income, with private social capital making a significant contribution to predicting labour market outcomes.

In addition, many unmeasured indicators of employment-related factors, such as luck, illustrate that the employment process is very complex and that a combination of factors influences employment outcomes.

## 14 Limitations and implications for future research

While attempts have been made to evaluate the labour market outcomes and the contribution characteristics as accurately as possible, this study still has some limitations which might negatively impact the quality of its evidence. This chapter discusses these limitations.

Although this study has distributed the questionnaire as widely as possible regarding the sample selection, the sample size needs to be further expanded. The research data failed to cover Chinese international students working abroad after graduation. In future studies, more participants engaged in international work should be covered. Studies on their characteristics, employment status and wages need to be focused on.

Although the study results show that after controlling for demographic, human capital and social capital variables, there is still a significant wage differential between the two groups, with higher economic returns for students abroad than their peers from home HEIs, however, it has not been possible to prove whether the wage premium is due to the studying abroad experience or family SES, as students abroad come from higher social origins. More research is needed in the future to confirm whether there is a causal relationship between studying abroad and the wage premium. Furthermore, although studies have shown that international students from UK HEIs have higher social origins than home students, they have not provided an in-depth analysis of the role of the ISM effect in the development of social inequality. More research is needed to examine the mechanisms explaining the outcomes we observe. In order to eventually answer the question of whether ISM increases or decreases social inequality, the perspective of social selectivity and the perspective of effect heterogeneity need to be discussed in conjunction.

In addition, the measurement of social capital still needs further exploration, and this study uses capital stock and capital mobilisation to measure social capital. However, the best measurement for international students still needs to be clarified and needs to be further discussed to find a better solution.

Much of the existing research focuses on the performance of graduates entering the labour market for the first time. However, what is employers' perception when they hire international students? What skills do they value more in recruitment? Future research needs to explore from the employer's perspective. In addition, there is a great need for data tracking of international students abroad to evaluate their performance

years after graduation in the labour market and how the mobile learning experience influences them in the long run.

Limited by the scope, several significant issues that emerged during the analysis are not further discussed in this study. However, future research on these issues may help us understand the related topics.

The post-Covid era will continue in the coming years, with many students abandoning their intention to study abroad or complete their studies through online learning. Will these students develop fewer skills, and will these skills be able to adapt to the changes in today's globalised labour market? Will they earn less than graduates with international mobile experience in previous years? Have employers' skills requirements for recruitment changed in response, and will they be more biased or more accepting of international students with online education? In the post-epidemic era, exploring who benefited from studying abroad and who did not remain a valuable topic for social stratification studies, education policy-makers, and mobile individuals. It will provide a more precise analysis of whether the labour market effects of studying abroad depend on factors such as the gender, academic achievement or socioeconomic status of graduates. These analyses could lead to a greater understanding of whether study-abroad opportunities reduce or exacerbate social inequalities in modern societies.

## **15 Implications for individuals, HEIs and policy-makers**

After summarising this study's findings, this chapter provides implications for Chinese international students, HEIs and future policy.

Individuals studying abroad should actively engage in college activities and societies to expand their social networks and cultural adaptability. Planning their career paths according to the situation is essential, and they should avoid being overly ambitious. Moreover, it is vital to broaden their employment channels and enhance information sharing among friends and classmates. In addition, choosing a highly reputable university is crucial for international students to achieve high salaries and job probability. Prestigious universities can provide students with high-quality educational resources to equip them with skills and enhance their productivity. Also, rich extra-curricular activities and practical programmes can help students accumulate more social capital and enrich "proper" social networking, enabling them to achieve

employment more quickly.

International students should understand and adapt to the domestic job search environment in advance to prepare for employment. The prime time for recruitment in China is in autumn and spring. However, UK graduates receive their diplomas six months later than local students, making it difficult to track the timing of campus recruitment. Therefore, international students need to plan and broaden their recruitment channels. Moreover, it is essential to follow domestic recruitment positions, industry distribution, salaries, city quotes and other information in advance. Pay attention to information on companies' official websites and recruitment information, as well as job search websites, are helpful for returnees as well. They should strengthen information sharing among relatives, friends and classmates and enrich CVs and internship experience by participating in internship placement programmes with companies during the holidays.

The visa restrictions and the short course duration make it difficult for international students to develop formal working experience or internship opportunities. Thus, it is even harder to prove their international qualifications in the highly competitive home labour market, which shows the potential value of work experience in UK master's programmes. More practical activities and work placement related to the courses should be provided by the HEIs. In response to the weak career guidance services, UK HEIs should improve the guidance services for international students in career service centres and set up exceptional tutors to conduct research and gain an in-depth understanding of the Chinese labour market and employers' needs. At the same time, they should strengthen their knowledge and experience of recruitment processes in different countries, expand recruitment channels for international students, and provide them with good career planning guidance and employment information support.

In addition, the UK government should also strengthen the monitoring and macro-regulation of the education market for inward international study. The market may lead to vicious competition if too much emphasis is placed on mutual competition and economic interests between countries, institutions and individuals. We should value the cultural and academic exchange and continue promoting peace and understanding. The tendency of the market to rationalise may lead to many issues, including uneven quality of education, education advertisements that do not live up to their name, and education certificates obtained by students that are not accredited. Some HEIs may become obsessed with the size of the student population at the expense of the quality

of education. The market management of cross-border HE is more complex than that within the country. It is essential to guarantee the rights, safety and development of students studying abroad relying on the market mechanism and macro management and regulation of the governments of both the sending and receiving countries.

The introduction of a full-fee policy in China opens the door to HE abroad for families from the middle class and above. The higher the tuition fee, the higher the financial level required. The impact of cross-border HE on social stratification may be even more severe. It is not conducive to national talent development and social mobility if we only rely on market logic and the law of value as the only regulating lever. For this reason, the Chinese government should also strengthen macro-regulation to regulate and formulate related laws and regulations. It should strike to manage the problems, especially for the inadequate, unreliable and asymmetrical information in the market of study abroad education, and pay attention to the risks, financial burdens and safety issues brought about by studying abroad.

With their global vision, cross-cultural communication skills and international academic community networks, returnees of international students play an essential role in promoting the development of disciplines, talent training, international exchange and the internationalisation of HE in China. In response to the many problems of employment services and the development of international students returning home, the government and related organisations should provide employment support to help them give full play to their strengths and realise their self-worth.

The Chinese government should strengthen the coordination and cooperation among various departments and strictly control the implementation of policies to practice the settlement and resettlement of international students returning to China. It should also accelerate the construction of channels for the release of relevant policies and use influential overseas media and Chinese media to regularly release the demand for talent introduction and expand the influence of policies to attract more international students to return to China. At the same time, the government should also speed up the construction of a network-sharing platform for international students' employment information. On the one hand, it can distribute timely recruitment information and opinions and suggestions from employers to alleviate the information asymmetry in the employment process and provide an effective vehicle for effective communication between international students and employers. On the other hand, international students can also use the platform to collect problems and give feedback

to direct the planning of talent introduction methods and management policies according to their demands. In addition, the government should significantly optimise the service system for introducing and managing international students and provide good life and job security services after their return to China. For example, Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Guangzhou Province, and Shenzhen adopted “One-stop service windows for the introduction of talents” online to standardise the process of introducing talents, including talent identification, talent policy consultation, household registration, security and other services, which are effective platforms to update information on the policies and the implementation of essential services for the introduction of talents (Jiangmen Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, 2022; Jintai News, 2020; Sina Finance, 2021).

The Chinese government should continue to maintain the excellent situation of stable economic development and make more tremendous efforts to attract high-level overseas intellectuals to return and contribute to China’s economic and social development. It should continue to vigorously develop its economy and increase investment in science and technology innovation to enhance the economic benefits of the return of overseas intelligence. At the same time, it should also focus on enhancing returnee talent’s social and psychological returns. In formulating return policies, it should respect talents more, further optimise the talent ecological environment, and help overseas talents crack the problem of social adaptation after returning to China.

## **16 Conclusion**

The decision to study abroad is rational, driven by a combination of supply and demand for education and resource allocation, with push and pull factors in both sending and receiving countries. Europe and North America still possess the world’s quality education resources, while developing countries are marginalised and located at a disadvantaged position in the education trade. However, this situation started to be reshaped with the rise of the Chinese economy. China, the world’s most significant sending country for international students, has become a primary receiving country for ISM in Asia, even globally.

Meanwhile, the “reverse migration” phenomenon has emerged. The number of returnees back to China with international learning experience is expanding rapidly. The tightening of immigration restrictions in the UK, problems getting citizenship and work permits, and cultural incompatibility are the obstacles that international

students encounter when seeking employment overseas upon graduation. On the other hand, the rise of China's economy and various entrepreneurship and resettlement policies drive students to return to China for employment. In addition, cultural barriers and the wish to stay with family members are also significant factors that drive mobile graduates to return.

The rapid expansion of the returnee population has also increased competition in the Chinese labour market. As studying abroad becomes increasingly popularised, the number of people with notable credentials increases. The high career aspirations challenge international students returning to China for employment. The experience of studying abroad indeed improves language skills, intercultural competence and adaptability, according to previous studies. Nevertheless, the results show that the number of English language certificates negatively affects labour market outcomes. Moreover, the role of human capital has been weakened as organisational social capital has become more significant in predicting job probability and monthly income.

A diploma from abroad has positive as well as negative effects on labour market outcomes, suggesting that the study abroad experience is a complex phenomenon. It is not easy to draw general conclusions about how overseas education is rewarded in the labour market. When international students return to their home countries after graduation with limited employment information, internship experience, and high employment expectations, these may hinder them from obtaining desired jobs and lead them to temporary unemployment. A possible explanation for the wage premium is the recognition by employers of the competence and productivity of students abroad after recruitment. Also, China is still under a period of labour market transition in HE, and there is some variability in the mechanisms for achieving employment and wages. In addition, the wage premium may partly be attributed to the higher origins of international students.

Internationally mobile students should actively engage in college activities and societies to expand their social networks and improve their English proficiency. It is essential to plan their career and not be overly ambitious. Broadening employment channels and enhancing information sharing among friends and classmates are also effective ways to increase employment information. At the same time, UK HEIs should set up employment placement schemes with academic programmes and further improve the career guidance services for international students. Tutors should be set up to conduct research and gain an in-depth understanding of the Chinese labour market, employers' needs, and expanding recruitment channels to provide

international students with adequate career planning guidance and employment information support.

The Chinese government should strengthen cooperation among various departments and strictly control the implementation of policies. Meanwhile, it should accelerate the construction of a platform for international students to share employment information, alleviate the information asymmetry in the employment process, and provide effective communication between international students and employers.

ISM's continuous growth and development have brought about mutual competition and economic benefits among countries, institutions and individuals. However, we cannot ignore the value orientation of cultural and academic exchange and the significance of promoting peace and understanding. As studying abroad education becomes increasingly industrialised, educational certificates become a positional commodity. The tendency of the market to rationalise may lead to a patchwork of educational quality, educational advertisements that do not live up to their name, and HEIs that are obsessed with the size of their student base at the expense of the quality of education. The market management of cross-border HE is more complex than that within the country. Suppose it relies solely on market mechanisms without the macro-management monitoring of the governments. In that case, it will sink into chaos. Thus, it is vital to conduct legal and regulatory construction and policy formulation and implementation by the governments of sending and receiving countries. Implementing joint efforts to protect the rights and safety of internationally mobile students, promote the ISM worldwide, and help them develop their strengths and realise their self-worth.

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire

The survey will ask some questions related to career plans and employment situation of Chinese postgraduate master's students who have graduated since 2016 or are currently registered at UK or Chinese universities. It takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

All answers from this survey are for use in this research only, and your name and other personal information will never be used. All reports will be based on aggregated results and so no individuals or institutions will be identifiable. Information about our data protection policy is available at <http://www.dur.ac.uk/ig/dp/>

Completion of this survey is voluntary. By responding to this survey you are agreeing to your anonymous responses and data being used as part of this research.

Please answer the questions with a tick or filling the blanks with related information. Thanks for your help!

**Part One: the following questions are related to your job-seeking process or job prospects. The term "postgraduate study" refers to your first Master's degree obtained typically by a combination of coursework and thesis/dissertation. The questions about your job refer to the first job after your first master's study.**

Have you obtained your first Master's degree yet?

- (1) Yes, I graduated successfully and obtained my Master's degree.
- (2) No, I'm currently registered in a Master's programme.
- (3) No, I didn't obtain a Master's degree.

**【NOTE】** If the answer=(1), continue answering question A1; if the answer=(2), skip to questions B1 to B10; if the answer=(3), the available reason options will be popped up and after that, skip to A2.

I dropped out because of financial reason.

I dropped out because of other reasons.

I was not able to pass.

I had a good job opportunity before I graduated.

Other reason (please specify\_\_)

A1 Which year did you graduate in?

2016

2017

2018

2019

A2 After your master's study, did you carry on your education or a training programme?

Yes

No

【NOTE】 If the answer=Yes, skip to A5; if the answer=No, continue answering A3.

A3 After your master's study you

(1) Found a job or were in paid employment

(2) Were not in paid employment, but looking for work

(3) Were not in paid employment, and not looking for work

(4) Others (please specify the reason)

【NOTE】 If the answer=(1), skip to answer question A6 to A17; if the answer= (2), continue answering question A4 and then skip to answer question B4 to B10; if the answer= (3), continue answering question A4 and then skip to Part Two section; if the answer=(4), skip to Part Two section.

A4 The main reason that you did not have a job with payment was that/ was:

Just graduated and missed the golden period of recruitment.

Plan to get some rest or travelling

Other objective factors such as domestic calamity, looking after sick parents

High competition in the labour market

High work expectations (for example salary and welfare)

Others

A5 The reason for carrying on your education or a training programme was:

Being ambitious to pursue advanced knowledge

Performing potential in academic study

Avoiding entering into the labour market

Awarding by scholarship

Others

A6 To what extent did you use the following job-seeking channels? Select from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
The employment information released by university					

Recruitment fair					
Online recruitment (e.g. companies' official website, third-party information platform)					
Job-seeking agency					
Recommendation from family members and relatives					
Recommendation from classmates and friends					
Internship or social practice					
Social recruitment examination					
Recommendation from supervisor					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

A7 To what extent did the following people help you in your job-seeking? Select from “not helpful” (1) to “very helpful” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
Immediate family					
Relatives					
Friends of your parents					
Supervisor or teacher at the university					
Friends					
Classmates					
Friends of your friends					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

A8 To what extent did you depend on the following elements in your job-seeking process? Select from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
Social networking					
Major					
Diploma					
Fortune					
Academic achievement					
The reputation of the university					
Career guidance service					
Acquired skills					
Working/ internship experience					

Family background					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

A9 Please rate the employment guidance services provided by your postgraduate university. Select from “not sufficient” (1) to “very sufficient” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
The designing and making of CV					
The guidance of the skills in the interview					
The guidance of career planning					
Psychological guidance					
The explanation of employment situation					
The releasing of employment information					
Others – specify and rate					

A10 When did you find your first job (sign the contract with the employer) after the postgraduate studies?

Before graduation

Six months after graduation

Six to twelve months

More than 1 year

A11 What is the employer type of the job?

Government/Party

Public institution

State-owned/State-controlled enterprise

Private enterprise/ Individually-owned Business

Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture

Self-employed

Individual enterprise of your family or relatives

Others

A12 The location of your first company is:

Municipality directly under the central government in China

Seaside city of eastern part of China

Provincial capital city in China

Prefecture-level city in China

County or countryside in China

City overseas

Others

A13 The above location is:

The city of your university

The provincial capital or prefecture-level city in the province of your hometown (including municipality directly under the central government if your hometown is one)

The county-level city in the province of your hometown

Other provincial capital city or municipality directly under the central government

Prefecture-level or county-level city in other provinces

Others

A14 The primary reason for choosing the above location is:

Attractive talents policies for graduates

Expansive development platform (e.g. more promotion opportunity)

High salary

Family members living there

Partners or lovers living there

Others

A15 The initial salary of your job was:

Below 5000 yuan

5001-10000 yuan

10001-15000 yuan

Above 15001 yuan

A16 Please score for your satisfaction of first job from 1 to 5 (1 means not satisfied at all, while 5 means very satisfied)

1	2	3	4	5
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B1 Your current year of Master's study is:

First

Second

Third and above

1-year postgraduate study in the UK

B2 Your plan after graduation is:

(1) To find a job

(2) To carry on my education or a training programme

(3) Not known

(4) Others \_\_ (please specify the reason)

【NOTE】 If the answer=(1)(3)(4), skip to answer B4 to B10; if the answer= (2), continue answering the question B3 to B10.

B3 The main reason for choosing to carry on your study or a training programme is:

Being ambitious to pursue advanced knowledge

Performing potential in academic study

Avoiding entering into the labour market

Awarding by scholarship

Others

**Question B4 to B11 is asking about when you come to look for a job,**

B4 To what extent will/are you use/using the following job-seeking channels? Select from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
The employment information released by university					
Recruitment fair					
Online recruitment (e.g., companies' official website, third-party information platform)					
Job-seeking agency					
Recommendation from family members and relatives					
Recommendation from classmates and friends					
Internship or social practice					
Social recruitment examination					
Recommendation from supervisor					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

B5 To what extent will/are the following people help/helping you in your job-seeking? Select from “not helpful” (1) to “very helpful” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
Immediate family					
Relatives					
Friends of your parents					
Supervisor or teacher at the university					

Friends					
Classmates					
Friends of your friends					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

B6 To what extent will/are you depend/depending on the following elements in your job-seeking process? Select from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
Social networking					
Major					
Diploma					
Fortune					
Academic achievement					
The reputation of the university					
Career guidance service					
Acquired skills					
Working/ internship experience					
Family background					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

B7 Please rate the employment guidance services provided by your postgraduate university. Select from “not sufficient” (1) to “very sufficient” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
The designing and making of CV					
The guidance of the skills in the interview					
The guidance of career planning					
Psychological guidance					
The explanation of employment situation					
The releasing of employment information					
Others – specify and rate					

B8 To what extent do/are you plan/planning to find a job in the following employers? Select from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
Government/Party, public institution					
State-owned/State-controlled enterprise					
Private enterprise/ Individually-owned					

Business					
Enterprise invested by Foreign Capital or joint venture					
Self-employed					
Individual enterprise of your family or relatives					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

B9 To what extent do/are you plan/planning to work in the following places? Select from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
The city where family members live					
The provincial capital or prefecture-level city in the province of your hometown (including municipality directly under the central government if your hometown is one)					
The county-level city in the province of your hometown					
Other provincial capital city or municipality directly under the central government					
The prefecture-level city or county-level city in other provinces of your hometown					
Seaside city of eastern part of China					
City in the UK					
City in other foreign countries					
Others – specify and rate how likely					

B10 Your expected monthly salary is:

Below 5000 yuan

5001-10000 yuan

10001-15000 yuan

15001-20000 yuan

20001 yuan above

B11 To what extent do you think your postgraduate study would fulfil your career prospect?

Select from “not at all” (1) to “very much” (5)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

**Part Two: the following questions are about the university background and experience. It will be answered by all the participants. The term “postgraduate study” refers to your first Master’s degree obtained typically by a combination of coursework and thesis/dissertation.**

The institution of your undergraduate study (or equivalent) was in:

- China
- The UK
- The USA
- Canada
- Australia
- Japan
- Korea
- Other country

The type of the institution of your undergraduate study (or equivalent) was:

**【NOTE】** If the answer of the previous question is “China”, the following options will be popped up.

- “Project 985” university
- “Project 211” university
- Ordinary public university
- Ordinary private university
- Independent college
- Three-year college
- Others

**【NOTE】** If the answer of the previous question is “The UK”, the following options will be popped up.

- The G5 group (Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, UCL, LSE)
- Russell group university except for the G5 group
- Non-Russell group university
- don’t know \_\_ (please indicate the name of the institution)

**【NOTE】** If the answer of the previous question is “The USA”, the following options will be popped up.

- Ivy League university
- Non-Ivy League university
- don’t know \_\_ (please indicate the name of the institution)

**【NOTE】** If the answer of the previous question is “Canada, Australia, Japan, Korea, Other country”, the following question will be popped up.

The name of the institution of your undergraduate study (or equivalent) was:

The institution of your postgraduate study was/is in:

China

The UK

The type of the university of your postgraduate study is/was:

**【NOTE】** If the answer of the previous question is “China”, the following options will be popped up.

“Project 985” university

“Project 211” university

Ordinary public university

Ordinary private university

Others

**【NOTE】** If the answer of the previous question is “The UK”, the following options will be popped up.

The G5 group (Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, UCL, LSE)

Russell group university except for the G5 group

Non-Russell group university

don't know \_(please indicate the name of the institution)

The field of your postgraduate major is/ was:

Business, management and economics

Humanity and social science

Science, engineering and Technology

Others

The rank of your postgraduate study is/was:

(1) Top 25%

(2) 25%-50%

(3) 50%-75%

(4) Below 25%

(5) don't know (for the students from Chinese universities)

(6) The university didn't release the rank (for the students from UK universities)

**【NOTE】** If the answer=(6), answer the next question; otherwise skip to C2.

Your ranking of graduation was:

(1) Distinction

- (2) Merit
- (3) Pass
- (4) Not pass
- (5) Haven't graduated yet.

C1 To what extent would the following factors motivate you to pursue a master's degree in the UK or at indigenous HEIs? "not influential" (1) to "very influential" (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
Programme length					
Economic development in the (destination) country					
Reputation of the university					
Available of educational opportunity					
Expenses					
Staying close to family					
Adaptability to education and career development					
Others					

Have/will you considered/consider jobs in the UK or other overseas countries if possible?  
To what extent do the following factors prevent you from finding jobs in the UK? "Not influential" (1) to "very influential" (5).

	1	2	3	4	5
Difficulties in getting a work permit					
Loneliness, being far away from family and friends					
Less work opportunities for the international students					
Language barrier					
Culture differences					
Major and development prospect					
Others					

To what extent do you think your postgraduate study would fulfil your career prospect?  
Select from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (5)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

During your postgraduate study,

	1 Yes	2 No
Have you ever been awarded by any scholarship?		
Are/were you a student cadre/ student representative?		
Have/ had you ever participated in any student organisation?		
Were you ever employed as an intern or part-time?		
Have you ever acquired any professional certificates/qualifications (including computer, accounting, law etc.)?		

Have you acquired the following English language certificates:

	Yes	No
CET-4		
CET-6		
TEM-4		
TEM-8		
IELTS band above 6.5		
TOEFL above 80		

**Part Three: the following questions are about your personal information and family background. All the answers are for use in the research only. But if you feel uncomfortable in answering any question, just ignore that one and keep answering the other questions. The terms “father, mother and parents” include natural parents, adoptive parents, step-parents or guardians who have brought you up.**

Your gender is:

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Are you a member of the Communist Party of China?

Yes

No

Does your father (as defined at the beginning of this section) has any higher education qualifications, such as a degree, diploma or certificate of higher education?

Yes

No

Don't know

Your father's profession is:

Middle or senior managers  
Professionals (such as researchers, doctors, lawyers or engineers)  
Government officials or civil servants  
Self-employed workers  
Common workers  
Laid-off workers or unemployed  
Farmers or labourers  
Others  
Don't know

Does your mother (as defined at the beginning of this section) has any higher education qualifications, such as a degree, diploma or certificate of higher education?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

Your mother's profession is:

Middle or senior managers  
Professionals (such as researchers, doctors, lawyers or engineers)  
Government officials or civil servants  
Self-employed workers  
Common workers  
Laid-off workers or unemployed  
Farmers or labourers  
Others  
Don't know

Your parents' annual income is around:

Below 50000 yuan  
50001-100000 yuan  
100001-150000 yuan  
150001-200000 yuan  
200001-250000 yuan  
250001-300000 yuan  
Above 300001 yuan


If you would like to receive a lay summary of the research, please leave your contact email here:






Thank you.

## Appendix 2: Ethical Approval

Ethical Approval: EDU-2019-07-15T19:31:39-kxgf57

1 1

 Ethics <no-reply@sharepointonline.com>  
To: HU, XIANAN  
Cc: ED-ETHICS E.D.; GORARD, STEPHEN A.C.

      
Fri 2019-07-26 17:31

Please do not reply to this email.

Dear Xianan,

The following project has received ethical approval:

Project Title: *Higher Education Aspirations and Outcomes: A Comparative Study of Postgraduate Students Seeking Degrees in the UK or in China*;

Start Date: 22 July 2019;

End Date: 20 November 2019;


Reference: EDU-2019-07-15T19:31:39-kxgf57


Date of ethical approval: 26 July 2019.


Please be aware that if you make any significant changes to the design, duration or delivery of your project, you should contact [ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk](mailto:ed.ethics@durham.ac.uk) for advice, as further consideration and approval may then be required.

Ethical Approval: EDU-2019-12-03T17:27:32-kxgf57

1

 Flag for follow up.

 Ethics <no-reply@sharepointonline.com>  
收件人: HU, XIANAN  
抄送: ED-ETHICS E.D.; GORARD, STEPHEN A.C.

      
Thu 2019-12-05 19:22

Please do not reply to this email.

Dear Xianan,

The following project has received ethical approval:

Project Title: *Higher Education Aspirations and Outcomes: A Comparative Study of Postgraduate Students Seeking Degrees in the UK or in China*;

Start Date: 05 December 2019;

End Date: 22 January 2020;

Reference: EDU-2019-12-03T17:27:32-kxgf57

Date of ethical approval: 05 December 2019.

Please be aware that if you make any significant changes to the design, duration or delivery of your project, you should contact your department ethics representative for advice, as further consideration and approval may then be required.