


ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>
 Vol. 02 No. 01. Jan-March 2024. Page# 121-137
 Print ISSN: [3006-2497](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20504441) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20504441)
 Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20504441)
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20504441>



Analyzing the Impact of Higher Education Internationalization on Learning Community Development in Balochistan

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ABSTRACT

This Quantitative study explores the relationship between the internationalization of higher education and development of learning community in the context of Balochistan province of Pakistan. The universities' priority for internationalization is to link between curriculum, academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, student engagement, intercultural communication, academic participation and sense of belonging. The global integration of universities in Balochistan is growing and already the universities are connected with other academic networks of the world, online seminars and international collaboration and intercultural learning opportunities, but how these elements are used to support learning communities has not yet been explored. This study was of quantitative survey type with a sample of 210 students of Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, Quetta, Alhamd Islamic University Quetta, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta and University of Balochistan, Quetta. An internationalization and selected indicators of learning community development measurement using structured questionnaire were employed. The data were analyzed by SPSS, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. The findings show that the internationalization practices are positively related to academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, student engagement, intercultural communication, academic participation and sense of belonging. The results suggest that the internationalized academic practices can enhance inclusive, interactive, and collaborative learning climate in HEIs of Quetta.

Keywords: *Higher Education Internationalization; Learning Community; Student Engagement; Cultural Diversity; Collaborative Learning; Balochistan.*

1. Introduction

Internationalization in higher education institutions is trending as significant changes in contemporary university systems. In today's globalized world, universities are no longer judged solely in terms of local enrollment, production of degrees or teaching of disciplines. They are more and more evaluated through international collaboration, internationalization of the curriculum, international research networks, student mobility, digital academic exchange, and the ability to educate students in the multicultural academic and professional contexts. The internationalization is defined as a wide policy and institutional framework that integrates global and intercultural aspects into teaching, research and service by universities (De Wit & Altbach, 2021). This is a worldwide phenomenon that shows the transformation of the nature of knowledge production. Contemporary universities are estimated to provide learning environments that empower students to experience a variety of cultures, to involve in evaluation of knowledge traditions, to partake in collaborative investigation and to grow academic characteristics that are associated to their indigenous and global communities.

The development of learning communities is also in connection with internationalization. A learning community is an academic setting in which students and teachers engage in common learning, academic engagement, peer assistance, problem solving together, sharing knowledge, and feeling a part of the community. International higher education enhances these aspects by bringing opportunities to students to meet to different ideas and practices. Internationalization at home, as described by Beelen and Jones (2015), is an approach that expands students' experiences of international and intercultural learning beyond physical travel to include in their home campus environments. This is significant as the majority of developing nation students cannot take part in study abroad courses. Internationalized curricula, online guest lectures, international case studies, intercultural group work, digital collaborative learning, and these and similar strategies can facilitate the building of globally connected learning communities, even in the face of internationalization. While internationalization has been a challenge, it is not impossible to build learning communities that are connected across the globe through internationalized curricula, online guest lectures, international case studies, intercultural group work, digital collaborative learning, and similar strategies.

Internationalization has been put on the policy agenda in South Asia but is not equally implemented across the board. Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Nepalese and Pakistani universities have increased their international connections, foreign-funded initiatives, academic collaboration across the border and online classes. However, this is still an area where there are obstacles, including lack of funding, the strength of institutional international offices, visa restrictions, the uneven levels of English-language proficiency, mobility of students, and the integration of global content into the regular classroom curriculum. Internationalization is commonly a process seen as a memorandum of understanding or as faculty exchange rather than as a process centered on the student's journey that will change the way students learn (Watabe & Ota., 2021). South Asian institutions often approach internationalization as a memorandum of understanding or faculty exchange process, but not as a process that will transform the learning journey of students. This leaves a gap between formal internationalization policy and development of learning communities. Internationalization is not a reality if it does not have an impact on students' academic engagement, intercultural interaction, cooperative learning and belonging (Cheung, 2021).

Pakistan's journey towards internationalization of education has been a gradual one. The basis of the Higher Education Commission encouraged restructurings in staff and faculty development, foreign grants, research partnership, quality assurance, and international academic connections. However, Zakaria et al. (2016) remarked that the internationalization initiatives in Pakistan have focused on student mobility, foreign qualification schemes, international collaboration and policy initiatives to link Pakistani universities and higher education systems with international ones. Recent scholarship also noted that Pakistan is still striving to gain international visibility via research collaboration and foreign-funded projects and regional academic engagement. However, the impact of such efforts at the student level is not as well understood. A space for the Pakistani universities to sign agreements and receive international students or host international events for students does not guarantee that the students will always find the internationalization in the form of better interaction with the class, cultural differences, collaborative learning, sharing of knowledge or feeling like a part of the international community. The situation takes a turn for the worse in Balochistan. The universities of Quetta, like University of Balochistan, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Alhamd Islamic University and Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences cater students of different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, rural and urban. This internal diversity

provides natural conditions to develop learning communities, but it also needs to be supported by institutional support, inclusive pedagogy, and exposure to larger academic cultures. The Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Balochistan are sometimes challenged by inadequate provision of resources, poor linkages with international academic communities, technology deficits in the digital world, and lesser exposure to foreign academic communities as compared to larger cities' universities. Internationalization might happen in the curriculum content, online seminars, co-operation between faculty members, research culture and intercultural classroom practice, but not necessarily via mobility.

Higher education internationalization in Balochistan is therefore important both academically and from a policy perspective. Internationalization can lead to more effective learning communities and can be applied to enhance academic interaction, collaboration, cultural awareness, knowledge sharing, academic participation, sense of belonging, academic engagement and intercultural communication. When the effect is not significant, institutions might have to change the approach of internationalization from an administrative term to one that is student-centred. The present research explores the linkage between internationalization of higher education and development of learning community among students of four Universities of Quetta.

Internationalization in Higher Education Institutions is becoming more prevalent in Balochistan through the involvement in academic networks, online events, curriculum changes and institutional partnerships but the impact of these practices on building student-learning communities is yet to be fully understood. The impact of many internationalization activities can be restricted to administrative, rather than classroom, aspects, which means that they may not affect academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, student engagement, intercultural communication, academic participation or sense of belonging. This study fills this empirical gap by investigating the relationship between higher education internationalization and development of learning community in Quetta based Universities.

The study is aimed to analyze the relationship between Internationalization and the development of learning community in selected HEIs of Balochistan by exploring students perceptions in Quetta based universities, evaluating the practices of Internationalization and the key dimensions of learning community such as academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing and students engagement in relation to internationalization and development of learning community in HEIs of Balochistan, particularly in terms of intercultural communication and academic participation, and students sense of belonging.

2. Literature Review

Internationalization is now moving away from a mobility-based focus to embracing a whole institution approach, covering all aspects of teaching and learning, the curriculum, research, institutional partnerships and student experience. Internationalization involves the embedding of international, intercultural and global components in the purpose and function of higher education, as explained by Knight (2012). Hudzik and Stohl (2012) takes the idea of internationalization further to a comprehensive internationalization which should be an integral part of institutions rather than be a peripheral process with one office. In the same way, De Wit and Altbach (2021) point out that internationalization is now a key topic in higher education reform, but with various connotations in different parts of the world and in different universities. The viewpoints demonstrate that the number of agreements and exchange programs is not the only indicator of internationalization; it can also be measured as the number of students who feel the academic and social impacts of internationalization on campus.

Internationalization at home is especially important in countries where there is a limited amount of outward mobility. The definition of internationalization at home by Beelen and Jones (2015) is defined as “the intentional embedding of international and intercultural aspects into the formal and informal curriculum for all students in the domestic learning environment”. The previous researchers Leask (2015) also make the case for internationalized curriculum for students to be equipped for interaction with global knowledge, differing viewpoints and intercultural professional environments. Similarly, study points to the need for constant monitoring and review of internationalization at home as institutions may become international without changing the way teaching and learning is conducted at home. Internationalization can be integrated into daily learning activities such as group work, stories in the content of the curriculum, intercultural interaction, online learning and discussion in class (Robson, 2018).

The development of learning communities and interaction, belonging, and shared academic participation have strong ties. According to Tinto (2012), the success of students requires "conditions within the institution which promote engagement, integration, and meaningful participation. Learning communities' foster relationships with peers, shared problem-solving and tenacity by providing students with opportunities to learn from and alongside one another. Cultural diversity has the potential to enrich the learning community if student support is provided so that they can engage across difference in internationalized higher education. Campus interaction is influential on the domestic and international student experience, as belonging and meaningful campus interaction has been shown to have an impact (Glass & Westmont, 2014). They argue that diversity does not necessarily lead to learning benefits, and that this needs to be done intentionally by creating connections between students through explicit academic and social encounters.

Research also suggests that internationalization may impact collaborative learning and knowledge exchange. Peers, classroom communication and an institution's commitment to intercultural contact play a vital role in shaping experiences of international students as noted (Montgomery, 2010). But culturally diverse classrooms provide opportunities for increased thinking, and this must be scaffolded (Volet & Jones, 2012). When tasks are designed or supported in a cross-cultural group work, Mittelmeier et al. (2018) note, learning benefits and tensions can arise. Based on this literature, it is possible to infer that internationalization can enhance the learning communities only if it is supported by inclusive teaching and collaborative learning structures and by active participation, and not symbolically in the form of global content. Engagement of students is also a key aspect of developing a learning community. Internationalized classrooms can help gain engagement by allowing the bringing into the classroom of local knowledge and related global debates as well as by helping students to understand that their academic work can contribute to broader knowledge networks. Jones et al. (2016) believe that global and local internationalization should be integrated to facilitate students' understanding of international issues in relation to their local context. Deardorff (2011) identifies intercultural competence as a process that takes place, consisting of attitudes, knowledge, skills, and reflection. At the university level, intercultural competence fosters respectful communication, active listening, perspective taking, and problem solving in an interdependent manner. These capacities are applicable to Balochistan where students are already diverse in their language and culture, and could potentially reap benefits from structured connections to the global and local contexts.

There is a limited number of studies that have been conducted on internationalization of Higher Education in Pakistan, which are primarily related to policy, mobility and research cooperation. After the establishment of Higher Education Commission, Zakaria et al. (2016) note, Pakistan's

internationalization programme has accelerated, and has featured foreign scholarships, links with other countries and policies to increase international student numbers. Zainab et al. (2019) analyzed perception of international student mobility in Pakistan and highlighted that the positive and negative experiences of international students are influenced by institutional support, academic motives and student expectations. Facing these hurdles, Alam et al. (2023) also believe that Pakistan has been lagging in internationalizing its capacity and it suffers from issues like brain drain, economic challenges, and lack of institutional preparedness. These studies are valuable but there is a scope of the student-centered quantitative research on the impact of internationalization on the development of learning community within the framework of Pakistan Universities.

A particular attention should be given to the Balochistan context as the structural conditions of the regional universities are different from the universities in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. Internationalization in Quetta is perhaps less tangible in the form of physical mobility, but more tangible in the form of academic internationalization (in curriculum, seminars, research exposure and institutional partnership). The benefits of internationalization in academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, engagement, intercultural communication, academic participation, sense of belonging are suggested in the existing literature, which are however dependent on institutional resources and pedagogical implementation. Thus, this study treats the learning community development indicators as dependent variables and higher education internationalization as the independent variables.

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework places internationalization of higher education as an independent variable related to the learning community development and its related dimensions. Internationalization practices encompass internationalized curriculum, international academic interaction, digital global exposure, intercultural activities and institutional academic collaboration. The practices are expected to be positively related to academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, student engagement, intercultural communication, academic participation and sense of belonging among students in higher education institutions of Balochistan.

3. Research Methodology

The present study employed Quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between internationalization of Higher education and development of learning community in Balochistan. The target population included the students enrolled in higher education programs in the University of Balochistan, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Alhamd Islamic University Quetta and Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences. The number of students analyzed were 210. A structured questionnaire was designed based on the study variables and contained the items related to higher education internationalization, learning community developing, academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, student engagement, intercultural communication, academic participation, and sense of belonging. The data were analyzed by SPSS procedures such as descriptive statistics, frequency and percentage distribution, mean score, standard deviation and Pearson correlation analysis. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis was employed in the analysis.

4. Results and Data Analysis

Table 1. Distribution of the Respondents Regarding Socio-Economic Status

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	120	57.1

	Female	90	42.9
	Total	210	100.0
Age	18–21	75	35.7
	22–25	82	39.0
	26–29	35	16.7
	30 and above	18	8.6
	Total	210	100.0
Level of education	BS (4 year)	100	47.7
	BS (2 years Bridging)	55	26.1
	MS/ M. Phil (18-year education)	37	17.7
	Ph. D.	18	8.5
	Total	210	100.0
Institution	University of Balochistan	65	31.0
	SBK Women’s University	45	21.4
	Alhamd Islamic University	40	19.0
	BUIITEMS	60	28.6
	Total	210	100.0
Area of Residence	Urban	118	56.2
	Rural	92	43.8
	Total	210	100.0

The respondents who participated in the study are demographically and socio-economically distributed as shown in this table. The sample consisted of 210 students, from selected higher education institutions of Quetta. The table details the respondents’ gender, age, level of education, institution and area of residence that will help to understand the background of the participants. Two hundred and ten respondents (210) (57.1% male and 42.9% female) completed the survey. This indicates that there were marginally more males than females as the majority of the respondents were male. As regards age, most of the respondents were from the age group of 22-25 years accounting for 82 respondents (39.0%). The 18-21 age group was the second with 75 respondents (35.7%). The aged 26–29-year-olds responded 35 (16.7%) and the 30 years old and above age group responded 18 (8.6%). This means that the respondents were mostly young university students.

As far as education level is concerned, most of the respondents were in under-graduate four year programs with 100 respondents or 47.7% of them. There were 55 respondents; 26.1% of the respondents attended the BS two-year bridging program. MS/ M.Phil. were 37 students (17.7%) and 18 Ph.D. students (8.5%). This indicates that the most significant component of the respondents was undergraduate students. From the point of view of institution, maximum respondents (31.0%, 65) were from University of Balochistan. The highest number of respondents were from BUIITEMS with 60 respondents corresponding to 28.6% of the respondents, and SBK Women's University (45 respondents or 21.4%). 40 students (19.0%) responded in Alhamd Islamic University. This means sample was collected from four Higher Education Institutions of Quetta which had an almost equal representation from BUIITEMS and University of Balochistan. In terms of place of residence, 56.2% (118 respondents) represented urban areas and 43.8% (92 respondents) were from rural areas. This indicates that the study sample was slightly more represented in an urban area than the rural area.

Table 2. Higher Education Internalization

Statement	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA	f/ %	Mean	STD
My university encourages international academic interaction through seminars, webinars, and exchange-oriented activities.	37 (17.8)	42 (19.8)	10 (4.8)	91 (43.5)	30 (14.2)	210 (100)	2.99	1.05
International perspectives are included in classroom discussions and academic activities.	18 (8.8)	70 (33.2)	85 (40.2)	27 (13.0)	10 (4.8)	210 (100)	3.08	0.96
Students are exposed to learning materials that reflect global and intercultural knowledge.	33 (15.8)	68 (32.5)	16 (7.5)	92 (42.8)	1 (1.5)	210 (100)	3.00	0.87
My institution promotes interaction with scholars or students from other countries.	33 (15.5)	53 (25.2)	4 (2.0)	34 (16.2)	86 (41.0)	210 (100)	3.27	0.99
International collaboration activities improve the academic environment of my institution.	27 (13.0)	72 (34.5)	14 (6.8)	76 (36.2)	9 (9.5)	210 (100)	3.38	1.03
The curriculum includes global issues relevant to students' academic development.	71 (34.0)	71 (33.5)	17 (8.0)	47 (22.5)	2 (2.0)	210 (100)	2.92	0.98
Digital platforms help students participate in international academic opportunities.	76 (36.0)	95 (45.0)	11 (5.2)	26 (12.2)	3 (1.5)	210 (100)	2.81	0.83
Internationalization activities are accessible to students from different departments.	90 (42.8)	86 (41.0)	11 (5.2)	21 (9.8)	3 (1.2)	210 (100)	2.76	0.79

Table No. 2 shows the perceptions of the respondents on the internationalization of higher education in selected HEIs. This table shows students' answers regarding their experience of academic interaction with foreigners, the inclusion of international viewpoints, access to materials on intercultural learning, interaction with foreign scholars/students, international collaboration, the relevance of the curriculum, digital platforms, and access to internationalization activities.

The highest percentage, 91(43.5%) disagreed with the statement "The university promotes international academic interaction through seminars, webinars, exchange activities etc. This was followed by 42 (19.8%) who agreed, 37 (17.8%) who strongly agreed, 30 (14.2%) who strongly disagreed, and 10 (4.8%) who expressed no opinion. The pattern shows that generally respondents felt that opportunities for interaction with the international academic world were scarce in their institutions.

Where international views were included in classroom discussions and activities, the majority of respondents, 85 (40.2%), indicated they had no opinion as to whether it was included or not. This was followed by 70 (33.2%) who agreed, 27 (13.0%) who disagreed, 18 (8.8%) who strongly agreed, and 10 (4.8%) who strongly disagreed. The results indicate that students' attitudes towards international perspectives were quite ambiguous, but a significant group did recognize the existence of international perspectives in classroom and academic activities.

As for exposure to learning materials containing global and intercultural knowledge, the largest percentage of respondents, 92 (42.8%) disagreed. This was followed by 68 (32.5%) who agreed, 33 (15.8%) who strongly agreed, 16 (7.5%) who had no opinion, and 1 (1.5%) who strongly disagreed. Although there are some positive responses, the results indicate that a significant part of the respondents found exposure to learning materials related to global and intercultural learning to be inadequate.

The highest number of respondents (86, 41.0%) strongly disagreed with the institutional promotion of interaction with scholars/students from other countries. This was followed by 53 (25.2%) who agreed, 34 (16.2%) who disagreed, 33 (15.5%) who strongly agreed, and 4 (2.0%) who reported no opinion. Few respondents indicated that international interaction with foreign scholars or students was perceived as weak, as was revealed by this distribution.

The majority of the respondents, 76 (36.2%), disagreed that international collaboration activities make the academic environment of the institution better. This was closely followed by 72 (34.5%) who agreed, 27 (13.0%) who strongly agreed, 9 (9.5%) who strongly disagreed, and 14 (6.8%) who had no opinion. There was a split perception in the answers given with some students noting academic benefits arising from international collaboration while others did not see academic benefits in their institutional setting.

Regarding the presence of global issues in the curriculum which are relevant to students' learning, the majority of 71 (34.0%) strongly agreed, and 71 (33.5%) agreed. In comparison, 47 (22.5%) disagreed, 17 (8.0%) expressed no opinion, and 2 (2.0%) strongly disagreed. This is indicative of a positive attitude towards the incorporation of global issues in the curriculum in general.

Regarding the contribution of digital platforms in supporting students in their participation in international academic opportunities, the respondents with the highest rate were those who agreed (95, 45.0%). This was followed by 76 (36.0%) who strongly agreed, 26 (12.2%) who disagreed, 11 (5.2%) who expressed no opinion, and 3 (1.5%) who strongly disagreed. The findings show a clear positive pattern, indicating digital platforms are considered to be an important instrument for supporting students' access to opportunities for international academic mobility.

As far as internationalization activities were concerned, the majority of the respondents, 90 (42.8%), strongly agreed that they were accessible to students from various departments. This was followed by 86 (41.0%) who agreed, 21 (9.8%) who disagreed, 11 (5.2%) who had no opinion, and 3 (1.2%) who strongly disagreed. This indicates that the respondents had, in general, a positive view of the accessibility of internationalization activities in different academic departments.

The results reveal that the perceptions of internationalization in higher education are mixed. While positive perceptions were stronger for the use of digital platforms, curriculum content and accessibility of internationalization activities, less positive perceptions were noted in relation to international academic interaction, exposure to intercultural learning materials, and interaction with foreign scholars/students. The results indicated that some aspects of internationalization were observed but that there is a need for more institutional action in order to improve and develop practical internationalization and as well in terms of intercultural academic exposure.

Table 3. Academic Interaction, Cultural Diversity, and Collaborative Learning

Statement	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA	f/ %	Mean	STD
Internationalization improves academic	53 (25.2)	100 (47.5)	50 (23.8)	5 (2.2)	3 (1.2)	210 (100)	2.08	0.83

interaction among students and teachers.									
Exposure to cultural diversity strengthens students' respect for different perspectives.	80 (38.0)		105 (49.8)	13 (6.0)	11 (5.0)	3 (1.2)	210 (100)	2.09	0.74
International academic activities promote collaborative learning among students.	84 (40.0)		68 (32.5)	36 (17.2)	19 (9.0)	1 (1.2)	210 (100)	2.23	0.91
Global academic content supports knowledge sharing in classrooms.	55 (26.0)		77 (36.5)	25 (11.8)	47 (22.5)	4 (3.2)	210 (100)	2.50	1.02
Internationalization increases students' participation in academic discussions.	70 (33.5)		104 (51.0)	15 (7.2)	13 (6.2)	2 (2.0)	210 (100)	2.44	0.79
Intercultural communication improves students' confidence in group learning.	63 (30.0)		78 (37.2)	12 (5.5)	57 (26.8)	1 (0.5)	210 (100)	2.18	0.90
Collaborative academic tasks help students build stronger learning communities.	51 (24.5)		99 (47.0)	18 (8.8)	32 (15.0)	10 (4.8)	210 (100)	2.54	0.95
International learning activities increase students' sense of belonging at the university.	51 (24.5)		73 (34.8)	5 (2.5)	46 (24.0)	30 (14.2)	210 (100)	2.55	1.08

Table No. 3 shows the perception of the respondents on the academic interaction, cultural diversity and joint learning as part of the internationalization of higher education. The table presents the student's perspective on the role of internationalization in enhancing academic communication, respect for cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, academic participation, intercultural communication, learning communities and sense of belonging.

Regarding the assertion that internationalization enhances the student-teacher interaction in the educational process internationally, the majority agreed (100, 47.5%). Next there were 53 respondents (25.2%) who strongly disagreed that was followed by 50 respondents (23.8%) who had no opinion, 5 (2.2%) who disagreed, and 3 (1.2%) who strongly disagreed. This means that overall, there is a positive attitude towards the role of internationalization in boosting interaction between students and teachers.

The highest percentage, 105 (49.8%), agreed that exposure to cultural diversity helps to build students' respect for other points of view. 80 people (38.0%) strongly agreed, 13 people (6.0%) had no opinion, 11 people (5.0%) disagreed, and 3 people (1.2%) strongly disagreed. The trend

is positive and strong, indicating cultural diversity was seen as an important determinant of respect for different viewpoints.

Regarding international academic activities encourage students to learn collaboratively, 84 (40.0%) of the respondents strongly agreed. Sixty-eight respondents (32.5%) agreed, 36 (17.2%) had no opinion, 19 (9.0%) disagreed and 1 (1.2%) strongly disagreed. This is because the majority of respondents considered that international academic activities were supportive of collaborative learning.

The highest response was on the statement, 'Global academic content helps facilitate knowledge sharing in classrooms' (77 respondents, 36.5%). Then there were 55 people who strongly agreed (26.0%), 47 people who disagreed (22.5%), 25 people who didn't say (11.8%) and 4 people who strongly disagreed (3.2%). It is found that while the majority of the students were aware of the importance of global content in knowledge sharing, there was a significant number that did not completely agree with this perspective.

The 104 (51.0%) agreed to the statement that internationalization leads to higher participation in academic discussions, which received the highest level of agreement. There were 13 respondents (6.2%) who disagreed, 2 respondents (2.0%) who strongly disagreed and 70 respondents (33.5%) who strongly agreed. This demonstrates a definite positive development that may motivate students to be more involved in academic exchanges via internationalization. The highest number of responses, equal 78 (37.2%) was for agreeing that intercultural communication contributes to the confidence of the students in the process of group learning. Then 63 respondents (30.0%) responded strongly agree, 57 (26.8%) responded disagree, 12 (5.5%) had no opinion and 1 (0.5%) strongly disagreed. The results indicate that most respondents find intercultural communication to be beneficial to confidence in group learning, but some have disagreed.

When asked about the value of collaborative academic tasks in students' development of stronger learning communities, 99 (47.0%) agreed. Fifty-one respondents (24.5%) strongly agreed, 32 (15.0%) disagreed, 18 (8.8%) had no opinion and 10 (4.8%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that most of the collaborative academic activities were seen as helpful in building learning communities.

The top answer for the question on a scale of 1 to 9 in relation to international learning activities and their impact on students' sense of belonging at the university was 'agree', with 73 respondents (34.8%) indicating this. This was followed by 51 respondents (24.5%) who very strongly agreed, 46 respondents (24.0%) who disagreed, 30 respondents (14.2%) who very strongly disagreed and 5 (2.5%) who had no opinion. The results indicate a moderate positive trend, but there was also moderate disagreement about the effect of international learning activities on the sense of belonging, which seems to indicate some mixed perceptions about the role of international learning activities in enhancing students' sense of belonging.

The results suggest that overall, the respondents had positive attitudes towards the role of internationalization in facilitating academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, academic knowledge sharing and academic participation. Increasingly positive results emerged in the areas of cultural diversity, academic discussions and collaborative learning, but mixed results were noted in relation to sense of belonging and confidence in group learning. Some of the totals for frequencies do not seem to add up to the total 210, so the table should be reviewed prior to submission.

Table 4. Knowledge Sharing, Students Engagement, and Sense of Belonging

Statement	SA	A	NO	DA	SDA	f/ %	Mean	STD
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Internationalized learning activities increase my engagement in academic tasks.	60 (28.5)	106 (50.5)	35 (16.8)	7 (3.5)	2 (0.8)	210 (100)	1.98	0.82
Knowledge sharing improves when students discuss global and local academic issues together.	68 (32.5)	92 (43.8)	42 (19.8)	9 (4.2)	2 (0.8)	210 (100)	1.99	0.88
Internationalized classroom activities help students develop peer support networks.	83 (39.5)	84 (40.2)	29 (13.8)	8 (4.0)	3 (2.5)	210 (100)	1.89	0.94
Cultural diversity in learning activities improves classroom participation.	60 (28.5)	94 (44.8)	51 (24.5)	3 (1.5)	2 (0.8)	210 (100)	2.01	0.82
International academic practices improve my motivation to participate in group work.	57 (27.3)	91 (43.2)	53 (25.2)	6 (2.8)	3 (1.5)	210 (100)	2.08	0.87
Students feel more connected when international and local perspectives are discussed together.	73 (34.8)	81 (38.8)	29 (13.8)	17 (8.0)	10 (4.8)	210 (100)	2.21	0.98
Academic participation improves when institutions support internationalization activities.	70 (33.5)	78 (39.2)	25 (12.2)	27 (13.0)	4 (2.0)	210 (100)	2.26	0.93
Internationalization improves students' overall learning community experience.	70 (33.5)	105 (50.2)	18 (8.8)	10 (4.8)	6 (2.8)	210 (100)	2.26	0.82

Table No. 4 shows the respondents' perceptions of knowledge sharing, student engagement and a sense of belonging in relation to the internationalization practices in higher education. The table illustrates how internationalized learning activities, global and local academic conversations, peer support networks, cultural diversity, group work, academic participation and the general learning community experience help students feel engaged and feel like they belong to the university.

The highest percentage (106, 50.5%) agreed that internationalized learning activities make them more involved in academic tasks for the first statement. Strongly agree (28.5%) were followed by 60 (no opinion), 35 (disagree), and 2 (strongly disagree). This means that there is a strong positive trend, which supports that internationalized learning activities support students' academic engagement.

The second statement received the highest agreement rate with 92 (43.8%) learners saying that sharing knowledge is enhanced when students have discussions with their peers on global and local academic topics. This was followed by 68 (32.5%) who strongly agreed, 42 (19.8%) who had no opinion, 9 (4.2%) who disagreed, and 2 (0.8%) who strongly disagreed. The results indicate that the discussions around global and local academic issues were seen as useful for enhancing students' knowledge sharing.

84 participants (40.2%) agreed that internationalized classroom activities have a positive impact on student development of peer support networks in the third statement. This was answered almost entirely by 83 (39.5%) who strongly agreed, 29 (13.8%) who did not agree, 8 (4.0%) who disagreed and 3 (2.5%) who strongly disagreed. This is a very positive trend, and shows that internationalized classroom activities help to foster peer relationships and networks of academic support.

The largest proportion of respondents 94 (44.8%) agreed that cultural diversity is important to learning activities as it enhances participation in the classroom. This was followed by 60 (28.5%) who strongly agreed, 51 (24.5%) who had no opinion, 3 (1.5%) who disagreed, and 2 (0.8%) who strongly disagreed. The overall picture presented in these results indicates that cultural diversity is generally considered as an important variable in increasing the participation of the classroom. In the fifth statement, 43.2% (91) of the respondents agreed that international academic practices have an effect on their motivation to do group work. 57 (27.3%) strongly agreed, 53 (25.2%) had no opinion, 6 (2.8%) disagreed and 3 (1.5%) strongly disagreed. The results show that the international academic practices have positive impact on students' motivation for group-based learning with a slight percentage of students reporting neutral.

The highest rate of response for the sixth statement was agreed, with 81 respondents (38.8%) agreeing that students feel more connected when both international and local perspectives are included. This was followed by 73 (34.8%) who strongly agreed, 29 (13.8%) who expressed no opinion, 17 (8.0%) who disagreed, and 10 (4.8%) who strongly disagreed. This means that an international and local perspective would positively impact students' sense of belonging in the school environment.

The seventh statement, where 78 respondents (39.2%) agreed that academic engagement is enhanced when academic institutions promote internationalization activities, was the only one to which a significant number of respondents gave a positive answer. This was followed by 70 (33.5%) who strongly agreed, 27 (13.0%) who disagreed, 25 (12.2%) who had no opinion, and 4 (2.0%) who strongly disagreed. The results suggest a positive pattern, as support for internationalization in institutions is related to better academic involvement.

The largest number of respondents (105, 50.2%) agreed that internationalization enhances the overall students' learning experience in the learning community. There were 70 (33.5%) who strongly disagreed, 18 (8.8%) who did not know, 10 (4.8%) who disagreed, and 6 (2.8%) who strongly disagreed. This means that there is a very positive attitude towards internationalization as a contribution to students' experience of the learning community.

The results indicate that internationalization had a positive impact on most of the respondents for knowledge sharing, student engagement, peer support, academic participation and sense of belonging. The most positive change was seen with students' overall learning community experience, participation in academic activities, and building of peer support networks. The results of some neutral responses suggest, however, that some students may not have directly experienced the full benefits of internationalized academic practices. There are some values which are presented in both frequency and percentage form in a few rows, which should be checked before submission of data.

Table 5. Correlation between Higher Education Internationalization and Learning Community Indicators

Learning Community Indicator	Learning Community Development	
	Pearson Correlation	.740**
Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
N	210	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Student Engagement	
	Pearson Correlation	.710**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Collaborative Learning	
	Pearson Correlation	.710**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Knowledge Sharing	
	Pearson Correlation	.690**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Academic Interaction	
	Pearson Correlation	.679**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Sense of Belonging	
	Pearson Correlation	.630**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Academic Participation	
	Pearson Correlation	.670**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Cultural Diversity	
	Pearson Correlation	.670**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		
Learning Community Indicator	Intercultural Communication	
	Pearson Correlation	.656**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	210
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		

The relationship between the internationalization of higher education and various aspects of learning community development is shown in the correlation in this table. The results indicate that internationalization in higher education is positively and significantly related to all of the learning community indicators at the 0.01 level of significance. The greater the extent to which

internationalization is implemented in HEIs, the more so is the development of the learning community and its dimensions.

There was the strongest correlation between overall learning community development and higher education internationalization, $r = .740$, $p = .000$. This is a very high positive correlation, indicating the important role of internationalization in the overall development of learning communities of students. The degree of internationalization of higher education had a strong positive correlation with student engagement ($r = .710$, $p = .000$) and collaborative learning ($r = .710$, $p = .000$). This implies the students' active engagement in learning activities and their involvement in collaborative learning processes are closely related to the practice of internationalization.

There was also a positive and significant correlation between knowledge sharing and higher education internationalization ($r = .690$). This means that if internationalization is promoted, students are more likely to share academic knowledge, ideas and experiences with each other. There was a strong positive relationship between academic interaction and higher education internationalization ($r = .679$, Pearson correlation). This implies that internationalization can enhance student-teacher and student-student relations as well as improve interaction within academic circles.

Both academic participation and cultural diversity had significant positive correlations, with $r = .670$. These results suggest that internationalization is related to an increase in students' involvement in academic activities and an increase in recognition of cultural diversity in the learning environment. In terms of intercultural communication, there is a positive and significant correlation with the internationalization of higher education with an r value of $.656$. This implies that internationalization helps students to communicate with others across cultural boundaries and helps develop intercultural understanding. A positive and significant correlation was found between Sense of belonging and internationalization ($r = .630$). This means that students' sense of belonging to their university learning community is also significantly influenced by internationalization. This is the least correlated of the indicators listed, but it is nonetheless a positive correlation.

The results suggest that internationalization in higher education is significantly and positively correlated with development of learning communities and all its key indicators. The results indicate that the internationalization practices can have a positive impact on higher levels of student engagement, cooperative learning, knowledge sharing, academic interaction, cultural diversity, intercultural communication, academic involvement and sense of belonging. All significance values are listed as $p = .000$ and therefore can be considered mathematically significant at the 0.01 level; however, it is not appropriate to report the significance value as exactly 0.000, but rather as $p < .01$.

5. Discussions

The findings obtained from this quantitative study suggest that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between higher education internationalization and development of learning community in Balochistan. The descriptive statistics indicate that in general, students do not see the internationalized academic practices as a hindrance for academic interaction, for cultural diversity and other aspects of academic engagement and collaboration, for knowledge sharing, for student engagement, for intercultural communication, for academic participation, and for a sense of belonging. The most positive descriptive trends were related to cultural diversity, academic interaction, and knowledge sharing – when students feel they are able to contribute to a class with their own perspectives, when they are given the chance to meet with other students from different countries, when they learn more about other cultures and the

sharing of knowledge, it seems they enjoy the experience. The results of our study are in line with the findings of Beelen and Jones (2015) who state that internationalization at home should offer all students opportunities for intercultural learning in their home institutions.

The correlation results also confirm the argument that internationalization promotes the development of learning communities. Overall learning community development, student engagement, collaborative learning and knowledge sharing were found to be most strongly associated with higher education internationalization. This trend is consistent with that of Leask (2015), who focuses on the three areas of what is learnt, how it is learnt, and how it is learnt across the nation's borders. The finding is significant in the context of Balochistan as many students might not get the opportunities to pursue mobility in the foreign countries. "Internationalized learning opportunities in the campus" thus serve as a concrete means to cultivate awareness of the world and academic engagement with the community.

The revised analysis uses only descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation and therefore should be interpreted as associations and not causal effects. The positive correlation pattern confirms Hudzik and Stohl (2012) notion that comprehensive internationalization should have an impact on the academic environment, as well as on the student experience, and not only on symbolic international agreements. Students who experience internationalization as a part of classroom activities, content, online academic events, intercultural communication and institutional partnerships are more likely to feel engaged with the students and teachers as active members of an academic community. The finding also resonates with Robson (2018), who posits that internationalization should be critically examined in terms of its real-world impact on the learning of students and their inclusion.

Relatively weak but positive correlations for the sense of belonging and intercultural communication need to be interpreted carefully. Being internationalized can bring students a variety of ideas but belonging is not a natural consequence of diversity. Glass and Westmont (2014) demonstrate that meaningfully interacting and being supported by institutions are key to belonging. Balochistan is internally diverse as students from various linguistic, ethnic and regional backgrounds are available in the state. Internationalization can play an important role in enhancing this diversity, if universities offer structured dialogue, inclusive group work, internationalized student societies and supportive classroom practices. If these kinds of structures are not present, internationalization can be content-based instead of relationship-based, resulting in lower levels of belonging associations.

The results also add to the Pakistan specific literature. Internationalization in Pakistan has been mentioned in existing studies in the context of policy issues such as scholarships, brain drain, foreign linkages and institutional reputation. Zainab et al., (2019) addressed student mobility and Alam et al., (2023) talked about the issues of educational development and internationalization in Pakistan. This study builds on that conversation, examining learning community outcomes. It demonstrates that internationalization can be measured in terms of students' experiences of academic interaction, sharing, collaborative learning and engagement. This transition is needed as institutional internationalization cannot be considered complete unless students experience it in their daily academic life.

The findings indicate that internationalization in higher education is not only an administrative and reputation management approach, but also a pedagogical and community building approach. Internationalization can facilitate linkage between local students and global knowledge in Balochistan and enhance internal academic linkages too. The highest gains will probably be seen where internationalization is purposefully integrated with student-centered teaching, collaborative activities, intercultural interactions, digital experiences in the academic

sphere, and campus inclusiveness. It is on this basis that the study would suggest a practical model of how internationalization enhances learning communities by making the students interact, share knowledge, interact in learning more effectively and form a sense of belonging to the university.

6. Conclusions

This study explored the relationship between higher education internationalization and learning community development in Balochistan in quantitative research design and SPSS analysis of 210 students of the University of Balochistan, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Alhamd Islamic University Quetta and Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences. The descriptive statistics revealed that overall, students had a positive perception on the usefulness of the internationalized academic practices for supporting digital academic access, exposure to curriculum, classroom participation, peer support, knowledge sharing, and overall learning community experience. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed that there were significant positive correlations between internationalization of higher education and learning community development, academic interaction, cultural diversity, collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, student engagement, intercultural communication, academic participation and sense of belonging. The correlation that was highest was between internationalization and overall learning community development, student engagement, and collaborative learning and sharing, indicating close links between internationalized practices and interactive and community-based learning. The results from the analysis should be interpreted as correlational, due to the fact that descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used. Internationalization needs to be built into student learning, not just into a few seminars, courses or students' assignments, but into everyday learning in universities in Quetta, through curriculum, seminars, online learning, and collaborative work. They should also create educational systems which facilitate the building of structured learning community programs by linking students from different departments with intercultural dialogue, inter-student learning groups, international webinars, and common academic initiatives. Finally, it can be concluded that higher education internationalization can be utilized as a practical approach to develop learning communities in Balochistan as a student-centered academic process and based on the students' actual classroom and campus experiences.

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