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Explaining Faculty Internationalization Engagement through Institutional Support and Perceived Benefits: Evidence from Public Universities in Guizhou, China

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ABSTRACT
Faculty engagement is widely recognized as a critical driver of higher education internationalization, yet empirical evidence remains limited on how institutional and motivational factors jointly shape engagement in less-developed regional contexts. Drawing on Childress' Five "I's" Model of Faculty Engagement in Internationalization and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory, this study examines the effects of institutional support for internationalization and perceived benefits for internationalization engagement on faculty internationalization engagement, and tests the moderating role of education background.

Using survey data from 432 faculty members in public universities in Guizhou Province, China, structural equation modeling (SEM) and multi-group analysis (MGA) were employed to test the hypothesized relationships. Results indicate that both institutional support and perceived benefits significantly and positively predict faculty internationalization engagement. MGA further revealed stronger structural paths among overseas-educated faculty (institutional support → engagement: $\beta = .50$ vs. .41; perceived benefits → engagement: $\beta = .51$ vs. .38; both ps $< .001$), indicating a significant moderating effect of education background.

These findings extend internationalization research by integrating organizational and motivational perspectives and identifying education background as a boundary condition shaping faculty engagement. The study provides context-sensitive evidence from an under-researched region and offers practical implications for policymakers and university leaders seeking to strengthen faculty internationalization engagement in resource-constrained higher education systems.

KEYWORDS: Faculty Internationalization Engagement; Institutional Support for Internationalization; Perceived Benefits for Internationalization Engagement; Education Background; Multi-Group Analysis (MGA)

I. INTRODUCTION

Internationalization has become a defining feature of contemporary higher education, reshaping institutional missions, academic practices, and global knowledge production. Driven by political and economic globalization and rapid advances in information and communication technologies, higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide have increasingly engaged in cross-border flows of students, faculty, research, and educational resources (Nawaz, 2018; Seeber & Cattaneo, 2020). Since the 1990s, internationalization has evolved from a peripheral activity into a strategic priority, contributing to intensified academic collaboration, expanded transnational education markets, and enhanced global competitiveness of universities (Li, 2020).

In China, higher education internationalization has accelerated significantly since the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy. Strong governmental leadership, combined with institutional initiatives and market forces, has positioned international exchange and cooperation as a central component of national higher education development (Bie & Kang, 2019).

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Major policy frameworks, including the Double First-Class initiative and faculty development reforms, have explicitly emphasized internationalization as a core indicator of institutional quality and governance capacity. In this context, faculty internationalization has increasingly been framed as a critical mechanism for achieving national strategic goals and enhancing universities' global engagement (Li et al., 2024).

Despite strong policy endorsement, the implementation of internationalization remains uneven across institutions and regions. While governments shape internationalization through policy instruments and funding mechanisms, the actual process unfolds primarily at the institutional and individual levels (de Souza et al., 2020). Faculty members play a pivotal role in translating institutional strategies into practice through teaching, research, and service. Consequently, faculty engagement has become a key indicator of institutional internationalization performance in both Chinese and international evaluation systems (Gao, 2018; Wang, 2018). Existing research consistently suggests that without active faculty participation, internationalization initiatives are unlikely to achieve depth, quality, or sustainability (Nawaz, 2018; Tran & Le, 2018).

However, empirical evidence indicates persistent challenges in stimulating sustained faculty engagement in internationalization. Faculty participation often exhibits paradoxical patterns, such as high willingness but limited action, prioritization of research-oriented internationalization over teaching-related initiatives, and difficulties in reintegrating international experience into domestic academic environments (Kuzhabekova et al., 2022; Sun, 2020).These challenges are frequently associated with inadequate institutional incentives, fragmented support mechanisms, and evaluation systems that fail to integrate internationalization into long-term faculty career development (Ma, 2021).

Such challenges are particularly pronounced in western China, where regional disparities in higher education development continue to constrain internationalization outcomes. While universities in eastern China have achieved relatively advanced levels of international engagement, institutions in western regions generally lag behind due to limited resources, weaker international networks, and less mature internationalization systems (Liu & Wu, 2021). Within western China, substantial interprovincial variation exists, with provinces such as Sichuan and Chongqing outperforming less-developed regions including Guizhou. As one of the economically less-developed provinces, Guizhou's public universities exhibit internationalization levels below both eastern regions and the national average (Xu & Zhou, 2021).

At the same time, national strategies such as the Belt and Road Initiative have created new opportunities for higher education internationalization in western China. Guizhou's geographical proximity to ASEAN countries and its emerging role in regional cooperation provide potential advantages for international engagement. However, realizing these opportunities requires not only policy support but also effective institutional mechanisms and active faculty participation. Without addressing faculty-level motivations and constraints, national internationalization strategies may not translate into substantive institutional outcomes.

Existing literature suggests that faculty engagement in internationalization is shaped by both institutional conditions and individual perceptions. Institutional support—such as leadership commitment, policies, funding, workload recognition, and administrative assistance—has been widely identified as an enabling factor. Nevertheless, institutional support alone may be insufficient to sustain engagement if faculty members do not perceive clear academic, professional, or personal benefits from participation (Sharif, 2018; Boone, 2019). Perceived benefits, including enhanced research productivity, career advancement, and expanded academic networks, play a critical motivational role in shaping faculty behavior. Despite growing recognition of these factors, empirical studies that jointly examine institutional support and perceived benefits as predictors of faculty internationalization engagement remain fragmented, particularly in non-Western and under-researched regional contexts.

Moreover, individual differences among faculty members may further condition how institutional support and perceived benefits translate into engagement. Education background, especially overseas education experience, has been identified as a potentially important factor influencing faculty members' international orientation, academic norms, and responsiveness to international opportunities. Although faculty with overseas education backgrounds are often viewed as key contributors to internationalization, existing research has paid

limited attention to education background as a moderating variable, and empirical evidence from western China remains scarce.

Against this backdrop, this study adopts a faculty-centered perspective to examine internationalization in public universities in Guizhou Province, China. Specifically, it investigates the relationships among institutional support for internationalization, perceived benefits of internationalization engagement, and faculty engagement in international activities, and further explores whether education background moderates these relationships. By focusing on an under-researched regional context and employing a systematic quantitative approach, this study seeks to address important gaps in the literature and to provide empirical evidence to inform more context-sensitive internationalization strategies for public universities in western China. By jointly modeling institutional support and perceived benefits and testing education background as a moderator via MGA, this study offers an integrated explanation of faculty internationalization engagement in a resource-constrained provincial context.

II. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

Faculty engagement is widely recognized as a central mechanism through which higher education internationalization is enacted at the institutional level. While national policies and institutional strategies set the direction for internationalization, the realization of international activities in teaching, research, and service ultimately depends on individual faculty members' engagement. To explain variations in faculty internationalization engagement, this study adopts an integrative theoretical framework that combines organizational and motivational perspectives, drawing on Childress' Five "I's" Model of Faculty Engagement in Internationalization and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory (Childress, 2010; Herzberg, 1966).

2.1 Institutional Support and Faculty Internationalization Engagement

From an organizational perspective, faculty engagement in internationalization is embedded within a broader institutional ecosystem. Childress' Five "I's" Model conceptualizes faculty internationalization engagement as shaped by interrelated institutional mechanisms, including intentionality, investment, infrastructure, institutional networks, and individual support (Childress, 2010). Rather than viewing faculty engagement as a purely individual choice, this model emphasizes the importance of coherent institutional arrangements that enable, legitimize, and sustain faculty participation in international activities.

Consistent with this perspective, institutional support in the present study is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing institutional commitment, institutional leadership, organizational practices, and constraining factors. Institutional commitment reflects the extent to which internationalization is embedded in institutional missions, policies, and strategic priorities. Institutional leadership highlights the role of senior administrators and academic leaders in coordinating resources and aligning internationalization goals with faculty work. Organizational practices refer to concrete arrangements such as faculty development policies, administrative procedures, and platforms that facilitate international teaching and research. Constraining factors, particularly those related to financial and workload limitations, capture structural barriers that may inhibit faculty participation.

Prior empirical studies suggest that supportive institutional environments play a crucial role in encouraging faculty engagement in internationalization by reducing uncertainty, lowering participation costs, and signaling organizational value for international activities (Beatty, 2013; Pan, 2024). When faculty perceive strong institutional backing, they are more likely to integrate international dimensions into their academic work and to sustain participation over time (Romani-Dias & Carneiro, 2019; Mittelmeier et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Institutional support for internationalization significantly predicts faculty internationalization engagement.

Beyond examining institutional support as a holistic construct, this study also recognizes that different dimensions of institutional support may exert varying levels of influence on faculty engagement. By examining the relative predictive effects of institutional commitment, leadership, organizational practices, and constraining factors, the study seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how specific institutional mechanisms shape faculty internationalization behavior.

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2.2 Perceived Benefits and Faculty Internationalization Engagement

While institutional support provides the structural conditions for engagement, organizational support alone may not be sufficient to motivate sustained faculty participation in internationalization. Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory offers a complementary motivational explanation by distinguishing between hygiene factors and motivator factors. According to Herzberg, hygiene factors—such as organizational policies, administrative arrangements, and resource availability—prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily generate intrinsic motivation. In contrast, motivator factors—such as achievement, recognition, professional growth, and meaningful work—directly enhance individuals' willingness to engage (Herzberg, 1966; Mausner & Snyderman, 1993).

Applied to the context of higher education internationalization, institutional support functions primarily as a hygiene factor that creates necessary enabling conditions. Perceived benefits of internationalization engagement, however, operate as motivator factors that stimulate faculty members' intrinsic motivation. These perceived benefits may include enhanced research productivity, expanded academic networks, improved teaching practices, career advancement opportunities, and increased intercultural competence. Faculty members who perceive substantial academic and professional gains from international engagement are more likely to actively seek out and sustain participation in international activities(Lai & Xu, 2022; Mananay et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence increasingly supports the motivational role of perceived benefits in shaping faculty internationalization behavior. Faculty who recognize clear personal and professional value in international engagement demonstrate higher levels of involvement in international research collaboration, mobility programs, and curriculum internationalization initiatives (Kuzhabekova et al., 2022; Cranwell, 2020). Based on this motivational logic, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H2: Perceived benefits for internationalization engagement significantly predict faculty internationalization engagement.

In addition, this study distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions of perceived benefits and explores their differential effects on faculty engagement, thereby extending existing research that often treats perceived benefits as a unidimensional construct.

2.3 The Moderating Role of Education Background

Although institutional support and perceived benefits are expected to influence faculty internationalization engagement, faculty members are not a homogeneous group. Individual characteristics may shape how faculty interpret institutional conditions and respond to motivational incentives. Education background, particularly whether faculty members have received overseas education, represents a formative experience that may influence international orientation, academic norms, and responsiveness to international opportunities.

Faculty with overseas education backgrounds are often exposed to international academic cultures, research norms, and collaborative practices, which may heighten their sensitivity to both institutional support and perceived benefits related to internationalization. In contrast, faculty with domestic education backgrounds may face greater adjustment costs or perceive international engagement as less immediately relevant to their academic trajectories. As a result, education background may condition the strength of the relationships between institutional support, perceived benefits, and faculty engagement.

From an integrative theoretical perspective, education background can be understood as shaping both organizational responsiveness and motivational sensitivity. Faculty members with different educational experiences may respond differently to the same institutional environment or perceive the benefits of internationalization in distinct ways. Accordingly, this study proposes the following moderating hypotheses:
H3: Education background moderates the relationship between institutional support for internationalization and faculty internationalization engagement.
H4: Education background moderates the relationship between perceived benefits for internationalization engagement and faculty internationalization engagement.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the study, summarizing the hypothesized relationships among institutional support, perceived benefits, faculty internationalization engagement, and the

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moderating role of education background..

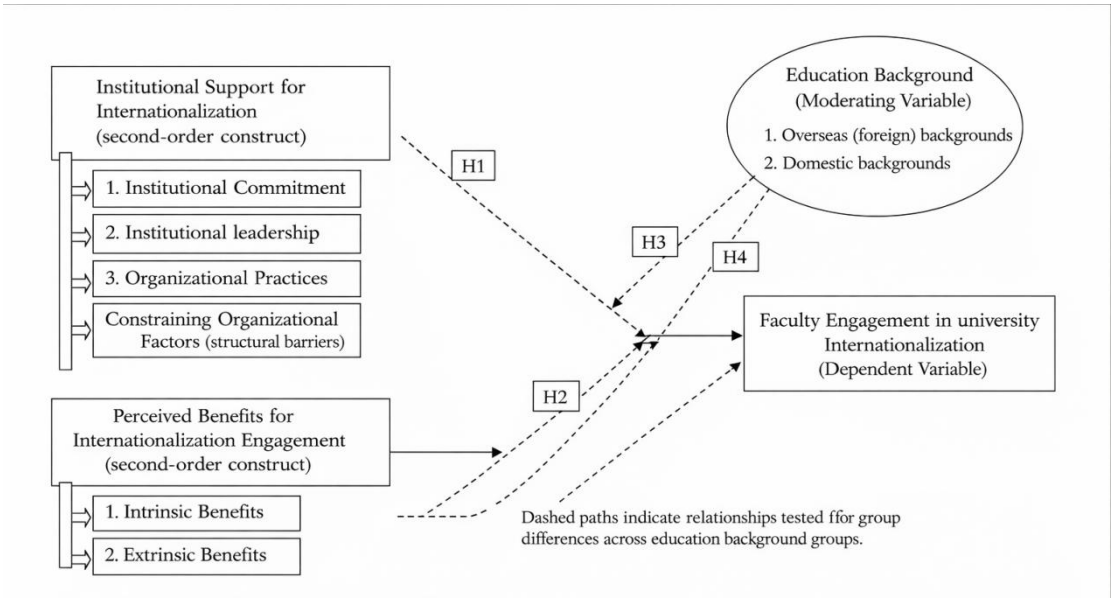

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

III. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among institutional support for internationalization, perceived benefits for internationalization engagement, education background, and faculty internationalization engagement. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized relationships among latent variables, while multi-group analysis (MGA) was used to examine the moderating role of education background. This analytical strategy is appropriate for modeling complex relationships and comparing structural paths across faculty subgroups.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted in public universities in Guizhou Province, China, with faculty members serving as the unit of analysis. To ensure adequate representation of faculty with overseas education backgrounds—a relatively small but analytically important subgroup—a stratified disproportionate random sampling strategy was employed. This approach was adopted to ensure sufficient statistical power for comparing faculty with overseas and domestic education backgrounds in the moderation analysis.

Data collection took place between June and July 2024. A total of 442 questionnaires were returned. After data screening procedures, including the removal of extreme outliers, 432 valid responses were retained for analysis. The final sample included faculty from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and academic ranks. Approximately half of the respondents held overseas education backgrounds, enabling robust multi-group comparison. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and informed consent was obtained prior to questionnaire completion. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and informed consent was obtained prior to questionnaire completion.

3.3 Measures

All constructs were measured using a structured questionnaire with items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was adapted primarily from Beatty (2013), with modifications to response formats and item wording to enhance measurement precision and contextual suitability for faculty internationalization in Chinese public universities.

Instrument Adaptation and Pilot Study

Prior to the main survey, a pilot study was conducted to establish content validity, linguistic equivalence, and to refine the measurement instruments. The questionnaire was translated from English into Chinese using the Brislin back-translation method to ensure semantic consistency. Four Chinese experts with expertise in higher education internationalization and English education reviewed

the instrument to assess item clarity, relevance, and cultural appropriateness. Based on their feedback, minor wording revisions were made to enhance contextual suitability. The pilot study further informed item refinement through preliminary reliability and factor analyses, leading to the removal of several items with weak psychometric performance. The revised questionnaire was subsequently administered in the main study.

Institutional Support for Internationalization

Institutional support was conceptualized as a second-order construct comprising four dimensions: institutional commitment, institutional leadership, organizational practices, and constraining organizational factors. This construct was measured using 20 items adapted from established internationalization and faculty engagement instruments.

Perceived Benefits for Internationalization Engagement

Perceived benefits were modeled as a second-order construct consisting of intrinsic benefits and extrinsic benefits. This construct was measured using 11 items capturing academic, professional, and career-related gains from internationalization.

Faculty Internationalization Engagement

Faculty internationalization engagement was measured as a first-order construct using 16 items reflecting engagement in international teaching, research, and service activities.

Education Background

Education background was operationalized as a dichotomous variable distinguishing faculty with overseas education backgrounds from those with domestic education backgrounds. This variable was used as a grouping variable in the multi-group analysis to examine moderation effects.

3.4 Data Screening and Validity Assessment

Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were screened for missing values, outliers, normality, multicollinearity, and common method variance. After data verification, no missing values were identified. Univariate outliers were detected using boxplot analysis and removed, while multivariate outliers were assessed using Mahalanobis distance. The assumptions of normality were satisfied, with skewness and kurtosis values falling within acceptable ranges.

Multicollinearity was examined using variance inflation factors (VIFs), all of which were below recommended thresholds, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern. Common method variance was assessed using Harman's one-factor test. The results showed that no single factor accounted for the majority of variance, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to confound the findings.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using the full sample (N = 432) to evaluate the measurement model. All standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating satisfactory item reliability. Internal consistency reliability was supported, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.897 to 0.965 across the major constructs, and composite reliability (CR) values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.60.

Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE values for most constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50, and all constructs demonstrated adequate convergent validity based on composite reliability criteria. Discriminant validity was supported, as inter-construct correlations did not exceed the recommended threshold of 0.85. Overall, the measurement model demonstrated acceptable fit indices (CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and χ^2/df), indicating that the instruments possessed satisfactory reliability and validity for subsequent structural equation modeling and measurement invariance testing across groups.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in three stages. First, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the levels of key variables and their bivariate relationships. Second, SEM was used to test the direct effects of institutional support and perceived benefits on faculty internationalization engagement. Third, MGA was performed to examine whether education background moderated these relationships. Measurement invariance across groups was assessed prior to structural comparisons to ensure construct equivalence.

IV. Results

4.1 Relationships between Institutional Support, Perceived Benefits, and Faculty Internationalization Engagement

Pearson correlation analyses were first conducted to examine the bivariate relationships

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among institutional support for internationalization, perceived benefits for internationalization engagement, and faculty internationalization engagement.Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients among institutional support, perceived benefits, and faculty internationalization engagement.Descriptive statistics indicate that faculty internationalization engagement was reported at a moderate level (M = 2.593, SD = 0.883). Similarly, institutional support for internationalization (M = 2.583, SD = 0.689) and perceived benefits for internationalization engagement (M = 2.576, SD = 0.750) were also reported at moderate levels among faculty respondents.The results indicate that institutional support for internationalization is positively and significantly associated with faculty internationalization engagement ($r = 0.544$, $p < .01$), representing a strong relationship with a large effect size. This finding suggests that faculty members who perceive higher levels of institutional support tend to demonstrate higher levels of engagement in international academic activities. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

At the dimensional level, all four components of institutional support—including institutional leadership ($r = 0.404$, $p < .01$), institutional commitment ($r = 0.424$, $p < .01$), organizational practices ($r = 0.459$, $p < .01$), and constraining organizational factors ($r = 0.401$, $p < .01$)—were positively and significantly correlated with faculty internationalization engagement. These correlations provide descriptive insight into the internal structure of institutional support as a second-order construct, indicating that multiple institutional mechanisms are associated with faculty engagement in internationalization activities.

Pearson correlation analysis also revealed a significant positive relationship between perceived benefits for internationalization engagement and faculty internationalization engagement ($r = 0.495$, $p < .01$), indicating a moderate effect size. This result suggests that faculty members who perceive greater academic, professional, and personal benefits from internationalization are more likely to actively engage in international activities. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

At the dimensional level, both intrinsic benefits ($r = 0.444$, $p < .01$) and extrinsic benefits ($r = 0.382$, $p < .01$) were positively associated with faculty engagement. These findings offer additional descriptive context for understanding perceived benefits as a multidimensional construct, without implying differential structural effects at the hypothesis-testing level.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Key Constructs and Faculty Internationalization Engagement

Predictor	Mean	SD	r with Faculty Internationalization Engagement
Institutional support for internationalization(overall)	2.583	0.689	0.544**
Institutional Leadership	2.610	0.858	0.404**
Organizational Practices	2.579	0.881	0.459**
Constraining Organizational Factors	2.628	0.907	0.401**
Institutional Commitment	2.517	0.905	0.424**
Benefits for Internationalization Engagement(overall)	2.576	0.750	0.495**
Intrinsic Benefits	2.606	0.949	0.444**
Extrinsic Benefits	2.547	0.839	0.382**
Faculty Internationalization Engagement	2.593	0.883	—

Note. N = 432. Mean and standard deviation are reported. Pearson correlation coefficients are shown. $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

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4.2 Moderating Effects of Education Background: Structural Equation Modeling Results

To further examine whether faculty education background moderates the relationships between institutional support, perceived benefits, and faculty internationalization engagement, structural equation modeling (SEM) with multi-group analysis (MGA) was conducted. The overall fit indices of the structural model are presented in Table 2. Prior to testing moderation effects, the overall structural model was assessed for goodness of fit. The results indicate that the proposed structural model achieved acceptable fit across multiple indices (CFI = 0.929, NNFI = 0.923, RMSEA = 0.049, normed $\chi^2 = 2.017$), supporting the adequacy of the model for further hypothesis testing.

Table 2 Model Fit indices for the Structural Model

Fit Index	Recommended Threshold	Structural Model
Chi-square / df (Normed χ^2)	<3.0 good; <5.0 permissible for complex model	2.017
RMSEA	< 0.05 good; 0.05-0.10 moderate	0.049
NNFI(TLI)	>0.90 traditional; >0.85 permissible for complex model	0.923
CFI	>0.95 great; >0.90 traditional; >0.85 permissible for complex model	0.929

Note. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; NNFI (TLI) = non-normed fit index (Tucker–Lewis index); CFI = comparative fit index. Given the large sample size (N > 200), the chi-square statistic is not emphasized.

Measurement invariance testing was conducted to ensure that constructs were comparable across faculty groups with and without overseas education backgrounds. Configural and metric invariance were supported, indicating that the underlying factor structure and factor loadings were equivalent across groups. However, when structural path coefficients were constrained to equality, model fit deteriorated significantly (ΔCFI > .01), suggesting that at least one structural relationship differed across groups. This result provides statistical evidence for the presence of moderation effects associated with education background.

Table 3 presents the standardized structural path coefficients for faculty with overseas and domestic education backgrounds.Subsequent examination of group-specific standardized path coefficients revealed clear differences between faculty with overseas education backgrounds and those without. For the path from institutional support for internationalization to faculty engagement, the standardized coefficient was stronger for faculty with overseas education backgrounds ($\beta = 0.500$, $p < .001$) than for those without overseas education experience ($\beta = 0.411$, $p < .001$). This finding indicates that institutional support exerts a stronger positive influence on internationalization engagement among faculty who have received overseas education. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Similarly, for the path from perceived benefits for internationalization engagement to faculty engagement, the standardized coefficient was higher for faculty with overseas education backgrounds ($\beta = 0.512$, $p < .001$) compared to their domestically educated counterparts ($\beta = 0.383$, $p < .001$). This result suggests that faculty with overseas education backgrounds are more responsive to perceived benefits and more strongly motivated by the advantages associated with internationalization. Accordingly, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Table 3Multi-group SEM Results by Education Background

Path	Overseas education background β	Domestic education background β	Hypothesis

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Institutional Support → Faculty Internationalization Engagement	0.500***	0.411***	H3 supported
Perceived Benefits → Faculty Internationalization Engagement	0.512***	0.383***	H4 supported

4.3 Summary of Results

Overall, the results demonstrate that both institutional support and perceived benefits are significant predictors of faculty internationalization engagement in public universities in Guizhou Province. Moreover, education background plays a significant moderating role in these relationships, with faculty who possess overseas education backgrounds exhibiting stronger responsiveness to both institutional support and perceived benefits. These findings highlight the combined importance of institutional environments, motivational perceptions, and individual educational experiences in shaping faculty engagement in higher education internationalization.

V. DISUSSION

This study examined faculty internationalization engagement in public universities in Guizhou Province by analyzing the roles of institutional support, perceived benefits, and education background. Drawing on organizational and motivational perspectives, the findings provide an integrated explanation of how institutional conditions and individual perceptions jointly shape faculty engagement in internationalization within a less-developed regional context of western China.

5.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

The results demonstrate that both institutional support for internationalization and perceived benefits for internationalization engagement are positively associated with faculty internationalization engagement, providing direct support for Hypotheses 1 and 2. Institutional support exhibits a particularly salient predictive role, underscoring the importance of structural and organizational conditions in enabling faculty participation. This finding suggests that, especially in resource-constrained public universities, faculty engagement depends not only on individual willingness but also on whether institutions can provide enabling conditions that reduce participation barriers and enhance feasibility. This pattern is consistent with prior research emphasizing the critical role of institutional environments in shaping faculty internationalization practices, particularly in contexts where structural support remains uneven or underdeveloped (Xu & Zhou, 2021; Li & Liu, 2020).

Descriptive analyses at the dimensional level offer additional context for interpreting the overall effect of institutional support. The positive associations observed across institutional commitment, leadership, organizational practices, and constraining organizational factors indicate that faculty engagement is shaped by a constellation of organizational mechanisms rather than by any single institutional element in isolation. Rather than implying differential causal effects among these dimensions, these patterns highlight the importance of translating institutional intentions into coherent, accessible, and operationalized support environments that faculty members can effectively utilize.Given the focus of the hypothesized model, these dimensional correlations are reported to characterize the construct structure rather than to test dimension-specific effects.

Perceived benefits also play a significant motivational role in shaping faculty internationalization engagement, further supporting Hypothesis 2. Faculty members who recognize academic, professional, and intellectual value in internationalization are more likely to engage actively and sustain their involvement. At the dimensional level, both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits are positively related to engagement, suggesting that faculty motivation reflects a combination of growth-oriented and outcome-oriented considerations. In the context of Guizhou, where material incentives are often limited, intrinsic motivations such as academic development and professional meaning appear particularly salient in sustaining engagement. This pattern is consistent with prior evidence that perceived benefits are associated with faculty participation in international activities (Gas-ib & Sannadan, 2023).

Importantly, education background significantly moderates the relationships between both institutional support and faculty engagement, and perceived benefits and faculty engagement, providing strong support for Hypotheses 3 and 4. Faculty members with overseas education backgrounds respond more strongly to institutional conditions and perceived benefits, translating these factors into higher levels of internationalization engagement. This pattern suggests that prior

educational experiences shape how faculty interpret, mobilize, and capitalize on organizational resources and motivational cues. In contrast, domestically educated faculty may face greater structural, cognitive, and psychological barriers to engagement, even when institutional support is available. Similar patterns have been observed in prior studies indicating that overseas educational experiences enhance faculty members' international orientation and responsiveness to internationalization opportunities (Li, 2020).

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

At the theoretical level, this study provides empirical support for both Childress' Five "I's" Model of Faculty Engagement in Internationalization and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory, while extending and refining these frameworks within the context of Chinese public universities.

Consistent with the Five "I's" Model, the findings confirm that institutional structures and support mechanisms are central to faculty internationalization engagement. However, the results refine this model by demonstrating that the effectiveness of institutional support depends less on symbolic commitment or leadership rhetoric alone and more on the extent to which institutional intentions are translated into operationalized and accessible organizational arrangements. This refinement underscores the importance of practice-oriented institutional capacity in shaping faculty engagement, particularly in less-developed higher education systems where internationalization infrastructures are still emerging (Moshtari et al., 2023).

The study also extends Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory by applying it to faculty internationalization engagement. Institutional support functions primarily as a hygiene factor that reduces dissatisfaction and removes structural barriers, while perceived benefits operate as motivator factors that stimulate sustained engagement. The strong effects of both institutional support and perceived benefits suggest that faculty engagement emerges from the interaction between enabling conditions and motivational perceptions, rather than from either factor alone. Moreover, the prominence of intrinsic benefits reinforces Herzberg's proposition that meaningful and growth-oriented rewards are central to genuine motivation, a pattern that has also been observed in recent studies of faculty international engagement (Kuzhabekova et al., 2022).

By integrating these organizational and motivational perspectives, the study advances a hierarchical and complementary explanation of faculty internationalization engagement. Institutional support establishes the necessary conditions for participation (Hypothesis 1), perceived benefits shape the depth and sustainability of engagement (Hypothesis 2), and education background conditions how faculty respond to both institutional and motivational influences (Hypotheses 3 and 4). Taken together, these findings provide coherent theoretical support for Hypotheses 1 through 4, confirming both the direct effects of institutional support and perceived benefits on faculty internationalization engagement and the moderating role of education background in shaping these relationships.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings yield important practical implications for policymakers, university administrators, and faculty members, particularly in public universities in Guizhou Province and similar underdeveloped regions.

For policymakers and higher education authorities, the results suggest that internationalization policies should prioritize institutional capacity building rather than relying solely on performance indicators. Stable funding mechanisms, targeted internationalization grants, and differentiated policy support for western regions are essential to reduce structural barriers and enable faculty participation. Moreover, policy design should recognize faculty heterogeneity by supporting overseas-educated faculty as internationalization catalysts while simultaneously investing in capacity-building pathways for domestically educated faculty.

For university administrators and institutional leaders, the findings highlight the importance of translating strategic commitment into operationalized organizational practices. Improving administrative efficiency, reducing bureaucratic obstacles, and providing accessible support for international collaboration can substantially enhance faculty engagement. Evaluation and incentive systems should also be refined to meaningfully recognize international engagement in teaching, research, and service, thereby aligning institutional expectations with faculty career development.

For faculty members, the study underscores the importance of viewing internationalization as a long-term professional development strategy rather than a short-term, incentive-driven task. By actively leveraging available institutional support and cultivating intrinsic academic motivation, faculty can enhance their engagement even in resource-limited contexts. Differentiated engagement strategies—such as mentoring, team-based projects, international-at-home initiatives, and incremental participation pathways—may help reduce barriers for domestically educated faculty while maximizing the contributions of overseas-educated faculty.

Overall, by clarifying the interactive roles of institutional support, perceived benefits, and education background, this study provides a theoretically grounded and context-sensitive foundation for enhancing faculty internationalization engagement in public universities in Guizhou Province and other less-developed regions.

VI.CONCLUSION

This study examined faculty internationalization engagement in public universities in Guizhou Province by integrating organizational and motivational perspectives. The findings demonstrate that both institutional support for internationalization and perceived benefits of internationalization engagement significantly predict faculty internationalization engagement, underscoring the joint importance of structural conditions and individual motivational perceptions. In resource-constrained institutional contexts, supportive organizational environments play a foundational role in enabling faculty participation, while perceived academic and professional benefits contribute to sustaining engagement over time.

Importantly, the study reveals that education background moderates these relationships. Faculty members with overseas education backgrounds respond more strongly to both institutional support and perceived benefits, translating favorable conditions and incentives into higher levels of internationalization engagement. This moderating effect highlights the role of prior educational experiences as a critical boundary condition shaping how faculty interpret and mobilize institutional resources.

By empirically validating and extending Childress' Five "I's" Model and Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of faculty internationalization engagement in less-developed higher education systems. The findings offer context-sensitive insights for policy design and institutional practice, emphasizing the need for coherent support structures and differentiated strategies that account for faculty heterogeneity in advancing higher education internationalization.

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