

**From Global Insights to Local Applications: Analyzing Student Engagement Strategies
for Pakistani Higher Education**

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Abstract



Student engagement has garnered significant attention in educational discourse over the past two decades. Research underscores the significance of student engagement in fostering positive academic outcomes for students, along with increased institutional effectiveness. Considering the significance of engagement for enhancing students' learning outcomes, the universities have increasingly prioritized student engagement as a crucial aspect of educational quality. A pivotal approach adopted by many institutions to assess and enhance student engagement is through the implementation of international student engagement surveys. The effective application of engagement indicators gleaned from these global surveys holds promise for fostering similar improvements in universities across different countries, especially the developing ones such as Pakistan. Considering this background, the main purpose of this qualitative research study was to analyze student engagement strategies as reflected in the global student engagement surveys and then to draw implications for universities in Pakistani from global insights. This research employed qualitative research approach and the data were meticulously gathered from publicly accessible documents, specifically focusing on five international student engagement surveys employed by universities across six countries. To analyze the data, thematic analysis was used. Thematic analysis revealed that five major themes or students' engagement strategies emerged from analysis of five surveys include: academic engagement; social engagement; educational environment; teaching and learning quality; and personal development and critical thinking. The implication of the results of this study for Pakistani universities is to focus on higher-order learning, active learning, integrative learning opportunities, learning with peers, staff-student interaction, supportive and inclusive environment, reflective practices, personal development and on lifelong learning of students as a tool for student engagement.

Keywords: Student Engagement, International Engagement Surveys, Universities, Academic Outcomes, Thematic Analysis.

Introduction

During the last two decades or so, significant attention has been paid by researchers, educators, and policymakers alike to the concept of 'student engagement'. This focus has been driven by seminal works such as Astin's theory of involvement (1984), Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris's framework highlighting three dimensions of student engagement, (i.e., behavioral, emotional, cognitive) (2004), and sociocultural theories proposed by Kahu (2013) and Kahu and Nelson (2018). These contributions have collectively refined the understanding of student engagement, shaping it into a complex yet pivotal phenomenon in educational discourse (Bond et al., 2020). The foundational origins of the concept of engagement can be traced back to the foundational works by Tyler (1932), Pace (1980), Astin (1984), Chickering and Gamson (1987), and Kuh et al. (1991). Furthermore, these scholars laid the groundwork for exploring how student learning outcomes are intricately linked to the time and effort students invest in educational activities, emphasizing the role institutions play in promoting meaningful engagement (Kuh, 2003).

The literature demonstrates that student engagement is generally recognized as a multifaceted construct (Appleton et al., 2008; Ben-Eliyahu et al., 2018), often described as a 'meta-construct' due to its composite nature (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kahu, 2013). Debate persists regarding its components, with mostly scholars advocating for three dimensions – cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Bond et al., 2020), while others propose additional elements such as agentic and social engagement (Fredricks et al., 2016; Reeve, 2012). Cognitive engagement, in this context, reflects the depth of students' investment in learning, characterized by their strategic approach and willingness to tackle challenging academic tasks (Boekaerts, 2016). Affective or emotional engagement pertains to students' affective responses towards their peers, teachers, and school environment, influencing their sense of belonging and identity (Fredricks et al., 2004). Finally, behavioral engagement, encompassing participation, effort, attention and conduct, underscores the active involvement of students in their learning processes (Fredricks et al., 2004; Reeve, 2012).

The concept of student engagement varies across literature, reflecting its diverse interpretations and applications (de Brito Lima, Lautert, & Gomes, 2021). At its core, engagement involves students' active participation and interaction within the learning environment, encompassing students' cognitive, conative and behavioral responses to educational stimuli (Boekaerts, 2016). The same has been emphasized by Fredricks et al. (2004) who believe that student engagement comprises through three interconnected dimensions: behavioral engagement involves actions like participation and determination; emotional engagement refers to feelings towards learning and school; and the cognitive engagement refers to investment in learning tasks and complexity mastery. Boekaerts (2016) argued that the concept of student engagement extends beyond mere participation; it encompasses students' interactions with learning materials within the physical, instructional, and social contexts of their educational environment.

Research underscores the significance of student engagement in fostering positive academic outcomes, including improved grades, critical thinking skills, persistence and higher attainment (Flynn, 2014; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Nelson Laird et al., 2014; Webber et al., 2013). Boekaerts (2016) stated that engagement flourishes in settings with supportive teachers, challenging tasks, opportunities for autonomy and structured learning environment. Similarly, engaged classrooms characterized by supportive interactions, challenging tasks, and structured environments correlate with higher levels of engagement and educational quality (Boekaerts, 2016; Fredricks et al., 2004). Likewise, Boekaerts (2016) argued that engagement flourishes in settings with supportive teachers, challenging tasks, opportunities for autonomy, and structured learning environment.

Considering the significance of students' engagement for enhancing their learning outcomes, universities globally, particularly in the Western world, have increasingly prioritized student engagement as a crucial aspect of educational quality and effectiveness (Griffin et al., 2003) in recent decades. A pivotal approach adopted by many institutions to assess and enhance student engagement is through the implementation of student engagement surveys. These surveys serve multiple purposes, such as they provide valuable feedback on teaching effectiveness for faculty development, serve as performance management tools, aid current and prospective students in course selection, and contribute to evaluating the quality of educational programs (Nair et al., 2008). Furthermore, these surveys are instrumental in benchmarking educational quality and supporting quality enhancement initiatives in universities (Webber, Lynch, & Oluku, 2013). The literature further demonstrates that several prominent surveys are employed globally to gauge student engagement and assess institutional effectiveness.

The most prominent international student engagement surveys include: The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE); Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE); Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE); The South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE); and the UK Engagement Survey (UKES). Originating in the USA and Canada, NSSE collects data from first-year and senior students to evaluate engagement levels and perceptions of institutional practices (Kuh, 2001, 2009; Zilvinskis et al., 2017). NSSE focuses on four key themes: academic challenge, learning with peers, faculty interaction, and campus environment, each assessed through ten engagement indicators (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2014). Likewise, the FSSE is also conducted in the USA and Canada, and it gathers feedback from instructional staff about their perceptions and expectations regarding student learning and development. Its structure mirrors the NSSE, organized into comparable themes and indicators (Kuh et al., 2001).

The AUSSE is the largest survey of its kind in Australasia and it also examines current students' engagement across multiple institutions in Australia and New Zealand. It assesses indicators such as academic challenge, active learning, student-staff interactions, and supportive learning environments (Coates, 2010). Likewise, the SASSE has been designed for universities in South Africa and it focuses on high-impact student experiences and engagement in learning. It covers four engagement themes of academic challenge, peer learning, staff interactions, and campus environment. Finally, the UKES is conducted in UK universities and it gauges undergraduate student engagement with an emphasis on course challenge, critical thinking, reflective learning, and collaborative learning experiences. These surveys not only provide valuable insights into student engagement at participating institutions but also serve as crucial tools for improving educational practices internally (Coates, 2010; Webber et al., 2013), along with a number of external implications.

In recent years, numerous studies have delved into various dimensions of student engagement, examining topics such as developing taxonomies of engagement and disengagement (Brint & Cantwell, 2014; Dougan, 2013), the correlation between self-regulation and engagement (Sun & Rueda, 2012), examining its influence on post-graduation outcomes such as career earnings and civic engagement (Hu & Wolniak, 2013; Bowman et al., 2015), the influence of technology on engagement (Chen, Lambert, & Guidry, 2010; Nelson Laird & Kuh, 2005), engagement in online education (Robinson & Hullinger, 2008; Smith et al., 2005), engagement characteristics (Coates, 2007) and cognitive engagement (Richardson & Newby, 2006). Furthermore, research has examined how student background, the psychological states, and their academic disciplines moderate the relationship between engagement and educational outcomes (Cole & Korkmaz, 2013; Griffin & McIntosh, 2015; Wilson et al., 2015; Zilvinskis et al., 2017).

Despite this breadth of research, a notable gap exists in the literature concerning the systematic identification, classification, and assessment of prevalent student engagement strategies across international student engagement surveys. Addressing this gap could yield valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing student engagement strategies within higher education institutions in countries like Pakistan. Zilvinskis, Masseria, and Pike (2017) highlighted that institutions have successfully utilized data from student engagement surveys to significantly enhance both engagement levels and the students' learning outcomes (Banta et al., 2009; Kuh, 2005; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2009). The effective application of engagement indicators gleaned from global surveys holds promise for fostering similar improvements in universities across different countries, especially the developing ones like Pakistan.

Therefore, there is a critical need to explore, identify, classify, and adapt the prominent student engagement strategies within the framework of international student engagement surveys. Such an exploration not only informs practices aimed at bolstering engagement within local contexts but also contributes to the broader discourse on effective educational strategies worldwide. This endeavour is crucial for advancing educational quality and ensuring equitable learning outcomes in developing countries, like Pakistan. Furthermore, there is a need of research with a focus on the practical implementation and customization of these strategies to suit the specific needs and contexts of institutions in Pakistan and similar settings.

Considering this background, the main purpose of this qualitative research study was to analyze student engagement strategies as reflected in the global student engagement surveys and then to draw implications for universities in Pakistani from global insights. Precisely, this qualitative research is aimed at identifying, classifying, and assessing the frequency and the prominence of key student engagement strategies across the five international student engagement surveys, namely, the NSSE, FSSE, AUSSE, SASSE, and UKES. These five student engagement surveys are being used across universities in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the UK. After gaining insights into the global student engagement practices emerged from thematic analysis of five engagement surveys, this research is aimed at drawing implications for universities in Pakistan, by providing insights and recommendations for enhancing students' engagement in higher education institutions of Pakistan.

Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to analyze student engagement strategies as reflected in global student engagement surveys and then to draw implications for universities in Pakistani from global insights. Specifically, this qualitative research is aimed at identifying,

classifying, and assessing the frequency and prominence of key student engagement strategies across five international student engagement surveys (NSSE, FSSE, AUSSE, SASSE, UKES) and applying insights gained from global student engagement practices for enhancing students' engagement in higher education institutions of Pakistan. Specifically, the key objectives of the study are as follows:

- Identify, classify, and assess the frequency and prominence of key student engagement strategies across five international student engagement surveys (NSSE, FSSE, AUSSE, SASSE, UKES).
- Draw implications for universities in Pakistan, providing insights and recommendations for enhancing student engagement strategies in higher education institutions.

By these objectives, the study will not only provide a comprehensive analysis of global student engagement strategies but also ensure that these findings are directly applicable to improving student engagement in Pakistani universities. This study, therefore, highlights the dual focus, identifying, classifying, and assessing the frequency and prominence of student engagement strategies across international student engagement surveys and local application of the insights gained to higher education institutions of Pakistan. Furthermore, this research study addressed the following research questions:

- What are the key student engagement strategies identified in the NSSE, FSSE, AUSSE, SASSE, and UKES surveys, and how frequently and prominently do these strategies appear within each survey?
- Based on the identified and classified student engagement strategies from international surveys, what specific insights and recommendations can be made to enhance student engagement strategies in universities in Pakistan?

Procedure of the Study

Data Collection Procedure

In this qualitative research study, the data were meticulously gathered from publicly accessible documents, specifically focusing on international student engagement surveys employed by universities across six countries. These five selected surveys were: National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for universities in the USA and Canada; the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) for universities in the USA and Canada; Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) for universities in Australia and New Zealand; South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) for universities in South Africa; and UK Engagement Survey (UKES) for universities in the United Kingdom. These five engagement surveys were sourced from their specified webpages of surveys or the official websites of the respective universities. The selection of these five specific engagement surveys was strategically aimed at achieving the primary objective of this qualitative research: to identify, classify, and assess the frequency and prominence of key student engagement strategies across five global student engagement surveys, and to apply the useful insights gained from these global practices to enhance student engagement in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

The key justification for the selection of these five engagement surveys was the comprehensive coverage of student engagement across universities of USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South African, and the UK. Furthermore, these five surveys ensure a comprehensive view of student engagement from both student and faculty perspectives. Another justification for the selection of these engagement surveys was their relevance to Pakistani context. By analyzing these internationally recognized surveys, this research aims to draw actionable insights and recommendations that can be tailored to improve student engagement strategies in Pakistani universities. The chosen surveys provide a wide array of successful engagement strategies that can be adapted to fit the local context of higher education in Pakistan. This methodological approach ensures a thorough examination of global student engagement strategies, providing a solid foundation for drawing powerful implications and recommendations to enhance student engagement in Pakistani higher education institutions.

Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the collected data, thematic analysis was employed. The process followed the steps of thematic analysis as suggested by Creswell (2015). Specifically, the following step-by-step procedure was followed for thematic analysis, comprising six key steps. The first step involved organizing and preparing the data. This initial step involved gathering the survey documents and preparing them for

analysis. This step further included downloading and filing the surveys and organizing them systematically. The second step comprised reading and Memoing. In this step, each survey was read thoroughly to get a general sense of the information and reflect on its overall meaning. Notes and memos were made in the margins to capture initial impressions and emerging thoughts about the data.

The third step of thematic analysis comprised coding the data. The coding process began by segmenting the text data into meaningful segments. This involved initial coding and creating codes. Initial coding involved highlighting words, phrases, sentences, or sections that appeared significant or relevant to student engagement strategies. In creating codes, labels or codes were assigned to these segments. Codes were brief, descriptive phrases summarizing the content of each segment. The fourth step comprised generating themes. After coding, similar codes were grouped together to form sub-themes. This process involved reviewing codes and grouping codes. While reviewing codes, we gone through the list of codes to find patterns or similarities. In grouping codes, the similar codes were combined into sub-themes. For example, the codes related to "collaborative learning" and "discussions with diverse others" were grouped under the sub-theme "learning with peers." Subsequently, these sub-themes were further grouped to form broader major themes. For instance, sub-themes like "quantitative reasoning" and "higher-order learning" were clustered under the major theme "academic challenge."

The fifth step involved defining and naming themes. In this step, each theme and sub-theme was reviewed to ensure they accurately represented the data. The themes were refined, defined, and named to capture the essence of the engagement strategies reflected in surveys. Definitions were written for each theme to clarify their meaning and scope. The sixth and the final step involved describing and interpreting the themes. A detailed description and interpretation of each theme and sub-theme were developed. Description involved explaining what each theme and sub-theme entailed. Interpretation involved discussing the significance of these themes in the context of student engagement strategies across different countries.

Following above-mentioned procedure, overall thematic analysis of five surveys revealed five major themes and corresponding seventeen minor sub-themes. This resulted into identification and classification of five key students' engagement strategies, followed a number of subsequent strategies. These five major themes or students' engagement strategies emerged from thematic analysis of student engagement surveys include: academic engagement; social engagement; educational environment; teaching and learning quality; and personal development and critical thinking. These themes and sub-themes have been presented in detail in results section of this article. Subsequently, the findings from comprehensive analysis of global student engagement strategies were applied to improve student engagement in universities of Pakistan. Moreover, while applying the insights gained from thematic analysis of international student engagement surveys to higher education institutions of Pakistan, the personal experiences of the authors in the areas of leadership and higher education also guided towards implications for universities in Pakistan.

Results

This section presents results of thematic analysis aimed at identifying and classifying student engagement strategies as reflected in international engagement surveys and subsequently draw implications for universities in Pakistani. These engagement surveys are being utilized across universities in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the UK. The data source used for this study include the five international students' engagement surveys, namely, The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE), The South African Surveys of Student Engagement (SASSE) and UK Engagement Survey (UKES). The results of thematic analysis have been presented in two sections, in response to objectives and research questions of the study. The first section presents thematic analysis results to identify, classify, and assess the frequency and prominence of key student engagement strategies across five international student engagement surveys (NSSE, FSSE, AUSSE, SASSE, UKES). The second and the final section presents results aimed at drawing implications for universities in Pakistan, providing insights and recommendations for enhancing student engagement strategies in higher education institutions.

Frequency and Prominence of Key Student Engagement Strategies across International Surveys

This section presents results of thematic analysis to identify, classify, and assess the frequency and prominence of student engagement strategies across five international student engagement surveys

(NSSE, FSSE, AUSSE, SASSE, and the UKES). Specifically, this section synthesizes the thematic analyses across all five surveys to identify, classify, and assess the frequency and prominence of central students' engagement strategies across five surveys. This section outlines the major themes and respective minor themes along with results and interpretation supported by quotations or items from the surveys. Additionally, we have created a word cloud based on the emerging qualitative data to visualize prominent students' engagement strategies. Thematic analysis of five surveys revealed five major themes and their corresponding seventeen minor sub-themes. This resulted into identification and classification of five key students' engagement strategies, followed a number of subsequent strategies. These five major themes or students' engagement strategies emerged from thematic analysis of the five engagement surveys include: academic engagement; social engagement; educational environment; teaching and learning quality; and personal development and critical thinking.

Major Theme 1: Academic Engagement

The first major theme emerged from thematic analysis of the five students' engagement surveys was *academic engagement*. Thematic analysis revealed that *academic engagement* emerged as a key component of student engagement, encompassing six accompanying minor sub-themes, namely, *academic challenge*; *active learning*; *higher-order learning*; *quantitative reasoning*; *learning strategies*; and *reflective and integrative learning*. The first sub-theme of *academic engagement*, i.e., *academic challenge*, focuses on the depth and rigor of academic work, critical thinking, academic expectations, and assessments. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the AUSSE which states: "The assessments in this course required me to think critically about the subject matter." The second sub-theme of *academic engagement*, i.e., *active learning*, place emphasis on students' active participation in constructing knowledge by engaging them in hands-on learning experiences.

The third sub-theme of *academic engagement*, i.e., *higher-order learning*, focuses on engaging students in critical thinking and problem-solving. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the NSSE that states: "My courses challenged me to examine my own beliefs and values." The next sub-theme of *academic engagement*, i.e., *quantitative reasoning*, focuses on application of mathematical and statistical skills in learning. The fifth sub-theme of *academic engagement*, i.e., *learning strategies*, puts emphasis on employing effective methods to enhance learning. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the UKES that states: "I am encouraged to use a wide range of learning resources." The final sub-theme of *academic engagement*, i.e., the *reflective and integrative learning*, focuses on making connections across courses and experiences. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the UKES which states: "I have opportunities to apply what I have learned to different contexts or scenarios."

In conclusion, the theme of *academic engagement* emphasizes the importance of challenging coursework, active participation, critical thinking, and the application of learning strategies for deepening students' understanding. Moreover, this theme expects that students across different regions value academic rigor and assessments that encourage critical thinking and integration of knowledge.

Major Theme 2: Social Engagement

The second major theme emerged from thematic analysis of five students' engagement surveys was *social engagement*. Thematic analysis revealed that *social engagement* emerged as a key component of student engagement, encompassing four associated minor sub-themes, namely, *learning with peers*; *discussions with diverse others*; *collaborative learning*; and *student-staff interactions*. The first sub-theme of *social engagement*, i.e., *learning with peers*, focuses on encouraging teamwork, diverse perspectives, and interactive learning experiences with peers. The second sub-theme of *social engagement*, i.e., *discussions with diverse others*, focuses on engaging students in meaningful dialogues with peers from diverse backgrounds. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the UKES which states: "I have had the opportunity to learn from students whose backgrounds and culture are different from my own."

The third sub-theme of *social engagement*, i.e., the *collaborative learning*, focuses on working together on projects and assignments. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the FSSE which states: "I worked with other students on projects during class." The

fourth and the final sub-theme of *social engagement*, i.e., *student-staff interactions*, focuses on positive interactions with faculty members, personalized teaching approaches, mentorship, and effective teaching practices to enhance students' engagement and satisfaction. It further focuses on engaging students in discussions and seeking guidance from faculty members. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the NSSE which states: "I have discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with faculty members outside of class."

In conclusion, the theme of *social engagement* emphasizes collaborative learning experiences and meaningful interactions with peers and faculty members. Moreover, this theme also states that collaborative learning, staff-student interactions, and learning with diverse peers contribute significantly to students' engagement and learning experiences.

Major Theme 3: Educational Environment

The third major theme emerged from thematic analysis of five students' engagement surveys was *educational environment*. This theme focuses on the overall atmosphere and support within the university. Thematic analysis further revealed that *educational environment* emerged as a key component of student engagement, encompassing two accompanying minor sub-themes, namely, *enriching educational experiences* and *supportive learning environment*. The first sub-theme of *educational environment*, i.e., *enriching educational experiences*, places emphasis on providing diverse and enriching opportunities for students beyond the classroom and their participation in broadening educational activities. For example, the focus on this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the SASSE which states: "I receive prompt feedback from instructors on my academic performance."

The second sub-theme of *educational environment*, i.e. and *supportive learning environment*, focuses on feelings of support within the university community, and these feelings are valued. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the AUSSE which states: "I can easily access the support services I need at this university." Another quote from NSSE confirms the same in these words: "I feel part of a community of learners at this institution."

In conclusion, the theme of *educational environment* focuses on providing diverse experiences and a supportive community for holistic student development. This supportive and inclusive campus environment is highly likely to foster students' overall engagement and well-being.

Major Theme 4: Teaching and Learning Quality

The fourth major theme emerged from thematic analysis of five students' engagement surveys was *teaching and learning quality*. This theme focuses on positive interactions with faculty, personalized teaching approaches, mentorship, and effective teaching practices. This is highly likely to enhance students' engagement and satisfaction. Thematic analysis further revealed that *teaching and learning quality* emerged as a key component of student engagement, including two related minor sub-themes, namely, *effective teaching practices and quality of interactions*. The first sub-theme of *teaching and learning quality*, i.e., *effective teaching practices*, focuses on evaluation of faculty members' teaching methods and approaches. For example, the focus on this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the FSSE which states: "The instructors in this course have demonstrated a genuine interest in students' learning."

The second sub-theme of *teaching and learning quality*, i.e. *quality of interactions*, focuses on the nature of social and academic interactions between students and teaching staff on campus. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the UKES which states: "I am able to contact academic staff when I need to. In conclusion, the theme of *teaching and learning quality* emphasizes effective teaching practices and positive interactions to enhance student engagement and satisfaction.

Major Theme 5: Personal Development and Critical Thinking

The fifth major theme emerged from thematic analysis of five students' engagement surveys was *personal development and critical thinking*. This theme focuses on encouraging students to think critically, connect knowledge, and engage in research. Thematic analysis also revealed that *personal development and critical thinking* emerged as an important component of student engagement, including three related minor sub-themes, namely, *critical thinking*; *reflecting and connecting*; and *research and inquiry*. The first sub-theme of *personal development and critical thinking*, i.e., *critical thinking*, focuses on the capacity building of students for analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. For example, the focus on this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the UKES that states: "I am encouraged to critically evaluate information and arguments."

The second minor sub-theme of *personal development and critical thinking*, i.e., *reflecting and connecting*, emphasizes on making connections between learning and personal experiences of students. For example, the focus of this sub-theme is evident from a quote of the NSSE which states: "My coursework has helped me develop a personal code of values and ethics." The third sub-theme of *personal development and critical thinking*, i.e. *research and inquiry*, focuses on encouraging students to engage in research. In conclusion, the theme of *personal development and critical thinking* emphasize students' ability to think critically, reflect on their learning, and make connections beyond the classroom.

Word Cloud Visualization: Prominence of Dominant Students' Engagement Strategies across the Surveys:

Based on the thematic analysis of emerging qualitative data of five surveys, a word cloud was generated to visualize the frequency and the prominence of key students' engagement strategies across the surveys. This word cloud is shown in Figure 1 and it highlights the most significant themes identified from the qualitative data.

The word cloud visualization in the *Figure 1* provides a concise summary of the most prevalent engagement strategies across the surveyed universities and regions. Moreover, this word cloud visually represents the frequency and prominence of key students' engagement strategies based on the extracted themes from the surveys. The size of each word in the word cloud corresponds to its frequency or importance across the surveys, providing a quick and intuitive overview of the most prominent engagement strategies. A close look at the word cloud in Figure 1 shows that the most prominent words are students, course, work, academic, activities, writing, staff, support, learning, campus, material, teaching, ideas, research, thinking, reading, understanding, discussion, experience, questions, study, projects, writing, values, problems, information, etc. These words have also been frequently occurred in all or most of the five major themes, their corresponding sub-themes, or students' engagement strategies emerged from thematic analysis of the five surveys. These words, therefore, clearly reflect the five major students' engagement strategies, as discussed above in detail and include: academic engagement; social engagement; educational environment; teaching and learning quality; and personal development and critical thinking.

In summary, thematic analysis reveals commonalities in students' engagement strategies across the surveyed universities, including academic, social, and the environmental factors. Academic engagement highlights the importance of rigorous challenges and critical thinking, while social engagement underscores collaborative learning and meaningful interactions. The educational environment and teaching quality play essential roles in providing enriching experiences and a supportive atmosphere for students' holistic development. Thematic analysis further revealed that academic challenge, learning with peers, faculty interactions, and campus environment are key factors influencing students' engagement and experiences in universities globally.

By incorporating quotations and items from the surveys, this analysis offers concrete examples and evidence of the identified themes, providing valuable insights into students' engagement strategies within higher education contexts. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of student engagement within higher education settings and the significance of creating conducive learning environments to promote student success and well-being. The findings underscore the importance of promoting active learning, challenging academic experiences, critical thinking, peer learning, personal development, collaborative environments, and supportive interactions to enhance student engagement and success in universities worldwide.

Interpreting these findings can inform educators and policymakers about effective strategies to promote student engagement and academic success. By focusing on key areas highlighted in the five international students' engagement surveys, institutions can tailor their approaches to better support student learning experiences and overall engagement within higher education settings. Overall, this integrated thematic analysis also underscores the importance of holistic student engagement strategies in fostering positive educational outcomes and enriching the university experience for students across diverse contexts.

from the other departments of the university serving in leadership role. These evidence-based insights and recommendations can guide universities in Pakistan to enhance student engagement.

Academic Challenge

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys revealed that their focus is on promoting higher-order learning. The implication of this result for Pakistani universities is to focus on developing curriculum that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and application of knowledge to real-world situations. This can include project-based learning, research assignments, and case studies. Another implication is to focus on providing integrative learning opportunities by encouraging students to integrate and apply their learning across courses and disciplines, and by fostering a holistic understanding of their subjects.

Learning with Peers

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys further revealed that their focus is on promoting learning with peers by facilitating collaborative learning, discussion forums, and peer review. The implication of this finding for universities in Pakistan is to focus on creating opportunities for group projects, study groups, and peer-led discussions to enhance collaborative learning. Encourage diversity in these groups to expose students to different perspectives. Furthermore, universities in Pakistan may promote practices of discussion forums and peer review through implementing both online and in-class discussion forums and peer review systems to stimulate engagement and deepen understanding through dialogue and feedback.

Experiences with Faculty/Staff

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys revealed that their focus is on enhancing faculty-student interaction and promoting innovative teaching practices as a tool for engaging student. The implication of this finding for universities in Pakistan is to focus on promoting regular and meaningful interactions between faculty and students through office hours, interactive sessions, mentorship programs, and academic advising. Faculty should be approachable and supportive. Another implication is to train faculty in innovative and interactive teaching methods, such as flipped classrooms, experiential learning, and the use of technology to engage students.

Campus Environment

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys further revealed that their focus is on provision of supportive and inclusive environment and on the quality of interactions as a tool for engaging student. The implication of this finding for universities in Pakistan is to focus on fostering such a campus culture that supports student well-being, inclusivity, and a sense of belonging. This includes providing accessible mental health resources, mentorship programs, and social events. Another implication is to improve the quality of interactions among students, faculty, and staff by creating more informal spaces for interaction, such as common rooms, cafes, and lounges.

Active Learning and Community Engagement

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys also revealed that their focus is on encouraging active learning and community engagement, through hands-on learning, as a tool for student engagement. The implication of this finding for universities in Pakistan is to incorporate active learning strategies such as lab work, internships, community service, and field trips to connect academic content with real-world applications. Another implication for universities in Pakistan is that to encourage their students to participate in community services and civic engagement activities to build a sense of responsibility and practical skills.

Reflective Practices and Critical Thinking

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys also revealed that their focus is on reflective practices and critical thinking as a tool for student engagement. The implication of this finding for Pakistani universities is to integrate reflective assignments that encourage students to think about their learning processes and outcomes, such as journals, portfolios, and reflective essays. Another implication for Pakistani universities is that is to focus on developing students' abilities to critically evaluate information, arguments, and different perspectives. This can be achieved through debate clubs, critical reading exercises, and analytical writing tasks.

Personal Development and Lifelong Learning

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys further revealed that their focus is on personal development and lifelong learning as a tool for student engagement. The implication of this finding for universities in Pakistan is to focus on provision of resources and opportunities for students to

pursue their personal interests and development, such as extracurricular activities, workshops, and personal development courses. Another implication for Pakistani universities is to cultivate a culture of lifelong learning by promoting continuous education opportunities, such as online courses, certifications, and professional development programs.

Institutional Policies and Support Systems

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys also revealed that their focus is on devising such institutional policies and support systems that promotes student engagement. The implication of this finding for Pakistani universities is on establishing a system of comprehensive support services that address academic, emotional, and social needs of students. This includes tutoring centers, counseling services and career guidance. Another implication for Pakistani universities is that is to implement robust feedback mechanisms to regularly gather student input on their engagement and experience, and use this data to make informed improvements.

Technological Integration

Thematic analysis of five engagement surveys also revealed that their focus is on technological integration. The implication of this finding for universities in Pakistan is to focus on utilizing such educational technologies that are likely to enhance students' engagement, such as learning management systems, virtual classrooms, and interactive online resources. Furthermore, ensure these technologies are accessible to all students.

Cultural and Contextual Adaptation

The final implication for universities in Pakistan is to mind *cultural and contextual adaptation* of student engagement strategies by tailoring strategies to local context. It is further suggested to adapt successful international strategies to fit the cultural and educational context of Pakistan for more successful application. Furthermore, it is also important to understand the local needs, challenges, and opportunities to create effective engagement strategies. By implementing these student engagement strategies and recommendations, universities in Pakistan can create a more engaging and supportive environment that enhances student learning experiences, academic success, and overall well-being.

Conclusions of the Study

Based on thematic analysis results across the five students' engagement surveys (NSSE, FSSE, AUSSE, SASSE, and UKES), the following four conclusions were drawn from this research:

- First, this study concluded that the common themes emerged from thematic analysis of the five student engagement surveys include: academic engagement; social engagement; educational environment; teaching and learning quality; personal development and critical thinking. These common themes suggest that academic rigor, social learning, supportive environments, quality teaching, and personal development are universally recognized as crucial for student engagement.
- Second, this study concluded that academic challenge, learning with peers, faculty interactions, and campus environment are key factors influencing students' engagement and experiences in universities globally.
- Third, this study highlights the multifaceted nature of student engagement within higher education settings and the significance of creating conducive learning environments to promote student success and well-being. The findings underscore the importance of promoting active learning, challenging academic experiences, critical thinking, peer learning, personal development, collaborative environments, and supportive interactions to enhance student engagement and success in universities worldwide.
- Fourth, the findings of this study can inform educators and policymakers about effective strategies to promote student engagement and academic success. By focusing on key areas highlighted in the five international students' engagement surveys, institutions can tailor their approaches to better support student learning experiences and overall engagement within higher education settings.
- Fifth, the implication of the results of this study for Pakistani universities is to focus on promoting higher-order learning; providing integrative learning opportunities; promoting learning with peers; enhancing faculty-student interaction; provision of supportive and inclusive environment; encouraging active learning and community engagement; and on reflective practices and critical thinking as a tool for student engagement.

- Sixth, another implication of the results of this study for universities in Pakistan is to focus on personal development and lifelong learning of students; devising such institutional policies and support systems that promotes student engagement; technological integration; and to mind *cultural and contextual adaptation* of student engagement strategies by tailoring strategies to local context.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings of this study, the following recommendations are being made, both for international universities and universities in Pakistan.

- First, it is recommended to enhance curriculum design by integrating project-based learning, case studies, and research assignments to promote higher-order learning. Furthermore, **promote** collaborative learning by implementing group projects, peer-led discussions, and study groups.
- Second, it is recommended to foster faculty-student interactions by encouraging faculty to hold regular office hours and mentorship programs. It is also recommended to train faculty in interactive teaching methods such as flipped classrooms and experiential learning.
- Third, it is recommended to create a supportive campus environment by developing accessible mental health resources, mentorship programs, and social events. This may be done by establishing informal interaction spaces like common rooms and cafes to enhance the quality of interactions.
- Fourth, it is recommended to incorporate active learning and community engagement by using hands-on learning methods, such as lab work, internships, and field trips. Universities must encourage students' participation in community service to build practical skills and a sense of responsibility.
- Fifth, it is recommended to integrate reflective practices and critical thinking by using journals, portfolios, and reflective essays to encourage students to reflect on their learning processes. It is further recommended to promote debate clubs, critical reading exercises, and analytical writing tasks to develop critical thinking skills.
- Sixth, it is recommended to adapt strategies to local context by tailoring international engagement strategies to fit the cultural and educational context of Pakistan. For this, universities must understand local needs, challenges, and opportunities to create effective engagement strategies.
- Seventh, it is recommended that universities, both international and Pakistani, should focus on holistic engagement strategies for students. They should emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach encompassing academic rigor, social interaction, and supportive learning environments.
- Eighth, it is recommended that universities, both international and Pakistani, should focus on regional nuances. They should recognize that while core engagement strategies are shared globally, there are distinct regional variations reflecting different educational priorities and practices.
- Finally, this research recommends that universities, both international and Pakistani, should focus on policy implications. Institutions can leverage these insights to tailor their engagement strategies, enhancing student learning experiences and outcomes based on both common themes and regional specificities.

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