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Why Pakistani Students are leaving: The Brain Drain Crisis No One Wants to Talk About

Every year thousands of Pakistan's talented students pack their life in their bags and leaves their country, not just because of better salaries but because of system that fails their own students .

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Introduction

Ask any final year student in Pakistan about their future plans, and almost every answer involves to go away to go to another country . It's not because of their lack of love for their homeland. It's beacuse, they spent four years, the most important years of their life to grow , they spent in a system that taught them theory without practice , gave them degree without direction, and offered them a future with no real options.

The question is not about, Why students are leaving? The question is why even anyone is surprised.

In 2024, nearly 200,000 highly skilled Pakistani's emigrated. Among them were approximately 12,000 engineers and 5,000 doctors. Pakistan ranked globally at 6th number for human capital migration.

> ***"Pakistan loses an estimated $4.2 billion every year in net economic activity as it's most skilled professionals build careers abroad."***

Technology Overview

The reason our students leave are not complicated. They are obvious to anyone who sat inside a Pakistani classroom. University education in Pakistan is largely theoretical. Students memorize textbooks and pass exams. Practical skills, industry exposure and career guidance are rare.

When these graduate encounter peers from abroad with real hands on experience, the gap is immediate and humbling.

Beyond the classroom, the job market punishes merit. Many Positions are filled through connections rather than experience. A qualified graduate with no family network may lose a role to someone with less skill but batter connections.

I also personally face this experience, repeatedly apply for multiple job applications, always ended with destroyed motivation.

So, the question raises, Why build your future in a system that will not value , What you have built? The answer, for growing numbers, is simple : do not.



Figure 1: Image Pakistan ranks sixth globally in human capital migration.

Key Findings & Impact

The economic damage is not abstract. Pakistan loses nearly $4.8 biilion in income to foreign economies every year as skilled professionals emigrate. The world bank has warned that Pakistan must create thirty million jobs over the next decades simply to prevent the situation from becoming dramatically worse.

For Pakistan technology sectors , the damage is intense. About 45,600 IT professionals left in 2023. They were not the people who gave up on Pakistan. Most of them wanted to build careers in Pakistan, they left because their skills, talent, and potential were not respected in their own country , conditions made it impossible for them to stay in Pakistan and when young talents of a country walks out, they took ideas, energy and growth with them.

What's Next?

Solutions of these problems exist. But they require honesty about what is actually broken . The government as introduced an overseas Pakistani card an investment incentives for returning professionals. Some economists point to brain circulation as model, encouraging Pakistani's to gain experience abroad and return with capital and skills, as China and India has managed to do.

These ideas are worth pursing , but anyone who has navigated a Pakistani government knows the gap between policy and reality. Nothing can be fixed without fixing the foundation: a university system built on real skills, a job market that reward merit, government people can trust, and an economy that actually grows fast enough to create opportunity.

Pakistan does not have talent problem. The people that are leaving are the ones who tried hardest and found nothing to hold onto. The loss is not just economic.

In conclusion, the talent is not gone forever, it is waiting to see if home becomes worthy to coming back to.

About the Author

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