

# Chinese Faculty Members at Japanese Universities: Who Are They and Why Do They Work in Japan?

ECNU Review of Education  
2021, Vol. 4(4) 743–763  
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DOI: 10.1177/2096531120985877  
journals.sagepub.com/home/roe



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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to identify the key aspects of the demographic characteristics and motivations of Chinese faculty at Japanese universities.

**Design/Approach/Methods:** Main methods include an analysis of relevant data from a national survey of full-time international faculty in Japan in 2017 and results from semi-structured interviews with several full-time Chinese faculty hired in different Japanese universities.

**Findings:** This study suggests that, compared to the average level of international faculty, there are larger numbers of female Chinese faculty, greater numbers of Chinese professors, Chinese doctoral degree holders, Chinese faculty in engineering, and larger numbers of them being engaged in research rather than teaching. Further, this study argues that the most important reasons for Chinese faculty to work in Japanese universities are academic or professional reasons, followed by their fondness for Japanese life and culture and their agreement with better living conditions in Japan than in China.

**Originality/Value:** It is the first time that the key characteristics of full-time Chinese faculty at Japanese universities and their motivations to come to Japan are investigated and discussed based on both quantitative and qualitative methods.

## Keywords

International faculty, internationalization of higher education, Japanese university, national survey

Date received: 23 September 2020; accepted: 14 December 2020

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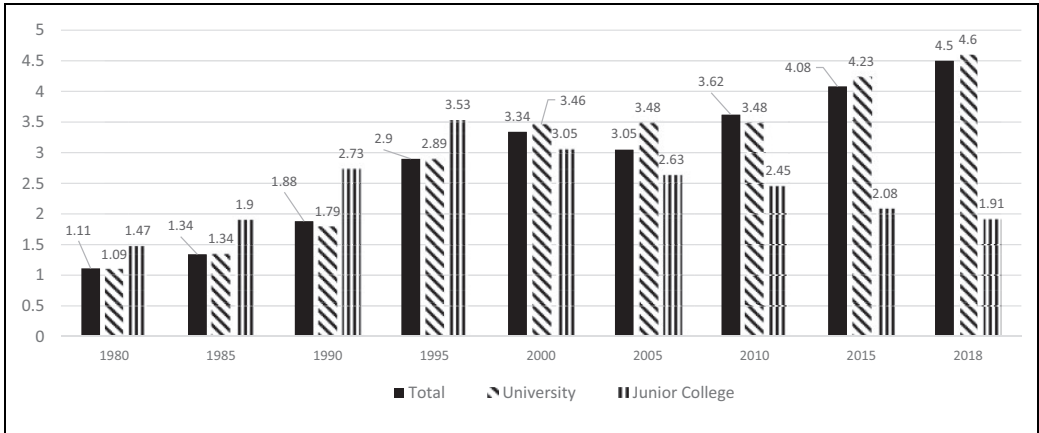
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## Introduction

With the advancement of economic globalization and especially a growing demand for improving international competitiveness of national higher education and research worldwide, attracting international faculty has become one of the important and effective ways of internationalizing national higher education in many countries. According to an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2004) report, most OECD countries have launched policies and strategies to attract capable scholars and scientists who have a high-level knowledge and competency from other countries. Since the 1990s, the mobility of international faculty has expanded quickly in most OECD countries (OECD, 2015).

Furthermore, in some ranking organizations such as Times Higher Education and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), the proportion of international faculty and students is used as an important indicator in ranking universities. To achieve high international status and be treated as a World-Class University, it is critical for some countries to accept talent from overseas, especially international faculty who are no less important than international students (Teichler, 2015). A recent research suggests that international faculty is recognized as an efficient group that brings not only diversity but also new horizons and skills to the countries they went to (Altbach & Yudkevich, 2017). All these factors have facilitated the expansion of international faculty.

Japan is no exception. To combat the new changes and challenges caused by the diversified factors, such as the globalization of economy, the internationalization of higher education, and increasing academic competition, the Japanese government and universities have carried out a series of policies and strategies. For example, since the early 2000s, the Japanese government has carried out a series of national policies to enhance its international competitiveness of higher education and research by hiring international faculty and researchers. As a result, the number of international faculty at Japanese universities has expanded rapidly, as shown in Figure 1 (MEXT, 2019). With a rapid increase in the numbers of inbound international students from the Chinese mainland to Japan, the prediction that the bulk of positions in academia will be offered in developing countries has come true (Altbach, 2004). In Japan, these changes occurred not only in the quantitative expansion of inbound international faculty but also in the international faculty's composition or qualitative aspects such as their demographic profiles. For example, different from what happened in the 1980s when there was a larger number of international faculty from English-speaking countries and particularly those from the U.S. and the U.K. than those from East Asian countries in Japan, the number of Chinese faculty accounted for the largest proportion of all the international faculty members in 2018 (Huang, 2019). Compared to those from other countries, there is little doubt that the impact from Chinese faculty on teaching and research activities in Japanese universities would become more obvious and



**Figure 1.** Changes in the proportion of full-time international faculty at Japanese universities. Source: MEXT (2019).

considerable. However, little is known of their personal identity or motivations to come to work in Japan.

The purpose of this study is to identify the key aspects of the demographic characteristics and motivations of Chinese faculty at Japanese universities. Using relevant data from a national survey of full-time international faculty focused on Chinese faculty at Japanese universities in 2017 and semi-structural interviews with six full-time Chinese faculty who were hired in different Japanese universities with various academic backgrounds, this study is mainly concerned with two specific questions: Firstly, what are the most striking features of full-time Chinese faculty members at Japanese universities according to their gender, discipline, academic rank, highest degree, and so on? Secondly, why did they determine to work in their current universities?

The study begins with a brief review of previous studies in international faculty in Japan. In the second section, it presents an overview of the research background, which is essential to understand the current higher education and international faculty members at Japanese universities. The third section analyzes the data from the national survey of full-time international faculty at Japanese universities in 2017. The study concludes by presenting the main findings and offering implications for research, policy, and institutional practice, as well as pointing out the limitations of this study.

The key term “Chinese faculty” means full-time faculty members or researchers who hold Chinese passports and are hired in Japanese universities. As there are some second-generation Chinese who were born and educated in Japan and worked in Japanese universities, they are excluded from this study. Only those who were born and educated in the Chinese mainland and received their bachelor’s degrees outside Japan are the target population of this research.

## Literature review

With the rapid growth of the global economy, the international mobility of academics and scientists across boundaries has grown increasingly. Some earlier studies present an overview of this population from global and comparative perspectives. For example, Huang and his team described the main characteristics and types of international mobility of the academy in 10 countries and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region based on relevant findings from national surveys in these countries and regions with a common questionnaire (Huang et al., 2014). A more systematic and comprehensive study of recruitment, integration, and impact of international faculty in higher education based on cases from a dozen countries applying a comparative perspective was conducted by a group of scholars from different countries. Unfortunately, no case study of international faculty in Japan is conducted in the book (Yudkevich et al., 2017). In terms of the motivations of international scientific mobility, the critical factors relating to various aspects have been found. Evidence suggests that the main factors of scientific mobility can be named personal and professional growth (Gureyev et al., 2020). A keen sense of engaging with intercultural experiences, adventure, and curiosity exploration is important for international mobility (Cai & Hall, 2016). As De Filippo et al. (2009) suggested, to pursue better career development, improvements in professional skills and competency have been recognized as one of the important incentives for international mobility. Similarly, competitive research topics and better equipment play an important role in the process of attracting international scientists and academics (Ackers, 2005). The second essential driving force of international mobility has been characterized as social-economic factors. For example, the pursuit of higher economic income and better working conditions are the inherent factors for international academics, especially those who are from developing countries (Ackers, 2008; Ciumasu, 2010). Moreover, when it comes to forced international mobility, it appears that economic reasons have also been recognized as a frequent cause. For example, the experiences of working abroad have been taken as a mandatory component written in the working contracts, which have been utilized as an important indicator when assessing the work performances of scientists since it plays an important role in the national and organizational innovation systems (Barufaldi & Landoni, 2012; Morano-Foadi, 2005).

Despite the perceived importance of international academics and their mobility, the attention paid to this population in Japan is extremely limited. Most of the prior studies have investigated the actual situation of the international faculty at Japanese universities, and explored their demographic characteristics, work roles, academic productivity, and their perceptions of certain aspects of Japanese universities (Fujimura, 2016; Horta & Yonezawa, 2013; Huang, 2018b, 2018c; Huang & Daizen, 2020; Huang & Li, 2011; Kitamura, 1980; Yonezawa & Ishida, 2012). To address this, Kitamura (1980) identified the demographic characteristics and key academic activities of

international faculty at Japanese higher education institutions (HEIs) based on a national survey of about 371 international faculty in Japan. With an increasingly important role played by international faculty in Japanese HEIs since the 2000s, several studies were conducted on how to recruit global talent and high-level researchers and faculty (Suh, 2005). Huang and Li (2011) elucidated the structural changes of international faculty from 1985 to 2009 and then through a case study of the University of Tokyo, summarizing the structural changes and features of international faculty at Japanese universities. Furthermore, Yonezawa and Ishida's research compare the behaviors and consciousness of international faculty with domestic faculty and conclude that international faculty tend to be more actively engaged than Japanese faculty in terms of teaching and research activities (Yonezawa & Ishida, 2012). Fujimura (2016) conducted a survey on international faculty working at national universities. The most comprehensive research is a comparative study of international faculty recruitment in Japan conducted recently by Huang (2018a, 2018b); specifically, the demographic characteristics, such as career path, working conditions, working roles, challenges, and so on, of this population, have been clarified. Regarding the prior study concerning the motivations and incentives of international academics and scientists in Japan, little has been investigated. To date, the key factors affecting international academics in the fields of science and technology who migrated to Japan have been identified as Japan's high level of science and technology, opportunities to acquire cutting-edge knowledge, and prospects for improving performance in an environment with large budgets, superior equipment and facilities, and good quality human resources (Murakami, 2009). In addition, Huang's research suggested that economic reasons, better living conditions than the home country, or difficulty of finding employment in the home country are among the most important pull factors for international faculty moving to Japan (Huang, 2018a).

In summary, even though numerous previous studies have been carried out related to the international academics, and their motivations and incentives, much is unexplored in the Japanese context, especially regarding Chinese faculties, who accounted for the largest proportion of total international faculty at Japanese HEIs (Huang, 2018a). With the rapid development of China's economy, the demand for highly skilled talent at HEIs has been intensified over years (Altbach, 2009; Morgan & Wu, 2011) and various policies and programs, such as the Thousand Talent Program and the Ten Thousand Talent Program, have been implemented and have led to a rise in the number of talents coming back to China or to work in China. Moreover, according to *The Nature Index 2016 Rising Stars*, regarding the most rapid improvement in prestigious research productivity, there were 40 Chinese institutions ranked in the top 100; most significantly, 9 Chinese institutions were sitting among the top 10 worldwide (Nature, 2016). Given this acknowledged Chinese context, the inquiries into factors affecting Chinese academics or faculty members to work at Japanese universities are considered to be important and necessary.

## **Research background**

### *Features of Japan's higher education*

The main characteristics of Japanese higher education in the international and comparative perspectives can be practically described as follows.

Firstly, there are three different sectors of HEIs by administration or founder. National universities that became national university corporations<sup>1</sup> since April 2004 are established, funded, and administered by the MEXT<sup>2</sup>. Local public universities are by local governments, and private universities and colleges are by school corporations. These three different sectors play different roles and fulfill distinctive functions according to their spirits of establishment, educational ideas, and missions. For example, even after they became corporations, the faculty from national universities are more engaged in basic and large-scale (with substantial funding, often supported by the national budget) scientific research and producing and training doctoral students. In contrast, the faculty from a vast majority of private sector are primarily concerned with undertaking undergraduate educational activities and delivering degree programs in humanities and social sciences. As local public universities are established, administered, and mainly funded by local authorities, they recruit more students from places in which they are located and produce more graduates who can serve the local economic development and prosperity. The faculty from this sector are expected to be more involved in teaching vocational and technical educational programs for undergraduate students. Very few of them undertake scientific research activities. Secondly, the proportions of both private institutions (universities and junior colleges) and students make up for the predominant share of all HEIs. For example, in 2018, the proportion of private universities and junior colleges comprised 77.1% and 94.9% of the total, respectively, and the proportion of students in these universities and colleges constituted, respectively, 73.7% and 94.8% of the total (MEXT, 2019). Therefore, although there is no clear-cut category of research and nonresearch universities determined by government or public authorities, the so-called former seven imperial universities that were founded before World War II (WWII), several national universities with a long history, and very few private universities like Waseda and Keio universities, which came into existence in the late 19th century, are regarded as research universities. The remaining universities and colleges are normally viewed as teaching-centered institutions, especially a majority of private universities and colleges are primarily concerned with undergraduate studies.

### *Changing strategies of attracting international faculty*

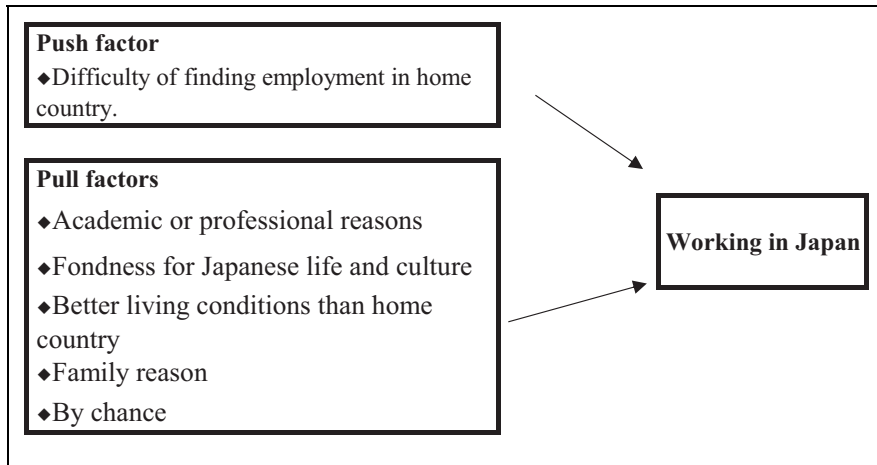
Although international experts and scholars were invited to work in various fields and sectors of Japanese government and society, and universities and other educational institutions in the late 19th

century, the number of these international academics and professionals is quite limited. The introduction of the U.S. general education idea to Japanese HEIs soon after the WWII resulted in the quick growth in the number of international faculty from English-speaking countries who provided English language as one of compulsory university-wide programs for all undergraduate students in Japan (Huang, 2018d). The massification of Japanese higher education and realization of near access to universal higher education since the 1980s have required Japanese HEIs to recruit more numbers of international faculty to teach foreign languages for Japanese students. Further, the amendment to the law relating to international faculty is another factor for the rapid increase in the number of inbound international faculty in Japan. For example, the implementation of the Special Measures Act for the Appointment of Foreign Staff at National and Public Universities in 1982 has made it possible for international faculty to be hired as a full-time employee in Japanese universities and promoted to any academic rank and participate in governance arrangements in both national and local public universities though they were not civil servants. Because the act has changed international faculty's social and academic status significantly, the number of international faculty has expanded massively, especially in national and local public universities since then.

In recent years, the Japanese government has launched various projects to attract highly skilled overseas talent, and these projects have also led to a rapid growth in the number of international faculty and researchers who moved to Japanese HEIs. In 2008, to enhance the international competitiveness of educational and research activities at Japanese universities, the Japanese government launched the "Global 30 Project." Partly the project aims at accepting 300,000 inbound international students, including those from English-speaking countries. Thirteen universities, which are selected and funded by the project, are also asked to hire larger numbers of international faculty and to provide English-taught degree programs for both international and domestic students. Moreover, the Japanese government implemented the "Top Global University Project" in 2014. Its primary goal is to promote the internationalization of university education and the international competitiveness of Japanese universities by expanding both international students and international faculty, the number of English-taught degree programs and doctoral students, and to improve the international reputation and competitiveness of Japanese higher education by 2024 (MEXT, 2014).

As a result, remarkable changes occurred in the quantitative and qualitative aspects of international faculty since the early 1980s. Quantitatively speaking, as suggested in Figure 1, there was a rapid growth in full-time international faculty from 1980 to 2018, and the number of full-time international faculty alone showed fast, continuous growth. Compared to 1979, when there were 940 full-time international faculty (0.9% of all faculty), as of 2018, its number amounted to 8,609 (4.6% of all faculty; MEXT, 2019).

From the qualitative perspective, according to the existing research, while the total number of international faculty has expanded, compared to the late 1970s, the number of Chinese faculty has



**Figure 2.** Analytical framework of international faculty's motivations to work in Japan.

Source. Huang and Chen.

had the quickest growth. For example, by country/region of origin, the 1979 survey shows that international faculty came predominantly from the U.S. (39.1%), followed by those from the U.K. (17.1%), Germany (15%), Other (10.8%), Spain (7.7%), France (6.6%), the Chinese mainland (4.4%), and Korea (2.7%). In contrast, the 2017 survey shows that the largest proportions came from the Chinese mainland (22.2%), followed by those from the U.S. (18.8%), Korea (13.2%), the U.K. (8.2%), Canada (4.8%), Germany (3.8%), Australia (2.8%), France (1.8%), the Taiwan region (1.7%), and Other (22.9%). This clearly suggests that Japanese universities have attracted more international faculty from neighboring countries than 30 years ago and become more of a regional hub (Huang, 2019).

## Research methodology and data analysis

### *Analytical framework*

This study creates an analytical framework based on the pull and push theory of migration. Although this theory was developed primarily to examine factors affecting immigration, it has been widely applied to explore the factors that affect the motivations of international students (Wilkins et al., 2012). According to the model (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), push factors refer to the factors that force students to leave their home countries and go abroad, while pull factors are viewed as the factors that attract students to their destination countries. Despite different target groups, there is little doubt that the model can also be used to analyze the international mobility of faculty and researchers and the motivations of their movement from home countries to foreign countries. Figure 2 suggests that the push factor is concerned with international



faculty members' difficulty of finding employment in home country. In contrast, the pull factors include academic, professional, economic, cultural, political and family reasons, and so forth like by chance.

## Research methods

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches to identifying the most striking characteristics of Chinese faculty and their motivations to work in Japanese universities. Regarding the quantitative method, this study uses the data from the national survey of full-time international faculty at Japanese universities based on the project of "A National Survey of International Faculty at Japanese Universities and Colleges." The project is funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, and the survey was administered in late 2017 by researchers from the Research Institute for Higher Education, Hiroshima University of Japan. Main questions in the survey are concerned with full-time international faculty's personal information, their working environment, teaching and research activities, their perceptions of the governance and management of universities they belong to.

Although there were approximately 8,000 full-time international faculty at Japanese 4-year universities in May 2017, partly because not all of them uploaded their personal profiles or in the home pages of the institutions they belong to and partly because some of them might have left their universities by the time when the survey implemented and the data of target population were collected. In late June 2017, when the national survey was carried out, this study gathered the profiles of 5,351 faculty who appeared by name to be international from publicly available sources, including the home pages of the international faculty. According to the list of the target population, 5,351 paper questionnaires in English and Japanese were sent out. However, it appeared that nearly 1,300 of the target group were not appropriate to be surveyed because they had retired or become naturalized Japanese citizens, while others were mistakenly identified as international faculty by name based on feedback and returned questionnaires from their affiliations. By the end of August 2017, about 1,285 valid responses were received from 4,076 international faculty (response rate: 31.5%) after nearly 1,300 of the target population were excluded for the reasons described above.

Although there are some questions about international faculty's motivations of coming to work in Japan, they are all closed questions and respondents' choices are quite limited. Therefore, this study also undertook semi-structured interviews with six Chinese faculty with diverse backgrounds and investigated their motivations to work in Japan. Participants were selected randomly, but they were invited to be interviewed by gender, discipline, academic rank, type of their belonging universities, and their reference in teaching or research. As presented in Table 1, all participants were between 30 and 40 years old. Among them, one was an associate professor, two were assistant professors, and three were lecturers. By discipline, one was from Social Sciences, two from Humanities, and three

**Table 1.** Characteristics of interviewees.

Interviewee code	Age	Gender	Discipline	Academic rank	Type of university
A	35	Male	Linguistics	Lecturer	Private
B	34	Female	Natural Sciences	Assistant professor	National
C	32	Male	Engineering	Lecturer	National
D	33	Female	Management	Lecturer	Private
E	38	Female	Humanities	Associate professor	National
F	33	Male	Engineering	Assistant professor	National

Note. The interviews were conducted by Lilan Chen in 2019 as part of this research.

from Natural Sciences. In addition, four of them worked in national universities and showed a stronger reference in research. Two were employed in private universities who believed that they were more interested in teaching. A pseudonym is used to represent a participant to ensure confidentiality. Despite differences between the seven interviewees, the average of the length of their study and work in Japan seems to be around 6 years. The main questions in the interview include their demographic information and open-ended questions that focus on their decision-making on working at Japanese universities, as well as their working/living situations in Japan. Interviews were conducted in both Chinese and Japanese and recorded for further analyses. Before this article was written, all the relevant findings were translated into English. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in January and February 2019. The time for each interview lasted between 40 min and 1½ hr.

### Data analysis based on the national survey

As for descriptive statistics of the valid responses from all international faculty who participated in the national survey of 2017 (Table 2), regarding academic ranks among international faculty, the largest numbers of them are professors (34.5%), followed by associate professors (29.6%), assistant professors (21.3%), lecturers (13.6%), and others (1.1%). By discipline, the top numbers of them stay in Humanities (29.6%), followed by those in Social Sciences (27.0%), Engineering (18.7%), Life Science (9.9%), Others (9.4%), and Natural Sciences (5.5%). By nationality, except for others (37.8%),<sup>3</sup> the largest numbers are from China (22.2%), followed by those from Korea (18.6%), the U.S. (13.2%), and the U.K. (8.2%). In terms of gender, the proportion of male international faculty is as high as 74.1%. By the highest degree, the largest numbers of them are doctoral degree holders (75.6%), followed by those with master's degrees (23.3%) and those with bachelor degrees (1.1%; Huang et. al., 2019).

Among all these valid respondents, there were 270 or 22.2% of Chinese faculty. As presented in Table 3, by gender, 64.0% of them were male and 36.0% were female. About their distribution by

**Table 2.** Descriptive characteristics of all international faculty.

Gender	Male	74.1%
	Female	25.9%
Academic rank	Professor	34.5%
	Associate professor	29.6%
	Lecturer	13.6%
	Assistant professor	21.3%
	Others	1.1%
Highest degree	Doctor	75.6%
	Master	23.3%
	Bachelor	1.1%
Discipline	Humanities	29.6%
	Social Sciences	27.0%
	Engineering	18.7%
	Life Science	9.9%
	Natural Sciences	5.5%
	Others	9.4%
Nationality	Chinese	22.2%
	Korean	18.6%
	American	13.2%
	British	8.2%
	Others	37.8%

Source. National survey of full-time international faculty at Japanese universities (2017).

academic rank, the largest number of Chinese faculty was full-time professors (43%), followed by associate professors (24%), assistant professors (24%), and lecturers (8%). Regarding the distribution of Chinese faculty by the highest degree, 91.1% of them were doctoral degree holders, only 8.9% of them earned a master's degree, and no one was bachelor's degree holder. By discipline, the largest number of Chinese faculty was hired in Engineering (24.1%), followed by those in Social Sciences (21.5%), Humanities (21.1%), Natural Sciences (12.6%), and Life Science (11.5%). It is clear that the largest number of Chinese faculty was hired in engineering. This suggests that the largest number of Chinese faculty was not involved in providing language teaching, but belonged to one of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. As indicated in the same survey, this is quite different from American and British faculty who were mainly engaged in teaching English language programs or courses from undergraduates.

**Table 3.** Main characteristics of Chinese faculty.

Gender	Male	64.0%
	Female	36.0%
Academic rank	Professor	43.0%
	Associate professor	24.1%
	Lecturer	8.0%
	Assistant professor	24.0%
Highest degree	Doctor	91.1%
	Master	8.9%
	Bachelor	0.0%
Discipline	Humanities	21.1%
	Social Sciences	21.5%
	Natural Sciences	12.6%
	Engineering	24.1%
	Life Science	11.5%
	Others	9.2%

Source. National survey of full-time international faculty at Japanese universities (2017).

As an employee working at Japanese universities, Japanese proficiency influences international faculty's satisfaction directly or indirectly through their life and academic activities (Yonezawa & Ishida, 2012). The data from the survey show that over 70% of Chinese faculty claimed their Japanese skill is *very good* or *good*. Probably this is also one of the important reasons why the largest number of Chinese faculty was hired in engineering in which their main responsibility was not to provide foreign language courses for undergraduate students at Japanese universities.

In terms of their preferences in teaching or research, the data show that as high as 69.8% of Chinese faculty showed interest in research activities. In contrast, only 30.2% of them claimed that their reference lied in teaching activities. As for the languages used in their academic activities, as Table 4 illustrates, when it comes to teaching activities, nearly 90% of Chinese faculty use Japanese, which means the majority of Chinese faculty have quite good Japanese ability. About the language used in research activities, 51.9% and 46.5% of Chinese faculty use Japanese and English, respectively. Further, 1.6% of them used other language (Chinese) when doing research. Therefore, Chinese faculty are trained to use both Japanese and English in their research activities. They are active not only in Japanese but also international academic market, and some of them are also active in the Chinese academic market surely.

**Table 4.** Distribution of Chinese faculty's language usage in teaching and research.

	Japanese (%)	English (%)	Others (%)	Total (%)
Teaching activities	89.90	8.50	1.60	100
Research activities	51.90	46.50	1.60	100

Source. Data from the national survey of 2017.

**Table 5.** Reasons for Chinese faculty to work in Japan.

(a) Academic or professional reasons	4.23	(1)
(b) Fondness for Japanese life and culture	3.74	(2)
(c) Difficulty of finding employment in home country	1.81	(6)
(d) Better living conditions than home country	3.48	(3)
(e) Family reasons	2.88	(4)
(f) By chance	2.73	(5)

Source. National survey of 2017.

Note. (1) Question: Why have you decided to teach/do research at a university in Japan?

(2) Respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement typically in 5 points: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*.

In terms of their satisfaction with the overall environment at the current working institution, 56.1% of them responded that they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the current environment (very high = 16.7% and high = 39.4%).

With respect to their motivations to work in Japan, as revealed in Table 5, the largest number of Chinese mentioned academic or professional reasons (4.23), followed by fondness for Japanese life and culture (3.74) and better living conditions than home country (3.48).

Table 6 presents the Chinese faculty's responses to the reasons why they worked in Japanese universities by gender and academic rank. Concerning gender, both male and female academics believed that the most important factor affecting them to work in Japan is "academic or professional reasons," and no significant differences could be found between male and female faculty. In the case of male faculty, the second largest number of them answered with "fondness for Japanese life and culture" (67.7%), followed by their answer with "better living conditions than home country" (56.6%). While the second largest number of female faculty strongly agreed and agreed with "better living conditions than home country" (60.2%), followed by their agreement with "fondness for Japanese life and culture" (59.8%). Interestingly, a greater number of female faculty (47.7%) strongly agreed and agreed with "family reasons" than male faculty (38.2%). With respect to academic rank, despite slight differences, the largest number of them answered with "academic

**Table 6.** Reasons for Chinese faculty's work in Japan by gender and academic rank.

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Professor (%)	Associate professor (%)	Lecturer (%)	Assistant professor (%)
(a) Academic or professional reasons	82.1	81.1	82.9	80.3	59.1	87.7*
(b) Fondness for Japanese life and culture	67.7	59.8**	72.3	63.3	45.0	57.1
(c) Difficulty of finding employment in home country	11.3	14.3	8.8	8.9	30.0	14.8
(d) Better living conditions than home country	56.6	60.2	55.6	63.2	50.0	54.7
(e) Family reasons	38.2	47.7*	43.4	41.0	35.0	37.5
(f) By chance	32.1	33.7	32.3	29.8	38.1	31.7

Source. National survey of 2017.

Note. (1) Question: Why have you decided to teach/do research at a university in Japan?

(2) Respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement typically in 5 points: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*. Only the number of responses of (4) *agree* and (5) *strongly agree* are included.

(3) \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

or professional reasons” regardless of their academic ranks. This is especially in the case of assistant professor (87.7%). Except for lecturers, larger numbers of the Chinese faculty mentioned that “fondness for Japanese life and culture” is more important than “better living conditions than home country” for them to choose to work in Japan.

By discipline, as revealed in Table 7, except for slight differences in their answers to “fondness for Japanese life and culture,” no significant differences could be confirmed in their answers to all the other statements. Similar to their previous responses by gender and academic rank, the largest number of them strongly agreed and agreed with “academic or professional reasons,” followed by their agreement with “fondness for Japanese life and culture” and “better living conditions than home country.”

## Results from interviews with Chinese faculty

As for the main reasons affecting Chinese faculty to work in Japan, based on the results from the interviews with six Chinese faculty in Japanese universities, this study identified four main reasons for Chinese faculty to work in Japanese universities.

**Table 7.** Reasons for Chinese faculty's work in Japan by gender and academic rank.

	Humanities (%)	Social Sciences (%)	Natural Sciences (%)	Life Science (%)	Engineering (%)	Other (%)
(a) Academic or professional reasons	87.8	75.4	90.9	81.0	84.9	58.3
(b) Fondness for Japanese life and culture	76.1	70.9	63.6	54.1	61.4	36.4*
(c) Difficulty of finding employment in home country	16.7	9.3	9.1	5.6	11.5	44.4
(d) Better living conditions than home country	59.5	68.4	45.5	48.7	55.3	45.5
(e) Family reason	27.3	49.1	41.7	47.4	42.9	18.2
(f) By chance	23.8	35.1	45.5	34.1	32.1	30.0

Source. National survey of 2017.

Note. (1) Question: Why have you decided to teach/do research at a university in Japan?

(2) Respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement typically in 5 points: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree*. Only the number of responses to (4) *agree* and (5) *strongly agree* are included.

(3) \* $p < 0.05$ .

Firstly, academic and professional reasons appear to be one of the most influential factors when they decided to work in Japanese universities because almost all the interviewees emphasized this point. For example, A mentioned that a long time of studying and doing research in Japan made him adaptable to his current university and working in Japan would be of help to his future career development as a researcher.

I became a PhD student at the same institute where I got my master's degree, and I got a job at my university as a research assistant during my PhD period. And then I got my job here naturally after I graduated from my PhD degree. I think that I could become a good researcher because I know most of the big names in my field in Japan. The working condition is satisfactory, too.

Lecturer B from a local university also declared:

I came to Japan after getting my bachelor's degree in the Chinese mainland, and have completed my master's and doctoral degree here at X university of Japan. Compared to other countries, I was quite familiar with the academic system of Japan and knew how it works. So, I decided to stay here and then got this job.

Secondly, Japan's geographic location and its language and culture are considered to be one more factor affecting Chinese faculty to work at Japanese universities. This factor or reason does not

appear in the survey questionnaire of 2017, but two interviewees asserted it. For example, C who had worked in a national university in Japan for almost 4 years told one of the authors of this article that:

I got my bachelor's degree in New Zealand and a PhD degree in Australia. And I was in Germany for 4 years as a postdoc ... in terms of the reason why I came here, mmm, actually, I think the living conditions in Australia and New Zealand are better (than here), but Japan is also a nice country for Asian people to live, especially for Chinese people. For example, the food, the 1-hr jet lag, similar culture and very close distance to China which only takes 2 hr to go back to hometown. Furthermore, we can understand the Japanese language approximately just by reading the Chinese characters even though we don't know the specific pronunciation of the Japanese.

Thirdly, the factor of family or work matters was identified as an important reason for Chinese faculty to work in Japan, too. D was a lecturer who worked at a Japanese private university, and she explained why she stayed in Japan below:

I opened a company when I was an undergraduate student specialized in economy while in China. I decided to learn Japanese because of the business trades with several Japanese companies like Shiseido and Kanebo at that time. Then I came to Japan as an undergraduate student in order to learn a living Japanese. Moreover, because my family has a lot of business trades with Japan, which persuaded me to settle down here.

Fourthly, it is interesting that one of the interviewees admitted that she came to work in the current university by chance. E is an associate professor from a national university, and her answer to the interview question about her motivation of coming to Japan is as follows:

I earned my PhD degree in Hong Kong university and I didn't want to stay in Hong Kong anymore for various reasons which include the positions provided in Hong Kong university were unsatisfactory. It was OK for me to go to any other countries in Asia, but I didn't think America or European countries would have been a good option for me to stay at that time ... I was so lucky that X university provided a position that required an academic who should have a Chinese background but also can speak English. So, I applied for this job. Everything was perfect for me.

To sum up, despite small samples, this study suggests that academic and professional reasons, geographic and cultural reasons, and interviewee's family and business or work reasons seem to be significant factors that affected them to stay and work in Japanese universities.

## **Conclusion, discussion, and implications**

As analyzed and discussed above, this research has several new findings below.

Firstly, although the national statistics of international faculty at Japanese universities are issued by the MEXT every year, not any information is available on their demographic features, let alone



the data of international faculty from a specific country like China. This research suggests that, compared to the average level of international faculty, there are larger numbers of female Chinese faculty, professors, doctoral degree holders, and larger numbers of Chinese faculty worked in Engineering. They had a very high level of satisfaction with their working condition, and nearly 70% of the Chinese faculty showed preference in research rather than teaching. In short, this study identified the basic characteristics of full-time Chinese faculty working at Japanese universities and provided a better understanding of their key demographic, educational, and professional characteristics.

Secondly, the study argued that the most important reasons for Chinese faculty to work in Japanese universities are academic or professional reasons, followed by their fondness for Japanese life and culture and their beliefs in better living conditions in Japan than China. Except for the third factor, both the academic or professional and the economic factors were supported by the results of interviews with the Chinese faculty working in Japan. Interestingly, the data from the national survey suggest differences in their motivations of working in Japanese between male and female faculty. The Chinese female faculty seems to stress family reason more than male faculty. In contrast, a greater number of the Chinese male faculty believed the important motivation of fondness for Japanese life and culture than female faculty. This is also partly supported by the interviews. Moreover, the interviews suggested that the geographic location of Japan and commonly shared culture seem to be factors attracting Chinese faculty to work in Japan. Previous studies in this regard suggested that salaries, sense of adventure, research time, organizational commitment, work assessment and tenured decision, satisfaction or belongingness with their affiliations, and so on, were the effective considerations (Kim et al., 2012; Lawrence et al., 2014; Lee & Kuzhabekova, 2018). The points are partly identified in this study. However, largely different from the previous studies, this study presented the most striking characteristics of Chinese faculty, which was the largest group of international faculty at Japanese universities and the important factors affecting them to come and work in Japan based on the quantitative and qualitative research methods. This not only contributes significantly to the study of international faculty in Japan, or international mobility of academics by providing new data and findings, but also helps Japan's government, individual universities, academics, and even the general public and other stakeholders understand some of Chinese faculty members' perceptions of Japanese society and their affiliations and may help Japanese universities to adopt more appropriate and relevant strategies to recruit Chinese faculty in the future. These points can be considered to be original findings of this study.

The implications derived from this study include the following aspects. Firstly, more comprehensive and in-depth research needs to be undertaken in exploring what factors have shaped the demographic and educational characteristics of the Chinese faculty. Further, as the largest group of international faculty in Japan, it is also important to research into other aspects of Chinese faculty.

For example, compared to international faculty from other countries or societies, what professional roles and responsibilities has the Chinese faculty assumed in Japan? In terms of implications for policy, since the Japanese government has implemented several strategies and projects to recruit and hire more international faculty in Japanese universities, should a larger number of Chinese faculty be increased in Japan? Would it be necessary to diversify the composition of international faculty by nationality? What would be the most appropriate and effective way of recruiting and hiring international faculty? These issues should be taken into consideration from the perspective of policy. For institutional practice, as both academic and professional reasons seem to be the most important factors attracting the Chinese faculty to work in Japan, it is critical for individual Japanese universities to provide more favorable academic and professional environments in which they can fulfill themselves in academic and professional activities if Japanese universities want to attract larger numbers of international faculty from China.

Regarding the limitations in the study, firstly, only six interviews were conducted in this study that may lack of representativeness of the Chinese faculty. It is necessary and important to conduct interviews with more numbers of Chinese faculty in the future. Also, due to the self-reported responses in the national survey, some of the respondents' statements and answers need to be carefully confirmed and checked. Secondly, despite a large number of part-time international faculty, including part-time Chinese faculty in Japan, their personal profiles and professional roles and motivations of working in Japan are rarely studied. As they also constitute an integral part of international faculty in Japan and especially play a central role in teaching, further research needs to be undertaken in these part-time faculty in Japan. Finally, a further comparative study with other international faculty or Japanese faculty is needed to better identify and understand the essential characteristics of Chinese faculty.

### **Acknowledgments**

The authors of this study want to express their thanks for the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for providing funding for the project of "An International and Comparative Study in Roles and Contributions of International Faculty and Researchers" (2019–2023, project code 19H01640).

### **Contributorship**

Futao Huang and Lilan Chen conceived the presented idea. Huang wrote "Introduction," "Research background," "Research methodology and data analysis," and "Conclusion, discussion, and implications." Chen wrote "Data analysis based on the national survey" and "Results from interviews with Chinese faculty." The authors critically revised the manuscript together.

### **Declaration of conflicting interests**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

## Notes

1. National university corporations refer to a transition happening to Japanese national universities in 2004 based on the National University Corporation Law. After its implementation, the national universities became juridical public bodies separated from the Japanese central government.
2. MEXT refers to Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan.
3. In this category, the numbers of international faculty from any single country or society do not exceed 10 members.

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