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Mandarin Learning Intentions in Bangladeshi Higher Education: Belt and Road Initiative Awareness, Motivation and Perceived Institutional Support

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ABSTRACT

Educational and professional opportunities related to China prompt inquiries into how university students and graduates evaluate the importance of learning Mandarin in conjunction with English. This study investigated the relationships among awareness of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), motivation to learn Mandarin, perceived institutional support, learning intentions, and perceived employment value in Bangladesh. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted with 400 participants, including 320 current university students and 80 recent graduates, recruited through convenience sampling from five locations. Composite scores from the five-point agreement scale were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression. A paired-samples t-test was employed to compare graduates' employment value ratings for English and Mandarin Chinese. BRI-related awareness was positively associated with motivation and perceived institutional support. Motivation was positively linked to learning intentions ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$), and perceived institutional support was positively correlated with the perceived employment value of Mandarin. The relationship between awareness and learning intention was not significant. Among recent graduates, there was no significant difference in employment value ratings between English and Mandarin ($p = .148$). These findings differentiate the recognition of potential opportunities from the commitment to learning and elucidate how perceived educational support influences the value attributed to learning Mandarin. Within the constraints of a cross-sectional convenience sample, this study provides a contextual analysis of language-learning aspirations and informs considerations regarding accessible Mandarin provision, clear information about opportunities, and guidance that aligns with learners' educational and professional priorities.

Keywords: *Mandarin learning intentions, Belt and Road Initiative, language learning motivation, perceived institutional support, and Bangladesh.*

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INTRODUCTION

University students and recent graduates face important decisions when considering the acquisition of an additional language, as it involves balancing time, effort, and future goals (Nagle, 2021; Van Gorp et al., 2024). Employment opportunities often weigh heavily in these considerations, alongside academic objectives, cultural interests, and the potential for international connections. Research on international students learning Chinese highlights the interplay of these factors, showing that scholarships, career goals, and cultural experiences significantly influence their commitment to language learning (Lu et al., 2022; Mussa & Cao, 2026). To comprehend these decisions, it is essential to examine both individual motivations and circumstances that make language learning feasible and valuable. In Bangladesh, this issue involves comparing the established importance of English with the prospects associated with learning Mandarin.

English serves as a crucial foundation for comprehending this context. Hamid's (2016) examination of Bangladesh's linguistic markets illustrates the varying opportunities to attain valued English proficiency across different educational and social settings. Subsequent research continues to highlight English as a resource linked to professional ambitions. Ramalingam and Islam (2024), utilising interviews with graduates in Dhaka, discuss its perceived importance for careers, communication, and social recognition. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2026) report significant practical and career-oriented motivations for English-medium instruction among students at a private university. These aspirations coexist with enquiries into educational preparation and the assumptions underlying language policy. Roshid and Kankaanranta (2025) identify discrepancies between university preparation and workplace communication expectations, while Ali et al. (2023) critically analyse the framing of English skills as human capital within development discourse. Collectively, these studies indicate that the value attributed to English warrants examination alongside the opportunities available for learners to acquire and utilise it.

Mandarin introduces a further dimension to these educational and professional aspirations. Recent research offers direct evidence of its relevance to some Bangladeshi learners. Amin (2026), examining postgraduate students' attitudes towards Chinese and French, found that participants associated Chinese learning particularly with economic and technological opportunities. Their accounts also identified linguistic, financial, and administrative difficulties that complicated their aspirations. Dong et al. (2026) provide a complementary perspective through a Bangladeshi student's educational trajectory to China within the wider context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Their study illustrates how multilingual resources, institutional encounters, and imagined futures can become connected in educational mobility. These accounts establish the relevance of Mandarin learning to particular Bangladeshi experiences while highlighting the practical conditions surrounding it. They also invite closer examination of how students and graduates perceive China-related opportunities while considering Mandarin as an additional language.

Research beyond Bangladesh helps clarify the relationships that warrant attention. Li and Tsung (2025) found that motivational selves, cultural interest, and pedagogical

experiences were associated with international students' intended learning efforts in Chinese. Liu's (2023) study, which collected data at two points during a semester, further demonstrates that motivation can develop alongside learners' experiences. In a different population, Song and Turner (2025) showed how heritage learners' intentions to continue Mandarin coursework involved appraisals of instrumental value, course expectations, and emotional experiences. These findings make learning intentions a useful focus while also showing why evidence requires careful contextual interpretation. Heritage learners, international students in China, and prospective learners in Bangladesh encounter different circumstances. Lam et al.'s (2025) review reinforces this concern by calling for greater attention to social perspectives and learner contexts in Chinese-language motivation research. Collectively, this literature supports examining motivation within the educational and social environments in which language-learning decisions are made.

The literature reviewed here raises a specific question for the present study: How do BRI-related awareness, motivation, perceived institutional support, and Mandarin learning intentions relate to one another among university students and recent graduates in Bangladesh? Existing studies illuminate English's perceived value, individual experiences of Chinese learning, and the contextual character of motivation. The present enquiry brings these concerns together using a common set of survey measures. It also distinguishes respondents' assessments of learning opportunities from their assessments of employment value. This distinction matters because recognising potential opportunities, feeling motivated to learn, and perceiving accessible university support represent different aspects of a learner's situation. Examining their associations can clarify how these perceptions coexist within the same respondent group.

Bourdieu's (1991) concepts of linguistic capital and linguistic markets provide the principal theoretical orientation. From this perspective, the value of language competence depends on the social settings in which it receives recognition and becomes usable. Hamid's (2016) application to Bangladesh highlights the importance of differentiated opportunities to acquire valued competence. Contemporary work extends this contextual understanding of language learning. Rahaman's (2025) narrative study in Bangladesh demonstrates how identity, ideology, and access to capital can configure a learner's engagement with English. Fan et al. (2025) and Darvin (2025) also explain the value of bringing motivational and investment perspectives into dialogue while retaining their conceptual distinctions. These contributions inform the present study's attention to individual aspirations and perceived educational opportunities. The survey examines selected relationships consistent with this orientation: identity, ideology, and the conversion of language competence into economic returns remain contextual considerations rather than measured outcomes.

The conceptual framework distinguishes awareness, motivation, institutional support, intentions, and employment-value perceptions. BRI-related awareness concerns respondents' knowledge of China-related economic activity and its perceived career relevance. The framework proposes positive associations between this awareness and both Mandarin learning motivation and perceived institutional support, while also examining its

association with learning intentions. Motivation concerns reasons for learning and willingness to make an effort, whereas intentions concern prospective commitment to learning Mandarin. Perceived institutional support captures respondents' assessments of university opportunities, including courses, scholarship information, and learning activities. Guo et al.'s (2026) findings concerning university learning environments provide broader grounds for attending to institutional conditions, although their study does not establish a relationship with Mandarin employment value. Therefore, the present framework examines this relationship directly. It also compares graduates' employment-value ratings for English and Mandarin within respondents, recognising that the questionnaire addresses broader employment contexts for English and more explicitly China-related contexts for Mandarin.

This study aims to examine these relationships through a cross-sectional survey of university students and recent graduates recruited from public and private university settings in Bangladesh. Three research questions guide the enquiry. First, how is BRI-related awareness associated with Mandarin learning motivation and intentions, and how is motivation associated with intentions? Second, how is perceived institutional support associated with BRI-related awareness and the perceived employment value of Mandarin? Third, among recent graduates, do perceived employment-value ratings differ between English and Mandarin in the contexts specified by the questionnaire? The corresponding hypotheses are presented in the Methods section. These questions concern contemporaneous perceptions and associations. Their interpretation therefore remains bounded by the study's measures and design, without assuming temporal ordering or an indirect relationship among the constructs.

The intended contribution is a more precise account of how perceived opportunity, educational support, and personal commitment relate to additional-language learning in this setting. By examining English and Mandarin within the same enquiry, the study accommodates the possibility that respondents value both languages for different purposes. By distinguishing perceived institutional support from documented university provision, it also keeps learners' assessments visible as an educational concern in their own right. The resulting evidence can inform discussions of curriculum planning, access to language-learning opportunities, and the information available to students making educational decisions. More broadly, the study connects linguistic-market perspectives with a bounded empirical examination of how students and graduates assess language learning as part of their anticipated futures.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey to examine the associations among BRI-related awareness, Mandarin learning motivation, perceived institutional support, language-learning intentions, and the perceived employment value of English and Mandarin in Bangladeshi higher education. Cross-sectional research examines observations without following participants over time and supports the analysis of contemporaneous associations (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Data were collected between January and July 2026. The design

addressed respondents' perceptions and relationships among measured constructs while limiting conclusions about causality, institutional change over time, and actual employment outcomes.

The target population consisted of current university students and recent graduates in Bangladesh, all aged 18 years or older. Recent graduates were specifically defined as individuals who had completed a university degree within the last five years. Recruitment efforts encompassed both public and private universities located in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, and Sylhet, with participants representing various academic disciplines. Convenience sampling was employed through recruitment on campuses and via social media groups catering to students and graduates. Questionnaires were distributed electronically using Google Forms and in paper format during in-person recruitment sessions. Out of the 450 questionnaires distributed, 400 responses were retained following a screening process. The final sample included 320 current students and 80 recent graduates. University staff were excluded from the analytical sample as they did not meet the criteria of the target population. Recruitment was based on accessibility and participants' willingness to engage, resulting in a sample that was not nationally representative.

The questionnaire consisted of six substantive scales and a section on background information. The items were adapted from established linguistic market and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) literature and evaluated by local experts in applied linguistics. Substantive items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). BRI awareness included familiarity with China-related projects, economic cooperation, Chinese companies, and the BRI itself, along with the perceived career relevance of these activities. Perceived institutional support involved the university's provision of Mandarin courses, scholarship information, cultural activities, *Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi* (HSK) preparation, and academic connections with Chinese universities. Motivation for learning Mandarin addressed employment and educational reasons for studying the language and willingness to invest effort. Intentions for learning Mandarin concerned pursuing the language as an additional skill and dedicating time and resources to achieving proficiency in it. The employment value scales evaluated the perceived usefulness of English and Mandarin for employment opportunities, interviews, career advancement, and business communication. English items addressed broader employment contexts, whereas several Mandarin items specified China-related positions and organisations. Comparisons were interpreted within these boundaries. Employment value scores reflected respondents' assessments of usefulness within the specified professional contexts. Institutional support represented perceived provision, and learning intentions focused on additional Mandarin learning rather than an exclusive choice between languages. Composite scores were calculated as the mean of the constituent items, with higher scores indicating stronger endorsements. Background questions included age, gender, participant status, university type, study location, field of study, previous Mandarin learning, China-related work or personal contact, self-rated English proficiency, and intentions to study or work overseas.

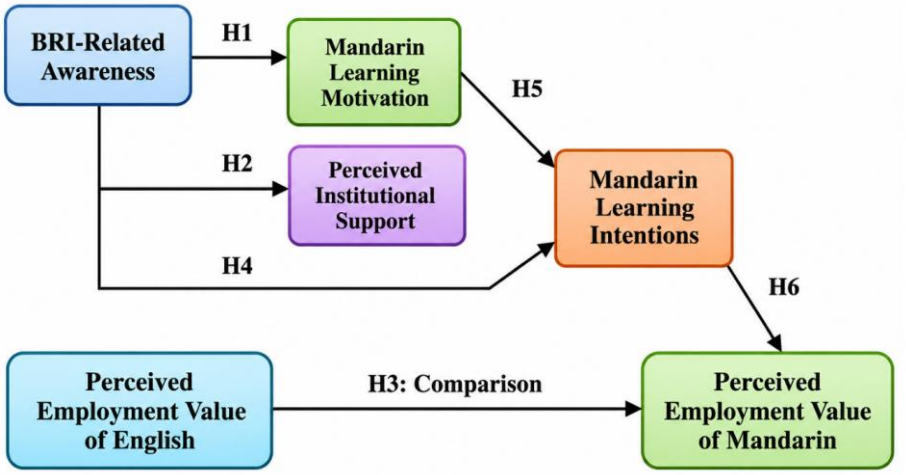


Figure 1. Research Model

The six hypotheses retained their original numbering, with the wording adjusted to match the operational definitions. Hypothesis 1 (H1) posits that awareness of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is positively associated with the motivation to learn Mandarin. Hypothesis 2 (H2) posits a positive correlation between BRI-related awareness and perceived institutional support for learning Mandarin. Hypothesis 3 (H3) investigates the differences in perceived employment value ratings between English and Mandarin among respondents, as outlined in the questionnaire. Hypothesis 4 (H4) examines the relationship between BRI-related awareness and the intention to learn Mandarin. Hypothesis 5 (H5) suggests that motivation to learn Mandarin is positively associated with the intention to pursue the language. Hypothesis 6 (H6) proposes that perceived institutional support enhances the perceived employment value of Mandarin. Notably, H3 involves a within-respondent comparison that is analytically distinct from the regression-based relationships. The framework does not assume mediation by motivation or institutional support; any indirect association requires a separate analysis.

During the screening process, responses were evaluated for missing data, duplicates, out-of-range entries, unusually short completion times, uniform response patterns, and internal inconsistencies. Consequently, 50 responses were excluded: 22 were incomplete, 18 contained duplicate or straight-line responses, and 10 exhibited internal inconsistencies. Participant characteristics were summarised using frequencies and percentages, while composite measures were described using means and standard deviations. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Confirmatory composite analysis was performed using partial least squares structural equation modelling in SmartPLS 4, with measurement assessment focusing on item loadings, composite reliability, and average variance extracted. Pearson's correlation was employed to examine bivariate relationships. Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted to test hypotheses H1, H2, H4, H5, and H6 using SPSS Statistics version 28. The dependent variables included learning motivation, perceived institutional support, perceived Mandarin employment value, and learning intentions. Predictors were based on BRI-related awareness, motivation, and institutional

support as per each hypothesised relationship. Age, gender, participant status, and previous Mandarin learning were included as covariates significantly associated with relevant outcomes in the bivariate analysis. Diagnostics addressed normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity, with variance inflation factors below 3. Hypothesis H3 was examined using a paired-samples t-test among 80 recent graduates, with English and Mandarin ratings paired within individuals to maintain correspondence between each respondent's two composite scores. Analyses involving the graduate subgroup were distinguished from those using the combined sample. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$, and regression coefficients, standard errors, and 95% confidence intervals are reported in the Supplementary Model Summary Table.

Research ethics approval was obtained from institutional committees across the five study regions, separate from recruitment permissions. Participation was voluntary, with respondents receiving study information and providing informed consent through paper consent forms or affirmative online agreements prior to accessing the questionnaire. Paper respondents received a participant information sheet before completing the consent form and could decline participation or discontinue completion. The questionnaire did not request names or identification numbers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Participant characteristics

The final analytical sample comprised 400 respondents retained after screening 450 questionnaires were screened. Fifty responses were excluded: 22 were incomplete, 18 contained duplicate or straight-line responses, and 10 were inconsistent. The retained sample included 320 current university students (80.0%) and 80 recent graduates (20.0%). University staff were excluded from the final analytical dataset.

Women accounted for 55.0% of the respondents, and the largest age group was 21–25 years (55.0%). Participants were recruited from five study locations, with Dhaka contributing the largest proportion (30.0%). Previous Mandarin learning was reported by 140 respondents (35.0%), and 156 respondents (39.0%) reported China-related work or personal contact. Table 1 presents the participant characteristics of the study.

Table 1. Participant characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	180	45.0
	Female	220	55.0
Age	18–20 years	120	30.0
	21–25 years	220	55.0
	26–30 years	60	15.0
Participant status	Current university student	320	80.0
	Recent graduate	80	20.0
Study location	Dhaka	120	30.0
	Chittagong	80	20.0
	Rajshahi	80	20.0

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Study location	Khulna	60	15.0
	Sylhet	60	15.0
Previous Mandarin learning	Yes	140	35.0
	No	260	65.0
China-related work or personal contact	Yes	156	39.0
	No	244	61.0

Measurement quality

Internal consistency was assessed for the six substantive scales using the final sample of 400 respondents. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .83 to .89. The coefficients were .86 for BRI-related awareness, .84 for perceived institutional support, .89 for Mandarin learning motivation, .87 for the perceived employment value of English, .85 for the perceived employment value of Mandarin, and .83 for Mandarin learning intentions. Mandarin-learning motivation was measured using four items. The measurement assessment conducted through partial least squares structural equation modelling yielded item loadings ranging from .725 .877. Composite reliability estimates ranged from .845 to .942, while the average variance extracted ranged from .614 to .680. Table 2 presents the internal consistency estimates and descriptive statistics.

Descriptive statistics

The perceived employment value of English had the highest mean score (M = 4.18, SD = 0.61), followed by the perceived employment value of Mandarin (M = 4.13, SD = 0.70). The difference between these rounded means was 0.05 scale points. The mean score for Mandarin learning motivation was 3.76 (SD = 0.74), while that for BRI-related awareness was 3.72 (SD = 0.71). Perceived institutional support had a mean of 3.54 (SD = 0.79), and Mandarin-learning intentions had a mean of 3.48 (SD = 0.82). All six means were above the response scale midpoint of 3.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency of the substantive measures

Measure	M	SD	Cronbach's α
BRI-related awareness	3.72	0.71	.86
Perceived institutional support	3.54	0.79	.84
Mandarin learning motivation	3.76	0.74	.89
Perceived employment value of English	4.18	0.61	.87
Perceived employment value of Mandarin	4.13	0.70	.85
Mandarin learning intentions	3.48	0.82	.83

Correlations among the measures

Positive correlations were observed for all six substantive measures (Table 4). BRI-related awareness correlated with Mandarin learning motivation (r = .59), perceived institutional support (r = .55), and Mandarin learning intention (r = .20). Mandarin learning motivation was also correlated with perceived institutional support (r = .52) and learning intention (r = .56). Perceived institutional support correlated with the perceived employment value of Mandarin at r = .46. Perceived Mandarin employment value was correlated with

learning intentions (r =.51). English and Mandarin employment value ratings were positively correlated (r = .48), indicating that respondents who assigned a higher employment value to one language also tended to assign a higher value to the other.

Table 3. Correlations among the substantive measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. BRI-related awareness	—					
2. Perceived institutional support	.55	—				
3. Mandarin learning motivation	.59	.52	—			
4. Perceived employment value of English	.18	.21	.16	—		
5. Perceived employment value of Mandarin	.31	.46	.43	.48	—	
6. Mandarin learning intentions	.20	.39	.56	.27	.51	—

Regression results

Regression analyses identified positive, statistically significant associations for H1, H2, H5, and H6. BRI-related awareness was positively associated with Mandarin learning motivation (β = .62, t = 8.54, p < .001), supporting H1. It was also positively associated with perceived institutional support (β = .58, t = 7.96, p < .001), supporting H2. Mandarin learning motivation was positively associated with learning intentions (β = .51, t = 6.78, p < .001), supporting H5. Perceived institutional support was positively associated with the perceived employment value of Mandarin (β = .46, t = 5.92, p < .001), supporting H6. The association between BRI-related awareness and Mandarin learning intentions did not reach statistical significance (β = .09, t = 1.23, p = .220). Therefore, H4 was not supported. Table 4 summarises these regression results alongside the separate comparisons conducted for H3.

Table 4. Hypothesis-testing results

Hypothesis	Association or comparison examined	β	t	p	Decision
H1	BRI-related awareness and Mandarin learning motivation	.62	8.54	< .001	Supported
H2	BRI-related awareness and perceived institutional support	.58	7.96	< .001	Supported
H3	Within-respondent comparison of English and Mandarin employment-value ratings	—	1.45	.148	Not supported
H4	BRI-related awareness and Mandarin learning intentions	.09	1.23	.220	Not supported
H5	Mandarin learning motivation and Mandarin learning intentions	.51	6.78	< .001	Supported
H6	Perceived institutional support and perceived employment value of Mandarin	.46	5.92	< .001	Supported

Comparison of perceived employment value

For the subgroup of 80 recent graduates, English received a slightly higher mean employment-value rating (M = 4.18, SD = 0.61) than Mandarin (M = 4.13, SD = 0.70). The difference between the rounded means was 0.05 scale points. However, the reported paired-samples t-test indicated that this difference was not statistically significant (t = 1.45, p = .148). Therefore, H3, which proposed a difference between the two employment-value ratings, was

not supported. This comparison concerned respondents' perceptions within the employment contexts specified by the questionnaire.

Discussion

The findings describe a pattern in which awareness of China-related opportunities, motivation, and perceived educational support were associated with different aspects of Mandarin learning. BRI-related awareness was positively associated with motivation and perceived institutional support, supporting H1 and H2. Motivation was positively associated with learning intentions, supporting H5, while the association between awareness and intentions was not statistically significant, leaving H4 unsupported. Perceived institutional support was positively associated with the employment value attributed to Mandarin, supporting H6. Among recent graduates, the paired comparison did not identify a statistically significant difference between English and Mandarin ratings; therefore, H3 was not supported. These findings concern respondents' perceptions and prospective commitments within the circumstances captured by the survey.

The association between BRI-related awareness and motivation suggests that the perceived relevance of China-related activity forms part of the context in which respondents consider Mandarin learning. Amin's (2026) interviews with Bangladeshi postgraduate students similarly connected Chinese learning with economic and technological aspirations. Lu et al. (2022) offer a broader account in which employment, scholarships, qualifications, and cultural experiences overlap in learners' investment in Chinese. These studies help interpret the present association as consistent with learners attaching personal significance to anticipated opportunities. They also indicate that professional aspirations can coexist with other reasons for learning. Dong et al.'s (2026) account of a Bangladeshi student's educational mobility illustrates how such aspirations can become intertwined with relationships and educational experiences. The present survey adds evidence of an association across its respondent group, while leaving the formation and development of these aspirations open to further investigation.

BRI-related awareness was also associated with perceived institutional support. Respondents who reported greater awareness tended to view university opportunities for Mandarin learning more favourably. One possible interpretation is that knowledge of China-related opportunities accompanies greater familiarity with relevant courses, scholarships, and institutional activities. The reverse possibility also merits consideration: encounters with these opportunities may accompany greater awareness. Dong et al. (2026) illustrate the significance of institutional encounters in one student's mobility, while Guo et al. (2026) identify relationships between university learning environments and language learners' motivation and engagement. These studies provide contextual parallels. The current association nevertheless remains a relationship between reported perceptions. Establishing how institutional opportunities and awareness develop together would require evidence collected over time and independent documentation of university provision.

The different findings for H4 and H5 bring personal commitment into sharper focus. Motivation was associated with Mandarin learning intentions, whereas the reported coefficient for awareness was small and not statistically significant. Recognising opportunities and expressing willingness to pursue learning therefore warrant separate attention. Li and Tsung (2025) found that motivational selves, pedagogical experiences, and cultural interest were associated with intended effort among international students learning Chinese. Song and Turner (2025), studying heritage learners, likewise showed how intentions to continue Mandarin coursework involved appraisals of value, expectations, and emotional experiences. Although these populations differ from the present sample, they help contextualise the relevance of motivation to prospective commitment. Fan et al. (2025) further demonstrate the value of considering aspirations alongside agency and learning circumstances. The present pattern does not establish mediation; an indirect association would require a separately specified analysis.

The positive association between perceived institutional support and Mandarin's perceived employment value extends this discussion to the educational setting. Courses, scholarship information, and university links may make opportunities associated with the language more tangible to respondents. This proposed explanation requires further investigation. Hamid's (2016) account of Bangladesh's linguistic markets helps explain why access to valued language competence deserves attention alongside the benefits learners anticipate. Lu et al. (2022) similarly connect investment in Chinese with several expected returns. Guo et al. (2026) reinforce the broader relevance of learning environments, although their study does not examine Mandarin employment value. H6 therefore contributes evidence about the coexistence of perceived educational support and perceived professional relevance in this sample. Whether particular forms of support strengthen these perceptions or whether interested learners become more attentive to available support remains unresolved.

H3 requires a different interpretation because it concerns a comparison within recent graduates. The small difference between English and Mandarin employment-value ratings was not statistically significant. Consequently, H3 was not supported, although the result did not establish equivalence between the languages. Research on Bangladesh provides context for understanding favourable assessments of each. Ramalingam and Islam (2024) describe graduates' accounts of English as a professional and social resource, and Roshid and Kankaanranta (2025) show its relevance to workplace communication. Amin (2026) identifies economic and technological aspirations associated with Chinese learning. These studies make it understandable that respondents could value both languages. The comparison is also shaped by the questionnaire wording: English items concern broader employment situations, whereas several Mandarin items specify China-related contexts. Its contribution lies in showing how graduates rated these contextualised propositions. Claims about relative labour-market demand would require employer evidence and comparable measures of actual language use.

Read through Bourdieu's (1991) perspective, the findings direct attention to the settings in which learners expect language competence to acquire value. English and Mandarin can be considered in relation to different anticipated uses, audiences, and opportunities. Hamid (2016) provides a particularly relevant account of how linguistic markets operate unevenly within Bangladesh. Contemporary work also helps connect these contextual conditions with individual aspirations. Rahaman's (2025) narrative analysis illustrates how access to capital, identity, and ideology configure English learning, while Darvin (2025) highlights productive connections between motivational and investment perspectives. The present study's conceptual contribution is bounded: it distinguishes awareness, motivation, perceived support, employment-value perceptions, and intentions within one empirical enquiry. These distinctions provide a basis for examining perceived linguistic value while keeping prospective commitment, acquired competence, and realised employment returns analytically separate.

The educational implications concern how universities help learners assess opportunities and gain access to learning. Institutions could consider accessible introductory Mandarin courses, clear scholarship information, and guidance that explains the kinds of communication particular study or employment pathways require. Amin's (2026) account of financial, administrative, and linguistic difficulties makes accessibility particularly relevant. Li and Tsung (2025) support attention to pedagogical experiences, while Roshid and Kankaanranta (2025) demonstrate the importance of examining workplace communication when considering educational preparation. Such provision would benefit from consultation with learners and prospective employers, followed by an evaluation of participation and learning outcomes. Professional aspirations also deserve to be situated within broader educational purposes. Ali et al.'s (2023) critique of English development discourse cautions against assuming that language education automatically produces economic advancement. Cultural engagement, relationships, and learners' own priorities should remain part of programme planning.

Several limitations define the reach of these interpretations. Convenience recruitment across five locations does not make the sample representative of Bangladesh's university population. The cross-sectional design establishes contemporaneous associations, and self-report measures may share response tendencies. The career-related content of the awareness and motivation measures also warrants attention when interpreting their association. Institutional support was perceived rather than independently documented, and employment value was assessed through beliefs rather than observed recruitment, earnings, or career progression. The graduate comparison involved 80 respondents and differently contextualised language measures. Future research could follow learners from initial interest into participation and sustained study, drawing on Liu's (2023) demonstration of motivation's development over time. Institutional records, learner interviews, and employer evidence would also help clarify how perceived opportunities relate to accessible provision and subsequent experiences. This contextual work would respond to Lam et al.'s (2025) call for closer attention to the social circumstances of Chinese-language learning.

CONCLUSION

In a study involving university students and recent graduates in Bangladesh, awareness of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was found to be positively linked with both the motivation to learn Mandarin and the perception of institutional support. While motivation was directly related to learning intentions, perceived support was connected to the perceived employment value of Mandarin. However, the link between awareness and learning intentions was not statistically significant, highlighting the need to differentiate between recognising opportunities and committing to learning. Among recent graduates, the slight difference in employment-value ratings between English and Mandarin was not statistically significant, thus not supporting Hypothesis 3, although this does not imply that the languages are equivalent. This research provides a contextual analysis of how perceived opportunities, educational support, and personal aspirations interact within the same study, while keeping intentions, competence, and employment outcomes analytically distinct.

For universities, these results suggest a need to reassess the availability of Mandarin courses, scholarship information, and guidance on language use in educational and employment settings. Planning should consider learners' circumstances and communication needs, while also acknowledging cultural interests and personal aspirations alongside professional goals. The conclusions are limited by the use of convenience sampling, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-reported perceptions. The comparison among graduates also reflects the distinct employment contexts outlined in the questionnaire. Longitudinal research that combines learners' accounts with institutional records and employer data could explore how initial interest evolves into participation, sustained learning, and subsequent language use. Such evidence would assist universities in evaluating whether the available support aligns with learners' needs and how anticipated opportunities correspond to their later experiences.

CRediT Authorship Contribution

Author 1: Engaged in the conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, and validation processes, as well as drafting the initial manuscript and approving the final version. Author 2: Focused on investigation, data curation, and formal analysis, while also contributing to the manuscript through review and editing. Author 3: Participated in the methodology and investigation, and assisted in the manuscript's review and editing.

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Ethics Statement

This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Committee of all survey universities prior to the commencement of data collection. This research analyzed survey data collected from participants who provided informed consent before proceeding. For the

paper-based administration, participants read a printed participant information sheet and signed/checked a consent form; for the digital/online administration, an introductory consent screen appeared first, requiring an affirmative click-through agreement before accessing the questionnaire. Moreover, all responses were collected anonymously with no names or identification numbers recorded. his/her research work analysed survey data All participants provided consent prior to completing the survey. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Bangladesh.

Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of AI use

The authors used AI (Dola AI) during the preparation of this manuscript. Particularly review the past relevant literature, language, and clarity. But the authors reviewed and revised AI-assisted material, and accepts full responsibility for the accuracy for the content of the published article.

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