

Personal Statement

In Pakistan, a common perception links computer science predominantly with web development, fueled by the surge in small service-based startups and lucrative freelancing opportunities. Regrettably the reality is that this trend prompts graduates to rush into the industry right after earning their Bachelor's degrees, overlooking the pursuit of advanced education. This shift bears visible repercussions, particularly in the stunted growth of research facilities within the country. While many argue that industry and startup development form the backbone of the economy, the simultaneous lamentation over the lower ranking of Pakistani universities adds a layer of contradiction. In my view, how can we anticipate Pakistani students excelling in research when the system and society discourage every step forward? This dilemma becomes even more apparent when we compare ourselves to neighboring countries like China and India, where flourishing universities and a thriving technology sector contrast sharply with our diminishing quality of students.

Additionally, a widespread lack of awareness in our educational institutions, from high school to the fourth year of university, strongly influences our academic pursuits. The common practice of idolizing figures like Steve Jobs and prioritizing talks from successful entrepreneurs overshadows the significant research conducted by our own professors. Personally, I only became aware of the concept of research around the middle of my sophomore year. It wasn't until I took graduate-level courses like Distributed Systems and Topics in Internet Research that I started reading research papers from my supervisor, Dr. Zafar Ayyub Qazi. This exposure helped me better understand the intricate design of today's systems and drew inspiration from my instructor's efforts to enhance inclusivity in Pakistan.

These courses not only enlightened me but also featured talks by research-oriented professors such as [Dr. Fawad](#) and [Dr. Ramnathan Algapan](#). Their discussions introduced us to the remarkable challenges they were addressing at a profoundly low system level. These experiences were nothing short of extraordinary and played a pivotal role in cultivating my interest in problem-solving within systems. This curiosity, sparked during those wonderful encounters, eventually fueled my determination to pursue a Ph.D.

My decision to pursue a Ph.D. has been fueled by considerable discouragement, even from close friends within society. The prevailing belief that a Ph.D. is a risky venture and a futile expenditure of effort has become a societal norm. However, I view these entrenched norms as invaluable insights, often stemming from individuals who have never ventured into the realm of research themselves. In my perspective, my passion lies in problem-solving within systems and optimizing their efficiency. Acknowledging the issues prevalent in my society, I recognize my responsibility as a member to reshape the distorted perception that perpetuates the ongoing darkness in my country.