



A SUCCESS STORY

USPCASW: NOT JUST AN INSTITUTE, BUT A PLATFORM FOR FULFILLING DREAMS

As a child, I frequently fell ill. Almost every time my family took me to a doctor, the answer was the same: I must have eaten something contaminated from outside. That recurring explanation got me thinking: if food could occasionally make us sick, what about water? We drink it every single day, and most of us never question where it comes from or whether it is truly safe.

That thought stayed with me for years. The more I learned about waterborne diseases, the clearer it became that contaminated drinking water posed a far greater and more widespread threat than most people realized. It was no longer just a personal concern; it had become a mission. I wanted to understand the science behind water quality, and I wanted to do something about the harm it caused in communities. That determination shaped my academic path from that point onward.

Growing up in Nawabshah, however, meant that opportunities in water-related fields were practically nonexistent. There was no institution or research center in my hometown dedicated to water studies. So, I did the next best thing; I enrolled in a degree program in Chemistry, a discipline closely tied to water quality analysis and environmental research. But even then, the laboratory facilities at my university were still in their early stages, and I could feel my ambition to do meaningful, water-focused research slipping further out of reach.

Then, in 2021, I came across USPCAS-W, MUET. The moment I read about the center, I knew this was the place I had been looking for; a place where I could finally turn my long-held dream into reality. Without wasting any time, I applied and enrolled in the Master's program in Water, Sanitation and Health Sciences, beginning my studies in September 2022.



But the excitement of getting in was quickly overshadowed by harsh reality. My father had already retired, and the family did not have the resources to cover my tuition fees, let alone my daily living expenses. At one point, the situation became so difficult that I seriously considered dropping out. I was on the verge of walking away from the very opportunity I had worked so hard to reach.

That was when Allah put Dr. Naveed Ahmed Qambrani in my path. His encouragement changed everything. He told me to stay strong, reminded me that hardship is always followed by ease, and urged me not to leave USPCAS-W. He explained that research projects were regularly offered at the center and encouraged me to work hard, apply for those opportunities, and let my merit speak for itself.

His words gave me the strength to keep going. For the first six months, my father endured significant hardship to support my education, stretching every resource to keep me in the program. Then, in the seventh month, a door opened; the Sindh HEC-funded COE-37 Project announced positions for Research Assistants. By the grace of Allah, I passed the selection test and, in February 2023, joined the project while continuing my Master's studies under the supervision of Dr. Muhammad Rizwan.

That position changed my life. It allowed me to cover my educational and daily expenses while gaining hands-on research experience. During this time, my elder brother, Wahid Ali Khokhar, who was working as a contract lecturer and managing his own family responsibilities, generously supported my accommodation costs. He stood by me throughout my Master's journey, offering unwavering encouragement whenever I needed it most.

I was also fortunate enough to receive the Sindh HEC Indigenous Master's Scholarship, which covered my whole tuition fees. That financial relief allowed me to focus entirely on my studies and research without the constant weight of expenses hanging over me.

My Master's research drew on data generated through the COE-37 Project, which investigated the health impacts of drinking water among communities living along the Indus River – from its upper reaches all the way downstream. The study identified waterborne diseases linked to drinking water quality and assessed the healthcare costs that households bore as a result. Through this work, I came face to face with the challenges vulnerable communities endure and developed a much deeper understanding of the connection between water quality and public health.

More importantly, the project allowed me to fulfill the dream that had driven me since childhood – to conduct research that could contribute to solving real-world water-related problems. I also had the opportunity to publish several research articles during this period, which strengthened both my academic profile and my professional development.

But understanding the problem was not enough. A new and more urgent question began to occupy my mind: how could these water-related diseases actually be prevented? Research could identify the risks, but what communities needed were sustainable solutions – practical measures that would protect them from waterborne illnesses for years to come.

Once again, USPCAS-W, MUET provided the answer. Through the UNIDO-PAIDAR Project, and under the supervision of Dr. Tanveer Ahmed Gadhi, I am now serving as a Project Coordinator, working directly with communities that face serious drinking water quality challenges. Our work involves assessing the water people consume, identifying contamination-related risks, and designing evidence-based water treatment and filtration systems. These systems are then installed within the communities, providing them with safe and reliable drinking water.

Through this initiative, families gain access to clean water, their exposure to waterborne diseases drops, and their overall quality of life improves. For me, this project is more than a job; it is the continuation of a dream that began in my childhood. It is a commitment to using science, research, and innovation to ensure that people have access to safe drinking water and, ultimately, healthier futures.



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