

**INTERNATIONAL PHD STUDENTS' FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCES: THE CASE OF
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (UKZN)**

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DECLARATION

I, Oyewo Adetola Elizabeth (214582712), hereby declare that:

The research reported in this dissertation is my original research. The thesis has not been submitted to another university for any degree or examination. This dissertation does not contain another person's writing. The sources used are referenced and acknowledged.

ABSTRACT

This study contributes to the literature on internationalization of higher education by adding to scholarship on students' destination choice on studying abroad and their experiences in host countries. South-south migration of students is an under researched field when compared to South-north migration. This study, couched in transnationalism, examined the reasons for international PhD students from countries in Africa exiting their home country to study at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in South Africa and their first-year PhD experiences at UKZN. The study is underpinned by push-pull theories (Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) and the social capital theory of Bourdieu (1986). The study was qualitative using interviews and focus group discussions as data generation tools. Sixteen international PhD students from Africa, studying at UKZN were selected through convenience sampling. The findings indicate that international PhD students exit their home country because of several push factors, which collectively spur them to leaving their home country to study at UKZN. International student migration to UKZN results in a brain gain for UKZN and a brain drain to the home country. The study advances theoretical insights into the push factors from other African countries, which were numerous; however the financial pull factors comprising fee remission and opportunities to tutor/ lecture at UKZN in SA overwhelmingly propelled the mobility of international students from countries in Africa to UKZN in SA. The findings illuminate both positive and negative experiences about students' first-year PhD study at UKZN. The study found that the students were accessing an array of social capitals at the host institution and within South Africa. Positive experiences included academic tutoring/ lecturing and research training towards completion of the PhD with initiatives such as the UKZN boot camps, workshops and the cohort model. These experiences developed the human capital of international students. Discursive positionality influenced students' experiences: the inability to speak isiZulu, Afrophobia, exclusion, and perceptions of 'being an outsider/foreigner. These created significant acculturative stresses for international students during the first year PhD. The study extends on the theories of Mazzarol and Soutar and Lee. It makes a further theoretical contribution by providing a framework on the push-pull factors influencing international PhD students to study at UKZN and advances a framework on the provision of service quality. Several recommendations are provided to strengthen service delivery for African international students to enhance the PhD students' experiences in their first year.

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my brother Oyewo Adebawale Samuel.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ASSAf	Academy of Science of South Africa
ASUU	Academic Staff Union of Universities
CHE	Centre for Higher Education
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DST	Department of Science and Technology
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
ISA	International Students Association
ISO	International Student Office
NRF	National Research Foundation
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SA	South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Framework
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISA	University of South Africa
UP	University of Pretoria
USA	United States of America
UK	United Kingdom
WITS	University of Witwatersrand

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Background of the study

Globally, the influx of students seeking to obtain a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) outside of their home country is on the increase (Zhang, O'Shea, & Mou, 2021; Schalkwyk & Cloete, 2021; Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020; Anegub, 2018; Lee & Schoole, 2015). Such students are referred to as international students because they relocate to another country for study purposes for a period of time (Zhang, O'Shea, & Mou, 2021; Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Xiong, 2017; Ratshilaya, 2017; Teichler, 2017; Open Door, 2017; UNESCO, 2021; Mda, 2010). International PhD students require a student visa to study in the host country for the duration of their program. They come from various countries with diverse cultures, languages, religious beliefs and political structures distinct from the host country (Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020; Sushma, 2019; Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018). Nwokedi (2015, p.8) asserts that international students are individuals with a temporary student visa enrolled in higher education institutions. Several countries use different metrics to classify international students. Such metrics are permanent residence, previous education and fee status (UNESCO, 2021). In this study, I use the term international PhD students to refer to my sample. ^[1] Also, in the context of this study, I define international PhD students as individuals who have fulfilled South Africa's immigration conditions, do not have permanent residence in South Africa and they have obtained a study permit to enrol in the PhD programme. It is worth noting that the PhD is postgraduate study. The PhD requires students to conduct original research at the highest level to become members of the academic community (Shaheen, 2021; Gumbo, 2017; Törnroos, 2017; Odena & Burgess, 2015; Backhouse, 2009). On this basis, popular study destinations in the global north like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany, and Canada attract PhD students (UNESCO, 2019). Germany is also becoming a prized destination for studying towards a PhD, overtaking France as the world's fourth-largest host country (Trines, 2019). The majority of international students are from home countries such as China, France, India, Germany, Korea, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia (UNESCO, 2019). Several Asian countries feature as home countries. Gao (2021, p.1) mentioned that in 2018, out of the 749,329 PhD students enrolled in the USA, 34% were international PhD students. He further mentioned that between 2017-2018, 34% of PhD students in the UK were international PhD

¹ Sushma (2019); In the literature, international students, are associated with the terms, 'overseas students' and (or) 'foreign students' interchangeably to imply students studying in another country.

students.

South Africa is also a sought-after study destination in the global south for international postgraduate students (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Ruwoko, 2021; Schalkwyk & Cloete, 2021; Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020). According to Whitehead and Sing (2015, p.80), in 2006, an estimated 53 000 international students studied in South African universities. They also noted that 67% of the students were from other African countries (south-south migration), 71% were from countries in Africa, Asia, and South America combined. In 2013, an estimated 74,000 international students comprised both undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in South African universities (ICEF Monitor 2013 cited in Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018 p.1). A further breakdown indicates that out of the 74,000 international students, 15% were postgraduate students (ICEF Monitor 2013 cited in Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018, p.1). Expounding further, Mokhothu and Callaghan (2018, p.2) observe that in 2013, 380 376 students from Africa studied abroad, an estimate of 10% of international students (undergraduate and postgraduate). They also mention that South Africa has a 15% market share as a preferred study destination for international students, while France remained the leading destination with 29.2% in 2013. South-south migration is significant: international students from the African continent make up the highest number of international students in South Africa (Whitehead & Sing, 2015, p.78).

1.2. Why Do PhD Students migrate to study abroad?

A starting point in addressing international PhD students' migration as a phenomenon is to examine what propels students from diverse backgrounds and biographical profiles to study abroad and what they expect to achieve from such an experience. Extant literature indicates that the migration of international PhD students is attributed to globalization, the internationalization of higher education, and numerous 'push-pull' factors (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Teichler, 2019; Stewart, 2017; Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015; Sehoole, 2011). Knight (cited in Stewart, 2017, p.1) describes international students' migration as a critical element of higher education's internationalization. Internationalization involves deliberately incorporating a global and intercultural element into the processes of education to improve teaching and research (De Wit, Hunter, Howard & Egron-Polak, 2015, p.29). Foster (2016, p.3) echoes that internationalization is 'academic learning that combines the notion of self, strange, foreign and otherness'. The phenomenon of internationalization in the literature covers aspects like universities' marketing,

students' physical mobility, international reputation, and achieving an international education (Teichler, 2019). Literature on decision-making of international PhD students linked to push-pull factors of migration suggests that international students exit their home country for various reasons (Mariusz, 2022; Salsabil, 2022; Zhang, O'Shea & Mou, 2021; Emma & Batalova, 2021; Chen, 2020; Anjofui, 2018; Boelen, 2017; Tati, 2016; Mouton, 2016; Agbeniga, 2016; Xiong, 2017; Anganoo, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) and these are discussed below. In the next section, I explore the South African trajectory.

1.2.1 Push and Pull factors propelling the Migration of International PhD Students to South African Universities

This section discusses the migration of international PhD students using the theoretical lens of push-pull factors. There is a plethora of literature which highlights what propels the migration of international students and the reasons they select particular host countries/ higher education institutions (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Mathies & Karhunen, 2021; Anjofui, 2018; Chen, 2017; Cohen, 2017; Boelen, 2017; Tati, 2016; Mouton, 2016; Agbeniga, 2016; Xiong, 2017; Anganoo, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Lee, 1966). It is critical to discuss the push-pull factors that propel international PhD students' migration to South Africa because it is the focus of this thesis.

1.2.2. Push Factors

Push factors are inherent conditions in the international students' country of origin/ home country (Whatley & Heidi, 2022; Nwokedi, 2015; Xiong, 2017; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). When applied to this current study, push factors influence students to migrate from their home country to another country to obtain a PhD. Push factors range from economic inequalities, conflicts, persecution, degraded environments and climate change (Yuezu, Hao & Rujia, 2022; White paper on Migration, 2017; Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966). Other push factors are political instability, terrorism, violence, insufficient public universities, low quality of a PhD education in the home country, cost of living, inadequate scholarships and the low quality of specific academic programmes (Fakunle, 2021; Chi, 2020; Mouton, 2016; Agbeniga, 2016; Anganoo, 2014; Mda, 2010).

1.2.3. Pull Factors

Pull factors are variables in a host country/ destination which attracts students to study abroad (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Fakunle, 2021; Anegub, 2018; Xiong, 2017; Chen, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Zhou, 2015; Anganoo, 2014; Mda, 2010; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Pull factors attract international PhD students to migrate abroad because of better opportunities in the host country which is nonexistent in the home country (Castles & Miller, 2003, p. 22). Seehole (2011, p.54) refers to pull factors as ‘magnets’ of opportunities that attract international students. Pull factors are encapsulated in knowledge about the host country, safety, referrals from family and friends, affordability, social network, and geographical proximity (Blumenstock, Guanghua, & Tan, 2021; Chi, 2020; Xiong, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Anganno, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

In 2017, the International Consultants for Education and Fairs [ICEF] Monitor, a market intelligence mechanism for the international education industry, cited a report by the Campus France Educational Agency that many African students’ study within the African continent because of the proximity to their home country. Other pull factors are scholarship availability, language, availability of specialised courses and flexible admission policies (Mariusz, 2022; Oyewo & Umoh, 2017; Xiong, 2017; Macgregor, 2014; Gumbo, 2014). Another significant factor for the influx of international PhD students to South Africa are the migration policies, PhD policies to increase PhD production in Africa and the SADC Treaty of 2005 (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Fakunle, 2021; Anegub, 2018; Nwokedi, 2015; Gumbo, 2014).

Campus France (2019 cited in Dago & Simon, 2021, p.310) identifies several factors that drive African students to emigrate, including a lack of PhD programs, low-ranked universities, and a mismatch between PhD training and labor market. Macgregor (2014 cited in Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021, p. 117) also noted that international PhD students are attracted to South Africa because of the proximity to their home country, internationalization of higher education, a cheap cost of living, availability of scholarships, employment opportunities, and better living conditions. The push factors from the home country and the pull factors in the host country universities are explained in-depth in the subsequent chapter under a review of the literature.

1.3. Value of International PhD Students to Host Countries and Universities

International students contribute positively to the host country and university in several ways. The value of international PhD students is evident in their contribution to diversity in the student population, university ranking for higher education institutions, cultural exchange amongst students, revenue and internationalization of education (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Ruwoko, 2021; Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Selahaddin, 2021; Chen, 2017; Xiong, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Hsiao-ping Wu et al., 2015; Lee & Schoole, 2014; Gubba, 2014). International students are also human capital for higher education institutions in the host country, evident in their research theses and their work as graduate assistants (Ruwoko, 2021; Fakunle, 2021; Gumbo, 2017; Odena & Burgess, 2015). Their research and final PhD dissertation also contribute to the advancement of research at universities (Baker, 2019; Hsiao-ping, Garza & Guzman, 2015). International PhD students also advance research capacity, innovation and the knowledge economy by connecting ideas between academia and industry (Shaheen, 2021; Törnroos, 2017; UKZN, 2017; Hsiao-ping et al., 2015). In the South African context, international students contribute to the South African knowledge economy and the diverse number of PhD students studying in South Africa (Törnroos, 2017; De Jager, Van der & Spuy, 2017; Molla & Cuthbert, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015; Macgregor, 2013; Schoole, 2011). International students were involved in teaching, research and supervision at their educational institutions (Ruwoko, 2021).

Adeagbo (2012) established that the high numbers of international postgraduate students are significant for university ranking. He avers that these necessitated African universities to advocate for internationalization and collaboration with foreign higher education institutions through various research programmes. Further to this, international PhD students contribute to the host country's economy through their tuition, house rental, and daily living expenses (Ruwoko, 2021; Hsiao-ping Wu et al., 2015; White & Sing, 2015; Aloyo, 2011). Ruwoko (2021) stated that between 2017-2021, African students at South African institutions contributed at least ZAR 750 million (about US\$49 million) to the South African economy. In 2003, international students studying in South Africa contributed an estimated 1.4 billion Rands (\$157 million) to the South African economy (White & Sing, 2015, p.82). Given the relevance of international PhD students, the former South African Home Affairs Minister, Malusi Gigaba, during his budget speech in

2016, reiterated international students' value (Department of Home Affairs, 2016). The former Minister emphasised that international PhD students are assets to countries because they contribute to host countries economically. He suggested international students are qualified to apply for permanent residence once they have completed their PhD from a South African university to maximize from the brain gain in host countries (Department of Home Affairs, 2016).

1.3.1. International PhD Students: Bolstering PhD Enrolment in universities

The relevance of international students manifests in bolstering the numbers of PhD students. Selahaddin (2021) cited the National Science Foundation report (2020) that half of the graduate students in the USA who studied natural sciences and engineering, and more than 60% in computer science and mathematics were international PhD students. In the same vein, due to the shortage of PhDs in South Africa, the National Development Plan forecasted that by 2030, 100 000 PhDs would be needed in South Africa to improve research and innovation capacity could be achievable by training 6 000 PhDs per annum (Schalkwyk & Cloete, 2021; Molla & Cuthbert, 2016). This is also reflected in the South African nation plan and South Africa's policies on the PhD quota, which aimed to achieve the envisaged 2030 target by increasing the enrollment of international students (Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey, 2014, p.80). Hence, to achieve the PhD target quota, Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey (2014, p.80) posit that South African universities can achieve the national PhD targets by enrolling international students. Ruwoko (2021) reported that South Africa is one of the major recipients of PhD students at its universities. International PhD students from Africa account for roughly 40% of all PhD graduates

Ruwoko (2021) cited the South African Council on Higher Education that the total number of African international PhD students was 36 058 in 2018. The Green paper on Migration (2016) states that an increase in international students' enrolment from other African countries, boosted the number of African PhD graduates towards achieving the National Development 2030 targets. In light of this, the Green paper on Higher education (2012) indicates the increase in the production of PhDs in revealing the statistics: that in 1995, South Africa produced 679 PhDs graduates, 967 PhDs in 2000, 1 188 PhDs in 2005 and 1 420 PhDs in 2010. The report identified demographically that in 2010, 48% of the PhD graduates were white (compared to 87% in 1995), 38% were African (6% in 1995), 7% were Indian (3% in 1995) and 6% were Coloured (4% in 1995); demonstrating an increase of all the disadvantaged races (as identified during apartheid) except for Whites.

Schalkwyk and Cloete (2021 p.5) observed that in 2019, four out of every ten PhD students enrolled in South African universities were international students, from the rest of Africa. They also observed tremendous growth in the number of PhD enrolments from the rest of Africa over the last 20 years. The percentage of African enrolments increased from 9 percent in 2000 to 34 percent in 2019. Most importantly also are the comparative statistics, on the graduation of the PhDs. Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey (2015) observed that in 2000, there were 105 South African-African graduates, compared to 49 from the rest of Africa. However, in 2012, graduates from the rest of Africa totalled 496 compared to 325 South Africans. Among the South Africans, the average annual growth rate was 9.9% compared to the 21.3% for international students from other African countries. A plausible reason for the low number of South African PhD graduates could be because South Africans study part-time due to the lack of funding for full-time PhD study; hence this is argued to have also resulted in low rates of progression and retention (Cloete et al., 2015, p.76). Cloete et al. (2015, p.76) also echoed that South Africans dropped out of the PhD programme because of the pressure of working and studying part-time: trying to balance work with their PhD studies. However, the number of South Africans enrolled for a PhD increased between 2008 and 2012 when the government introduced funding incentives for study. This led to an increase in PhD enrolment by South Africans: in 1996 it was 5 152, 6 354 in 2000 and 13 965 in 2012 (Cloete et al., 2015, p.40).

From an historical stance the numbers of international PhD students enrolled in South African universities has been on the increase. Seehole (2011, p.59) indicates that in 2005, 2 564 (27%) international PhD students from the cluster of 9 434 PhD students were enrolled in South African universities. Years later, Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey (2015) asserted that international students from 59 countries worldwide received a PhD in South Africa in 2012. They noted that international students were drawn from the following countries: Zimbabwe (142), Nigeria (76), Kenya (43), Uganda (29), Ethiopia (23), and the United States (23). Seehole (2011, p.59) referred to the substantial increase in international students, pointing out this increase in international students' enrolment from 8% to 10% from 2005-2009. The importance of international students is also evident during the period 2005-2009 when there was a shortage of PhD graduates in South Africa.

1.4. Problem Statement & Challenges Experienced by International PhD Students

International PhD students are susceptible to challenges in the host country and universities. Insights on international PhD students' experiences, particularly the challenging aspects, are mostly ignored despite these being central to their experiences and satisfaction (Whatley & Heidi, 2022; Baker, 2020; Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020; Koppel, 2016; Wu et al., 2015). The literature sums up these challenges as financial problems, discrimination, adjustment to the host country, adaptation, and personal barriers (IOLNews, 2022; Kasese-Hara, & Mugambi, 2021; Kibaliwandu, Mwesigye & Clive, 2020; Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018; Ratshilaya, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Wu et al., 2015). Depending on the country-specific context, they may experience challenges such as accommodation, language, prejudice, discrimination, homesickness, xenophobic attitudes, a lack of funding opportunities and a lack of South African friends (Bernard, 2021; Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Mittelmeier & Cockayne, 2020; Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020; Bryce, 2019; Anegub, 2018; Nwokedi, 2015; Lee & Seehole, 2014; Whitehead & Sing, 2013). Whatley and Heidi (2022, p.47) argue that international students struggle with academic, social, and financial challenges and the acculturative stress of adapting to their new host society. They also argue that international students need more academic and social help than domestic PhD students. Gumbo (2014) argues that international PhD students encounter more problems than local students. He maintains that migration can be traumatic and stressful, impacting on international students' physical and psychological health. Ndayambaje (2018, p.60) buttresses that international students deserve special treatment because they are affected by the distance from family and environmental acclimatisation.

Thus, studies on the challenges experienced by international students is significant for varied reasons. Firstly, there is considerable competition for international PhD students in internationalization discourses because of their relevance to both the host country and the universities wherein they are enrolled. Secondly, studying at a PhD level is a daunting and time-consuming task. Bryan and Guccione (2018) point out the benefits and risks involved in studying at a PhD level. They define the risks from two angles, namely graduates becoming over-educated and over-skilled. They explain that over-educated means that the PhD skill acquired may not be required for a job, while over-skilled risk means the lack of opportunity to use a PhD skill after it

has been obtained. They explain further that risk reduces job satisfaction dramatically and threatens the financial capacity of the PhD students. Thirdly, studying abroad is a huge investment for students; hence international students should get satisfying experiences for their time and money.

Although there are myriad challenges that international PhD students encounter, this current study emphasizes challenges related to discrimination, language, safety, financial difficulties and accommodation. The rationale for discussing these specific challenges alludes to prior research gaps, overlooked these relevant issues facing international PhD students. Such challenges affect the first-year PhD experience of international students. The challenges are also articulated in the media regarding higher education institutions in the recent past. Yet, a comprehensive understanding of international PhD students' experiences is still notably lacking in the literature. Also, some of these challenges are necessary because of its relevance for international PhD students in South African higher education institutions especially, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). These challenges are also ubiquitous and fall within the broader South African society. Besides, little is known about these challenges, a gap which the study seeks to fill especially at this institution, where I am located as a PhD student. In addressing these specific issues, the dominant challenges facing South African higher education in the past five years, such as outbreaks of xenophobia and the 'Rhodes Must Fall'/'Fees Must Fall' ^[2] students' protests were factored into this thesis. This provided an in-depth analysis of the issues and challenges facing international PhD students. This study began in 2016 soon after the wave of student protests ('Rhodes Must Fall'/'Fees Must Fall') started in 2015 and it started to gain momentum. Given this context, the study examines international PhD students' exit from the home country and their first-year study experiences: namely the case of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The next section briefly provides an insight into the challenges international PhD students face and the rationale for focusing on such challenges in the study context.

² . Kgatle, 2018; Wadantu, 2015; Brian, 2015; 'Rhodes Must Fall' was a student protest that started on 9th March 2015 at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The 'Rhodes Must Fall' culminated in student activism resulting in the on-going 'Fee Must Fall' movement.

1.4.1. Discrimination

Discrimination is one of the challenges experienced by international PhD students (Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Kasese-Hara, & Mugambi, 2021; Mittelmeier & Cockayne, 2020; Ratshilaya, 2017; Whitehead & Sing, 2015). Discrimination involves treating an individual or a specific group of people unfairly because of their skin colour, race, age, disability, religious beliefs, sex, or gender (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Discrimination emanates from several sources such as at university, from local students, faculty and community members (Mittelmeier & Cockayne, 2020; Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020; Ratshilaya, 2017; Manik & Singh, 2013). In the South African context, a form of discrimination is xenophobia. Also, crucial to note is the spate of xenophobic attacks on migrants, often called ‘kwerekwere’^[3], a derogatory term in South Africa referring to African immigrants. In particular, African international students in South Africa have been found to experience xenophobic displays of behaviour (Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020; Akande, Musarurwa & Kaye, 2018; Freeman & Lee, 2018; Gumbo, 2014; Manik & Singh, 2013). Freeman and Lee (2018) reported that because of xenophobia, an international Tanzanian PhD student at the University of Johannesburg died in 2018 when he was brutally attacked by a bus driver. They also mentioned that the student was a ‘soft target’ because he dressed in African attire which made him ‘easily identified’ as not being a South African citizen.

1.4.2. Financial Challenges

Financial challenges have a significant effect on the experiences of international PhD students in the host country. Finance is required for tuition fees, living expenses, including accommodation. International students pursuing a Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) PhD in the USA also confront significant financial hurdles than their domestic counterparts (Selahaddin, 2021). MacGregor (2014) contends that university education is not for poor international students because of the cost associated with visa requirements, tuition fees, accommodation and student medical insurance. Consequently, to make ends meet, international students, especially those who are self-funded, either request an allowance from their family members in their home country or engage in part-time work to survive (Selahaddin, 2021;

³ Ratshilaya (2017); Manik & Singh (2013) ; kwerekwere also known as ‘Kalangass’ or ‘Grigambas’ is a discriminatory word which depicts strangers and hostility to them because of their race, culture or language.

Whitehead & Sing, 2015). Whitehead and Sing (2015) argue that non-academic challenges such as international PhD students' financial challenge are usually ignored and under-researched. They stress that financial challenges extend beyond the formal academic environment, yet they are crucial to understanding international students' needs. International students could still struggle to access funding despite the availability of all types of postgraduate funding (Selahaddin, 2021; Ruwoko, 2021; Adeagbo, 2012). Viewing financial challenges in light of the 'Fees Must Fall' protests also mirror local students' financial challenges, as they find themselves in a similar predicament to international students. Under these circumstances, anecdotal evidence also suggests that international students at UKZN are required to pay full or half tuition fees compared to local PhD students who pay 15% of tuition fees or sign an acknowledgment of debt ^[4] whenever the 'Fees Must Fall' protests have occurred. Hence, it is essential to consider how financial challenges affect international students in a study.

1.4.3. Accommodation Challenges

A discussion on accommodation challenges is equally important, considering that international PhD students' study outside their home country. International PhD students have challenges renting accommodation because of the language barriers during the search for accommodation (Stampfle, 2022; Worsley, Harrison & Corcoran, 2021; Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Birchard, 2016). In the UK context, Worsley, Harrison and Corcoran (2021) elucidate that the type of accommodation students reside in affects their mental wellbeing. They also argue that there are difficulties connected with moving from home to student housing, living with strangers, and establishing independence. Lee and Seehole (2014) argue that the major hurdle experienced by international PhD students in South Africa concerns accommodation. They echoed that because of their migration status, some property owners expect them to pay the whole year's rent in advance because of their status as non-citizens.

Corroborating Lee and Seehole's (2014) argument, Ncame (2016, p.1) reiterated that it is arduous for international students to find accommodation close to university while studying at

⁴ UKZN (2021); Acknowledgement of debt [AOD] is a form completed by students with outstanding debt before registration

universities in cities. This alludes to the cost of student accommodation which for international students, can be problematic because they are living away from home (Minsky, 2016).

Mthethwa (2017) mentioned that one of the causes of student protests at UKZN campuses was inadequate student accommodation, particularly for first-year students who had to stay in hotels during registration. In the past, inadequate student accommodation also triggered student protests in 2010 at UKZN (Whitehead, 2017). Thus, student accommodation has been a consistent challenge for students.

1.4.4. Safety

Safety is another factor considered by international students when choosing a university in the host country (Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Callitz, Diane & Jooste, 2019; Chen, 2017; Xiong, 2017; Zhang, 2017; Ratshilaya, 2017). Discussing students' safety within the discourse of the 'Fees must Fall' protests in South African universities, Callitz, Diane and Jooste (2019) maintain that safety and security play a crucial role in university selection for international students. Safety is significant because university activities are interrupted during protests due to the violent nature of protests (Callitz, Diane & Jooste, 2019; Kgatle, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2017; Ratshilaya, 2017). In an article, Storm (2020) reveals that the 2020 Gallup Law and Order Index rates South Africa as the fifth most dangerous country because of citizens' personal security and their experience of crime and law. The report indicates that only 29 percent of citizens felt safe walking alone at night.

1.5. Student Protest Action: 'Rhodes Must Fall' and 'Fees Must Fall' Movements

This section provides an insight into the 'Rhodes Must Fall', and 'Fees Must Fall' for the following reasons. The 'Fees Must Fall' is one of the study's broader objectives, which examines significant challenges facing South Africa higher education. The 'Fees Must Fall' protests also affect international PhD students' perceptions of South African universities as unsafe spaces.

1.5.1. 'Rhodes Must Fall'

'Rhodes Must Fall' is a significant protest and a precursor to the 'Fees Must Fall' protest. 'Rhodes Must Fall' was a student protest that started on 9th March 2015, at the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Kgatle, 2018; Wadantu, 2015; Brian, 2015). The student protest was initially a reaction

against the statue memorializing Cecil John Rhodes' colonial emblem, which later led to the beginning of a wave of student protests at South African universities (Kgatlé, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2017; Wadantu, 2015; Brian, 2015). 'The Rhodes Must Fall' protest became popular via the internet because student protesters created a Facebook page called 'Rhodes Must Fall' to promote the 'hashtag' # 'Rhodes Must Fall' on Twitter (Bosch, 2017). The 'Rhodes Must Fall' protest also culminated in a reaction against institutional issues of inequality such as racism, access to university education and the need for the decolonization of education (Bosch, 2017; Ra'eesa, 2015).

1.5.2. 'Fees Must Fall'

The 'Fees Must Fall' protest was an offshoot of the 'Rhodes Must Fall' student-led protest movement, which started in South Africa in October 2015 (eNCA, 2015). The student protest was led by the Student Representative Council (SRC) leader of the University of Witwatersrand, Shaeera Kalla, in 2015 (eNCA, 2015). Some of the 'Fees Must Fall' objectives were to stop increments in student tuition fees, institutional racism and to increase government funding of universities (Kekana et al., 2015; eNCA, 2015). The protesting students damaged universities and public property (such as public buses and set alight police vehicles) (Business Tech, 2016). Besides, during the 2016 protest, there was also a fracas between campus police and protesting students (Kgatlé, 2018; Business Tech, 2016).

Nationally, the estimated value of damages to university properties in 18 South African higher institutions during the 2015-2016 protest was R460 million (Mail & Guardian, 2016). However, the 2015 student protest ended when the South African Government announced that there would be no increase in tuition fees for 2016 (Kgatlé, 2018; Kekana et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the protest commenced again in 2016 when the Higher Education Minister declared that fee increases would be capped at 8 percent for 2017; however, each university had the freedom to fix its tuition fees (Kgatlé, 2018; Kekana et al., 2015; eNCA, 2015). Business Tech (2016) reported the worth of the estimated destroyed properties in selected South African higher education institutions during the 2016 protests as being exorbitant. In 2016, the university of KwaZulu-Natal; R82 000 000; University of Johannesburg – R120 295 000; University of the Western Cape – R46 000 000; Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University – R6 600 000; Tshwane University of Technology –

R5 073 747; University of Zululand – R4 500 000; University of Cape Town – R3 200 000; Free State University –R412 000 and North-West University – R54 046 169 (Business Tech, 2016).

1.5.3. ‘Fees Must Fall’ Movements at UKZN

As a result of this thesis centering on international students at UKZN, this section discusses the dynamics of the ‘Fees Must Fall’ movements at UKZN. In 2015, when the ‘Fees Must Fall’ Movement started, students at UKZN supported the protest commencing with a few students at Howard College and Westville campuses (Berea Mail, 2015). Students also joined the protest because SASCO ^[5] urged all university students to protest on 21 October 2015 (Berea Mail, 2015). Similarly, during the 2018 wave of student protests at the Westville campus, about 400 students blocked access to campus with furniture, threw bottles at the police officers and set alight two guardhouses (Thami, 2018). In particular, during the 2020 ‘Fees Must Fall’ protest at UKZN, the UKZN SRC demanded full fees clearance for students excluded from registration due to historical student debt ^[6]. Singh (2020) reported on this being one of the causal factors for the protest, namely historical debt. He also reported the extent of damages during the protest, when 1 000 students moved to Durban Central in areas such as Princess Alice Street and set the Durban Solid Waste bins on fire. He also stated that UKZN properties were destroyed when students’ petrol bombed the security officers’ building.

Further to this, the law library at UKZN Howard campus was burnt, and the William O’Brien student residence at UKZN’s Pietermaritzburg campus was set alight (News24, 2016). Equally, during the 2020 protest, the UKZN Campus HIV and AIDS Support Units (CHASU) located at Howard College and Edgewood Campus were set alight, disadvantaging other students who required these services (Craig, 2020). Due to the destroyed CHASU buildings, the 10 000 students who visit the CHASU were left vulnerable and helpless without support (Craig, 2020). The estimated value of damages to UKZN properties during the 2015 protest was R180 million and R82-million in 2016 (Mail & Guardian, 2016). Craig (2020) reported that during the 2020 student

⁵ SASCO is an acronym for South African Students Congress is a South African student organization

⁶ News24 (2019). Historical debt refers to debts owed by students to university

protest, the estimated cost of the damage to Howard College was around R800 000 and R5 million to CHASU. From an overview of the ‘Fees Must Fall’ protests, student protests are strategies that local students at South African universities, including UKZN, use to voice their grievances to university management.

1.5.4. ‘Fees Must Fall’ Movements and International Students

This section unpacks the link between the ‘Fees Must Fall’ protest and its impact on international students. The rationale for such a discussion alludes to scant studies on the effect of the ‘Fees Must Fall’ protests on international students (except a news report by Nowicki, 2020). Nowicki (2020) illuminates that international students were affected by the ‘Fees Must Fall’ protests in the following ways. Firstly, international students were part of the cluster of students chased by rubber bullets. Secondly, some students risk forfeiting their scholarships by their sponsor due to a prolonged period in which they had to complete their education. Thirdly, sending countries recalled their citizens (international students) because of safety concerns because of the protest’s nature. The ‘Fees Must Fall’ protest was characterised by violence, destruction of properties and burning of buildings which lead to either the suspension of academic activities and, in some instances, closure of the university campuses (News24, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2017; Mail & Guardian, 2019; Kekana et al., 2015). That being the case, these incidents affect international PhD students’ first-year experiences because the protests disrupted the UKZN academic calendar and it compromised the safety of international students who live on campus.

Arguably, international students were not involved directly in the protests; however, they were impacted by it in many ways. For instance, the Local Area Network (LANs) where postgraduate students conduct research was locked by UKZN management to prevent the LANs from been destroyed. Likewise, international students who live on campus were forced to evacuate the onsite residences because of safety concerns. During the 2015 protest, a communiqué was issued by the UKZN Vice-Chancellor that students should vacate UKZN on-campus residences because of safety concerns (Mlamabo, 2015). Due to the communiqué issued by the UKZN Vice-Chancellor, students who vacated UKZN hostels were stranded because they had no alternative place to go (Mlamabo, 2015). The ‘Fees Must Fall’ protests thus negatively impacted the experiences of international PhD students. As discussed earlier, there is competition amongst universities for

international students. Arguably, the ‘Fees Must Fall’ protests could hinder internationalization of education efforts and the recruitment of international students. Johnson (2016) mentioned that the wave of student protests affected South African universities’ reputation and image abroad. He cited how international PhD students studying at the University of Witwatersrand discouraged their relatives from studying at South African universities. He echoed that the protests hamper South African universities’ efforts to attract overseas funding. Silva (2016) also reported that the ‘Fees Must Fall’ protests put international PhD students in a difficult emotional situation. She noted that international PhD students who study at the University of the Witwatersrand left their home country because of protests in their home country to study in a peaceful country.

1.6. Research Problem and Rationales for the Study

The study is further underpinned by four rationales, namely personal, professional, contextual and scholarly motives. The rationales are explained under these headings below:

1.6.1. Personal Rationale

My personal rationale for conducting the research alludes to the following reasons. Firstly, my intention to conduct the study is motivated by my background as an international PhD student studying in the School of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Secondly, my experiences as an international student sparked my interest in exploring this phenomenon. I began to ask myself a range of questions based on my thoughts and feelings: why do international students choose to study at UKZN; and why do they select South Africa as their study destination? The other set of questions that I needed answers to was how international students adjust to their new environment as newcomers to South Africa. This alludes to the probability that international students might experience more stress more than local students because of the geographical distance from their home country, which could also pose unique challenges to their adjustment process (Jeong-Bae & Park, 2014).

The other personal rationale for the study alludes to anecdotal evidence (corridor conversations) based on my interactions with some first-year international PhD students enrolled at UKZN. There were hints about poor supervisory relationships, inadequate PhD seminars to support studies and

a lack of physical resources for their study, which I believed would affect the quality of the PhD programme.

1.6.2. Scholarship and Professional Rationales

Another rationale is the professional rationale, which is the need to add knowledge to the existing gap in the literature on international PhD students first-year experience. The study sought to contribute to the academic debates and discourses on international PhD students' first-year study experiences at UKZN. Also, I see myself as a higher education researcher and I wanted to identify how UKZN addresses international PhD students' experiences and how UKZN could seek to improve international PhD students' experiences. As McKenna (2019) emphasized, the increase in the number of PhD students is significant, yet throughput and graduation, as well as dropout, are concerns with some PhD students being either 'stuck in the system' or dropping out without completing their studies. She asserts that universities need to account for these issues.

1.6.3. Contextual Rationale

The contextual rationale for the study relates to location. The study was undertaken at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, specifically at the Edgewood and Howard College campuses. The following reasons underpin the contextual rationales. Firstly, there are scant studies on international PhD students' first-year study experiences at the case study institution-UKZN, despite UKZN hosting many diverse and multicultural international PhD students spread across its five campuses (UKZN, 2017). Between 2009 and 2010, UKZN received about 5 400 applications from both undergraduate and postgraduate international students (Preesha, 2011, p.iv). Thus, UKZN is a major destination in South Africa for international post graduate students. In 2016, UKZN hosted an estimated 2 209 international students from 71 countries (UKZN, 2017, p.16). Most of full-time students were from the SADC region, other African countries, China, India, Europe and the USA (UKZN, 2017, p.16). Of the 46 520 students who were enrolled at UKZN in 2016, 13 064 were postgraduate students (UKZN, 2017 p.13).

1.6.4. Scholarly Rationale

The study's scholarly reason is to add my voice as a researcher with my findings to existing literature and debates on international PhD students' first-year experiences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Although prior research has tried to answer questions on the various reasons international students exit their home country to study abroad, the sample of students were mixed and included masters and PhD students. Substantial studies identified several reasons (push and pull factors) for international students exiting their home country to study abroad (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Fakunle, 2021; Diogo & Carvalho, 2019; Boelen, 2017; Xiong, 2017; Cohen, 2017; Chien, 2015; Macgregor, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). For instance, Chien (2017) noted that push-pull factors such as political reasons, economic reasons, career improvement and academic reasons propel international postgraduate students to study in Canada.

Several studies also suggest that international students studying abroad experience challenges including adjustment, language barrier, financial, supervision, prejudice and discrimination (Whatley & Heidi, 2022; Selahaddin, 2021; Mittelmeier & Cockayne, 2020; Diogo & Teresa, 2019; Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018; Smit, Meyer, Crafford & Parris, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Chien, 2015; Jeong-Bae, & Park, 2014; Gubba, 2014; Jeong-Bae & Park, 2014; Majyambere, 2012). Selahaddin, (2021) reported that international PhD students in USA encounter challenges such as racism, financial challenges and visa hurdles. He suggests that higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders need to address the challenges faced by international PhD students. In the South African context, Nwokedi and Khanare (2020, p. 50) found that international postgraduate students at a South African university faced difficulties in their host environments due to a variety of factors such as xenophobia, financial constraints, visa and student permit difficulties, a lack of social belonging, housing issues, and a lack of job opportunities, which hampered their learning and development. A similar study conducted by Alabi, Seedat-Khan and Abdullahi (2019) on postgraduate female students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal found that postgraduate female students are constrained during their study. Their research identified constraints such as socio-cultural factors, traditional and religious beliefs, financial impediments and gendered roles.

Nwokedi (2015) also examined international postgraduate students' experiences learning in a selected university in KwaZulu-Natal. Her study found that international postgraduate students' experiences are the combination of their interrelations with people, resources and the environment that shape their personal experiences. She echoed that such experiences enhance their knowledge, develop skills and result in behavioural changes to achieve their academic objectives. Another study was on the experiences of African international postgraduate students at a South African University (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021). Studies by Rajpal (2012) and Majyambere (2012) are outdated; but nonetheless provide some relevant information about postgraduate students in South Africa. Rajpal, (2012) studied the educational experiences of African international postgraduate students who studied at UKZN's Pietermaritzburg Campus. Her study focused on internationalization and how postgraduate students navigate their learning experiences across the different social, personal and professional spaces at UKZN. She found that UKZN's professional space provided postgraduate students a chance to achieve their goals at UKZN. She added that UKZN's professional space also shaped students' identity formation of international students at UKZN.

Given this overview, these studies show that various factors propel international students to study outside their home country; however, challenges at a personal level, in the host country and university cause international students to have difficulties when learning in new environments. Besides, the above studies on international PhD students, were grouped under postgraduate students (Masters, Honors) and with no differentiation in their postgraduate level (PhD). Caldwell and Hyams-Ssekasi (2016, p.589) contend that grouping international students as one conceals the most critical challenges encountered by a specific group of international students. On the contrary, Mokhothu and Callaghan (2017) assert that international students are from different countries, yet they share similar circumstances, which makes them one.

Previous studies on international PhD students did not adequately discuss non-academic issues (accommodation, financial challenges, discrimination and safety) that affect international PhD student experiences. Thus, it is necessary to continue the debate and chronicle international PhD students' voices on their experiences at UKZN. These studies are silent on the push-pull factors propelling international PhD students' migration to UKZN or their first-year PhD experiences in

UKZN, a gap the study seeks to fill. Nwokedi (2015) argued that international PhD students' perspectives at the host university are missing from the debate about their educational experiences. Given this gap, the study was motivated by a lack of limited study on international PhD students' first-year study experiences at UKZN.

1.6.4.1. Why UKZN's Edgewood and Howard Campuses

The rationale for UKZN as the study site is that UKZN was ranked a top university out of 100 universities and ranked 83rd in the Times Higher Education (THE) Young University Rankings of 2018 (UKZN Indaba, 2018). UKZN is also one of the six universities in South Africa that produced 70% of international PhD graduates (Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey, 2015, p.87). The other universities are the University of Pretoria, University of Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town, University of Stellenbosch and Rhodes University (Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey, 2015). International students accounted for almost 40% of PhD enrolments at South Africa's research universities (UKZN, UCT, UP, and WITS) (Schalkwyk & Cloete, 2021, p.5). Schalkwyk and Cloete (2021 p.5) noted that the University of South Africa (UNISA) also consistently enrolled the highest proportion of international PhD students, with non-South Africans accounting for more than half of PhD enrolment in 2019. UKZN has over 49 000 students (UKZN, 2019, p.1).

The justification for conducting the study at the Edgewood and Howard campuses is that many international PhD students are registered on both campuses. From the statistics collected from the UKZN campus manager with assistance from my supervisor, 163 PhD students were enrolled in the School of Education at Edgewood in 2016/2017. Of these, 163,161 were international PhD students, while the other 2 were South Africans. According to the 2016/2017 statistics, the international PhD students were from the following countries; Botswana (1), Cameroon (3), Kenya (2), Lesotho (6), Malawi (2), Mauritius (34), Mozambique (1), Nigeria (24), Rwanda (2), Tanzania (1), Swaziland (23), Uganda (1) Zimbabwe (60), South Africa (1) and India (1).

1.7. Research Objectives

The study examined international PhD students' first-year study experiences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Building upon the push and pull theories (Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) and the social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986), the study sought to do the following.

(a) To examine why international PhD students, exit their home country to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN.

(b) To explore international students' first-year experiences at UKZN and why they have these experiences.

The broader issue which the study also unpacks is the 'Rhodes / Fees Must Fall Protest' and how it impacted international PhD students because these were long-term protests extending beyond a month. To substantiate this argument, the researcher uses the 2016 'Fees Must Fall' protest (which continued annually until 2020, when the study report was being written up) as a reference point. This is also significant given that waves of student protests are becoming prevalent annually at South African universities prior to COVID-19.

1.8. Significance of the Study

This study contributes broadly to the literature on the internationalization of education with a more focused contribution to international PhD students' migration to South Africa to study and their experiences (an area where there is a dearth of research). A study on international PhD students' experiences at UKZN is significant for several reasons. Firstly, the study has policy connotations for UKZN. UKZN would improve its strategies to enhance the experiences of its international PhD students. With insights into international PhD students' experiences, UKZN management will also be better informed, prepared and able to create a more supportive environment (resources and services). Secondly, the study also contributes to the body of knowledge on why international PhD students are attracted to study at UKZN specifically; and their experiences. The study contributes to the existing knowledge on the internationalization of education and international PhD students experiences at UKZN. International PhD students' first-year experiences are vital to create a more inclusive and rewarding experience for students. This is critical because

dissatisfied international students could spread their experiences by word of mouth, discouraging potential international students from enrolling at UKZN.

1.9. Research Questions

The following questions framed the research:

- i. Why do international PhD students exit their home country to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN?
- ii. What are international PhD students' first-year experiences at UKZN and why do they have these experiences?

1.10. Research Methodology Qualified

The study is hinged on a qualitative approach located within the interpretive paradigm. Qualitative research describes a social phenomenon based on the specific meanings that individuals attach to a phenomenon (Tenny, Brannan, Brannan & Sharts-Hopko, 2021; Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2018; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017; Leung, 2015; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research examines a problem in the natural environment because less is known about the issue (Tenny, Brannan, Brannan & Sharts-Hopko, 2021; Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). In the context of this study, it is the first-year international PhD students' experiences at UKZN. Qualitative research aims to understand a phenomenon by answering research questions on 'why or how' a specific phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2018; Patton, 2015; Babbie, 2014; Austin, 2014). The second critical question asks the 'why' question about international PhD students' experiences, locating the study in the qualitative realm.

Conversely, the interpretive paradigm offers specific and flexible analysis mechanisms to capture meanings in interaction with people (McGlinchey, 2022; Keetse, 2018; Thomas, 2014). The interpretive paradigm seeks to understand daily events, experiences, social structures and values that people attach to phenomena (Creswell, 2018; Daher et al., 2017; Thomas, 2014; Austin, 2014). Thus, the rationale for using an interpretive paradigm is to understand international PhD students' experiences at UKZN. Another rationale for the use of the interpretive paradigm is that it also

allows for the use of more open research questions whereby participants tell their stories and the researcher explores the meanings that participants give to the social situations under investigation (Creswell, 2018; Keetse, 2018; Daher et al., 2017). Data in qualitative research are generated from various sources such as interviews, observations, focus group discussion (FGD) and on-going email communications. In the current study, data were generated through several instruments such as interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), ISA dialogue (international Students Dialogue) and on-going email communications. The data generation process is discussed in-depth in chapter four, the research design and methodology chapter.

1.11. Outline of Chapters

This thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter one commenced with the study's background and justification for this study. Detailed reference was made to understanding the phenomenon of international PhD students. The chapter briefly described some challenges that international PhD students encounter and the rationale/s for focusing on such challenges in the study context because of its relevance for international PhD students in South African higher education institutions and at UKZN. Equally, the chapter briefly provided insight into international PhD students' challenges and the rationale for focusing on such challenges in the study context. Amongst such challenges are the 'Rhodes Must Fall', and 'Fees Must Fall' movements. The 'Fees Must Fall' protest is a significant ongoing challenge facing South African higher education. The 'Fees Must Fall' protests are briefly examined.

Chapter two unpacks PhD routes: the traditional PhD, a PhD by publications, a taught PhD and PhD Cohort. The chapter also presents the conceptual frameworks related to international PhD students and their migration within the push-pull framework. Previous studies on international PhD students' experiences globally and in South Africa was discussed. The chapter also points out the importance of international PhD students to their host country and the universities where they are enrolled. The chapter also provides a synopsis of international students' value in bolstering PhD students' enrolment, university diversity, tuition fees, and research outputs.

Chapter three outlines the theoretical framework. These are the theories of push-pull (Ernest Ravenstein, 1885; Everett Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002); and social capital theory

(Bourdieu, 1986). The push-pull theories indicate the rationale for international PhD students' migration motive to leave their home country and how they are attracted to study at UKZN. Similarly, social capital theory reveals how international PhD students possess and access various forms of capital (economic capital, human capital, and social capital) at UKZN while navigating the PhD journey and its challenges.

Chapter four unpacks the methodological approach and research design used in the study. The chapter provides a synopsis of the research methodology, which leans on a qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm. A case study was utilized to understand international PhD students' first-year experiences at UKZN. Purposive sampling was employed to select sixteen participants. Data were generated from several sources: interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), ISA dialogue (International Students Dialogue) and ongoing email communications. The selection of instruments and methods are discussed in detail. Lastly, the ethical considerations, the study and limitations were also discussed.

Several strategies were utilized to enhance data validity and reliability. The study samples comprise participants regarded as appropriate data sources for the study. Extensive and lengthy verbatim participant narratives were employed to support the research themes. Finally, data triangulation was used to compare and cross-check data from the various tools by seeking evidence from multiple data sources (focus group discussion, interview, ISA dialogue). Similarly, secondary sources and theoretical frameworks informed primary data (push-pull factors, social capital theory). The theories aided in the cross-checking, verification, and authenticity of the information gathered. By reducing and modifying the questions in line with the research questions, the interview protocol also contributed to the study's rigor. This also ensured that the study's research objectives were met. The study was limited to international PhD students at UKZN's Howard and Edgewood campuses.

Chapter five centres on the research study results: international PhD students' reasons for exiting their home country to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN. The chapter also details international students' first-year experiences at UKZN and why they have these experiences. The

chapter also describes the challenges, academic and non-academic experiences of international PhD students at UKZN's two campuses.

Chapter six analyses the findings and discusses the international PhD students' experiences in light of the literature and within the confines of the theoretical frameworks which serve as analytical framings. The push-pull theory (Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) explains why international PhD students' study at UKZN. Similarly, the chapter also highlights how the various forms of capital (economic capital, human capital and social capital) at UKZN impacted international PhD students' experiences negatively or positively.

Chapter seven presents key theoretical insights related to the students' experiences of contributing to the phenomenon of first-year international PhD students' experiences. I also discuss the conclusions and provide recommendations derived from the critical questions. I conclude with some ideas for future PhD research.

1.12. Conclusion

This chapter provided a synopsis of the study by highlighting essential background information on the phenomenon of international PhD students exiting their home country to study at UKZN in South Africa. This chapter also discussed the rationales for conducting the study, the research objectives and the research questions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The chapter presents the literature review that underpins the study. It has the following structure. First, the chapter contextualizes international PhD students as a starting point to understand what motivates them to migrate from their home country. The section is preceded by the conceptualization of the following terms: PhD, PhD types, and PhD relevance to universities. The chapter also unpacks international PhD students' migration trend globally and to South Africa.

After that, I discuss the push and pull factors to identify why international PhD students exit their home country and why they are attracted to study in South Africa. The chapter also discusses migration policies on international PhD students' and PhD study bureaucratic requirements in South Africa, such as student medical insurance. A further discussion on the challenges that international PhD students encounter in the host country, is also highlighted.

2.2. The Concept of International PhD Students

Various countries use different metrics (such as permanent residence and their previous education) to determine what is defined as an international student, (Whatley & Heidi, 2022; Choudaha, 2020; Teichler, 2017; Boelen, 2017). International students is a term sometimes used interchangeably with foreign students (Xiong, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015). The OECD (cited in Xiong, 2017, p.4) distinguishes between international students and foreign students. Xiong explains that international students are 'mobile students' who leave their home country to study abroad. An 'international PhD student' is a crucial concept in this study because the study centres broadly on their experiences in host universities. International PhD students are individuals who crossed the national border to study for a given period (Choudaha, 2020; Anegub, 2018; Boelen, 2017; Department of Higher Education and Training-DHET, 2017; UNESCO, 2021). The International Organisation on Migration (2019) defines international PhD students as 'internationally mobile students' because they require a student's visa to study in the host country for a specific period. Nwokedi (2015, p.8) asserts that 'international students are individuals enrolled in higher education institutions based on temporary student visas'.

UKZN (2021, p.5) defines an international PhD student as a person who is not a national or permanent resident of South Africa and consequently requires a study permit to enrol at a South

African university. International PhD students are on temporary student visas to study in South Africa (Nwokedi, 2015; Orth, 2015). Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey (2014, p. 83) classify international PhD students into two groups; students from the rest of Africa and students not from African countries. They mention that international students not from African countries comprise a tiny proportion of the international students.

In this study, I define international PhD students as individuals who have study visas because they have met the study requirement of the study destination and immigration condition. Therefore, in this study, international students have a study visa to study in a PhD programme in a South African university. It needs to be noted that the concept ‘international students’ is used interchangeably with ‘international PhD students’.

2.3. University Choice, Types of PhD and PhD Policies

An overview of the concept of a PhD, the types of PhDs, policies on PhD and relevance of the PhD to host countries /universities is provided in this section. This alludes to the proliferation of various types of PhDs offered in higher education institutions globally and the different types of PhDs that international students could enroll in when abroad.

2.3.1. The concept of the PhD

The PhD falls under postgraduate education after a Master’s degree (Kaddoura, 2021; Shaheen, 2021; Odendaal & Frick, 2017; Hodgson, 2017; Odena & Burgess, 2015). A PhD is the highest education globally (Yazdani & Foroozan, 2018; Gumbo, 2017; Boelen, 2017). It is also referred to as a ‘Doctor of Philosophy’ or ‘DPhil’ (Yazdani & Foroozan, 2018). PhD is from the Latin word, *Philosophiae Doctor* (Yazdani & Foroozan, 2018; Gumbo, 2017; Louw & Muller, 2014; Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2017; Park, 2007). Wellington, Bathmaker, Hung, McCullough and Sikes (2005) mentioned that the first recorded PhD was awarded in the 12th century in France and the 19th century in Germany. They noted that a PhD was conferred to individuals as a license to teach in higher education institutions.

In South Africa, a PhD is the highest educational level in the National Qualification Framework ^[7]. The PhD is placed on level 10 by the South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) ^[8] (SAQA, 2017). A PhD entails students writing a dissertation which forms the bulk of work on research that expands the boundaries of knowledge (Mikaël, Mariane, Assaad, Olivier & Benoit, 2021; Shaheen, 2021; Odena & Burgess, 2017; Gumbo, 2017; Liu, 2015; Odena & Burgess, 2015; Schuman, 2014). Through a PhD, international students are trained to conduct research (Confait, 2018; Cloete et al., 2015; Louw & Muller, 2014). A PhD trains an individual for an academic career, industry, and to be a professional (Gumbo, 2017, p.164). International students that obtain a PhD are distinguished from other graduates because they have honed their soft skills (Boelen, 2017). The duration of the PhD programme varies in different countries. The duration of a PhD locally for full-time students ^[9] is three years minimum and a maximum of four years. While, for part-time students ^[10] is a minimum of five years at South African Universities (UKZN, 2020; Gumbo, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015). At UKZN, a PhD usually takes about 3-5 years to complete and any students who does not complete their study within the stipulated period are de-registered (UKZN, 2020). Students who do not submit their PhD thesis after eight semesters as full-time students or ten semesters as part-time students are be deregistered (UKZN, 2020, p.5). In the Netherlands, four years is the duration of a PhD programme (Rooij, Bruinsma & Jansen, 2019, p.1). Smith et al. (2010) note that a PhD is structured on a ‘1+3’ model in certain countries such as the UK because PhD students have completed a taught master’s programme before embarking on PhD study. They explain that in the UK, a PhD includes a pre-doctoral year based in a graduate school. They also noted that in France, a pre-doctoral year is included at the Masters level instead of a PhD level. Park (2007, p.190) emphasizes that through a Master’s degree, students are prepared for a PhD because they have been trained in research and writing a dissertation (Park,

⁷ SAQA (2017) implements the National Qualification Framework (NQF) based on a set criterion by which student achievement records are recorded to recognize prior education continue the lifelong study. The NQF comprises 10 education levels categorized into three educational bands. Educational bands 1 - 4 are equivalent to grades 9 to 12, which occurs at either a high school or vocational training. Educational bands two occurs at level 5 - 7 with training at either college and technical qualifications. Educational band three comprises 7 -10, which are university degrees

⁸ SAQA (2017) The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established in October 1995 by the SAQA Act (No. 58 of 1995). SAQA is a statutory organ governed under the 2008 National Qualifications Framework Act No. 67.

⁹ UKZN (2018, p. 35) A full-time student dedicates at least 40 hours a week to their studies and undertakes a full credit load of coursework and/or research during each semester

¹⁰ UKZN (2018, p. 35) Part-time students take less credit than the required credit load for full-time study in each semester

2007, p.190). Conversely, the timely completion of a PhD is crucial to universities to improve the research output for international ranking systems amid increasing competition (IseOlorunkanm et al., 2021; Woolderink et al., 2015). The Academy of Science in South Africa (ASSAf) cited in Gumbo (2017, p.164) stated that completing a PhD is linked to several factors. These are the Departmental support, supervisory relationship, nature of PhD research and student motivation. The timely completion of a PhD is hinged on three factors: institutional factors, the nature and quality of supervision, and the characteristics of the PhD candidate (Igumbor et al., 2021; Rooji, Bruinsma & Jansen, 2019; Woolderink et al., 2015; Gumbo, 2017). The factors linked to the completion of a PhD are discussed in the next section.

2.3.2 Factors linked to the completion of a PhD

This section briefly discusses the factors that affect PhD completion, namely departmental support, supervisory relationship, PhD student motivation, and PhD research's nature.

2.3.2.1. Departmental Support

Producing PhD students is essential for universities because they contribute to increased knowledge and outcomes (Rooij, Fokkens-Bruinsma & Jansen, 2021; Woolderink, Putnik, Van der Boom & Klabbers, 2015). Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.364) reiterated that departmental structures are essential as a crucial component of the PhD experience. They assert that departmental structures reveal how university departments provide development opportunities and support students socially, financially, academically and professionally. Rooji, Fokkens-Bruinsma and Jansen (2019) elucidate that in European countries, like Netherlands and Belgium, a PhD is structured as a form of employment where PhD students have a university job contract and earn a monthly salary while working on their research. South African universities are also awarded subsidies for PhD graduates produced (McKenna, 2019).

2.3.2.2. Supervisory Relationship

The relationship between a PhD supervisor and PhD student is essential in completing a PhD or dropping out of the PhD programme (Igumbor et al., 2022; Mikaël et al., 2021; Oumarou & Uddin, 2017; Mouton, 2016). Sherman, Ortosky, Leong, Kello and Hegarty (2021, p.3) stated that a positive relationship between PhD students and their supervisor is critical for success in the PhD

journey. They also stated that PhD students with a satisfactory relationship with their supervisors meet more frequently and are less likely to abandon their PhD studies before completing their studies. Woolderink et al.'s (2015) study examined the relational aspects of PhD supervision in the Netherlands. Their research reveals that a good relationship between PhD students and their supervisors are crucial to the timely completion of the PhD research. Studies underscored that a significant factor in the timely completion of a PhD is the interaction between the PhD supervisor and the PhD student (Mikaël et al., 2021; Rooji, Fokkens-Bruinsma & Jansen, 2021; Lynch, Salikhova & Salikhova, 2018; Oumarou & Uddin, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015; Woolderink et al., 2015).

According to Lynch, Salikhova and Salikhova (2018, p.1), supervisors play a critical role in a PhD student's research, academic writing and scholarly activities. They also echoed that supervisor policies and practices either support or undermine a PhD student's self-determination. Woolderink et al. (2015, p.217) highlighted the importance of supervisors' qualities for a successful PhD completion. They state that these qualities are the supervisor's personality, expertise, skills and communication. Critical factors such as the supervisor's receptiveness, availability, flexibility and timely feedback also influence the timely completion of a PhD (Ajuwon, 2022; Rooij, Bruinsma & Jansen, 2021; Sherman et al., 2021; Oumarou & Uddin, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015).

2.3.2.3. PhD Student Motivation

A PhD student's motivation also influences the PhD success from its beginning, onto progression and completion (Lynch, Salikhova & Salikhova, 2018; Gumbo, 2017; Oumarou & Uddin, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Woolderink et al., 2015; Nerad & Evans, 2007). Numerous factors influence a PhD student's motivation, such as professional development, career orientation, and the research process (Rooij, Fokkens-Bruinsma & Jansen, 2021; Lynch et al., 2018; Boelen, 2017; Woolderink et al., 2015; Wellington & Sikes, 2006). Universities expect PhD students to exhibit advanced knowledge in a specific discipline and the aptitude to conduct substantial research in the intended field (Nerad & Evans, 2007, p.9). Lynch et al. (2018, p.255) echo that intrinsically motivated PhD students perform well in PhD studies, persevere in challenging tasks and experience high psychological well-being. They assert that completing a PhD is influenced by self-determination

which comprise of objective and subjective determinants. They also explain that objective determinants are discipline, time management, academic writing, and scholarly activity. On the other hand, subjective determinants are PhD students' attributes, such as the perceptions of university support for students' psychological needs (Lynch et al., 2018, p.255).

2.3.2.4. The Nature of PhD Research

The type of PhD research that international students conduct also affects the PhD completion. Oumarou and Uddin (2017) noted that PhD students whose research topics align with their supervisor's research expertise are likely to finish their studies on time. They also emphasize a strong link between a research topic and the ability to work autonomously.

2.4. Models of PhDs

This section discusses the types of PhDs international students could engage in. The PhD types are the traditional PhD, a PhD by publication, taught PhD and a professional PhD (Shaheen, 2021; McKenna, 2019; Gumbo, 2017; Cloete et al., 2015; Louw & Muller, 2014; Govender & Dhunpath, 2011; Vithal, 2009). The most common types of PhD study offered by European universities are the research PhD, professional PhD and industrial PhD (Diogo & Carvalho, 2019, p. 4491).

2.4. 1.Traditional PhD

The traditional PhD is called the Oxbridge tutorial study model (McKenna, 2019). It is referred to as the 'master-apprentice model' and used mostly in the Humanities and Social sciences (McKenna, 2019). Under the traditional PhD, international students work independently on their research writing the dissertation under experienced supervisors to create a thesis that contributes to knowledge (Shaheen, 2021; Gumbo, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015; Louw & Muller, 2014). The importance of quality supervisors in the traditional PhD is identified in the literature (McKenna, 2019; Gumbo, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Odena & Burgess, 2015; Cloete et al., 2015). Supervisors are mentors, project managers, and coaches who guide international students in writing dissertations to yield a tangible output (Mouton, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015; Woolderink et al., 2015). The key emphasis of the traditional PhD is the apprenticeship between the supervisor and the student. The benefit of the traditional PhD model is that many PhD graduates are produced (Gumbo, 2017). Nevertheless, the traditional PhD is phased out by some universities in the UK

because of low submission rates, poor PhD-level performance, and a lack of qualified supervisors (McKenna, 2019; Gumbo, 2017; Park, 2007). McKenna (2019) argues that the traditional PhD model reinforces power disparities between PhD students and the supervisor. She asserts that the power disparity between PhD students and the supervisor could be balanced in a PhD cohort; a support structure for PhD students, where everyone has the chance to learn from each other.

2.4.2. PhD by Publication

Another PhD is the PhD by publication, also referred to as ‘PhDP’ (Lewis & Zaid, 2021; Shannon, 2018; Peacock, 2017; Cloete et al., 2015). According to Peacock (2017), the PhDP was introduced at the University of Cambridge in 1966. A PhD by publication is a PhD based on a supervised research project assessed by the number of peer-reviewed academic papers either published or accepted for publication by a student (Lewis & Zaid, 2021; Gumbo, 2017; Peacock, 2017; Louw & Muller, 2014). The PhDP is advantageous for practitioners in their field and research-active students who do not have a high formal academic qualification (Shannon, 2018; Peacock, 2017; Cloete et al., 2015).

The PhDP was initially designed to enable professionals like creative writers, health and business professionals with publications who are still active in research to gain academic recognition at the highest level (Peacock, 2017, p. 124). The PhDP requires a student to submit about three to five original papers where they are the first author in all the submitted journals (Pham, 2021; Lewis & Zaid, 2021; Gumbo, 2017). Australia conferred PhD through PhDP on an average of 4.5 journal articles; however, some PhDs were awarded based on 1 or 12 articles in 2018 (Shannon, 2018). Gumbo (2017) emphasized the benefits of PhDP and the reasons the PhDP is gaining prominence in South African universities. These include a corresponding increase in the number of peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals linked to the government subsidy by the DHET. In addition, the PhDP produces more PhD graduates at a faster rate and it does have high scholarly productivity. Gumbo (2017) stressed that for more PhD graduates to be produced faster, other PhD models such as this PhDP need to be explored in depth for their success rates.

2.4.3. The Taught PhD

The taught PhD is termed ‘course work’, and it is structured on the North American PhD model (Gumbo, 2017; Louw & Muller, 2014). The taught PhD model originated from the UK in 2001 as the new route PhD (Park, 2007; Park, 2005; Scott et al., 2004). The taught PhD is an apprenticeship that involves research training alongside supervision under a supervisor (Gumbo, 2017; Louw & Muller, 2014). However, in South African universities, a coursework PhD does not count as a credit, despite the idea that course work is needed to prepare a student for a PhD or add value to the thesis (Cloete et al., 2015, p.102). According to Cloete et al. (2015, p.136) the Department of Economics at the University of Cape Town [UCT] offers a PhD degree by coursework and also thesis. UCT's taught PhD programme is structured on a full-time four-year programme. They noted also that the four-year programme is split into two: two years of prerequisite courses and two years to write a thesis. McKenna (2019) mentions that a taught PhD is beneficial to PhD students because they are equipped with the academic requirements needed to conduct a PhD study. She also stated that in South Africa, the coursework PhD does not count as a credit, which is why few universities offer coursework as part of their PhD training.

2.4.4. The Professional PhD

The professional PhD is referred to as the ‘work-based PhD’ (Sherman, Ortosky, Leong, Kello & Hegarty, 2021; Louw & Muller, 2014). A professional PhD’s key focus is students' work experiences (McKenna, 2019; Cloete et al., 2015; Louw & Muller, 2014). In a professional PhD, students undertake a PhD specific to the industry where they work and not necessarily academia (McKenna, 2019). In the professional PhD, students undertake various coursework modules, do work-integrated learning and research that culminates in a thesis within their area of expertise (Cloete et al., 2015). Laar, Rehm and Achrekar (2017) elucidate that the professional PhD is becoming popular to accommodate working-class students. The professional PhD also offers education and training specifically suited to experienced professionals who wish to broadly contribute to their professional practice (Sherman, Ortosky, Leong, Kello & Hegarty, 2021; Laar et al., 2017; Cloete et al., 2015).

2.4.5. The PhD Cohort

The PhD Cohort model is supervisory support offered to PhD students by a team of supervisors in a group setting with other PhD students (Govender & Dhunpath, 2011). A PhD Cohort is referred to as the ‘Collaborative Cohort Model’ (CCM) (Rout, Sommerville & Aldous, 2015; Govender & Dhunpath, 2011). The PhD cohort has been used in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada for over four decades (Bista & Cox, 2014). The PhD Cohort is used at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to enhance the quality of PhD supervision (Gumbo, 2017; Cloete et al., 2015; Govender & Dhunpath, 2011). Vithal (2009) echoed that the PhD cohort was introduced as an alternative to address the low levels of PhD output in South African universities and close the gap in the traditional model of supervision (Vithal, 2009). Hence, the PhD cohort is structured on collaboration, cooperation and professional learning communities (Rout, Sommerville & Aldous, 2015; Bista & Cox, 2014; Govender & Dhunpath, 2011; Vithal, 2009). The PhD Cohort is similar to the traditional supervision with cohort seminar sessions, which run parallel. The PhD Cohort is advantageous because of Supervisor-PhD student mutuality, higher PhD graduation rates, decreased PhD attrition rates and an enhanced academic environment where research is encouraged (Gumbo, 2017; Govender & Dhunpath, 2011; Lewis et al., 2010). The PhD Cohort also offers possibilities to prepare conference papers, publish articles and act as guest lecturers for university modules (Bista & Cox, 2014; Govender & Dhunpath, 2011; Backhouse, 2009).

2.4.6. Industrial PhD

An Industrial PhD is a three-year PhD completed in partnership with a commercial or public sector company, an Industrial PhD candidate, and a university (Kaddoura, 2021; Endret, 2021). Kaddoura (2021) notes that students in industrial PhD programs have a better chance of landing a position in the industry, primarily as research and development scientists, because they graduate with an extensive understanding of the industry and market. Endret (2021) states that an industrial PhD allows students to perform an application-oriented research project. It also allows students to develop a network outside the typical university sector and a skill set that appeals to companies.

2.5. Targets on PhD production

The relevance of the PhD is reflected in various country's national PhD policies to increase the number of PhD graduates (Qadeer et al., 2021; Shaheen, 2021; Schalkwyk, & Cloete, 2021; Törnroos, 2017; Louw & Muller, 2014). According to Louw and Muller (2014 p.3), in 2008, Finland set a target of producing 1 600 PhD graduates. They observed that Mexico and South Africa are also increasing the numbers of PhD graduates. They also stated that there has been an impressive development in Korea, Singapore, and Thailand in producing PhD graduates. Likewise, India increased its PhD candidates in 2015 from 65,491 in 2005. Further, they observed that Canada, Denmark, Finland and Thailand, are examples of countries that invest financially in producing PhDs. Numerous studies stressed the need for South Africa to produce more PhD graduates (IOLNews, 2022; NRF, 2018; Mouton, 2016; Louw & Muller, 2014; National Planning Commission, 2012). This is crucial to fill the academic capacity in the higher education sector and contribute to the knowledge economy (Mouton, 2016, p.1). Hence, to produce more PhDs in South Africa, the government put various PhD policies in place. One such policy includes the Department of Science and Technology [DST] Ten-Year Innovation Plan, which sets the initial targets for producing more than 100 PhD graduates per one million population by 2030 (IOLNews, 2022; Schalkwyk, & Cloete, 2021; Mouton, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015).

The National Planning Commission (2012, p. 26) echoes that by 2030, PhD graduates will be the drivers of the knowledge economy. The Mail & Guardian (2017) reports that there is still a low enrollment and graduation of PhD students compared to the South African government's national targets and that of other developed countries. The report attributes this to South African higher education institutions producing PhD graduates estimated at 3,000 students per annum per one million of the population, in contrast to the 5000 targets envisaged by the NDP. The report also highlighted the lack of funding for the low number of PhD students produced in South Africa. The report further explains that a lack of funds excludes students from studying at the PhD level or delays students in completing their studies once they start. The next section discusses South Africa's strategy to strengthen its PhD production.

2.5.1. Targets on PhD production in South Africa

In recognition of the relevance of the PhD to the knowledge economy, South Africa put measures in place to promote research in South African universities. Amongst such measures is the launch of the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) (IOL News, 2022; NRF, 2018), which aims to support the National Development Plan Vision 2030 (NDP) on the production of PhDs

2.5.2. The National Research Foundation (NRF)

The NRF is a national government agency that promotes and supports research by funding research, developing researchers and providing research facilities (NRF, 2018, p.6). Hence, to address the challenges of the PhD shortage in South Africa and to achieve the stated NDP goals, the NRF seeks to achieve the following objectives. Firstly, to increase the number of postgraduate enrolments at South African higher education institutions from 16% to 25% (NRF, 2018, p.28). Secondly, to increase the number of PhD graduates from the previous 2 000 to 5000 yearly, thereby raising the number of PhDs per million population by 2030, from 36 in 2015 to 100 (NRF, 2018, p.28).

2.5.3. The South African Research Chairs (SARChI)

The Department of Science and Technology established the South African Research Chairs [SARChI] in 2006 to ensure high-quality research and innovation at South African public universities (NRF, 2018). Individuals occupy Research Chairs in collaboration with a public research institution, either from another university, a science council, a national research facility, or an academic health network (NRF, 2018; NRF, 2017). SARChI's priorities include strengthening universities research and innovation, production of top-notch PhD students and high research outputs. (NRF, 2018; NRF, 2017). The objectives of the SARChI are:

1. To increase the number of PhD graduates
2. To increase the capacity of scientific research and innovation in South Africa.
3. To improve the competitiveness of South Africa through global research and innovation by addressing social and economic challenges.
4. To attract and maintain outstanding researchers and scientists.

5. To develop the human capital of young and mid-career researchers.

To achieve the above-listed objectives, the SARChI put in place a strategy called the 60/40 target (NRF, 2018). According to NRF (2018), the 60/40 target implies external and internal candidates. The 60/40 target implies recruiting candidates from outside South African universities, either from industry and abroad, including African scholars and South Africans in the diaspora (NRF, 2018). Since the launch of SARChI, 21 public universities in South Africa have received 150 Research Chairs (NRF, 2018).

2.5.4. Universities as Hubs for PhD Production

Universities are important hubs for PhD production by offering PhD programmes at full-time, part-time, or distance (Cloete et al., 2015; DHET, 2018; Higher Education Act, 1997). Research alongside teaching is one of the missions of universities (Mouton, 2016). Universities are also the catalyst for economic growth and development by training the labour force and producing scientific knowledge by producing PhD students (Cloete et al., 2015, pp. 3-4). Highlighting the critical role universities play in the number of PhD graduates produced, Samuel (2017, p.8) identified the number of PhDs produced by South African universities from 2000-2012. These are UCT (676); Stellenbosch University (559); UKZN (554); UP (497); UNISA (467) and WITS (414). Thus, within a three- year period, UKZN was ranked 3rd in the number of international PhDs produced. It is necessary to note that there are twenty-six public universities in South Africa (DHET, 2018). South African Universities are classified into different categories, such as traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology (DHET, 2018; Nwokedi, 2015).

The Centre for Higher Education Transformation report (CHE-2010) classified South African universities into three clusters: red, green and blue cluster. Universities are classified under clusters because of the institution's mission and purpose (MacGregor, 2010). According to MacGregor (2010), the three clusters are characterized by the following explained below:

- i. Red clusters are research-intensive universities. Red cluster universities are characterized by high research output, high student success rate and large proportions of academic staff with PhDs. Five universities fall under the red cluster. These are the University of

Witwatersrand, Stellenbosch University; University of Cape Town; University of Pretoria and Rhodes University.

- ii. Blue clusters are higher educational institutions whose primary focus is technical training. Its focus is science, engineering and technology. Blue clusters are characterized by low postgraduate enrolments, low graduation rate and low research output. These institutions are Vaal University of Technology; Central University of Technology [CUT]; Durban University of Technology [DUT]; Mangosuthu University of Technology; Tshwane University of Technology; Cape Peninsula University of Technology; University of Venda and Walter Sisulu University.
- iii. Green clusters are universities that combine both teaching and research. Green clusters were historically disadvantaged institutions that merged because of the transformation of higher education institutions between 2002-2005 (MacGregor, 2010). MacGregor (2010) argues that mergers affected the green clusters in research output, postgraduates' enrolment and staff qualifications. Nine universities fall under the green cluster. These are the University of Free State, University of KwaZulu-Natal [UKZN], University of North-West, University of Fort Hare, University of Limpopo, University of Western Cape, University of Johannesburg, University of Nelson Mandela and the University of Zululand.

2.6. Relevance of a PhD to Host Countries

The PhD is increasingly relevant globally because of its positive contribution to countries (Shaheen, 2021; Van Schalkwyk, Van & Cloete, 2021; Gumbo, 2017; Boelen, 2017; Edge & Munro, 2015; Louw & Muller, 2014; Backhouse, 2009). The PhD's importance to the host countries and universities is evident in the literature (Baker, 2019; Bryan & Guccione, 2018; Gumbo, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Odena & Burgess, 2015; Seehole, 2011). Bryan and Guccione (2018) reiterate that PhD contributes to countries knowledge economies such as the UK, Europe and Australia. They bolstered the argument that PhD students play a strategic role in the European knowledge economy and foster sharing knowledge partnerships amongst universities cum businesses in Europe. They stated further that the PhD contributes substantially to UK industries in the UK because about 56% of PhD holders leave academia within six months after graduation to work in other sectors. They also stated that about 60% of PhD graduates in Australia leave academia within nine months of graduation to work in diverse careers like business and academia.

Seehole (2011, p.54) notes that through the PhD, new and original ideas are produced through research and exchange of ideas. Such exchange of ideas occurs at different levels, either locally, institutionally or internationally, through transactions within researchers' networks located in various parts of the world. In the same vein, the Department of Science and Technology –DST (2007) recognized the PhD as a vital force in economic development and transformation towards a knowledge-based economy. Edge and Munro (2015) found that PhD students offer organizations and businesses collective knowledge, skills, and reputational benefits in the UK. PhD students also contribute to research capacity and generate the needed skills that address complex societal issues (Shaheen, 2021; Van Schalkwyk, Van & Cloete, 2021; Laar, Martin & Achrekar, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey, 2015). Given the relevance of a PhD, Mouton (2016, p.52-53) elucidates that in 2010, the ASSAf suggested increased funding for full-time PhD students, targeted at specific higher institutions to produce more PhDs. He also stated that ASSAf devised strategies to promote public support for a better understanding of the value of the PhD.

2.7. Trends in International PhD Students' Migration

This section discusses an overview of international PhD students' migration globally and to South Africa. IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021) observed that international students surged from 2.1 million in 2001 to nearly 5.3 million in 2019. They also stated that international students' significant five study destinations are the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) observed that the top three study destination countries for international students are the United States (18%), the United Kingdom (11%), and France (7%). Many international PhD students studying in the USA are from Asia, China and India (OECD, 2015). Cohen (2017) observes that globally Australian, British and Canadian universities vigorously recruit international PhD students. They also observe China has ambitious internationalization policies to recruit international PhD students.

In a report by Marshall (2013) on the 'international mobility of African students', especially international students from Sub-Saharan Africa, she echoes that in 2010, 380, 376 African international students' migration accounted for about a tenth of all international students globally and 6 percent of all African graduates. The report indicated that France had a large proportion of international students, estimated at 111,195 students. The report also revealed that the following

countries host a large number of African international students: South Africa, 57,321 (15%); the United Kingdom, 36,963 (9.8%); the United States, 36,738 (9.7%); Germany, 17,824 (4.7%); and Malaysia, 14,744 (3.9%). The report further revealed a 1 percent decline in African students enrolled in France between 2006 and 2010. Further, the report indicates a 28.8% increase in international students who studied in South Africa. Further analysis revealed that 19.3% of students chose to study in the United Kingdom, while the U.S and Germany decreased to 2.3% and 4.8%. Furthermore, the report revealed that the home countries of the largest group of Africans international students studying abroad were Morocco, 39,865 (10.5%); Nigeria 34,274 (9%); Algeria 22,465 (5.9%); Zimbabwe 19,658 (5.2%); Cameroon 19,113 (5%); and Tunisia 18,438 (4.8%).

2.8. International PhD Students in South African Universities

This section gives an overview of international PhD students in South African universities, considering South Africa is not immune to the concept of having international students studying across the twenty-six public face-to-face South African universities. Such a discussion is also essential to reveal the push and pull factors international students choose to study in South Africa. The number of PhD students migrating to South Africa for PhD purposes has increased significantly (ICEF, 2017). The migration of international PhD students to South Africa is located within debates like the Global-South and South-South migration (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016; Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). The term ‘Global-South’ are low or middle-income countries based on the World Bank classification (Clarke, 2018). The countries are Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America, and the Caribbean (Clarke, 2018). Hollington, Tappe, Salverda and Schwarz (2016) associate ‘Global-South’ with ‘developing countries’ and ‘Third World’. South-South migration is also referred to as intra-regional migration, which implies the migration of international students within developing countries, notably Africa (Woldegiorgis, 2017).

With a focus on international postgraduate students studying in four African countries, Ashley (2019) observes that South Africa, Egypt, Uganda, and Kenya are the top four African countries for international students. She also noted that South African universities rank among the top ten African universities. She further stated that international students who study in African higher educational institutions save a huge amount on tuition fees and living costs while acquiring quality

education. Mokhothu and Callaghan (2018) mention that in 2013, South African universities recorded 74 000 international students comprised of undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments, accounting for nearly 8% of the student body. They also mentioned that out of this enrolment, 15% of postgraduate students were international students. The number of international students seeking a PhD is evident in the significant increase in the number of students, especially from other African countries to South African Universities (Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018; Mouton, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey, 2014). International students from the SADC region ^[11] and other African countries such as Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Nigeria and Cameroon are studying in South African public face-to-face universities (Nwokedi, 2015). The White paper on Migration (2017, p. 47) indicates that from June 2014 – December 2016, the number of international students on study visas was 1322074 (18%). The Whitepaper on Migration (2017, p.47) also indicates that in 2013, there were 20 962 postgraduate international students. Mouton (2016, p. 27) buttress that in 2000, the number of South African enrolments was 990 and African international students was 526. She also noted that in 2012, enrollment from international students from other African countries was 3717 compared to South African enrollment, 2 967.

Equally, since 1994, the number of international students studying in South African universities has increased, evident in 12 557 international students registered by South African universities and 72 999 in 2014 (DHET, 2016 cited in Ratshilaya, 2017, p.1). In 2014, South Africa received around 43,000 international students and 70,000 in 2011(ICEF, 2017). ICEF (2017) data suggests that international students studying in South Africa are from African countries. These are Zimbabwe (10, 993), Namibia (2,674), DRC Congo (2,648), Lesotho (2,557), Nigeria (2,243), Swaziland (2,217), Botswana (1,662), United States (1,257), Kenya (1,073) and Zambia (1,066). In contrast, Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey (2014, p.83) observed that in 2006, South Africa hosted over 53 000

¹¹ See <https://www.sadc.int/member-states/>: SADC is an acronym for the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SADC consists of 16 Member States and is a regional economic community. SADC was established on 17 August 1992 to achieve regional integration, economic development, peace and eradication of poverty. SADC are Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Madagascar, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

international students. They also stated that in 2012, out of 1 878 graduates, 630 (33.6%) were international students from other African countries. The top ten countries where the international students come from were countries like Zimbabwe (142), Nigeria (76), Kenya (43), Uganda (29) and Ethiopia (23). Cloete, Sheppard and Bailey (2014, p.83) equally observe that during the period 2000–2012, there was an increase in PhD enrolments from 6 354 to 13 964, a growth of 7 610. They stated that PhD enrolments also surged from 6 354 to 13 964, an increase of 7 610 (120%), while for international students from Africa expanded from 573 to 3,901. Lee and Schoole (2014) corroborated that the number of international students in South Africa has grown from 12,600 in 1994 to 72,875 in 2012. They also pointed out that since 2007, the average growth rate of international students has been 4.4% per annum compared to the national average of 5.47%.

The overview of international PhD students in South African Universities suggests that the number of international students seeking a PhD is increasing. This is evident in the significant increases in the enrollment of students, especially those from other African countries at South African Universities. Arguably, there are scarce statistics on the number of international PhD students studying in South Africa. Statistics on international PhD students studying at South African universities classify international PhD students under the postgraduate umbrella without a clear-cut distinction into specific study categories of the PhD. However, several studies suggest that the number of international PhD students migrating to South Africa for PhD purposes has increased significantly.

2.9. International PhD Students and Migration Policies

International students are a ‘special category of migrants’ because the host country’s legislation, rules and practices affect how they reside, study and work in such country (Xiong, 2017, p.35). Migration policies are laws and regulations that guide the movement of international students (United Nations cited in Anegub, 2016, p.14). Numerous studies suggest that international PhD students in study destinations such as the USA, UK and Australia must comply with the immigration policies of their host countries (Emma & Batalova, 2021; Baer & Mirka, 2020; Anjofui, 2018; Xiong, 2017; Boelen, 2017; Wu et al., 2015). Taborda (2020) highlighted the effects of USA’s immigration policies on international students studying in the USA. She asserts that international students are issued three visa categories in the USA: F visas, M visas, and J visas.

She explains that an F visa is issued to international students who study in the USA. The M visa is issued to international students enrolled in the vocational study. The J visa is issued to international students on cultural exchanges. F-1 visa is for full-time students in a college, university, high school, or a language-training program (Whatley & Heidi, 2022; Emma & Batalova, 2021).

Cong (2017, p. 10) maintained that after the terrorist attack of 2001 in the USA, the government amended the USA's migration policies. She mentioned that the introduction of the Student Exchange Visitor and Information System (SEVIS) and related legislation significantly affected the types of student services provided to international students. SEVIS is an internet-based system that enables schools and the Department of Homeland Security to share information on the immigration status of F-1 international students and J-1 exchange visitors (Emma & Batalova, 2021). The USA's Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) program tracks and supervises USA schools, programs, students, exchange visitors, and dependents throughout their studies in the USA (Emma & Batalova, 2021). Emma and Batalova (2021) buttressed that SEVIS requires all universities to submit and periodically update international student information in a database that the government may access. He adds that students who do not attend classes may have their visas revoked and face deportation.

In South Africa also, international PhD students' migration is guided by South African immigration policies and legislation. International PhD students must fulfill the immigration conditions stipulated by the South Africa Department of Home Affairs [DHA] to study in South Africa and other university study conditions. These conditions are previous qualification evaluations by the South Africa Authority Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and students must have an international student medical insurance certificate.

2.9.1. International PhD Students and the South African Study Visa

The South Africa immigration Act (2002) states that a study visa may be issued to prospective students intending to study in South Africa by the Director-General of the Department of Home Affairs. The South African Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002, section 13 stipulates the following condition under which a study visa is issued.

- i. A study permit may be issued to an international student that intends to study for more than three-months; based on the condition that (a) Visas issued for study purposes should be for the duration of the course but not more than four years.
- ii. An official letter confirming the provisional acceptance of a student and the course duration at the higher education institution.
- iii. The university guarantees that the international student intends to study and declares that such students will pay their tuition fees.
- iv. The university guarantees that such international students have adequate means to support themselves while in South Africa.
- v. A study permit holder is not authorised to work except for 20 hours part-time.

Similarly, Section 12 states that for a study visa to be issued, an undertaking shall be submitted by the Registrar of the higher education institution to (i) Provide proof of registration within 30 days of registration. (ii) Notify the Director-General that the student has completed his/her studies or requires extending such period of study. A study visa issued shall immediately expire if the holder fails to register during the period for which his or her visa is issued or, if any undertakings referred to in sub-regulation (1) (b) are not met. The study conditions, such as evaluation by SAQA and student medical insurance is discussed in the next section.

2.9.2. International PhD Students and SAQA

International students seeking PhD admission to South African Universities must evaluate their previous qualifications and certificates by SAQA (Anjofui, 2018; SAQA, 2017; UKZN, 2018; Keevy, Green & Manik, 2014). The Higher Education Act (1997) as a recommendation for quality assurance purposes (SAQA, 2017; DHET, 2013) established SAQA. Keevy, Green and Manik (2014, p. 23) underscored the importance of having a foreign qualification evaluation by SAQA. They also stated that foreign qualifications are compared to a South African qualification by SAQA and located on the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Keevy, Green and Manik (2014, p. 23) highlight how SAQA evaluates foreign qualifications. Firstly, the SAQA application form is completed either manually or online. Secondly, the certified copies of the student's qualifications, the original language, and sworn translations are submitted to SAQA. Thirdly, the applicant signs a declaration on academic records and transcripts submitted.

Lastly, after completing the evaluation, a SAQA certificate is posted to the applicant or collected from Pretoria's SAQA office. Foreign qualification evaluation is critical because international students come from countries with different educational systems in contrast to the host country's educational systems (Altbach, cited in Cloete et al., 2015, p.1). Kishun (2007) explains that evaluating foreign qualifications is crucial during the admission process to select qualified candidates for a PhD programme and avoid jeopardizing the PhD programme's quality. She elucidated that a high level of expertise is required to recognize, interpret, and determine foreign qualifications from other countries.

2.9.3. International PhD Students and Student Medical Insurance

Student medical insurance is one of the criteria to be fulfilled by international PhD students before applying for a study visa. Crystal (2016) established that Sweden allows international students living in the country for more than a year to benefit from its public health care by having them register with the appropriate authorities. He elucidates that European students' could use a health insurance card obtained in their home country in other European Union countries and thus benefit from the same health benefits as local students. He asserts that most countries require international students to obtain medical insurance. South African immigration also echoes that all international students are required to have adequate medical insurance with a recognized South African medical scheme during their studies (UKZN, 2016; Department of Home Affairs, 2016).

The South African Immigration Act Regulation 12(f) states that international students should have proof of medical cover renewed yearly for the study duration (Department of Home Affairs, 2016). Each higher education institution has its accredited medical aid schemes registered with the Medical Schemes Act (Act No. 131 of 1998), which international students could choose (UKZN, 2016). However, Lee and Sehoole (2014) argue that medical insurance is a substantial financial cost for international students, particularly those from developing countries.

2.9.4. Changing South African Migration Policies

In the past years, there have been amendments to the South African immigration policies resulting in various regulations that affect international PhD students. These are the 2012 immigration, 2014 Immigration Regulations, 2016 Green Paper on international migration and the 2017 White Paper on international immigration. Under the 2014 immigration amendment, the word ‘visa’ was replaced with ‘permit’ (South Africa News, 2014). The immigration amendment also became restrictive. Due to the 2014 immigration amendment, the visa facilitation services (VFS) was appointed as the service provider by the Department of Home Affairs to handle visas (Anjofui, 2018). Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) is a private visa application service provider contracted by the DHA to process international students’ study visas (Department of Home Affairs, 2018). VFS has eleven centres in South Africa’s nine provinces and takes about 100- 150 applications per day charged at R1350 (Department of Home Affairs, 2018).

The amendments to the South African immigration policies also indicate that South African migration policies affect international PhD students in two ways. Firstly, before the amendment, international PhD students awaiting their visa outcome could exit the country provided they have a note from the Department of Home Affairs, which acknowledges the receipt of their visa submission. Nevertheless, under the 2014 immigration amendment, international PhD students cannot travel out of the country without a visa (Anjofui, 2018; Department of Home Affairs, 2014). Secondly, before the immigration amendment, international students who overstay in South Africa were required to pay a fine; however, under the 2014 policy, they are banned from entering South Africa for twelve months or five years, depending on the severity of the overstay (Anjofui, 2018; Boynton, 2015). International students who overstay are prohibited from re-entering South Africa and regarded as ‘undesirable’ (Anjofui, 2018).

Anjofui (2018) and Boynton (2015) point out that the term ‘undesirable’ was previously associated with individuals with criminal records and ‘overstayers’. Factors that make international students become lodged as 'overstayers' include visa backlogs, visa application requirements, costly visa charges by VFS and the insufficient capacity of VFS to book visa appointments timeously (Anjofui, 2018; Boynton, 2015; Mail & Guardian, 2015). For instance, Anjofui (2018) found that

the visa application fee is expensive, increasing threefold, from R450 to R1350. By contrast, Boelen (2017) argues that international students are 'desirable migrants' because they have skills that make host countries modify their migration policies to attract international students. As stated in the 2016 Green Paper on international migration, international PhD students will be granted permanent residence (PR) after completing their PhD in South Africa because of their critical skills (Green Paper international migration, 2016).

From the overview, it is apparent that study destinations like South Africa manage student mobility through migration policies. It also appears that the various amendments aim to minimize irregular migration and ensure efficient migration management in South Africa to contribute to its economic development. The various South African immigration policies also affect international students' visa and study conditions, which is discussed next.

2.9.5. The Nexus between International PhD Students and South African Migration Policies

The challenges of international students renewing study permits in South Africa are highlighted in extant literature (Bernard, 2021; Anjofui, 2018; Mouton, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Boynton, 2015). International students that apply for study permits at VFS encounter unequal treatment during the visa processing (Anjofui, 2018; Mail & Guardian, 2015). It is difficult for international students to renew their study visas because of stringent requirements and visa backlogs (Johnson, 2016; Mail & Guardian, 2015). Due to the challenges associated with the renewal of a study visa, the visa process is exasperating for international students and other migrants (Anjofui, 2018). The amendments in immigration policies also resulted in a drop in international PhD students studying at South African universities. The Mail and Guardian (2015) reported that South Africa's higher education witnessed a decrease in international students, noticeably by 600 in 2015 and 25 percent in 2014, hindering South Africa's internationalization efforts. Along similar lines, drawing on Anjofui's (2018, p.30) study of Cameroonians in Cape Town, Anjofui found that amendments to South Africa's immigration policies negatively affected international students because of how their visas are processed. Anjofui also argued that South Africa's migration policy is controversial because it is a restrictive policy unfavourable to international students. Anjofui contends that

students study visas should be renewable after four years instead of every 12 months.

Johnson (2016) also reported on visa backlogs experienced by international PhD students at the Witwatersrand University in SA. Due to visa backlogs in 2016, the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA) urged the Department of Home Affairs to issue a blanket extension of student visas, so that affected students are not declared ‘undesirable persons’ when departing South Africa (Johnson, 2016; MacGregor, 2015). Schalkwyk and Cloete (2021, p.3) argue that African students confront barriers during migration due to complicated study visa requirements. Kasese-Hara and Mugambi (2021) assert that international students in South Africa, particularly those from other African countries, have grappled with immigration policies perceived as discriminatory.

MacGregor (2015) noted international students' challenges due to visa backlogs, such as police arrests. She further notes that students with expired visas are constrained from accessing their bank accounts because their accounts are linked to their visa duration. She stressed that a student’s bank account could be frozen because of an expired visa or a visa extension delay. The former Home Affairs Minister, Hlengiwe Mkhize, highlighted the challenges associated with South African immigration policies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Westville campus on October 6, 2017. Hlengiwe Mkhize emphasized that migration issues are controversial because it involves a power relationship of control between migrants, the host countries, space and resource scarcity (IOL, 2017; Department of Home Affairs, 2017). The Mail & Guardian (2017) reported that South Africa tightened its immigration policies and firmly safeguarded its borders, even though this is considered anti-African behaviour.

Cohen (2017) mentioned that Australia and Canada attract many international students because of their robust migration policies. He cites how Canada amended its migration policies on student visas in 2014, enabling international students to work without extra documentation before and after their studies. He argues that hostile environments and strict USA immigration policies decrease international student migration to the USA. The Green paper on international migration (2016, p. 44) buttresses the need to retain international PhD students after graduation because of their critical skills for the South African economy.

2.10. The Relevance of International PhD Students to Host Countries and Universities

International PhD students greatly benefit the host country's economy and higher education institutions (IOL News, 2022; Mouton, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Cloete et al., 2015). Research studies sum the importance of international PhD students (Emma & Batalova, 2021; Castiello & Li, 2020; Baker, 2019; Confait, 2018; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Wu et al., 2015; Lee & Schoole, 2014; Gubba, 2014). These reasons are university tuition fees, an enhancement of university student population diversity, internationalization of education and a contribution to the knowledge economy. International PhD students contribute positively to both the host country and universities in terms of their payment of fees, accommodation and their research undertaking (Whatley & Heidi, 2022; Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min & Zaman, 2021; Shaheen, 2021; Van Schalkwyk, Van & Cloete, 2021; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Wu et al., 2015; Lee & Schoole, 2014). The relevance of international PhD students to host countries and universities is discussed from the following lenses: economic growth of host country, international PhD students as human capital, bolstering the number of PhD graduates and student diversity.

2.10.1 International PhD Students and Economic Growth of Host Country

'International students are regarded as economic growth drivers and socially integrated migrants' (Boelen, 2017, p.1). International students provide immense benefits to South Africa's economy and higher educational institutions (Van Schalkwyk, Van & Cloete, 2021; Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min & Zaman, 2021; Nwokedi, 2015; Mouton, 2016; Cloete et al., 2015). International students contribute to the knowledge economy because they are economic growth engines (Shaheen, 2021; Gumbo, 2017). Boelen (2017, p.1) mentioned that international students contribute positively to both the home country and the host country because of the short- and long-term gains for higher education institutions and countries. They also contribute financially to the host country's economy (Chien, 2020; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019).

Chien, (2020) investigated the benefits and challenges of studying in Britain amongst international PhD students. The study found that study abroad is double-edged, encompassing both positive and negative effects. Chien also found that international students contribute financially to educational institutions and the host country's economy. She estimated the contribution of international postgraduate students to the UK economy in 2009 in terms of tuition fees and living expenses to

£7.9 billion. Chien also projected that in 2025, the potential economic contribution of international student will be £16.9 billion. Alfatta (2017, p.2) found that international students are vital to higher education and the economy of the USA because they bring foreign currency into the USA, pay substantial tuition fees, rental costs, and purchase considerable amounts of goods in the country.

2.10.2. International PhD students as Human Capital

At the institutional level, PhD students are involved in research that increases their university's research output and ranking. The dissertation constructed by PhD students also contributes to 'advancing a university's research and the developing research capacity (UKZN 2007, p.10). Research fosters a culture of national intellect and the platform to stay in touch with international scientific advancements that promote innovation (Shaheen, 2021; White Paper, 1997). International PhD students contribute to their host country's intellectual capital as a workforce as graduate assistants (Mikaël et al., 2021; Schalkwyk & Cloete, 2021; Nwokedi, 2015). Park (2007, p.190) termed PhD students as 'the army of research ants' because they carry out research projects while academics are overwhelmed with other responsibilities. Universities recruit international PhD students to meet the national targets of PhDs (Baker, 2019). International PhD students are also talented because they contribute to research and innovation (IOLNews, 2022; Mathies & Karhunen, 2021; Boelen, 2017; Foster, 2016; Wu et al., 2015). Research by Science Connect (2017, p.11) on career tracking pilot on PhD graduates in Europe found that PhD holders have a high employment rate because many are employed on permanent contracts and working as researchers. The study also found a high unemployment rate amongst PhD holders in Humanities who find it more difficult to find employment. The study also points out that several PhD holders work in jobs unrelated to their PhD training.

Confait (2018) referred to PhD graduates as specialists with vast knowledge in a specified area of study and transferable skills that contribute to society. He adds that they have accumulated human capital and invaluable human resources because of their capacity to contribute to national development. Host countries are also 'pushed' to recruit and train international PhD students to meet their local needs in critical or scarce areas (Emma & Batalova, 2021; Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Seehole, 2011). Qadeer et al. (2021) asserted that international students granted permanent residency after graduation contribute their knowledge as a skilled

workforce that benefits the host country's development. They also echoed that when international students return to their home countries, they serve as influential ambassadors for the host countries. In Canada, international students are permitted to stay for three years after graduation if they find work that create a pathway from study to permanent residence (Cohen, 2017). This is also reflected in South Africa's migration policy on granting Permanent Residency to international PhD students who graduate in South Africa (White paper on Migration, 2017, p.47). The South African White paper on Migration (2017, p.47) reiterates the importance of international PhD students becoming permanent residents (PR) in South Africa after graduation. Graduate PhD students are issued with a 7-year work permit to remain in the country (White paper on Migration, 2017, p.47).

According to the White paper on Migration (2017), international PhD students become permanent residents (PR) after graduation for three reasons: Firstly, this is to fill the lacunae of critical skills shortages in South Africa. Secondly, it is affordable recruiting PhD graduates as scarce skilled personnel because they are currently in the country. Thirdly, many countries grant permanent residency to international students after graduation as an inducement to remain in the country and contribute to development.

Daniel (2022) highlighted that international PhD graduates who qualify with critical skills in South Africa no longer receive automatic residency. Since 2016, international PhD graduates who graduated with critical skills in South Africa were eligible for a permanent residency permit without work experience (Daniel, 2022). However, these waivers were recently removed in 2022 by the Department of Home Affairs (Daniel, 2022). Mathies and Karhunen (2021) suggest that improving international students' ability to integrate into a host country's labor market and promoting an environment conducive to international students' families, rather than graduation would result in higher international student stay rates.

2.10.3. International PhD students and bolstering the number of PhD graduates

PhD students bolster the number of PhD graduates produced in the host country. Several developed countries rely on international students to address the low number of local PhD students uninterested in a PhD because of other competitive alternative economic labor opportunities (Mathies & Karhunen, 2021; IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Baker, 2019). Baker (2019) observed that Switzerland has a higher number of local PhD graduates, bolstered by an increased number of international PhD students. He further observed that in 2017, 71 000 students were awarded a PhD in the USA, yet the number of locals with a PhD is low compared to other OECD countries.

Xueying, Stocking, Gebbie and Appelbaum (2015) illuminated that 50% of international PhD students studying in the US are from China, India and Korea. They noted that international students study mathematics, computer science, physics, and engineering (STEM). They state that international PhD students are also involved in pioneering global technology and research activities. Seehole (2011, p.56) mentions that the USA has a challenge producing PhDs from local students who are uninterested in scarce subjects such as Engineering and Natural Science; hence international students are recruited to fill in the gap. In the South African context, the Green Paper (2012, p. 37) also observed that students who enroll in PhD programmes have increased over the last fifteen years, with the proportion of black PhD graduates growing. South African universities admit African international students to fulfill the admission quotas set for black students (Mda, 2010 p. 2). This alludes to international black students being better prepared academically to quickly start postgraduate study than local South African students (Mda, 2010, p. 2).

2.10.4. International PhD Students and Internationalization

International students are vital in internationalization because of the benefits of tangible results for individuals, institutions, and the host country (Schalkwyk & Cloete, 2021; Qadeer et al., 2021; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). Internationalization is integral to university branding and ranking (Govender, 2019). Universities are ranked on criteria such as internationalization (Qadeer et al., 2021; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). The recruitment of international postgraduate students has been one of the strategies for internationalization (Chaguluka, Ramraj & Amolo,

2018, p.438). Chaguluka, Ramraj and Amolo (2018, p.438-439) assert that South African public universities attract and retain international students needed in highly specialized occupations through internationalization. They mention that UKZN also attracts international students through its internationalization policy.

Conversely, in an article by Govender (2019), she reported that the Members of Parliament (MPs) proposed introducing the postgraduate quota to regulate the number of international students studying at South African universities to ten percent to protect the South African brand. She reverberated that the University of Johannesburg objected to the quota system because of the negative impact on internationalization and universities rankings. She further states that quotas contradict higher education policies that aim to expand the number of postgraduate students. She equally echoed that postgraduate students need to maintain an affiliation with their universities once they graduate to build stronger alliances and boost regional cooperation in SADC.

2.10.5. International PhD Students and Student Diversity of Universities

International PhD Students contribute to student diversity (Schalkwyk, & Cloete, 2021; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang, 2020; Xiong, 2017; Alfatta, 2017; Boelen, 2017; Foster, 2016; Lee & Schoole, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Open Doors Reports, 2014; Maharaj, 2011). Such students are also valuable to their universities because they foster intercultural learning and diversity (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). Universities are also ranked on criteria such as international students and staff (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). Govender (2019) buttressed that university diversity is linked to significant innovation. Govender argues that without diversity, knowledge production and creativity will stagnate.

2.11. Reasons why International PhD Students Migrate

The reasons international PhD students migrate is discussed in this section. International PhD students' migration is attributed to the push and pull factors (Schalkwyk, & Cloete, 2021; IseOlorunkanmi, 2021; Mathies & Karhunen, 2021; Qadeer et al., 2021; Xiong, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). A mix of push and pull factors influence international PhD students' decision to study abroad and the decision-making process of selecting the study destination (Carbajal & Jesus, 2021; Zhang, O'Shea & Mou, 2021; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang, 2020; Boelen, 2017; Zhou, 2015). Anganoo (2014, p.17) posits that push and pull factors are

corresponding factors because migration occurs if the reason to emigrate [push factors from the home country] is addressed by the corresponding pull factors in the host country. Push and Pull factors are the demand and supply of education (Yuezu, Hao & Rujia, 2022; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang, 2020; Xiong, 2017). Ravenstein's (1885) and Lee's (1966) push and pull theory initially explain factors that propel people's migration, and this is linked to international students' motivations to study abroad and study destination choices. The push and pull theories are explained in chapter three.

2.11.1. Push Factors motivating the emigration of PhD Students

Push factors are the conditions in the home countries of international PhD students that propel their migration to study abroad (Carbajal & Jesus, 2021; Mariusz, 2022; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang, 2020; Xiong, 2017; Zhou, 2015; Nwokedi, 2015; Anganoo, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Push factors are negative and unpleasant situations in the home country do influence international students to pursue education elsewhere (Mariusz, 2022; Anjofui, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015). Push factors are circumstances that drive people to leave their home countries to take advantage of opportunities not available in their home country (Mariusz, 2022, p.3). Extant literature suggests that international PhD students exit their home country for several reasons (Yuezu, Hao & Rujia, 2022; Carbajal & Jesus, 2021; Blumenstock, Guanghua & Tan, 2021; Mathies & Karhunen, 2021; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang, 2020; Anjofui, 2018; Boelen, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Agbeniga, 2016; Anganoo, 2014).

The literature sums push factors as insufficient public universities, inadequate university funding, lack of student scholarships, overcrowded universities, unemployment, low quality of academic programmes, limited professional growth and a scarcity of specific programs (Yuezu, Hao & Rujia, 2022; Carbajal & Jesus, 2021; IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Ogujiuba, Anjofui & Stiegler, 2019; Anjofui, 2018; Boelen, 2017; Mouton, 2016; Xiong, 2017; Mda, 2010). Other push factors are climatic conditions, conflict, violence, terrorism and political instability (Mariusz, 2022; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang, 2020; Agbeniga, 2016; Anganoo, 2014). The push factors could either be political, economic and educational reasons. Political push factors are summed into conflict, terrorism and political instability. Economic push factors are summed into unemployment, inadequate university funding and a lack of student scholarships. Educational push factors are

summed into insufficient public universities, limited professional growth, low quality of academic programmes and a scarcity of specific PhD programs

2.11.2. Political Push Factors

Political factors propel the migration of international students. Political factors include political crisis, political instability, violence and war (Mariusz, 2022; Carbajal & Jesus, 2021; Altanchimeg, Nam & Jigjiddor, 2021; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang; 2020; Anjofui, 2018; Nwokedi, 2015; Anganoo, 2014; Gubba, 2014). Mariusz (2022, p. 4) mentioned that political issues such as economic instability, poor governance, civil conflicts, and political revolutions drive people to migrate to safer countries. Ogujiuba, Anjofui and Stiegler (2019, p.222) observed that Congo's war has displaced millions of people, and many have fled the country for fear of persecution and insecurity (Ogujiuba, Anjofui & Stiegler, 2019).

Anjofui (2018) posits that violent conflicts and political instability have forced several Congolese to migrate to South Africa. Similarly, the political crisis in Zimbabwe propelled Zimbabweans to migrate to South Africa because of South Africa's political stability (Anganoo, 2014, p.24). Zimbabwe's political instability, which started in 2000 almost, destroyed its higher education system (Seehole, 2011). Gubba (2014, p.5) stated that Zimbabwe had been a hot spot of political and economic instability, pushing students outside their country to study in South Africa. In the Nigerian context also, terrorism has contributed to the migration of Nigerian international students since 2000 (Agbeniga, 2016). A report by the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) (2012, p.8) echoed that protracted civil wars and political instability ravaged many Sub-Saharan African countries. Further, the report notes that political unrest in countries such as Angola, Mozambique and the DRC negatively affected the countries' education sector and students' enrollment. However, Evie (2017, p.4) contends that students who migrate from conflict countries are not motivated to study in the host country but by safety and security.

2.11.3. Economic Push Factors

Another push factor is economic reasons. Anjuoi (2018) and Gubba (2014) observed that certain countries, such as the DRC, Sudan and other African countries are in turmoil economically because of war. The desire for better living conditions and opportunities propels people to exit their home countries to other countries to access better opportunities (Ogujiuba, Anjofui & Stiegler, 2019; Anjofui 2018; Ojong & Otu, 2015, Manik, 2013). Meanwhile, Cameroonians also flee due to high unemployment and poverty rates (Ogujiuba, Anjofui & Stiegler, 2019). The country has had high migratory patterns in recent decades. Anjofui (2018, p.15) posits that African migrants come to South Africa because of adverse economic situations in their country, which affect their survival. 'Bush falling' is a metaphorical figure of speech among Cameroonians, implying relocating abroad for an improved livelihood.

Ojong and Otu (2015, p.50) likened 'Bush-falling' to the process of migrants going abroad to improve their livelihood prospects. Ojong and Otu (2015, p.50) likened Cameroonian's migration to individuals who leave their homes to the bush to hunt and gather. Anjofui (2018, p.6) stressed that 'Bush falling' is associated with the idea of success, and rejecting the opportunity to travel out of the country is like quitting the quest for success'. Citing the case of Cameroonian migrants, Ojong and Otu (2015) attribute the migration of Cameroonians to 'bush falling'. She notes that 'bush falling' is prevalent among Cameroonians because of the country's dysfunctional government and the high number of unemployed university graduates. Ojong and Otu (2015, p.50) opined that South Africa is regarded as the continent's 'United States', hence migrants who live in South Africa could be referred to as 'bush fallers. Ojong and Otu (2015, p.50) explain that the concept of 'bush fallers' refers to elite individuals who studied abroad through the support of mission, networks and personal contacts. Ojong and Otu explain that when such students graduate, they return to their home country to take formal jobs with the government or foreign organization.

2.11.4. Educational Push Factors

Educational push factors are discussed under the following sub-headings: insufficient educational access in home country universities, insufficient public universities, low quality of PhD programs in the home country and inadequate infrastructure in the home country.

2.11.4. (a). Insufficient Educational Access in Home Country Universities

Insufficient educational access in home country universities is another reason why international student's exit their home country (Yuezu, Hao & Rujia, 2022; Boelen, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Efionayi & Piguet, 2014). IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021) stressed that challenges in Nigeria's education sector triggered the migration of Nigerian postgraduate students to South African universities. Efionayi and Piguet's (2014) study on African students' migration identified why international students from three West African countries, namely Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niger study outside their home country. They found that the push factors are unsatisfactory study conditions in their home country, few universities and limited educational opportunities in their home country. Drawing on a study undertaken by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, p.3-4) in Indonesia, Taiwan, China and India, they found that the lack of access to higher education institutions in Asia and Africa propels the migration of international students to study abroad. Mazzarol and Soutar indicated insufficient educational access in the home country, particularly for those students from less developed countries was a motivation to study overseas.

Tati's (2014) study on students from the Francophone country suggests that international students from West Africa and Central Africa migrate to South Africa to seek quality higher education because of the dysfunctional educational system and competition for postgraduate admission in their home country. Boelen (2017) revealed that international students from Vietnam study abroad as an avenue to advance their lecturing careers because the limited educational space is insufficient to accommodate students in their home country. One of the contributory factors to limited educational space is the increasing demand for university education in African countries amidst the high population of African countries (Gandhi, 2018; Akudolu & Adeyemo, 2018; Boelen, 2017; Xiong, 2017; World Education News and Review-WENR, 2017; Whitehead & Sing, 2015). World Meters (2019) cites the population of selected African Countries as follows; Nigeria (206,

139,589); Ethiopia (114, 963, 588); Egypt (102, 334,404); DRC (89, 561, 403); South Africa (59, 308, 690) and Zimbabwe (14, 862, 924). For instance, Nigeria is one of the seventh most populous countries (WENR, 2017). WENR (2017) observes that in 1960 when Nigeria gained independence, the population was 42.5 million but increased to 186,988 million in 2016 and is likely to increase to 399 million people in 2050. Akudolu and Adeyemo (2018) assert that the number of students seeking university education is increasing, yet there is insufficient space to accommodate such students. Due to limited educational space to accommodate students seeking university education in Africa, private higher education institutions have increased (Gandhi, 2018). Gandhi (2018) points out that Sub-Saharan country like Uganda, the Republic of the Congo, and Côte d'Ivoire witnessed high enrolments of students in private higher educational institutions. Public universities in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from 100 to 500 between 1990 and 2014, while private universities increased from 30 to over 1000 (Gandhi, 2018). In Ethiopia, universities increased from 2 universities in 2000 to 36 public and 98 private universities (Gandhi, 2018). This suggests that the number of higher education institutions in Africa is insufficient to accommodate the number of postgraduate students seeking space to study, thus leading to an increase in private higher institutions.

In the same tone, a report by the Southern News (2019) cites a study by the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARU) on higher education institutions' difficulties in SADC. The report observes that higher education in SADC countries is poorly funded for decades despite the increasing student population. Due to Africa's population growth rate, there are constraints in financing higher education (Akudolu & Adeyemo, 2018).

2.11.4. (b). Insufficient Public Universities

Insufficient universities in the home country of international students also propel them to exit their home country to study abroad. Dahir (2017) highlights the number of universities in Africa's most populous countries. These are Nigeria (152); South Africa (136); Ethiopia (134); Democratic Republic of Congo (60); Egypt (55); Sudan (52); Uganda (46); Algeria (39); Kenya (39) and Tanzania (33). Dahir also observes that the ten largest populated countries in Africa have about 740 universities that accommodate about 660 million out of the 1.2 billion people in Africa. In contrast, the United States has about 5,300 universities and colleges that accommodate 323 million

students (Dahir, 2017). This suggests that the number of African universities is insufficient to accommodate the growing population seeking a PhD education. This has resulted in countries sending students abroad for PhD education. Akudolu and Adeyemo (2018, p.4) mention that Nigeria is a leading African country that sends students to study abroad, mainly in European and American universities. They also projected that in 2024, the UK would receive 28,800 postgraduates from Nigeria, and the USA would receive 7,600 postgraduate students.

2.11.4. (c). Low Quality of PhD programs in Home Country

The perceived low quality of the PhD programme offered in the home country is also a critical consideration that influences international students' migration (Akudolu & Adeyemo, 2018; Boelen, 2017; Evie, 2017; Xiong, 2017; WENR, 2017; Anganno, 2014). Evie (2017, p.4) notes that international students from developing countries rate education in their home country as sub-standard, not enhancing their career pursuits. Boelen (2017) found that international students from Vietnam obtain a PhD abroad because the quality of education at Vietnamese universities is sub-standard. Equally, in a study on the academic experiences of international PhD students in Canada,

Leping, O'Shea and Zhang's (2020) study provides interesting insights. Leping, O'Shea and Zhang (2020) stated that international PhD students who study in Canadian universities because of availability funding. Son and Park (2014) found that international students who study in Australia do so because of the limited availability of resources, poor quality of PhD programme, unavailability of specific PhD courses, lack of infrastructure, funding, and expert professors in their home countries. WENR (2017) reported that the low quality of PhD programs in Nigeria is affected by underfunding. WENR (2017) further revealed an insufficient budget allocated to education because of underfunding. Different countries have different funding structures; however, most African universities rely on government funding for about 60 percent of their budget (Southern News, 2019).

2.11.4. (d). Insufficient Infrastructure in the Home Country

Infrastructure such as laboratories, ICTs and internet access are resources needed to conduct quality research at universities. Severe hurdles hinder Nigerian universities in terms of higher education funding, quality of the PhD program and poor research infrastructure, which affects the

quality of the PhD programme (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Akudolu & Adeyemo, 2018). Oyewo and Umoh (2016, p.9) mention that ICTs are crucial for teaching learning and PhD students' research activities. They found that international PhD students are pushed to study at UKZN because of insufficient ICT, internet connectivity and Turnitin software in their home country universities, making research and publishing difficult. Rakoma's (2018) study on postgraduate students studying at UNISA, the largest distance model university, found that restricted access to the internet due and distance to internet facilities cafés influenced the quality of postgraduate study. She suggests that data bundles and access to the internet are expensive for postgraduates studying at UNISA.

2.12. Pull Factors: Why International PhD Students Migrate

This section discusses the other reasons referred to as the pull factors why international students migrate to the host country. Pull factors are the host country's conditions that attract international PhD students to study ((Mariusz, 2022; Yuezuo, Hao & Rujia, 2022; Schalkwyk, & Cloete, 2021; Leping, O'Shea & Zhang; 2020; Xiong, 2017; Zhou, 2015; Anganoo, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Seehole (2011, p.54) echoed that pull factors are 'magnets' of opportunities that attract international students to the host country. The literature sums pull factors as the cost of living, scholarship, future job prospects, better living conditions and the reputation of the South African higher education system (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Xiong, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Mda, 2010; Anganno, 2014; Lee & Schoole, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Xiong (2017, p.14) found that international PhD students are attracted to the host country because of pull factors such as educational advancement, scholarships, cheap tuition fees and social networks in the host country. Other pull factors are the quality of higher education programmes offered in foreign universities, degree value and unavailability of certain areas of specialization in the home country (Blumenstock, Guanghua & Tan, 2021; Evie, 2017; Oyewo & Umoh, 2017).

The pull factors are discussed under the following sub-headings, namely quality of PhD programme as a pull factor, language as a pull factor, cost as a pull factor, proximity as a pull factor, immigration as a pull factor, social network as a pull factor, economic factors as a pull factor and funding as a pull factor.

2.12.1. The Quality of the PhD Programme

The quality of the PhD programme is a pull factor that attracts international students to study abroad. The quality of the PhD programme in South Africa alludes to having several well-established higher institutions that offer quality PhD programmes that attract international PhD students (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Mouton, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Cloete, Sheppard & Bailey, 2015). Herman (2011) notes that during post-apartheid, the government did not give much preference to the PhD programme because the undergraduate programme was the priority. He asserted that it was until 2006-2007 that South Africa's national policies started to consider PhD distinct from other postgraduate degrees. Based on this, higher educational institutions in South Africa have undergone quality reviews by the CHE and met the requirement for ministerial approval for programme and qualifications mixes (PQMs) (Mouton, 2016; CHET, 2012).

2.12.2. University Reputation

University reputation is another pull factor for international students to study abroad (Leping, O'Shea & Zhang, 2020; Diogo & Carvalho, 2019; Mouton, 2016; Anganoo, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Gumbo (2014, p.26) echoes that the proven quality of South African universities, research outputs and the international status of academics contribute to a university's reputation. A study by Diogo and Carvalho (2019) on international PhD students studying in Portugal found that international students select a university because of a university's prestige and university ranking. Belavy, Owen and Livingston (2020) posit that university's ranking is crucial for its reputation and marketing to prospective students. They emphasize that citation rates, publications, and impact factors of journals wherein staff publish contribute to university ranking. For instance, in 2021, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) was placed 61 out of the 475 universities in the Times Higher Education (News24, 2021).

Similarly, in 2019 the Times Higher Education (THE) Young University Rankings ranked UKZN number one in Africa (UKZN Indaba, 2019). In 2018, the Times Higher Education (THE) Young University Rankings ranked UKZN among the top 100 universities placing UKZN in 83rd position (UKZN Indaba, 2018). Whilst ranking seems significant, Alfatta (2017, p.76) contends that university reputation is not a paramount factor student consider when selecting universities. Schalkwyk and Cloete (2021, p.3) argue that student protests, sporadic outbreaks of xenophobic

attacks and campus unrest negatively affected South Africa's reputation as an educational destination.

2.12.3. English Language

Language is also a significant discourse, being a pull factor that attracts international students to study abroad (Montse, 2022; Odena & Burgess, 2017; Nwokedi, 2015; Gumbo, 2014). Montse (2022) *states* that English-speaking countries attract the most international students because English is a favoured language globally. Chimucheka (cited in Gumbo, 2014, p. 26) pointed out that English as a medium of instruction attracts many international students to South Africa. However, South African universities such as the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Pretoria use Afrikaans as a teaching medium (Seehole, 2011; DHET, 2002). For instance, the University of Pretoria replaced Afrikaans as a medium of teaching with the English language because of student protests that Afrikaans was the language of apartheid (BBC, 2019). Similarly, Jansen (2015) reported that in 2013, UKZN announced that it is a dual-medium university, where isiZulu terminology would be developed in disciplines such as law, accounting, physics, and mathematics. She maintained that some of UKZN's postgraduate students wrote their thesis, aspects of the thesis (such as the abstract) and journal articles in isiZulu.

Given this context, DHET (2013, p.16) supports teaching in Zulu, as stated in Section 29(2) of the 1996 constitution. The 1996 constitution section 29(2) highlights that "Everyone has the right to be instructed in the official language(s) of their choice at public higher educational institutions when such teaching is acceptable". The English language is also crucial for job searches and employment prospects (Tati, 2014). Tati's (2014) study on international students from Francophone countries found that an inability to communicate in English language impedes students whose native language is not English. He found that international students from Francophone countries attended English classes before exiting their home country to improve their job prospects in South Africa or elsewhere. Countries that offer English courses are attractive to international PhD students who are non-English speakers because the English course helps students to overcome their linguistic lacunae (OECD, 2015; Boelen, 2017).

2.12.4. Cost of Living in the Host Country

The cost of living abroad is a vital pull factor because international students incur expenses during the migration process, including tuition fees and accommodation expenses. Expatica (2019) observes that South Africa is cheaper to live in than what is obtainable in other countries like Europe, Asia and North America because the average living cost in South Africa is cheaper than these countries. Anjofui (2018, p.23) asserts that international students from Cameroon and the DRC study in South Africa because of affordable tuition fees compared to other European countries. The South African government subsidizes the PhD program cost to achieve PhD targets and high graduate output in South Africa (Mouton, 2016) (Mouton, 2016). Sehoole (2011) asserts that studying in South Africa is cheap because the government absorbs some of the costs in subsidies for all students, including international PhD students.

Equally, South Africa's exchange rate to other currencies like the dollar and Euro makes South Africa an inexpensive study destination compared to the USA or Europe (Open Door, 2017; Sehoole, 2011). Cloete et al. (2015) elucidate that South Africa is economical for PhD candidates from African countries. Cloete et al. (2015, p. 9) put succinctly that 'the overall cost during the first year of a PhD in social sciences and education at a leading South African university is cheaper than universities like the University of California, Berkeley; Bath University; and New York University'.

2.12.5. Proximity as a Pull Factor

Proximity to the home country is another factor that international PhD students consider when selecting a study destination (Evie, 2017; Xiong, 2017; Mda, 2010; Gubba, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Proximity is a common factor for international PhD students from SADC (Anjofui, 2018; Anganoo, 2014; Nwokedi, 2014, Macgregor, 2014). It is easier for international PhD students from the SADC region to migrate to South Africa because they share national borders and speak a common language (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Mouton, 2016; Nwokedi, 2014; Gubba, 2014; Sehoole, 2011). Gubba (2014) mentioned the role of proximity in selecting of study destinations. Gubba (2014) likened Zimbabwean students to Asian students who migrate to Singapore because it is less costly and near their home country. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002)

contradict that, asserting that geographic proximity is less important to international students.

2.12.6. Migration Policy

International PhD students constitute about 30% of PhD student enrolment because of migration policies that facilitate the inward flow of students into South Africa (Schoole, 2011). It is worth noting that the 1997 SADC Protocol on Education and Training Development was a strategy to ease the migration of students and staff (Maunganidze & Formica, 2018; DHET, 2017). The SADC Protocol suggests that South Africa should facilitate students' mobility from the SADC region for study, research, teaching, and other educational training-related pursuits (DHET, 2017). The SADC Protocol also emphasized cooperation between member countries in higher education, training, research, development, and lifelong learning (Maunganidze & Formica, 2018; Gumbo, 2014). The SADC protocol also states that South African universities allocate 5% of admission space for SADC students (Gumbo, 2014, p. 13).

The impact of the SADC protocol on SADC students is that they pay the same tuition fees as local students because the South African government subsidizes them (Schalkwyk, & Cloete, 2021; Gumbo, 2014; Schoole, 2011). South Africa contributed significantly to higher education internationalization through the SADC protocol because SADC students form 5% of international students among the student population (Schalkwyk & Cloete, 2021, p.1). Schalkwyk and Cloete (2021, p.1) cite how the NDP 2030 also envisioned South Africa as a global higher education and training country seeking to attract many international students. They echo that before 1994, South Africa had a minimal number of international PhD students, but this started to change in 2000 because of government migration policy.

2.12.7. Social Network

A social network is a family, acquaintance, or friend (Blumenstock, Guanghua & Tan, 2021; Chi, 2020; Anjofui, 2018; Evie, 2017; Tati, 2014; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Blumenstock, Guanghua and Tan (2021, p.2) emphasize that migrants learn about opportunities and situations in host countries through social networks. They also stated that migrants' social networks influence their ability and willingness to leave their home country. According to Anjofui (2018, p.24), social

networks play a crucial role in migration as informants because they provide essential knowledge about the receiving country, assist with travel plans, provide social and psychological support to migrants during the migration process and arrival in the host country. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, p.7) reiterated the importance of the social network in university selection. They explain that international students choose a university based on recommendations from their social networks. They add that social networks recommend a university because they are enrolled or graduated from a particular higher education institution. Anjofui (2018, p.24) also stresses that the social network; 'paints a picture of living standards in the host country' and the type of assistance expected from the social network'. Thus, such support from the social network eases any shock experienced by international students in the host country.

2.12.8. Economic Pull Factor

Economic pull factors range from higher salaries, funding, better living conditions, work opportunities and a higher standard of living (Mariusz, 2022; IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Anjofui, 2018; Xiong, 2017; Anganoo, 2014; Tati, 2014). Manik (2014) elucidates that African migrants migrate to South Africa because of the perception that South Africa as a land of milk and honey. Anjofui (2018, p.5) notes that South Africa's economic stability makes it an attractive country for different migrants, such as international PhD students, professionals and business people. She mentions that migrants settle in South Africa's major cities like Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth, where there are several opportunities and a flourishing economy. On the contrary, Muller's (2019) report suggests that South Africa's economy is deteriorating because of unemployment, economic recession, and a downgrade to 'junk status'.

2.12.9. Funding as a Pull Factor

Funding is one of the pull factors, similar to the economic pull factor. Numerous literatures echo the importance of funding for international PhD students (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Belavy, Owen & Livingston, 2020; Mouton, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Cloete et al., 2015; Lee & Seehole, 2014; Carnegie, 2013; DHET, 2017). The importance of funding is premised on the argument that PhD students contribute to knowledge production and that a PhD is full time activity (Cloete et al., 2015; Tati, 2014; DHET, 2013). The rationale for funding PhD students, as posited by Tati (2014) is that international PhD students self-finance their studies to improve their job prospects.

International students are financially supported by their savings, families, scholarships or the government (Open Door, 2017; Schoole, 2011; Mazzarol & Soutar 2002). The source of funding for international students are scholarships that come from several sources like university funding, government grants, research grants, donations, fee remission, and contracts (IOLNews, 2022; IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Herman & Frick, 2019; Akudolu & Adeyemo, 2018; Herman & Schoole, 2018; NRF, 2016; Tati, 2014). The high number of SADC students studying at UKZN is because Zimbabwe supports several students to various South African universities through the Zimbabwe Presidential Scholarship (Gumbo, 2014, p.2). Belavy, Owen and Livingston (2020) observed that the Australian Government gives three years scholarships to international PhD students through the Australian Commonwealth Government. They contend that granting scholarships is competitive because previous academic degrees and study experience are considered.

2.12.9. (a). Types of PhD Funding and the Importance of PhD Funding

Baker (2019) illuminates that funding is one strategy that host country universities recruit international PhD students. He mentioned that countries like Germany and Switzerland fund the PhD from sources such as national funders, universities and industry. The importance of funding is pointed out in Tati's (2014) study on international postgraduate students from Francophone countries studying in South Africa. Tati found that most international students are intrinsically motivated by financial support from their universities. In the Nigerian context, Akudolu and Adeyemo (2018, p.14) observe that funding is allocated to postgraduate education. These are the Petroleum Development Trust Fund, the National Scholarship Board and the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). They explain that TETFund is derived from a 2 % education tax paid by registered companies' transferable profit in Nigeria. They note that TETFund is used for PhD training, maintenance of crucial physical infrastructure, research, publication, academic staff training and development. IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021) argue that in South Africa, the NRF budget for research was two billion rands in 2017, while at the market exchange rate of R1/N29. They also mentioned that two billion rands were the amount that Nigeria budgeted for the whole Ministry of Education in Nigeria in 2017, which means higher education in Nigeria is grossly underfunded compared to South Africa.

Similarly, in the South African context, the National Research Fund (NRF) is one of the principal funders of postgraduate scholarships in South Africa (IOLNews, 2022; IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Herman & Frick, 2019; NRF, 2016). The NRF provides financial incentives in the form of bursaries and scholarships to international PhD students and South Africans as a strategy to increase the number of PhD students substantially (Herman & Frick, 2019; Herman & Schoole, 2018; NRF, 2016). The NRF provides several bursaries and scholarships such as the Grant holder-linked bursaries, Thuthuka PhD track, Thuthuka Post PhD track, Competition funding for unrated researchers, incentive funding for rated researchers, competitive funding for rated researchers; Blue-sky research and SARChI. The NRF gives freestanding PhD scholarships to qualified students in any South African university (Herman & Schoole, 2018, p.12).

Herman and Schoole (2018, p.12) reveal that in 2015, there were about 2,000 freestanding NRF bursaries for PhD studies. He adds that in 2017, R70, 000 per annum (about \$5,000) was earmarked per student for postgraduate funding for a period of three years. For Scarce Skills Development Fund (SSDF) and the DST research priorities, R120 000 per annum (\$8,750) was earmarked. Nevertheless, Herman and Schoole (2018, p.12) argue that only a small percentage of such scholarships is awarded to international PhD students studying at South African universities despite a large percentage of international students being enrolled. This is because the scholarships are awarded to a majority of South Africans. The next section presents and discusses the challenges experienced by international students in the host country.

2.13. International PhD Students and Study Challenges in the Host Country

International PhD students face challenges as they study outside their home countries. Anjofui (2018, p.24) posits that several international PhD students exit their home country expectant to gain much from their host country. She adds that few of them achieve their aspirations, whereas others remain unfulfilled. About 20% of PhD students who start full-time PhD will not finish their studies or obtain their PhD degree (Sverdlik, Hall, McAlpine & Hubbard, 2018). A growing body of studies highlights the challenges experienced by international PhD students, such as language barrier, isolation, xenophobia, financial challenges, accommodation problems, lack of sense of belonging and adjustment (Stewart, 2018; Mouton, 2016; Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016; Nwokedi, 2015; Cloete et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2015; Xiong, 2017; Lee & Schoole, 2014; Anganoo,

2014; Jeong-Bae & Park, 2014; Manik & Singh, 2013; Majyambere, 2012). The next section presents and discusses the challenges of international students.

2.13.1. Financial Challenges

International students studying outside their home country usually encounter financial difficulties, aggravating other hardships they experience (IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Kibaliwandu, Mwesigye & Maate, 2020; Whitehead and Sing, 2015; Lee & Schoole, 2014; Gumbo, 2014; Tati, 2014). Various factors influence student continuation and discontinuation of PhD studies, but the main challenge is funding availability (Baker, 2020; Mouton, 2016). There are two categories of international PhD students, namely those that are self-funded and those on scholarship (Gumbo, 2014; Tati, 2014). Gumbo (2014, p. 29) explains that self-funded international PhD students make up the bulk of students compared to students on scholarship; hence they are mostly affected by financial challenges. Gumbo further explains that international PhD students on scholarship are sponsored and do not usually encounter financial hardships compared to self-funded international PhD students.

Altbach and Knight (2007) reiterate that globally more than two million international students are self-funded, although their families also assist them in some instances. They also state that self-funded students attend classes in daylight and at night work in restaurants to cover their living cost. Financial hardships faced by self-funded international students forced most of them to work odd jobs in restaurants and hotels to contribute to their tuition fees and living expense (Ruwoko, 2021; Gumbo, 2014; Tati, 2014; Altbach & Knight, 2007). Lee and Schoole (2014) affirm that finance is one of the biggest challenges international PhD students studying in South Africa experience because there is the stereotype that international students arrive with a huge amount of money to spend. International PhD students' financial challenges are aggravated by paying yearly medical insurance, accommodation fees, and other living costs (Xiong, 2017; Lee & Schoole, 2014). Medical insurance costs and house rent is an enormous burden for international students financially, particularly those from less developed countries (Lee & Schoole, 2014).

2.13.2. Discrimination

Discrimination is the poor treatment of individuals based on race, gender, age, religion, or sexual orientation and it does include restricting specific group members from opportunities or privileges available to members of another group (Qadeer et al., 2021; Mittelmeier & Cockayne, 2020; Bryce, 2019; Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Discrimination takes various forms, such as xenophobia and exploitation (Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Adeoye, 2017; Akande, Musarurwa, & Kaye, 2018; Ratshilaya, 2017; Koppel, 2016; Wu et al., 2015; Whitehead & Sing, 2015; Nwokedi, 2015; Gumbo, 2014). Xenophobia is dislike or hostility against people from other countries (Gumbo, 2014; Manik & Singh, 2013). Bryce (2019) reported that international students in the USA experience discrimination, bias, and microaggressions because of their race and ethnicity. Discrimination is a significant discourse and it comes in various forms such as physical assaults, immigration policies, exclusion from jobs and access to educational opportunities, verbal insults, xenophobic attitudes and cultural discrimination (Bryce, 2019; Adeoye, 2017; Akande, Musarurwa, & Kaye, 2018; Ratshilaya, 2017; Koppel, 2016; Wu et al. 2015; Whitehead & Sing, 2015).

Xenophobia also occurs in higher education institutions, where a higher degree of openness is expected (Akande, Musarurwa, & Kaye, 2018; Gumbo, 2014; Manik & Singh, 2013). Koppel (2016) reported that international students studying in Estonia experience discrimination. Koppel cites how a former student who studied at an Estonian university sued the school management for discrimination. He argues that discrimination negatively jeopardizes university internationalization efforts. He argues that governments and universities do little to address the discrimination experienced by international students. Gumbo (2014, p.32) mentioned that international students from Asia, Africa, India, Latin America and the Middle East often encounter discrimination compared to local students. He also found that Zimbabwean students faced discrimination because of their nationality, race, ethnicity and cultural difference, which negatively affected their psychological functioning and well-being. Nwokedi (2015) argues that prejudices and stereotypes against international students impede them from developing or maintaining relationships and support systems with locals. International students experience xenophobia because of the stereotype that they threaten South African jobs (Anjofui, 2018; Lee, 2014). Akande, Musarurwa and Kaye (2018) study on students' attitudes and perceptions of

xenophobia at DUT found that students are not xenophobic. Freeman and Lee (2018) reported that African international students in South Africa had been regularly experiencing xenophobic sentiment. Due to xenophobic sentiments, Ratshilaya (2017, p.20) contends that international students fear the community members because of victimization, segregating themselves to avoid violence and hostilities.

2.13. 3. Accommodation Challenges

Renting suitable accommodation is another challenge international PhD students' encounter when they exit their home country (Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Birchard, 2018; Eurostudent, 2017; Ncame, 2016; Schoole, 2014; Wu et al., 2015; Lee & Seehole, 2014; Gubba, 2014). Ncame (2016) highlighted various types of student accommodation in South Africa, such as shared flats, studio, bachelor apartments, student digs, dormitory-style residences, and shared houses (also referred to as communes) and inner-city walk-ups. The literature reiterates the importance of adequate student accommodation for students' mental health and smooth transition in the host country/university life (Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, & Zaman, 2021; Whitehead, 2017; Gumbo, 2014).

Living on-campus hostel offers the comfort of not commuting on a long journey to campus and saves student's transportation money (Ncame, 2016). Due to insufficient on-campus residence, students are compelled to live in off-campus hostels (Whitehead, 2017; Ncame, 2016; Gumbo, 2014). Whitehead (2017) found that due to financial challenges, international PhD students' accommodation challenges are aggravated, making them sleep in the classroom. He also found that increasing living costs combined with constant rises in accommodation prices suggest that international students struggle to access basic needs such as accommodation. Gumbo (2014, p. 30) elucidates that there are ineffective policies on allocating on-campus residence for international students studying in South Africa during the start of the semester. He also noted that because of ineffective policies on on-campus hostels, international students are propelled to live off-campus, making them susceptible to crime.

Similar concerns on accommodation challenges experienced by international PhD students in Europe were identified by Birchard (2018) in the ‘the Erasmus+ project’. Birchard (2018) surveyed housing providers and student associations to assess their experiences and practices on accommodation. Her study identified challenges such as insufficient housing for international students and university management's ignorance of accommodation challenges, which affected international student's mental health. She also mentioned that international PhD students were prone to fraud and discrimination during the accommodation search. The challenge of international students renting accommodation in South Africa is aggravated by property owners who demand that international students pay the full rent year in advance (Sehoole, 2014). Woodman (2016) concurs that a landlord can legally rent accommodation to a legal foreigner who holds a valid residence permit or a permanent residence permit under the Property Act. This alludes to the Immigration Act, which specifies that property owners who rent accommodation to illegal foreigners indulge in the criminal offense of aiding and abetting an illegal foreigner (Woodman, 2016).

In recognition of students' accommodation challenges, the former Minister of Higher Education Naledi Pandor underlined that government prioritize insufficient student housing to satisfy the housing needs of students (South Africa Government, 2019). According to the Minister, money from the Infrastructure and Efficiency Grant (IEG) is set aside for student housing to fund that project and other infrastructure-related projects (South Africa Government, 2019). The former Minister mentioned that R4.1 billion was set aside from 2015–16 to 2020–21 for student housing (South Africa Government, 2019). Additionally, in ten years, 200 000 beds would be delivered to South African universities through the Student Housing Infrastructure Programme (South Africa Government, 2019, p.5). Mlamla (2019) notes that the Department of Higher Education has undertaken the Student Housing Infrastructure Program with several collaborations to increase the number of student hostels.

Similarly, the 2011 DHET Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the provision of Student housing at South African Universities had initially reported on the supply and demand of student accommodation (DHET, 2011, p. xii). The report noted that in 2010, the highest proportion of students residing in the school hostel were students from KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern

Cape, and students from SADC. The report noted that in 2010, the highest proportion of students residing in the school hostel were students from KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape, and students from SADC. The report also states that the bed space occupied in UKZN was 6 924. Further analysis reveals that bed space per campus of the university was as follows: in Howard Campus (1 743); Medical school (165); Westville campus (2 349); Edgewood campus (802); and Pietermaritzburg campus (1 865) (DHET, 2011). The report suggests that there is insufficient bed space for local PhD students and international PhD students as well.

2.13.4. Safety Challenges

Safety is a vital factor for international students when selecting a university, considering that they leave their home country for another country (Callitz, Diane & Jooste, 2019; Chen, 2017; Xiong, 2017; Zhang, 2017; Ratshilaya, 2017). Patton and Gregory (2014, p.452) underscored the importance of student safety in a study of 11,161 students at Virginia community college (VCC) in the USA. They maintain that universities should be safe and secure environment for students while studying. They asserted that maintaining a safe university is expensive because of the cost involved in employing security personnel, installing physical security devices, and procuring surveillance gadgets. Callitz, Diane and Jooste (2019) assert that the 'Fees Must Fall' protest revealed South African universities' security and security challenges. Viewing safety in the light of the 'Fees Must Fall' student protests, the importance of safety was indicated in the twelve issues raised by the Student Union Government during the 2019 student protest (South Africa Government, 2019). This alludes to concerns about compromised student safety and campus security, which sparked the protest (South Africa Government, 2019). Nwokedi (2015, p.4) echoed that universities should be safe and accommodating to meet diverse students' needs.

2.14. Conclusion

This chapter provides relevant literature and the conceptual framework of this study on international PhD students. The chapter indicates that international PhD students' study through various PhD routes. These are the traditional PhD, PhD by Publication, Taught PhD and professional Work-based PhD. The chapter discussed studies conducted on the experiences of international PhDs globally and in South Africa. The chapter reveals the relevance of international

PhD students to their host country and the universities where they are enrolled. These range from economic growth, human capital, bolstering PhD graduates, internationalization, and university diversity. The chapter also highlighted why international PhD students migrate under the push-pull theory. Push factors are located in international students' home country, which makes them exit their home country. Push factors are summed into political, economic and educational factors. Educational factors range from inadequate educational access in the home country University, insufficient public University, low quality of PhD programs in the home country and inadequate infrastructure in the home country.

The other reasons international PhD students migrate are the pull factors. Pull factors are conditions in the host country that attracts international students to such country. Pull factors include the cost of living, the quality of the PhD programme, university reputation, the English language as the medium of instruction, migration policy, social networks and economic factors. The chapter also underscored that international PhD students studying abroad experience several challenges. These ranges from accommodation problems, discrimination, lack of funding and safety. International students are also impacted by the dynamics of the 'Fees Must Fall' protest at UKZN. The next chapter presents and discusses the key theories that underpin the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RELEVANT THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the theories that underpin the study. The theories explain the motivations for international PhD students' migration and why they exit their country of origin to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN. The theoretical aspects relevant to the first-year international students' experiences at UKZN are unpacked. These include push-pull theories (Ernest Ravenstein, 1885; Everett Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) and social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986). After that, the chapter also presents the justification for using these theories.

3.2. Concepts: Theory and Theoretical Framework

A theory explains concepts and provides a broad reason for explaining the phenomena under study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Best & Khan, 2006). A theory explains why or how something occurs or functions (Pratt, 2016, p1). A theory describes various concepts observed by verification and review (Cohen & Pate, 2019, p.1214). Theories describe, forecast and explain events (Abend, 2008; Grant & Osanloo 2014). A theoretical framework describes the theories that define the research problem related to the broader fields of knowledge (Grant & Bosanko 2014; Ocholla & Le Roux, 2011). A theoretical framework also enables the researcher to conduct a study from a specific point of view, which influences the research design, direction and particular approaches applicable to such a worldview (Kaushik & Christine, 2019; Grant & Bosanko, 2014; Creswell, 2014).

3.2.1. Theoretical Framework on International Students' Migration

This section discusses three push-pull theories (Ernest Ravenstein, 1885; Everett Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The first two are general push-pull theories, while the third theory centres on push-pull factors specific to international students, which has special relevance for this study.

3.3. The Push –Pull Theories

This section discusses three push-pull theories. These are Ernest Ravenstein's (1885) Laws of Migration, Everett Lee's (1966) push and pull theory, and Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) push-pull theory specific to international students' destinations.

3.3.1. Ernest Ravenstein's (1885) Laws of Migration

Ravenstein's work significantly contributes to the theory of migration in his 'law of migration'. Ravenstein, a German-English geographer cartographer, was the first scholar of migration. Based on England and Wales census data, he propounded the theory known as the 'laws of Migration'. The 'laws of Migration' are based on the following tenets: push and pull. Push factors suggest unfavourable circumstances in a country. Push factors 'drive' people to an external location and an attractive country that 'pulls' them in. The push factors are inherent in the migrant's home country, while pull factors are located in the host country. In addition, push factors are propelled by oppressive laws, heavy taxation, political reasons, conflict, civil war, environmental conditions, culture and traditions. Ravenstein (1885, p.199) also posits that the principal cause of migration is economic factors. He states that long-distance migrants move from agricultural areas to major commercial and industrial centres because of economic reasons. He further posits a gender dimension to migration because female migrants tend to migrate shorter distances than male migrants who choose to migrate long distances.

3.3.2. Everett Lee's (1966) Push and Pull Theory

Lee's theory is the second theory based on a push and pull theory. Lee (1966) built on Ravenstein's theory, emphasizing the push factors and pull factors. Lee's theory centred on the internal factors referred to as push factors inherent in the migrant's home country. Lee expounded on four factors that significantly affect the decision to migrate and the migration process. The four factors are migrant's home country; factors in the host country; migrant's personal factors and intervening obstacles.

Same as Ravenstein, Lee maintains that factors related to the migrant's home country are called

push factors. Lee expanded on the push factors as unfavourable factors from where migrants originate. He mentioned that push factors include famine, pestilence, forced labor, political turmoil, persecution, servitude, poor medical care, disasters, discrimination, and war. He maintains that the host country's factors are the pull factors that correspondingly attract migrants to such a country. Lee emphasizes that pull factors are employment prospects, better living conditions, education, health access, pleasant climate, safety, and family ties. Lee explains that migrant's personal factors influence the decision to migrate and the migration process. He notes that personal factors imply migrant's perception of the 'push and pull forces' which eventually propels the migration. He highlights personal factors as migrant's education, his/her knowledge of a host country, and social network either facilitate or hinder the migration process. Lastly, Lee states that intervening obstacles are difficulties, which hinder migration. Intervening obstacles are immigration laws, cost of migration, cultural barriers and personal factors.

However, despite the relevance of the push and pull theory, it has limitations (Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012). Wilkins, Balakrishnan and Huisman (2012, p.5) suggest that students' preferences and characteristics are unaccounted for in the push and pull theory. They further echo that international students respond differently to different push and pull factors.

3.3.3. Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) Push-Pull Theory Specific to International Students' Destination Choice

Scholars such as Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) used Lee (1966) and Ravenstein's (1885) theoretical insights for their model on study destination selection by international students. They examined the push-pull factors affecting international students from Asia, Indonesia, Taiwan, China and India, which propels them to travel abroad. Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, p.3) noted that push factors are inherent in the international students' home country. Their theory accentuated how the 'push-pull' dynamics influence international students' motivation to pursue an education abroad and the decision-making process when choosing a final study destination. They also reiterated the importance of pull factors such as knowledge about university prestige, awareness of a host country and recommendations by social networks during international students' selection of study destination.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, p.4) explain that deciding and selecting a study destination based on the 'push and pull' factors occur in three stages. Mazzarol and Soutar explain that international students decide to study abroad because of their home country's 'push' factors in stage one. They establish economic and social forces within the home country 'push' international students to travel outside their home country for study purposes. They noted that stage two involves weighing several study destinations based on students' evaluation of the factors that make a study destination more attractive based on the various 'pull' factors. They also noted that in stage three, international students finally choose a university from several competitor universities, based on additional 'pull' factors. The other 'pull' factors are university ranking, the variety of courses offered, ICT, and university staff's expertise.

3.4. Social Capital Theory

To complement the push-pull theory, the current study also uses social capital theory and its related concepts. Thus, the next section discusses Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory.

3.4. 1. Bourdieu's Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu (1986, p.247) defines social capital as the actual or potential resources resulting from institutionalized interactions due to common recognition and familiarity. Bourdieu (1986, p. 248) highlighted three categories of capital he termed 'the forms of Capital'. These are economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. He explains that economic capital is material resources at the disposal of an individual, such as money, financial resources, land or property that could be converted into cash (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). In this study, economic capital is material resources such as finances or property at the disposal of international students, which could migrate to acquire quality PhD education at South African universities. Linking economic capital to international students in South Africa suggests that international students need to have economic capital such as the financial resources to apply for a student visa, SAQA and student medical insurance. International students also need money for their living costs, tuition fees and accommodation in South Africa.

However, international students must have completed a master's degree and be willing to travel to

a study destination to study for the PhD. Bourdieu (1986, p. 241) defines social capital as the resources that a person or a group receives because of a long-lasting network of associations. Social capital are 'networks, norms and social trust that promote cooperation for mutual gain' (Putnam, 1995 cited in Olujobi, 2014, p.6). Bourdieu (1985, p.284) also posits that social capital is social relationships and liaisons in social groups comprised of individual personal relationships. He further expounds that social relationships are intentionally or unintentionally formed because of invested time and energy in forging or replicating relations valuable in the long or short term.

He notes that cultural capital consists of a person's education, knowledge, and intellect, which gives them the edge for social mobility and high social status in society. Cultural capital relates to this sum that international students have before migrating- having completed a master's degree and willing to travel to a foreign destination for further study like a PhD. Bourdieu (1986, p. 241) maintains that cultural capital is further classified into embodied capital, objectified capital and institutionalized capital. He explains that embodied capital refers to people's values, skills, knowledge and tastes. Additionally, embodied capital is achieved intentionally by socialization, culture and tradition, which becomes part of a person's way of life. He further explains that objectified cultural capital is a person's property, such as works of art or scientific instruments that could be converted to money because of their significance. Lastly, institutionalized cultural capital recognises a person's cultural capital, such as academic attainment in the labour market. Social capital enhances student experience (Taylor, 2012, cited in Olujobi, 2014, p.6). This suggests that social networks (friends and family) and resources are crucial to ease international students' adjustment in the host country quickly.

3.5. Justification for the use of Push and Pull Theory

Originally, the push-pull theory (Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966) was developed to describe the factors that propel peoples' migration but is now a popular theory that explains international students' motives and the study destination selection. The push and pull theory is suitable for this study because of several reasons. Ravenstein (1885) and Lee's (1966) push-pull theory is relevant to the study because it gives an insight into the overarching reasons migrants, particularly international PhD students, exit their home country because of push factors. Push and pull theory

is relevant to this study because it reveals why international PhD students exit their home country and migrate to other countries because of pull factors in the host country. Hence, this study utilizes push-pull theory as one of its major theoretical frameworks because of its significance in explaining how international PhD students were ‘pushed’ from their home country because of unfavourable conditions, and ‘pulled’ into South Africa, particularly to UKZN because of favourable conditions.

In the same tone, the theoretical lens also highlights the impacts of intervening obstacles on international students while migrating to another country and how intervening obstacles hinder them during migration. In the context of this study, intervening obstacles are policies and processes that hinder international PhD students ease of entry into South Africa, such as the South Africa immigration policies. The second theory by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) is equally important because it indicates the three levels of decisions that international PhD students are involved in when selecting a study destination. In the context of this study, this relates to how international PhD students chose to study specifically at UKZN out of 26 public South African universities.

3.5.1. Justification for the use of Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu’s (1986) social capital theory is also suitable for the study because it dissects how resources at the disposal of international students in the host country (South Africa) and UKZN influences their first-year PhD experiences. The social capital theory provides insights into how international PhD students are impacted by economic and social capital during the first year of their PhD.

Bourdieu’s (1986) social capital theory is equally relevant for the study because it indicates how social capital eases international students' adjustment and adaptation to South Africa and UKZN. The theory underscores how international students access social capital because of a long-lasting network of associations. The theory also illuminates how international students accrue cultural capital from accumulating knowledge and skills through previous education [Master’s Degree] in their home country. Upon arrival in South Africa, international PhD students' cultural capital is assessed in South Africa by SAQA.

3.5.2. Justification for the use of Two Theories

The push-pull and social capital theories are suitable for the study because both theories complement each other. Each theory cannot provide sufficient insights into the phenomenon of international PhD students' first-year study experiences at UKZN. Neither the social capital theory alone nor the push and pull theory can each on its own explain the phenomenon of first-year international PhD students' migration and their experiences. Some prior studies that used the push-pull theory were from different perspectives (Anjofui, 2018; Boelen, 2017; Sehoole, 2011). In a national context like Vietnam, Boelen (2017, p.12) adapted Lee's push-pull theory, context-specific to Vietnamese international PhD students studying abroad. He found that several pull factors lured international PhD students to study abroad. Boelen (2017, p.12) summed the pull factors into academic, economic, social, and political factors. He mentions academic factors such as the degree of innovation, university ranking, quality of education, English language, range of courses offered, availability of resources and staff expertise. He explains that economic factors are the availability of scholarships, higher salary and lower costs of living. Boelen describes social factors as the availability of information, recommendations and safety. Further, political factors are education policies, employment policies and immigration policies.

Similarly, Sehoole (2011) explored international student migration and PhD education in South Africa, drawing on the pull and push factors. She emphasized the South African government's role in providing scholarships facilitates such mobility. Likewise, Anjofui (2018) discussed the reasons Cameroonian and Congolese migrants in Cape Town migrated to South Africa. Olujobi (2014) examined the factors that influence international students' academic choices and the role of social capital in students' integration at Fort Hare University and Rhodes University. From the overview of the theories, none of the studies cited above combined both the push-pull theory and social capital theory simultaneously when researching international PhD students' first-year study experience.

Given this context, I use Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory to explore the importance of social networks and the resources that international students use in South Africa and at UKZN. The study highlighted how international PhD students are impacted by resources (economic capital, human capital and social capital) at UKZN. In addition, guided by the social capital theory

framework, the study shows how international PhD students access and build different forms of capital such as economic capital, social capital and cultural capital while studying at UKZN. Hence, combining both theories also reveals the reasons for international PhD students' migration. It also provides insight into the social capital framing, that international PhD students possess and acquire forms of capital at UKZN. These theories collectively also informed the various methodological tools in the data generation process.

3.6. Conclusion

The chapter presented and discussed theories underpinning the study; namely the development of the push and pull theory over time and social capital theory. Push and pull theory explain why international PhD students exit their home country and migrate to other countries. The second theory, namely the social capital theory, underscores the importance of social networks and various forms of capital. The next chapter unpacks the research design and methodology, which explains how the study was conducted.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1.Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design and methodological approach that guided the study and the justification for the selected research method. The chapter delves deeper into the phenomenon examined in the study by addressing the research question posed in the study. Thus, the chapter provides a detailed explanation of the research design, data collection and data analysis. The data collection techniques such as the Focus Group Discussion [FGD], interviews and on-going email communication are also discussed. Lastly, the chapter discusses the research ethics that guided the study and the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

4.2.Qualitative Research within an Interpretive Paradigm

This qualitative study locates itself in the paradigm of interpretivism.

4.2.1 Qualitative Research

The study is qualitative study located within the interpretive paradigm. Qualitative research describes a social phenomenon based on meanings that individuals attach to a phenomenon (Tenny, Brannan, Brannan & Sharts-Hopko, 2021; Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Creswell, 2018; Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017; Leung, 2015; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research explores and reveals a problem in a natural environment because less is known about the issue (Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). Qualitative research investigates a phenomenon in-depth by answering research questions on why or how a specific phenomenon occurs (Yin, 2018; Patton, 2015; Babbie, 2014; Austin & Sutton, 2014). It offers detailed explanations of phenomena and events examined in their natural setting, emphasizing complex and emerging issues (Yin, 2018; Daher et al., 2017; Patton, 2015). Thus, qualitative research was suitable for the study to understand international PhD students' first-year study experiences at UKZN for several reasons. The other rationale for using qualitative research is its strength in learning more about the push-pull factors and the experiences and challenges facing international first-year PhD students at UKZN. With qualitative research, I was also able to access experiences related to finances, accommodation, language barrier and discrimination.

4.2.2 Interpretive Paradigm

A paradigm is a research philosophy, principles, ideals and perceptions that guide the conduct of a study (Braun, Ravn & Frankus, 2020; Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills; 2017; Daher et al., 2017; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Paradigms are categorized into positivism, critical postmodernism and interpretive (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015; Austin & Sutton, 2014). Positivism is used in quantitative analysis as a conceptual context, where empirical hypothesis testing is needed (Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The interpretive paradigm offers specific and flexible analysis mechanisms to capture meanings in interaction with people (Keetse, 2018; Thomas, 2014). In an interpretive paradigm, the study seeks to understand daily events, experiences, social structures and values that people attach to phenomena (Daher et al., 2017; Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Austin & Sutton, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Hence, the rationale for using the interpretive paradigm in the study is to understand international PhD student's experiences at UKZN and the value that they attach to their experiences at UKZN. Another rationale for using an interpretive paradigm is that it allows more open research questions where participants tell their stories (Daher et al., 2017; Creswell, 2014).

4.3. Research Design: Case Study

A case study describes in detail a single entity, a particular event, program, or event that is examined in detail for a given period (Sibbald, Stefan & Meghan, 2021; Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir & Waseem, 2019; Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills; 2017; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). There are different types of qualitative research, namely ethnographic studies, phenomenological studies, grounded theory studies, historical studies, case studies and action research studies (Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018; Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills; 2017). However, the case study was suitable for the study, especially where people's behaviour and social relationships are essential to understanding an event or phenomenon (Yin, 2018). A Case study focuses on what happens in the environment, why and how things happen (Yin, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Denscombe, 2014). In this case, the research provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of the experiences of first-year international PhD students studying in UKZN. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020). Particularistic refers to when a case study focuses on one event, process, or situation in a study (Yin, 2018; Patton, 2015; Merriam, 1998). Descriptive characteristics refer to comprehensive

information on a phenomenon (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Sibbald, Stefan & Meghan, 2021; Merriam, 1998). Heuristic focuses on multiple approaches to conducting research because case studies do not merely end with one case (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Merriam, 1998). Also, case studies depend on inductive reasoning to manage various data sources (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Harrison et al., 2017; Daher et al., 2017; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014; Merriam, 1998) which resonates with this study.

A case study was suitable for the study to understand the in-depth first-year experiences of international PhD students studying at UKZN. It provided an in-depth understanding of international PhD students' experiences at UKZN, namely at Edgewood and Howard campuses. These were experiences such as accommodation, financial challenges, safety, discrimination and other significant issues. Another rationale for using a case study is its advantage in selecting a particular geographical region and a small number of people as study participants (Sibbald, Stefan & Meghan, 2021; Harrison et al.; 2017; Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2014). Thus, the rationale for the selection of UKZN alludes to the following reasons. Firstly, UKZN has several international students studying at PhD level. UKZN hosted 2 209 international students from 71 countries (UKZN, 2017, p.16). Out of the 46,520 students enrolled at UKZN in 2016, 13,064 were postgraduate students (UKZN, 2017, p.12). Secondly, the Times Higher Education (THE) Young University Rankings of 2018 named UKZN as one of the top 100 universities, evidenced by its 83rd position in 2018 (UKZN, 2019, p.5). Hence, for these reasons, I decided to examine the first-year experiences of international PhD students at UKZN to explore why they chose to study at UKZN and their subsequent experiences.

In a case study, data are obtained from several sources that allow using multiple techniques such as observations and interviews (Yin, 2018; Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills, 2017). However, the limitation of the case study is that the findings are not generalizable because the sample size does not represent the population under investigation (Sibbald, Stefan & Meghan, 2021; Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Yin, 2018; Denscombe, 2014). In this context, the study's findings are not generalizable to international PhD students in the other three UKZN Campuses (Westville campus, Pietermaritzburg campus and Nelson Mandela medical school) and other South African universities.

4.3.1. Research Context: UKZN Edgewood and Howard Campuses

This section describes the research context of the study and where (the site) international PhD students have these experiences. The UKZN was established on 1 January 2004, after a merger between the University of Natal and Durban-Westville University in 2004 (UKZN, 2016). UKZN also has five campuses located in different parts of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa (UKZN, 2016). The five campuses are Edgewood, Westville, Howard College, Pietermaritzburg, and Nelson Mandela medical school. Hence, international PhD students at UKZN's two campuses, namely Edgewood Campus and Howard Campus, were selected as the study sites. The criterion for choosing the two campuses is that I am a registered international PhD student at the Edgewood campus. Secondly, I am resident in Durban, where the Howard campus is located. Selecting the two UKZN campuses is because of accessibility to data and convenience: participants could also clarify matters because they were within easy reach.

4.4. Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling identifies and selects information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015; Leung, 2015; Denscombe, 2014). Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters, and Walker (2020) echoes that purposive sampling is a technique for selecting participants who are most likely to provide relevant data. For the study, sixteen international students at different PhD levels were selected through purposive sampling. The rationale for selecting sixteen participants alludes to collecting extensive details on a few participants to have quality data until data saturation is reached (Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015; Austin & Sutton, 2014). Creswell (2018) suggests collecting detailed information on a few sites or individuals from a sample size ranging from four to five cases. Participants are usually small because it focuses more on getting rich information than on research that focuses on quantity (Creswell, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Patton, 2015). Thus, the sixteen participants were sufficient to provide rich quality responses to the research questions on international PhD students' first-year experiences at UKZN. Purposive sampling was a suitable choice for this study because it was useful in determining participants who are considered ideal sources for the research because of their knowledge of the phenomenon studied (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell, 2018; Denscombe, 2014). In purposive sampling, cases are

chosen because of their experience and information about the phenomenon examined (Creswell, 2014).

4.4.1. Maximum Variation Sampling

There are different types of purposive sampling, such as maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling, typical case sampling, deviant case sampling, critical case sampling, total population sampling and expert sampling (Campbell et al., 2020; Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Creswell, 2018; Daher et al., 2017; Denscombe, 2014). However, the study utilized the maximum variation sampling method because it allowed the researcher to choose a limited number of units or cases that optimize the research question's diversity (Daher et al., 2017; Harrison et al., 2017; Creswell, 2014; Denscombe, 2014). A maximum variation sampling is a purposeful sampling technique used to gather a broad range of viewpoints about the studied phenomenon. Maximum variation sampling allows variability in viewpoints on the types of units studied, such as people, cases, events, or pieces of data that are significant to the researcher (Creswell, 2018). These studied units show a broad variety of characteristics, attitudes, experiences, occurrences, values and circumstances (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). The underlying idea behind maximum variation sampling is to understand a phenomenon by examining it from all perspectives.

4.4.2. Sampling Selection Process

The selection of participants was guided by selection techniques suggested by scholars (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Patton, 2015). These techniques include choosing the participants or sites, sampling method and the sample size. Several factors are considered when selecting the sample size for a study. These are the scope of the research, the nature of the topic, data quality and the research design (Campbell et al., 2020). Participant selection is also determined by the research questions, data collection procedure, data analysis and resource availability (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Campbell et al., 2020; Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020; Merriam, 2009). To recruit participants for the study, I explored several avenues. I approached the UKZN postgraduate officers at the Edgewood campus for the list of registered international PhD students. However, this yielded few results until my supervisor assisted me in assessing the list of international PhD students registered at the UKZN Edgewood

campus in 2016/2017 period. Equally, to recruit participants from the Howard College campus, I approached the UKZN international student office for the list of registered international PhD students. At the time, participants were recruited for the study in 2017, an international PhD student from Zimbabwe was occupying the international student office and he understood the value of the research. He provided the list of UKZN international students, their UKZN emails and phone numbers. From the student list, I sent a bulk mail to potential participants to invite participation in the study.

However, there was little success because of inadequate responses from the participants. The statistics on registered PhD students at the UKZN Edgewood campus indicated that 163 PhD students were registered with the School of Education in 2016/2017. A breakdown suggested that out of the 163,161 students were international PhD students, while the remaining were South African. A further breakdown of the 161 international PhD students showed the following: Botswana (1), Cameroon (3), Kenya (2), Lesotho (6), Malawi (2), Mauritius (34), Mozambique (1), Nigeria (24), Rwanda (2), Tanzania (1), Swaziland (23), Uganda (1) Zimbabwe (60), and South Africa (2).

4.4.3. Recruitment of Participants

The other avenues I recruited the participants for the study are discussed below:

- i. Online recruitment of participants on UKZN social platforms (Facebook and other social media/website and platforms): I posted an announcement on recruiting international PhD students for the study. The text of such posts contained a short description of the study and the objectives of the study. I utilized this approach because social media is used by students' in the digital era. However, this method was ineffective because of the inadequate number of responses from the participants through the bulk mail.
- ii. Direct Recruitment of participants: I approached participants and talked to them to participate in the study. I visited the likely places where international PhD students clustered, such as PhD research commons, PhD student's offices, Tutors offices, and international students' offices. When potential participants were identified, I collected their email and phone numbers. The direct physical recruitment of potential

participants was effective because I have a similar background as an international PhD student. My international student background also helped me to establish a relationship with the participants because we share a common status as international PhD students.

- iii. Referrals: I also recruited participants by referrals from other international PhD students in their social network by contacting them, in person, by telephone, mail and social media (Facebook/Whatsup).

4.4.4. Addressing Bias during Participants' Selection

The study considered the possibility of bias during the selection of participants. The selection process did not discriminate against race, age, disability and gender because the participants were selected based on accessibility and availability. The participants were also invited following a purposive sampling approach, using word-of-mouth and referrals, to ensure 'maximum variation' across students from diverse countries in the two UKZN campuses for the study. Although, many international PhD students could have participated in the study, the sample size was those accessible to me.

4.5. Data Generation Methods

Data collection methods employed in research are selected based on the study's research design and objectives (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Campbell et al., 2020; Yin, 2018; Daher et al., 2017; Patton, 2015; Denscombe, 2014). Data are generated in several ways in qualitative research. These are interviews, observations, focus group discussion (FGD) and email communications (Dahlin, 2021; Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Manju, 2020; Rashid et al., 2019; Creswell, 2018; Eeuwijk & Zuzanna, 2017). Thus, data for the study was collected through interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD)-and email communications. Additional data was obtained from attending the UKZN International Students Association Dialogue (ISA). The rationale for the several data collection methods was to complement each other and provide quality data. The next sub-section discusses the data generation methods and the justification for the use of each method.

4.5.1. Interviews

An interview is a qualitative research approach that allows asking participants open-ended questions (Roulston & Choi, 2018; Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). Interviews explore in-depth topic details (Dahlin, 2021; Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Rashid et al., 2019; Harrison et al., 2017; Patton, 2015). The interview allows researchers to investigate or ask the participants follow-up research questions (Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018; Denscombe, 2014). Interviews can be conducted face-to-face, by email and telephone (Eeuwijk & Zuzanna, 2017; Daher et al., 2017; Patton, 2015; Creswell, 2018; O'Leary, 2014). There are three types of interviews: structured interviews, unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews (Dahlin, 2021; Eeuwijk & Zuzanna, 2017; Daher et al., 2017; Harrison et al., 2017; Patton, 2015; Creswell, 2014). Data generated from the interview and FGD used international students from African countries as the unit of analysis. The three types of interviews and the justification for the selected interview used in the study is discussed in the next section.

i. Structured interviews

A structured interview follows a particular range of questions in a specified sequence with a limited number of categories of responses that seem to regulate the participants' answers (Dahlin, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018; Austin & Sutton, 2014; Creswell, 2014). In structured interviews, participants are asked questions face-to-face or by telephone (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020; Creswell, 2018; Daher et al., 2017; Patton, 2015). The questions asked are in a fixed and uniform sequence; hence the interviewer does not diverge from the interview protocol or inquire beyond the answers obtained (Austin & Sutton, 2014; Creswell, 2014). The interview protocol is an investigative tool to ask questions about relevant details relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). It is also a tool for discussing a particular subject, such as the participants' background, ideas and perspectives (Patton, 2015). However, because of the rigid nature of the structured interview, I did not use a structured interview because I did not want to restrict the participants' answers. I felt this would limit me from understanding the nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

ii. Unstructured Interviews

An unstructured interview does not pose a range of questions in a specified sequence to limit the number of responses; hence, it does not restrict the participant's answers (Dahlin, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018; Austin & Sutton, 2014; Creswell, 2014). Unstructured interviews do not necessarily use an interview schedule, and if it is used, open-ended questions could be asked in any sequence (Creswell, 2014). In an unstructured interview, several questions could either be added or skipped depending on their relevance.

iii. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews collect information from participants on a particular issue (Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). The semi-structured interview allows open-ended questions that allow more detailed follow up questions and information that cannot be directly observed or located in documentary sources (Yin, 2018; Austin & Sutton, 2014). A semi-structured interview is flexible because it allows two-way communication and addresses concerns as it emerges during the interview (Dahlin, 2021; Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). I used the semi-structured interview for the study because it allowed participants to talk freely about their experiences as international PhD students at UKZN and explain why they have these experiences. Another rationale for using a semi-structured interview is that it allowed me to clarify ambiguous answers from participants.

4.5.1.1. Conducting the Interviews

The interview was from 40 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the participant's availability and mood. Some interviews were handwritten and digital recorded based on participants' consent. As the interviews were digitally recorded, I simultaneously took notes to ensure that the information would still be available in case the digital recorder malfunctioned. In addition, during the interview, the sixteen participants were assigned pseudonyms and codes to protect their identities. The pseudonyms also helped me quote the participants directly- their own articulations.

4.5.2. Focus Group Discussion

Data was also collected by the focus group discussion (FGD), where I pursued some in-depth information with participants. The focus group discussion enables a researcher to interview multiple participants of 6-12 people simultaneously in a structured discussion on specific issues ranging from 1 -2 hours (Manju, 2020; Eeuwijk & Zuzanna, 2017; Daher et al., 2017; Harrison et al., 2017; O'Leary, 2014). The focus group discussion obtains multiple viewpoints on the same issue (Manju, 2020; Eeuwijk & Zuzanna, 2017; Patton, 2015; Austin & Sutton, 2014). The rationale for using the focus group discussion in the study lies in its strength in pursuing and understanding the critical issues mentioned during the interview. The focus group discussion was also suitable for the study because, during the interviews, the participants talked about relevant critical concerns. These are critical concerns that relate to perceptions of latent discrimination in accessing funding, opportunities and jobs at UKZN. Secondly, the critical concerns were the perceived poor attitude and ineffectiveness of the UKZN international students' office. Thirdly, were critical concerns about the increment of international students' medical insurance coverage. The focus group discussion offered a viable means to explore these critical issues in-depth.

4.5.2.1. Conducting the Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion's objectives were to encourage participants to freely address the issues of significant concern, clarify viewpoints and add depth to certain interview responses. Conducting the focus group discussion was guided by Manju's (2020) guide on carrying out a focus group discussion (FGD):

- i. The researcher is the facilitator of the discussion because she is assumed an expert.
- ii. As the facilitator of the discussions, the researcher encourages participation and probes participants.
- iii. An interview guide should contain a list of specific questions or discussion points ranging from 6 and 12 items.

The focus group discussion questions were constructed based on the interviews. The participants were notified a week before the discussion so that they were available and prepared. Two focus group sessions were conducted because the participants were on different campuses, namely Edgewood and Howard campus. Three participants at the Edgewood campus and three participants from the Howard College campus were part of the (FGD). Although I initially envisaged during

the data collection planning that six participants per campus would form the focus group, I discovered that it is difficult to gather the participants as a group in one setting. This is also because the participants are resident in different areas in KwaZulu-Natal, such as on-campus accommodation and off-campus accommodation. The participants were also busy and involved with different activities like tutoring, lecturing and supervising teaching practice at schools.

The three participants in the FGD from the Edgewood campus were assigned codes FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3. The discussion with the FGD participants at the Edgewood campus was conducted in the postgraduate research commons boardroom. The venue was convenient because international PhD students are clustered in the research commons where they conduct research. The discussion with the participants lasted for about one and a half hours. On the other hand, the Howard College focus group discussion participants were coded FGD4, FGD5 and FGD6. The discussion with the FGD participants at the Howard College campus was conducted at the PhD students' office located at the memorial tower building. The discussion lasted for about an hour because the participants had a busy schedule.

Given the above guideline, during the FGD, I devised the following strategies. The discussions occurred in an informal and relaxed setting. Each session commenced by expressing gratitude to the participants for their time. The participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity. During the discussion, the strong personalities were checkmated not to dominate the conversation while also drawing silent members into the group discussions. To have a robust discussion, each participant was allowed to speak based on the facilitator's prompt (researcher). This ensured that all the participants had an opportunity to speak.

4.5.3. On-going email

An ongoing email was also used to obtain data from the participants. Email is increasingly used to gather research data (Woodfield & Iphofen, 2017, p.1). On-going email is suitable for the study because it inherently provides researchers with several opportunities such as low cost of administration financially (Dahlin, 2021; Roschelle & Vandermause, 2018; Anderson & Gansneder, 1995). To collect data, I initially established a rapport with the participants when recruiting them for the study. The participants and I exchanged emails for on-going communication. The use of on-going emails for the study was significant for three reasons. Firstly,

with on-going emails, I collected new data from the participants. Secondly, the participants gave me additional information that they omitted during the interview. Thirdly, I also obtained feedback from the participants when I was uncertain about the meaning of their responses during the interview.

4.5.4. International Students Association (ISA) Dialogue

Data was also collected from the International Students Association (ISA) Dialogue. During data collection, there was an announcement from the UKZN International Students office on a dialogue organized by the 'International students Association'. I felt that attending such a meeting would yield fruitful data for the study. The International Students Association (ISA) dialogue was held at one of the auditoriums at the UKZN Westville Campus on September 7th, 2018. In attendance at the dialogue were the following: a cluster of thirty international students (postgraduate and undergraduate); Representatives of the International students Association; UKZN Student Representative Council (SRC) and UKZN staff [UKZN International Students Office; Student Services Division ^[12]; UKZN International Relations ^[13]. From the cluster of thirty international students, the participants who were international PhD students and whose words were relevant to the study were assigned codes ISA participants [ISA participant 1; ISA participant 2; ISA participant 3]. The international students at the dialogue were a cluster of students from Africa, Asia and Europe. An overview of the ISA is provided in the next section because their work revolves around international students.

The International Students Association (ISA) represents international students studying at the UKZN (UKZN, 2016). The UKZN ISA was established to foster greater unity within the international student community. ISA collaborates with the International Student Offices (ISOs) in terms of student governance and addresses international students' challenges (UKZN, 2016,

¹² UKZN (2018). The UKZN Student Services Division (SSD) provides a supportive atmosphere that supports students in their academic experience to enhance student retention and throughput. The Student Services Division (SSD) administers students' services such as sports, students funding, health and residence.

¹³ UKZN (2018). UKZN International Relations recruits international students and promotes UKZN to the international community

p.10). The ISA also mentors' new international students and provides a supportive atmosphere for all international students. ISA organizes social functions and events for international students (UKZN, 2016, p.10).

4.6. Data Analysis

The data was analysed by thematic analysis technique.

4.6.1. Thematic Analysis

The generated data were analyzed by thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves looking for patterns of meanings in interviews and categorizing data into themes and sub-themes (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020; Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). Thematic analysis emphasizes the themes of contextual meaning from the data, by representing different dimensions of a phenomenon (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic analysis offers a flexible method that provides a thorough but complex account of results (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis allows researchers to understand the aspects of a phenomenon that participants speak about frequently in detail (Creswell, 2018). The analytical process for thematic analysis involves the researcher familiarizing herself with the data and coding all data (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher also codes all data and organizes the codes based on similarity into broad themes that lead to main themes and sub-themes (Creswell, 2014). Thus, thematic content analysis was carried out by familiarizing myself with the data and coding all the data generated from multiple sources such as interviews, FGD, and ISA dialogue. After coding all the data, I organized the codes based on similarities in themes and sub-themes.

4.6.1.1. Data Coding

The interview was transcribed immediately after the data collection while it was still fresh in my memory. Interviews could be transcribed verbatim, paraphrased, summarised and transcribed depending on the interview guide questions (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021; Elliot, 2018; Creswell, 2018; Theron, 2015). After I finished transcribing the interviews, I developed codes. A code is an issue or ideas participants discuss during an interview (Mattimoe, Hayden, Murphy & Ballantine, 2021; Theron, 2015). Coding is locating a text in pieces of data by scanning and categorising them according to themes (Elliot, 2018; Theron, 2015). I used manual coding that involved pencil and paper in coding the data, as Saldana suggested (2015). Codes allow for the

generation of topics from the text, which helps the researcher progress quickly into coding and generating themes (Creswell, 2018; Elliot, 2018; Theron, 2015).

To code the data, I employed the following strategies. Firstly, I familiarized myself with the data by repeatedly reading the transcribed data. Secondly, I wrote down the themes that emerged from the data to identify the link between the themes and the research questions. Thirdly, I condensed the themes into codes. The codes were also merged into themes that provided meaning to the data collected. The codes were assigned to the main themes across the interviews for further analysis. Fourthly, I identified similar repeated patterns, which I then categorized into different themes. After that, the themes were refined in detail and arranged according to main themes and sub-themes.

4.7. Credibility and Trustworthiness of Data

The listed measures were employed to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data and research findings. Firstly, the study samples comprised purposively selected participants and those deemed to provide rich information for the study. Secondly, I used detailed and thick verbatim participant stories to support the research themes. Thirdly, data triangulation was used to generate more findings that are comprehensive. Fourthly, validity and reliability considerations were also employed to attain rigor in the research. The study's validity, reliability and data triangulation are discussed in the next section.

4.7.1. Research Validity

Validity is the degree to which data is accurate in evaluating what it is proposed to measure. Validity also refers to the credibility of data (Coleman, 2022; Bouncken, Qiu, Sinkovics & Wolfgang, 2021; Creswell, 2018; Noble & Smith, 2015). Validity also measures the behaviour the researcher is interested in (Middleton, 2019; Paulo, Gustavo & Norberto, 2018). Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021, p. 1) explain that validity in research refers to how well a research method measures a question and how close the results are to the phenomenon studied. Validity is critical for ensuring that findings from a study are accurately used and interpreted to make informed decisions. Paulo, Gustavo and Norberto (2018) argue that there are no universally agreed standards for assessing validity in qualitative studies due to the diversity of qualitative research methods and procedures. They suggest that qualitative research should take a processual approach to validity

because validity should not result from a single test or a single step in the research process. Processual validity supports and aids in the reflection and guiding of effective research (Coleman, 2022; Lin, Werner & Inzlicht, 2021; Paulo, Gustavo & Norberto, 2018; Holleman, Ignace, Kemner & Roy, 2020). Paulo, Gustavo and Norberto (2018, p.101) further argue that several scholars avoid using validity because quantitative and qualitative research have different purposes. Instead, they suggest that in qualitative research, validity and reliability should be replaced with trustworthiness. Paulo, Gustavo, and Norberto (2018, p.101) highlight that qualitative research are descriptive, interpretive and theoretical. Validity could also be internal, external or construct (Coleman, 2022; Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021; Hayashi, Abib & Hoppen, 2019; Paulo, Gustavo & Norberto, 2018). These are discussed in the next section.

4.7.1.1. Types of Research Validity

Three types of validity are used in this study, namely descriptive, interpretive and theoretical.

- i. Descriptive validity implies the precision and factual account of the data gathered (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). It also implies that the data is free of any prejudice that could undermine the research findings (Lin, Werner & Inzlicht, 2021; Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). In the study, I used detailed thick quotes of the participant stories to convey participants' views.
- ii. Interpretive validity is when the qualitative researcher appropriately comprehends and conveys the participants' opinions, ideas and experiences (Hayashi, Abib & Hoppen, 2019, p.100). Interpretive validity was used in the study by asking the participants to comment further on specific responses made during the interviews to gauge if their perspectives correlated with what they had stated.
- iii. Theoretical validity is achieved when a theory or theoretical description is developed from a research study that is aligned with the data (Hayashi, Abib & Hoppen, 2019, p.100).

4.7.2. Research Reliability

Reliability implies that the research findings can be replicated under the same conditions when the study is repeated in a similar context (Coleman, 2022; Noble, 2019; Paulo, Gustavo, & Norberto, 2018; Leung, 2015). Reliability also implies consistency utilised during the data analysis process (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017). The reliability of data is assessed by testing the accuracy of the findings over time through several triangulation sources. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research does not depend on statistical methods for validity and reliability but emphasizes the findings' credibility (Bouncken, Qiu, Sinkovics & Wolfgang, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017).

Hence, the trustworthiness of the study's data has relevance because several methods were utilized by the researcher, such as triangulation and confirmability to demonstrate that the study's findings are credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985 cited in Paulo, Gustavo & Norberto, 2018, p.101) assert that research's trustworthiness is crucial aspect of validity and reliability. Criteria for trustworthiness in research are credibility, reliability, transferability and confirmability (Coleman, 2022; Noble, 2019; Paulo, Gustavo, & Norberto, 2018). Triangulation is the interaction between information from data collected from many sources to improve the knowledge of the study in question and the results' trustworthiness (Paulo, Gustavo & Norberto, 2018). The trustworthiness of the study's data is explained in-depth in the next section under triangulation.

4.7.3. Triangulation

Paulo, Gustavo and Norberto (2018) emphasized that the parameter for qualitative research is triangulation. Researchers employ triangulation in their study to ensure validity and credibility (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021; Middleton, 2019; Noble & Heale, 2019). Triangulation establishes a study's validity, credibility and rigour in data analysis (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021; Bans-Akutey, & Tiimub, 2021; Noble & Heale, 2019; Heath, 2015). Triangulation allows data validation through crosschecking data from several sources (Bans-Akutey, & Tiimub, 2021; Roulston & Choi, 2018). It also measures the accuracy of findings gathered through various instruments and increases the probability of managing some of the risks inherent in the data obtained (Noble & Heale, 2019; Noble, 2019; Creswell, 2018; Leung, 2015). Bans-Akutey and Tiimub (2021, p. 2) assert that triangulation could be achieved by six methods, namely methodical triangulation, data

triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, environmental triangulation, and multiple triangulations. Bans-Akutey and Tiimub ((2021) explain that methodical triangulation employs more than one research method and can be ‘across method’ or ‘within method’. Methodological triangulation is explained as the aggregation of various methods that leads to a definite conclusion (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021; Heesen, Liam & Zucker, 2019; Heath, 2015).

Data triangulation uses multiple data sources, while investigator triangulation employs many researchers, interviewers, investigators, data analysts, or observers (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). Bans-Akutey and Tiimub also explain that theoretical triangulation employs numerous hypotheses to analyze a phenomenon. Environmental triangulation employs a range of contexts to corroborate research findings (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021; Hayashi, Abib & Hoppen, 2019). Lastly, multiple triangulations combine two or more forms of triangulation (Hayashi, Abib & Hoppen, 2019). In qualitative analysis, triangulation allows for the use of several data sources to understand a phenomenon in-depth (Bouncken, Qiu, Sinkovics & Wolfgang, 2021; Middleton, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). Methodological triangulation enhances research validity by applying multiple methods to study a phenomenon (Noble, 2019; Heesen, Liam & Zucker, 2019).

I employed multiple strategies through triangulation to identify different aspects of the same phenomenon to ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings. I also used data triangulation to compare and crosscheck data from the various data sources by deliberately seeking evidence from the multiple data sources and comparing the findings with the data gathered from different sources (Focus Group Discussion, Interview, ISA dialogue). Secondly, theoretical triangulation was used to interpret data. The primary data was juxtaposed with the secondary sources and theoretical frameworks (push-pull factors, social capital theory). The theories assisted in crosschecking, verification and the authenticity of the data collected. The interview protocol also helped ensure the rigour of the study by streamlining and revising the questions in line with the research questions. This also ensured that the research objectives of the study were covered.

4.7.4. Confirmability

Confirmability is neutrality in the research findings (Coleman, 2022). In this study, the confirmability of the findings is based on the participants' responses and not on the bias of the researcher. This implies that researcher bias does not distort the participants' perspectives to suit a particular narrative. To ensure the confirmability of the research, every phase of the data analysis process is highlighted. This also ensures that the findings of the research appropriately reflect the views of the participants.

4.7.5 Limitations of the Study

A weakness of the case study method used, is that the study's findings are not generalizable to other situations (Sibbald, Stefan & Meghan, 2021). A case study can be misinterpreted as a less thorough research method (Hayashi, Abib & Hoppen, 2019). However, a case study method is flexible and provides a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Sibbald, Stefan & Meghan, 2021). I achieved flexibility in the study by generating data from several sources and data triangulation. Furthermore, using different data sources enhances in-depth analysis. Also, a case study allows triangulation for validating findings and providing more detail about the phenomenon. Thus, I was able to delve deeply into my participants experiences through several data sources (interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), ISA dialogue and ongoing email communications).

The study was also limited to international PhD students on Howard campus and Edgewood campus. International PhD students studying in other UKZN's three campuses: Westville, Pietermaritzburg and Medical school were not involved in this study. Thus, the study's finding do not apply to the three UKZN campuses. The findings nevertheless provide an understanding of international PhD students' first-year experiences at UKZN's two campuses: Edgewood and Howard.

4.8. Research Ethics

Ethics in research is critical, especially when the study involves interacting and engaging with human subjects (Braun, Ravn & Frankus, 2020; UKZN, 2020; Creswell, 2018; Roets, 2017). Ethics are moral standards and codes of conduct that minimize harm to participants while conducting research (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Research ethics include participants' voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. The ethics that guided my study were research guidelines stipulated by UKZN research ethics. The research guidelines helped me to ensure that the study was carried out transparently and professionally. Before I started the research, I also obtained permission from UKZN's Research Ethics Committee to conduct the research by applying for ethical clearance (see p.285).

4.8.1. Voluntary Participation

The interaction between the participants and I, was guided by their right to participate or withdraw at any research stage (Johnny, 2019). Participants' participation in the study was thus voluntary. The participants were not coerced or forced to participate against their will. Before the start of the research, I explained the nature of the study to the participant. Similarly, I explained to the participants what I intend to achieve from the research and that they could pull out of the study at any time. The study did not involve any vulnerable groups of people, just a sample of the international PhD students who are adults above the age of 18 years and mature enough to decide about their participation.

4.8.2. Informed Consent and Anonymity

I also sought the participants' permission and consent before the start of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity also guided the study by removing any identifying characteristics of the participants. The participants were also assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. The participants were also guaranteed that their names or identities would not be revealed or used for any other purposes.

4.9. Conclusion

This chapter is a synopsis of the study's research methodology, namely, the qualitative interpretive paradigm. Purposive sampling was utilised to select the international PhD students to understand their first-year experiences at UKZN. Data was generated from several complementary sources such as interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), ISA dialogue [international Students Dialogue], and ongoing email communications. The next chapter presents the study's findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the study's findings on the reasons international PhD students exit their home country to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN. The first-year experiences of international PhD students at UKZN and the reasons they have these experiences are also discussed. Data was generated through several sources such as interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and ISA dialogue (International Student Association). The direct quotes from the participants were also highlighted to buttress the participants' views. The demographic profile of the participants is discussed first before discussing the thematic findings aligned to the research critical questions.

5.2. Demographic Representation of Participants

The demographic profile of the sixteen international PhD students who participated in the research study is discussed below. This extends to variables such as gender, marital status, age, nationality, previous education, level of PhD and PhD study mode. The table below captures the demographic profile of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Representation of Participants

Gender (n)	Age (n)	Marital Status (n)	Prior Education (n)	Level in PhD Study (n)	PhD Study Mode (n)
Males: n=10 (62.5%)	25-30 years: n=3 (18.7 %)	Married: n=11(68.7 %)	Prior education at UKZN: n=5 (31.2%)	1st year: n=1 (6.3%)	Full time PhD study n= 12 (75%)
Females: n=6 (37.2%)	30-35 years: n=4 (25%)	Single: n=5(31.2%)	No previous education at UKZN: n=11 (68.7 %)	2nd year: n=9 (56.1%)	Part-time study: n=3(18.8%)
	35-40 years: n=7(43.8%)			3rd year: n=4 (25%)	Sandwich n=1 (6.3%)
	40-45years: 2(12.5%)			4th year: n=1 (6.3%)	
				5th year: n=1(6.3%)	

Table 2: Number of participants selected based on country

Nationality	Number of participants selected based on Nationality	Pseudonym
Kenya	1	Aagha
Malawi	1	Furaha
DRC	2	Chimanga Mukwege
Zimbabwe	4	Daraki, Amos Vimbai Masimba
Nigeria	8	Gbenga Lekan Shade Chinasa Abidemi, Blessing Olabode Damilola
Total	16	

5.2.1. Gender

Gleaning from table 1, a large proportion of the participants were males, 62.5% (n=10) and there were fewer females, 37.2% (n=6) who participated in the study. The large proportion of male participants alludes to the availability of those present during the sampling. The male participants were available to participate in the study, more so than the females because some of the females whom I approached claimed that they were busy or had family duty.

5.2.2. Nationality

A huge percentage of the participants were from African countries. The findings revealed the following composition: 50% (n=8) were from Nigeria; 25% (n=4) were from Zimbabwe; 12.5% (n=2) were from the DRC; 6.25% (n=1) were from Malawi and 6.25% (n=1) were from Kenya. From the data, the sample is skewed towards Nigerians because they were the majority of the participants. This is attributed to the researcher having the same background as an international PhD student from Nigeria. This assisted me in establishing a relationship with Nigerian participants because of common nationality. The data collected from the UKZN Edgewood postgraduate officer in 2017 indicates the number of international PhD students enrolled at UKZN in the 2016/2017 period.

The 2016/2017 statistics on registered PhD students at the UKZN Edgewood campus revealed that 163 PhD students were registered with the Department of Education. A breakdown of the statistics indicates that out of the 163 PhD students, 161 students are international PhD students while the remaining two were South African. A further break down of the statistics from the 161 international PhD students indicated the home countries: Botswana (1), Cameroon (3), Kenya (2), Lesotho (6), Malawi (2), Mauritius (34), Mozambique (1), Nigeria (24), Rwanda (2), Tanzania (1), Swaziland (23), Uganda (1) Zimbabwe (60), and South Africa. From the overview of 2016/2017 statistics above, most international PhD students are from Zimbabwe. This could be attributed to Zimbabweans taking advantage of the UKZN PhD cohort, which was launched as a strategy to increase the number of PhD graduates from Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) and the University of Swaziland (Uniswa) (UKZN, 2017). The nationality of the participants aligns with Mlambo's (2017, p.iv) study conducted on the international postgraduate students at UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus. Mlambo (2017) found that international students from Zimbabwe and Nigeria are the main target market, where from UKZN recruits its students.

5.2.3 Age

The data revealed the participant's age composition. 18.7% (n=3) of the participants were within the ages 25-30 years; 25% (n=4) were within 30-35 years; 43.8% (n=7) were within 35-40 years and 12.5% (n=2) were within 40-45 years' age bracket. From the overview on the participants' ages, it appears that the majority, 43.8% (n=7) of international PhD students were between the 35–

40-year age group.

5.2.4. Marital Status

The findings indicate that 68.8% (n=11) of the participants were married while 31.2% (n=5) were single. This also indicates that a significant number of the participants are married and studying at the same time.

5.2.5. Previous Education

It is deduced from the findings that 31.2% (n=5) of the participants had previously studied at UKZN before pursuing a PhD, hence they had an academic history with UKZN. The remaining 68.8 % (n=11) had a Master's Degree from their home country. The large number of international PhD students (68.8 %, n=11) who had a Master's Degree from their home country suggests that the majority of participants who participated in this study were studying for the first time at UKZN. A further breakdown of the 5% who studied previously at UKZN also indicates study at Master's Level, 12.5% (n=2); Undergraduate level, 12.5% (n=2) and Honors level, 7.6% (n=1).

From the overview, it is apparent that most participants were studying for the first time at UKZN. The significance of data on participants' previous education is that international students who schooled outside South Africa evaluated their qualifications by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (Keevy, Green & Manik, 2014). SAQA evaluation is one of the conditions to be met by international PhD students before applying to a South African university and being admitted for a PhD at UKZN (UKZN, 2018; SAQA, 2017). Keevy, Green and Manik (2014, p.23) posit that SAQA evaluation determines international qualification status and authenticity. They also mentioned that the SAQA evaluation compares the international qualification to the South African qualification and rates it on the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

5.2.6. PhD Study Level

The participants were at different levels in their PhD. 1st years were 6.3% (n=1); 2nd years were 56.1% (n=9); 3rd years were 25% (n=4); 4th years were 6.3% (n=1) and 5th years were 6.3% (n=1). The overview indicates that most of international PhD students were in their 2nd year of study.

5.2.7: PhD Study Mode

The findings also indicate that participants studied through three PhD study routes: full-time, part-time and a sandwich PhD. From the data, 75% (n=12) of the participants studied on a full-time basis; 18.8% (n=3) studied part-time and the remaining 6.3% (n=1) studied through the sandwich mode. In this study, for the sandwich PhD, the home country university is the University of Zimbabwe, and the host country university is UKZN. Data on the field of the discipline shows that the participants were registered in the Social Sciences, Educational Management, Educational ICT, Educational Sociology, History, Criminology, International Relations and Public policy. Further, from the 75% studying through a full-time programme, one of the participants, was doing the PhD by publications rather than a full dissertation. A PhD by publications entails a PhD student investigating a topic and publishing articles on such findings in peer-reviewed journals (Lewis & Zaid, 2021; Gumbo, 2017; Peacock, 2017; Louw & Muller, 2014).

5.2. Data Presentation: Reasons why international Students Study at UKZN

This section discusses the themes obtained from the thematic content analysis to unpack PhD students' first-year study experiences at UKZN. This section is based on the data obtained from the interviews, focus group discussion (FGD) and ISA dialogue. The themes from the data are discussed under the following headings, push and pull factors. These are the first-year PhD experiences of international students at UKZN and the challenges of the international PhD students. The first-year experiences of international PhD students at UKZN can be separated into categories of academic and non-academic experiences.

5.2.1. Push Factors: Reasons why International PhD Students Exit their Home Country

This section presents findings thematically on push factors that motivate international PhD students to exit their home country for South Africa. The themes that emerged from the thematic content analysis on the push factors are summed into the following: These are the economic situation in the home country, inadequate infrastructure/facilities, unavailability of specific PhD courses in the home country and the lengthy time to complete a PhD.

Figure.1: Push factors: Why International PhD Students exit their home country to study at UKZN

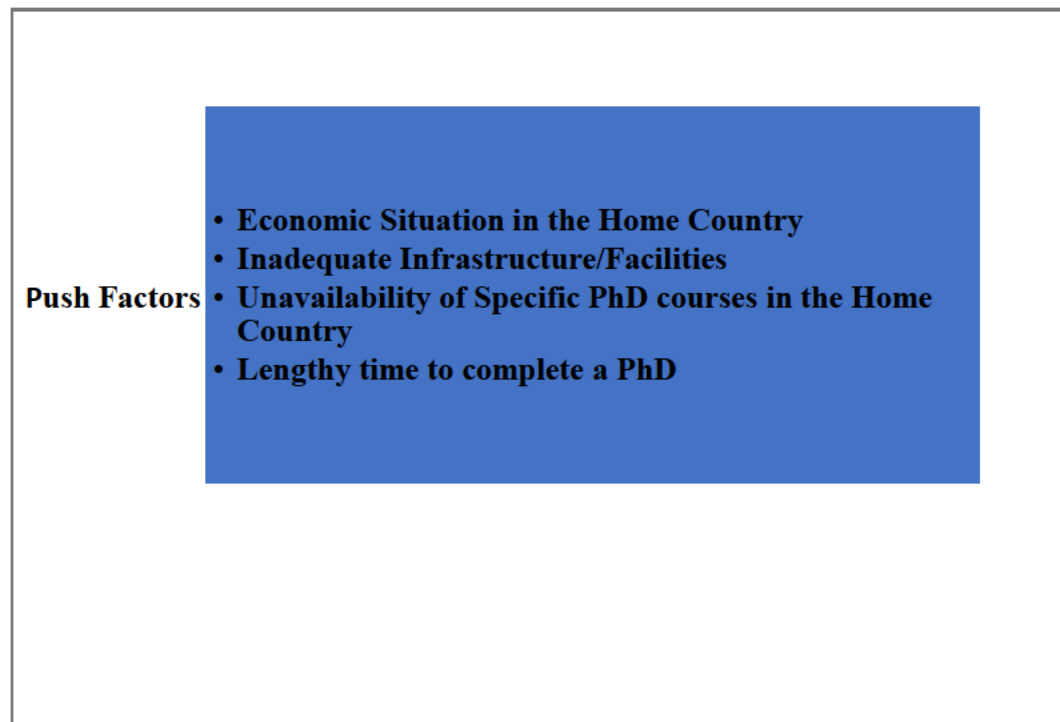


Figure 1 summarises the push factors why international PhD Students exit their home country to study at UKZN. The push factors are explained under the following sub-themes below.

5.2.1.1. Economic Situation in the Home Country

Many participants, 68.7% (n=11) cited the economic situation in their home country as one of the push factors that propelled them to exit their home country. The participants indicated that their country's economic situation pushed them to first come to South Africa and later study for a PhD at UKZN. The economic situation in Zimbabwe relates to the level of high unemployment, a lack of job security and a lack of scholarships for study.

Participants from Zimbabwe revealed that Zimbabwe's economic crisis and limited scholarships were major reasons for migrating to South Africa. Vimbai (Zimbabwe), explained:

'The economic situation in Zimbabwe was very bad. It was hard to study in Zimbabwe, so I came here in 2010 during my undergraduate years to study'.

Masimba (Zimbabwe) remarked:

'The economic situation in Zimbabwe also makes it difficult to obtain a scholarship to study'.

Mukwege (DRC) revealed dual reasons: that the war and economic crisis in the DRC propelled him to migrate to South Africa, not for study purposes initially but to eke out a living. Mukwege (DRC) indicated:

'In the DRC, I could not get a job because of the war, so I fled to South Africa as a refugee, later pursued a PhD because of opportunity'.

From the overview, the migration of international students from the DRC alludes to fleeing from war, which is negatively affecting the DRC economy. Participants from Nigeria cite unemployment in their home country, similar to the Zimbabwean students, as the reason they migrated to South Africa. Abidemi (Nigeria) remarked:

'The economic situation in Nigeria is bad that you cannot get a job after graduation even when you get first-class honours.... There is age restriction on job offering because most organizations would like to employ job seekers who are younger in the workplace between age 25 years from 30 years and do not want older people'.

Another participant from Nigeria, Olabode (Nigeria) shared a similar concern that Abidemi (Nigeria) expressed, explaining that:

'It is easier for job seekers who graduated from private universities to get a job on time because private universities do not go on strike like public universities... such strike delays the timely completion of graduation...makes you mature in the labour market'.

The data above indicates that the participants were propelled by different economic situations or economic motives coupled with other reasons in their home countries to exit their and migrate to South Africa. It is also evident that the participants leave their home country hoping to get a better

job because they were unemployed in their home country or needed to escape from the economic situation in their home country.

5.2.1.2. Unavailability of Certain PhD Courses/Programmes in the Home Country

Participants from the DRC, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, 31.2% (n=5) mentioned the unavailability of a specific PhD Course/Programme as one of the reasons they exited their home country to study at UKZN. There are three reasons for the unavailability of specific PhD Courses/Programmes: Firstly, institutional age: the year a university was established. Secondly, the PhD program rigour or quality assurance for PhD programmes. Thirdly, insufficient expert supervisors to supervise particular PhD topics. Chinasa, a Nigerian and a lecturer, mentioned that:

‘For a university in Nigeria to offer particular PhD courses and programme, it has to have quality assurance process approved by the Nigerian University Commission [NUC].

Blessing (Nigeria) mentioned the institution’s age as a factor preventing him from studying in the home country:

‘There is no PhD programme at my school because my school is a new one, established in 2012’.

Gbenga (Nigeria) and Mukwege (DRC) reported the lack of a supervisor and specialization area respectively impacted on the decision to study at UKZN. According to Gbenga (Nigeria):

‘There was no expert supervisor for the proposed research topic I chose in Nigeria. I could not get a supervisor that was an expert in African history... I was interested in researching African history, which was lacking in other universities... I applied to selected universities also in Europe... I also applied to DAAD Germany University’.

Mukwege (DRC) echoed that:

‘In the DRC, there is no speciality of certain course ... I was formerly in the university of Gome, DRC. In 2006 I came to South Africa, here I wanted to study medicine, I could not study medicine because it is restricted to South Africans. I am studying criminology’.

Amos (Zimbabwe) expressed his inability to meet the requirements in his home country as propelling his migration:

'... The person in charge of admission said I did not have the required GPA for a PhD that I should enrol in a one-year pre-doctoral programme before starting the PhD which I did not want...'

The participants' views suggest that international students migrate because of reasons associated with the unavailability of PhD courses in their home country.

5.2.1.3. Lengthy Time to Complete a PhD in the Home Country

The lengthy time to complete a PhD in Nigerian public Universities is also a push factor that propelled international PhD students of Nigerian descent to study at UKZN, which offers a PhD across a minimum of three years of full-time study and a maximum of five years. A perceived lengthy time to complete a PhD in the home country is a significant push factor amongst Nigerian international students. The lengthy time to complete a PhD was attributed to the supervisor's attitude in their home country public universities and incessant strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) ^[14]. Olabode (INigeria) explained that Nigerian supervisors believe that their PhD students should graduate within seven-ten years. Olabode (Nigeria) further explained that Nigerian supervisors exhibit such attitude because they (supervisors) did not graduate on time during their PhD; hence, they believe their students should also follow the same route.

Interestingly, Shade (Nigeria) expressed that Nigerian supervisors are changing their attitudes. Shade mentioned:

'I have seen Nigerian PhD students graduating after five years of starting their PhD'.

¹⁴ Ntiasagwe (2020). ASUU is the Nigerian union of university academic staff. ASUU was founded in 1978 but started initially in 1965 as the Association of University Teachers (AUT). The formation of ASUU triggered the agitation for academic freedom, university autonomy and an increase in university funding. The mandates of ASUU is the protection of the interest of its members and act as a trade union

The second reason contributing to a lengthy time to complete a PhD is the incessant strikes by ASUU in Nigerian public universities. Damilola (Nigeria) describes how ASUU strikes propelled him to come to UKZN for study purposes.

Lekan (Nigeria) explained this push factor while also alluding to the pull at UKZN of fee remission for three years of study:

‘...There is no definite time you will finish a PhD in Nigeria. The strike is a contributory factor to not knowing when you will finish. Unlike in South Africa, where you finish in three years. Although this does not mean it is certain that you will finish in three years because of the supervisors here, but you know that in UKZN, that it is a three-year period because of fee remission...’

Gbenga (Nigeria) shares the views of Lekan (Nigeria) that ‘ASUU strikes and lengthy time to complete a PhD in Nigerian public universities are contributory factors for exiting the home country. He (Gbenga, Nigeria) explained the lengthy duration of the PhD in Nigerian universities:

‘The minimum number of years for a PhD completion in Nigeria University is five years as determined by the Nigerian University Commission... Although the completion rate is also dependent on other factors like supervisory relationship... That leads to eight years in some cases.’

5.2.1.4. Inadequate Infrastructure and Facilities in the Home Country

Inadequate infrastructure and facilities needed for research such as electricity in the home country, access to the internet and ICTs are also significant push factors. Participants from the DRC, and Nigeria all articulate how the quality of education has been adversely affected by limited infrastructure. Mainly speaking on his views on the state of infrastructure in the DRC, Chimanga (DRC) expressed that:

‘The availability of electricity is crucial for research because the research output is not encouraging... Electricity is one of the scarce commodities in the DRC; we are used to the generator...’

Abidemi (ISI2) shares a similar view with Chimanga (DRC). She *explained*,

'Generator... This also transcends to public universities in Nigeria because most universities do not have a backup plan for electricity to power their schools, which makes them rely on a generator. However, certain public universities do not also allow generators in schools because of the noise and air pollution associated with it. The financial implication of running a generator with the high, exorbitant price of fuel is alarming.'

Olabode (Nigeria) also corroborated Abidemi (Nigeria) that:

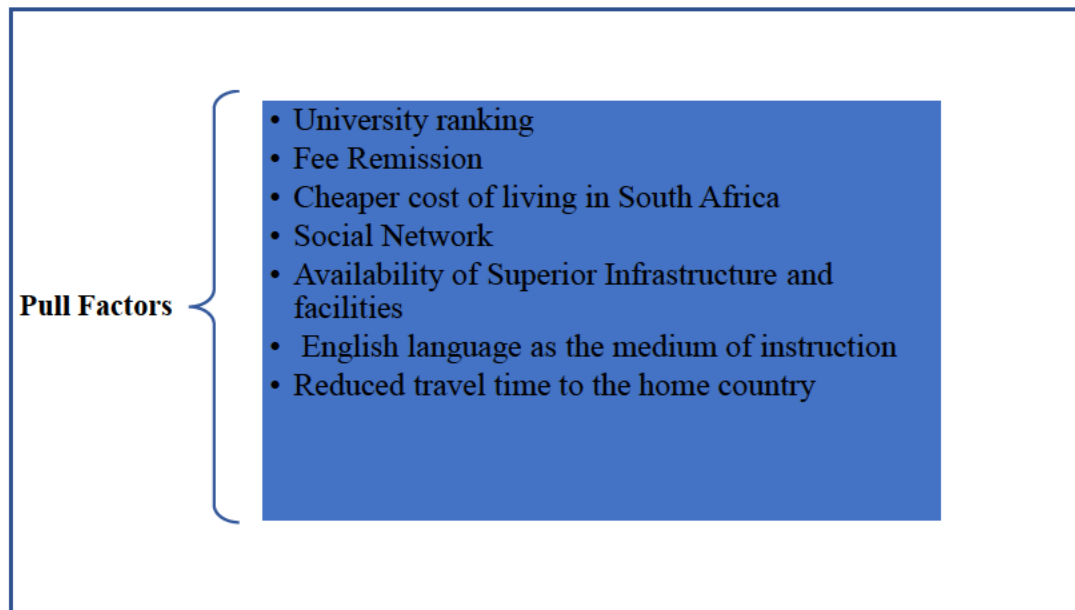
'There is insufficient internet ... so you have to go to the internet café to access the internet to download materials...The internet café is not reliable, and most times poor network services usually affect research output because often, researchers are discouraged...even when there is internet the young researchers like me have to pay with their money to access the internet ... this frustrates researchers to meet deadlines'

The participants' perspectives on poor infrastructure/facilities indicate the crucial role infrastructure such as electricity and access to the internet has on research and how it triggers the decision to leave the home country. The overview suggests that infrastructure and facilities propelled international PhD students to migrate to South Africa. Nonetheless, South Africa is also currently experiencing a resurgence in challenges with electricity provision, which was not the case previously.

5.2.2. Pull Factors Attracting International PhD Students to South Africa

This section discusses the pull factors that attract international PhD students to South Africa and the reasons for studying at UKZN. The key themes that emerged from the pull factors include university ranking, fee remission, cheaper cost of living in South Africa, social network, availability of superior infrastructure and facilities, the English language as the medium of instruction and reduced travel time to the home country. Figure 2 below summarises the pull factors why International PhD Students exit their home country to study at UKZN are captured in the figure below.

Figure 2. Pull Factors attracting International PhD Students to UKZN in South Africa



The pull factors are explained under the following sub-themes below.

5.2.2.1. University Ranking

There was consensus amongst the majority of the participants, 68.7% (n=11) that they study at UKZN because of university's ranking. They also chose UKZN after finding out the university ranking. Commenting on university ranking as a pull factor, Vimbai (FGD4 Zimbabwe) stated:

'UKZN ranking in comparison to university ranking in Zimbabwe was a consideration for selecting UKZN'.

Chimanga (DRC) expressed that,

'Universities in Congo do not rank as do South African universities... This was the major reason I chose to study in South Africa'.

Chimanga (DRC) explained the reasons why Congolese universities do not rank high like South African universities. He alludes to the conflict in Congo, which affected the educational

infrastructure and government spending on education.

Aagha (Kenya) uttered:

‘I conducted an internet search on universities and discovered that UKZN is highly ranked in Africa’.

Chinasa (Nigeria) mentioned that she chose to study at UKZN because of its ranking and because she obtained funding from her home country’s university. University ranking is a significant pull factor for Chinasa, a lecturer at a Nigerian university. Chinasa (Nigeria) explained:

‘Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) scholarship usually funds lecturers in Nigeria willing to study in top universities listed in University Rankings... a key consideration in the choice of UKZN...TETFund assists to study abroad’.

Chinasa (Nigeria) also stated that TETFund is the Nigerian federal government scholarship for Nigerian academic staff. Chinasa (Nigeria) also elaborates that TETFund is an academic training program that began in 2008 when the National Universities Commission (NUC)¹⁵ adopted a policy that a PhD is a mandatory teaching prerequisite for lecturers to teach in Nigerian universities. This suggests that university ranking is a decisive pull factor for international PhD students studying at UKZN because of sponsorship by their home country government. International students also compared several universities through the university rankings to determine the most suitable university to attend. The participants based their rankings on the internet search. Also, they compared their home country universities to other African universities. The participants also based their ranking on word-of-mouth recommendations by their social networks [friends, family, acquaintances] already studying at UKZN. In addition, the home country’s government also sponsors international students who enroll in a ranked university abroad.

¹⁵ The Nigerian Economist (1987). NUC is a government commission in Nigeria that promotes quality assurance in higher education. It was founded in 1962 as an advisory agency and became a statutory organization in 1974.

5.2.2.2. Fee Remission as Bait

Fee remission is another crucial pull factor for international students studying at UKZN. The timely completion of a PhD is also a significant factor for full-time PhD students on UKZN fee remission. One of the incentives for students is the fee remission to finish the PhD within the stipulated period of three years (UKZN, 2017). 75% (n=12) of the participants, stated that they chose UKZN because of fee remission, which means that it is a major pull factor. They also mentioned that their social networks informed them about UKZN's fee remission, which is attractive. Olabode (Nigeria) echoes that and expresses a view that it may not be a continued effort by UKZN:

'The fee remission might serve as bait to recruit international students...This is good because of students who do not have much earnings...However the recent happenings in UKZN like 'fees must fall' whereby local students owe debt suggests that with time UKZN might introduce tuition fees because of the high influx of international PhD students flocking into UKZN'.

Similarly, Amos (Zimbabwe) mentioned:

'During my search for admission, there were many options to study at South African universities like Western Cape and the University of Zululand... my friend at UKZN told me about UKZN fee remission and I applied for admission at UKZN...fee remission is a key factor...'

Gbenga (Nigeria) revealed:

'I initially got admission to the Durban University of Technology (DUT). I deferred my PhD admission for a year because there was no funding from my sponsor and supervisor to study at DUT. From DUT, I had to first defer my admission for a year and later, I changed to UKZN after DUT offered a letter of release'.

Abidemi (Nigeria) expressed:

'Fee remission is a motivating factor for me as a married person with children; you need to save cost. My friend in UKZN gave me the information about UKZN fee remission, and I paid for the application fee, although when I came to South Africa, I made an inquiry at Witwatersrand University and the University of Pretoria. Since you have to pay school fees

at these schools, I opted for UKZN’.

Commenting further on fee remission, Chimanga (DRC) similarly remarked:

‘Fee remission is a bait for attracting international PhD students who are immigrants because of the financial burden. Unlike local students with access to loans and student funding like the National Student Financial Aid Scheme [NSFAS], we [international PhD students] do not’.

Lekan (Nigeria) mentioned that South Africa was not initially his first preference as a study destination. He explained the ease of entering a South African higher education institution and the added bonus of fee remission:

‘I planned to go to the USA to study as promised by my sponsor... my sponsor disappointed me, so I came to South Africa when I discovered that admission here is easier than in the USA and there is fee remission’.

Other aspects related to finance (weighing the cost locally with that abroad at UKZN) are all pull factors as Damilola (Nigeria) stated:

‘I was already registered to start my PhD at the University of Lagos [Unilag]. The tuition fee at Unilag costs two hundred and fifty thousand naira per year, which equates to R 10 000 South Africa rands ... converting this money [school fee] into South Africa currency, comparing this cost with Nigerian university is worth it’.

25% (n=4) of participants also mentioned that they considered studying at other South African universities like the University of Western Cape and Witwatersrand University while searching for universities. This is because these universities have funding, such as scholarships and bursaries for PhD students. Despite this, many participants did not enrol in other South African universities because they were required to pay upfront tuition fees before accessing the funding.

Olabode (Nigeria) echoed that despite the attractiveness of the scholarships, paying tuition fees is not a guarantee to access university funding or scholarships. Olabode (Nigeria) also mentioned that a student could register at such universities and not access scholarships because the

scholarships are competitive. This suggests that international students will choose UKZN with fee remission rather than chase after universities without fee remission where they have to pay tuition fees first and then try to access student scholarships, which are not guaranteed. Fee remission is more instantaneous, reaping monetary gains in tuition fees before registration at a South African higher education institution, such as is available at UKZN

Similarly, international students on study leave from the universities in their home country stated that fee remission enabled them to concentrate on their studies without looking for a part-time job. They were also keen to complete their PhD study on time to resume work. As echoed by Lekan (Nigeria),

‘As a lecturer in a Nigerian university on study leave, one of the conditions for my study leave is that I finish my PhD on time because my organisation (university) is still paying my salary... After three years, when my PhD is not completed, my school would not continue to pay my salary’.

The responses from the participants indicate that fee remission is a form of a scholarship. Fee remission is a marketing strategy UKZN adopts to attract and recruit international PhD students. Fee remission was an overwhelmingly vital consideration for international PhD students as it helps reduce the living costs of residing in South Africa while studying at UKZN.

5.2.2.3. Cheaper Cost of Living in South Africa

The cost of living is also a pull factor influencing international students’ choosing South Africa as a host country and studying at UKZN. Some participants who studied at Master’s level in European countries indicated that studying in South Africa is cheaper than studying in the USA, Canada and the UK. 12.5% (n=2) of participants expressed that they studied for a Master’s Degree in Cyprus and the UK. They also mentioned that the cost of living and tuition fees is expensive in these countries. The participants also stated that they considered other study destinations before deciding to study at UKZN. Aagha (Kenya) explained how location and the cost of living influence decision-making for PhD students on where to study:

‘During my search for admission, I explored options to study in developed countries like the UK, Australia, Finland, Germany; ...However, the tuition fees are expensive because

of their currency...Living in South Africa and been close to home, your family can support you financially when you are broke [cash strapped] by sending money to you. Before coming to South Africa, my friend at UKZN told me that food is cheap...chicken and fruit are cheap’.

The participants’ responses also reveal that the cost of living is linked to South Africa’s currency/exchange rate to the participants’ home country’s currency. The participants from Nigeria mentioned that the exchange rate of the rand to the Nigerian currency, with the naira being lower when compared to the currency and exchange rate of countries like the USA, UK and South Africa. ‘In 2017, the rand exchange rate to naira (Nigerian Naira-NGN) was 1 ZAR = 23.6253 NGN’ (Olabode, ISI5). ‘The exchange rate of 1 GBP (British Pound Sterling) to naira in 2017 was 461.2020 NGN’ (Olabode, Nigeria). Shade (Nigeria) explained that:

‘When my certificates were to be evaluated by SAQA, I sent the naira equivalent to my ‘contact’s (contact is a slang that means a friend) account. He also helped to pay for my Momentum medical insurance, so I could apply for a student visa’.

‘Living in Durban is cheaper than Johannesburg...When I arrived South Africa in 2013, before coming to Durban; I lived in Johannesburg for three months... Although accommodation is quite expensive and scarce in Durban’ (Damilola, Nigeria).

The inference from the findings suggests that the cost of living in South Africa is also impacted by the currency exchange rate between the participants’ home country and South Africa. The cost of living is thus also a significant pull factor for participants who receive financial support from their home country or from friends in SA.

5.2.2.4. Role of Social Networks

Another important pull factor is the social network. In the context of this study, a social network is family, friends, or colleagues (Blumenstock, Guanhua & Tan, 2021). The social network

assisted and guided participants in the UKZN admission process, SAQA processing, payment of UKZN application fee, application for UKZN admission, payment of student medical insurance, and search/renting accommodation.

'I came to UKZN in 2012 because my cousin and twin sister were studying at UKZN Westville campuses' (Mukwege, DRC).

Abidemi (Nigeria) remarked that:

'It was the people I know that is why I came to Durban... It was my friend that facilitated the admission and guided me on the visa requirements'.

Shade (Nigeria) state that:

'I had the opportunity to go to the University of Zululand with an opportunity to access the scholarship and funding, but the mere fact that UKZN was in the suburb, I decided to stay...Almost all my friends from Unilag, where I did my Master's Degree are at UKZN. Seeing them would make me comfortable, my queries resolved because they have been on the ground and they can guide me'.

The participants also admitted that they chose UKZN because they have social networks at UKZN and did not know anyone at other South African universities (Western Cape University and Witwatersrand University). Aagha, (Kenya) stated:

'My friend, who was a former PhD student at UKZN and a lecturer in UKZN help in a little way in coining my proposed research topic that helped get a supervisor'.

'My friend picked me up at King Shaka International Airport...He rented an apartment for me before my arrival...we bought a registered sim card at pep store...The next day after my arrival, he told me how to open a bank account in South Africa...He took me to the Pinetown market to buy foodstuff' (Amos, Zimbabwe).

The response reveals that the social network assisted international students by offering social and

economic support to newcomers in South Africa. The social network support ranged from airport pick-up, showing them around Durban and Pinetown; guidance on the currency exchange rate; information tips on survival; and advice on opening a bank account. The roles performed by the social network in the long run assist the participants to settle in with ease, adapt, acclimatise and minimize alienation. On the contrary, Damilola (Nigeria) has a divergent view on the role of the social network. Damilola (Nigeria) contends that his friend, another PhD student who was already schooling in DUT, did not assist financially and ‘squatted’ on him from arrival. The ‘squat’ in Damilola’s (Nigeria) view, means a friend who temporarily lives/shares a flat without paying for any expenses such as house rent.

From the overview, international students’ study at UKZN because of the information provided by their social networks, such as that by the UKZN Alumni or students currently studying at UKZN. The social network also assists international PhD students during their migration process and upon arrival in South Africa.

5.2.2.5. Availability of Superior Infrastructure and Facilities

The other reason international PhD students’ study at UKZN alludes to the availability of superior infrastructure and facilities in South Africa and UKZN. UKZN facilities include access to the internet, technological development and library resources that enhance research. Half of the participants, (50%, n=8), (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Kenya, DRC and Nigeria) echoed poor electricity in their home countries. The participants reported that they chose to study at UKZN because their social network marketed UKZN as having superior ICT facilities and internet speed. The participants also emphasized that access to the internet and ICTs improved their research skills by attending conferences and workshops. The participants identified limited infrastructure and facilities as push factors from their home country; correspondingly, South Africa and UKZN’s infrastructure (internet, ICTs and electricity) was also a pull factor by the participants for coming to study in South Africa.

Chinasa (Nigeria) had this to say:

‘ICT that UKZN has in abundance- it’s what we lack in my country [Nigeria]’.

Amos (Zimbabwe) articulated this:

‘UKZN has facilities and ICTs that make you want to read till the level you get tired...Although they (UKZN local students) might not appreciate what they have’.

Blessing (Nigeria) mentioned:

‘As a research assistant in my home country, I struggled with meeting deadlines, submitting assignments and completing my Master’s thesis because of electricity. In South Africa, there is constant electricity...even if there would be load shedding; you would be informed by the Municipality’.

International students from Nigeria reiterated that electricity and access to the internet are erratic in their home country. They echoed that poor infrastructure and facilities affect the quality of research.

‘The availability of ICT and the internet is instrumental to my research. It was easier to get materials for my research, especially the literature review. More importantly, it creates the opportunity to access relevant journals in my field’ (Aagha, Kenya).

The participants also averred that students who study at UKZN from the undergraduate level are better prepared for research because they use the computer to type assignments and become aware of plagiarism from the first year of the undergraduate programme. The participants were also clear that in Nigeria, students use a public café to access the internet because of the lack of the internet at school. They also described how the public internet café is expensive and they have poor internet connectivity in the home country. Erratic electricity and insufficient access to the internet also affected participants’ capacity to publish in reputable journals because it hindered them in meeting deadlines. Gbenga (Nigeria) shared that:

‘Not having publications affected my admission selection process during the PhD and having a potential supervisor in UKZN... This is because prospective supervisors and UKZN requested my CV to assess my work experiences and research papers’.

Damilola (Nigeria) revealed:

‘The standard of the UKZN’s internet is up to international standards in comparison to the University of Lagos (Unilag)... In Unilag, only lecturers have access to the internet. Internet access is restricted for students...They [school management] claim that the reason for limited internet access for students is its misuse- for other purposes that are non-academic, like watching pornography’.

Furaha (Malawi) commented on the importance of campus location and its influence on research for PhD students:

‘UKZN’s environment is conducive for research ‘unlike the Durban University of Technology’s (DUT) Durban campus located next to a garage and market where there is noise’.

Masimba (Zimbabwe) mentioned that he tutors at DUT, and there is a restriction on students’ access to the internet. In respect of the above views, unbridled access and use of the internet are vital academic resources to support PhD students’ research needs and they considered this a priority.

5.2.2.6. English as the Medium of Instruction

Few participants, 18.7 % (n=3) mentioned that the English language as a requirement to study and a medium of instruction is crucial for selecting South Africa as a study destination. Olabode, ISI5 hinted that while searching for universities in developed countries like the USA, UK, and Canada, he noted that most of these universities require international students to have the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) or Test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL) while applying for admission. Olabode (ISI5), contends that at his age (35-40 years), he cannot write the TOEFL examination because, after two years, TOEFL expires. Olabode claims that TOEFL is also expensive. The TOEFL examination in Nigeria costs 80,000 naira, equivalent to 3 144 South African Rands. As articulated by Olabode (Nigeria);

‘Sitting for TOEFL at this stage is not convenient for me after studying this far’.

Damilola (Nigeria) divulged that:

'Some universities I contacted in the USA said it is not compulsory that I have TOEFL ... However, I won't be able to obtain a full scholarship because I don't have TOEFL. During the PhD application process to South African universities, my friend told me I need to have SAQA before I could apply for admission...The SAQA certificate does not expire; you can use it in different schools (if you wish to teach in a SA school) ...that was a relief'.

Shade (Nigeria) also shared that:

'The use of TOEFL is not required in the South African universities' admission process like in the UK because of the financial costs of writing such TOEFL'.

Due to these reasons, the participants were discouraged from applying to universities in the USA, UK and Canada. This suggests that these international PhD students of African origin, preferred to study in universities where the English language is the medium of instruction but where they would not require any form of verification that would indicate that they are competent in the English language. This is also partly due to the financial implications of the TOEFL.

5.2.2.7. Reduced Travel Hours to the Home Country

Another reason international students' study in South Africa is the reduced travel hours to their home country. 31.2% (n=5) of the participants echoed the importance of reduced travel hours to their home country. International students, especially those from Nigeria and Zimbabwe, chose South Africa because of the reduced travel hours to and from their home countries (Nigeria, Zimbabwe) to South Africa. Daraki (Zimbabwe) underscores the importance of reduced travel hours to his home country, Zimbabwe. Daraki (Zimbabwe) claimed that his PhD thesis is a comparative study, which requires him to gather data in Zimbabwe and South Africa. At the same time, international PhD students from Zimbabwe especially those studying by sandwich PhD route, noted that the reduced travel distance between South Africa and Zimbabwe is advantageous for them. This alludes to coming to UKZN to spend some time as part of their PhD training and in Zimbabwe. Chinasa (Nigeria) who mentioned the cost of flight expressed a divergent view.

‘Travelling to and fro from South Africa- Nigeria, Lagos State is 6 hours. It is a motivating factor to see my family ...Sometimes the flight cost varies from 4,000 rand-5,000 rand for a two-way ticket for Ethiopia airline...or Arik Airline owned by Nigeria...’ (Chinasa, Nigeria).

Abidemi (Nigeria) explained that:

‘Closeness to my home country, Nigeria is important ... for my family members to come to visit me in South Africa ...when I delivered a baby, my mother visited me to babysit and spend some time with me’.

The data also revealed that because of the reduced hours, travelling from Nigeria to South Africa, international students also maintain ties with their home country by receiving *foodstuff* and homemade groceries from their families. Blessing (Nigeria) verbalized that:

‘As a self-funded student, I have the opportunity to receive foodstuff from anyone coming from home (Nigeria) and also send stuff (gifts) to my family when anyone is travelling home’.

Aagha (Kenya) expressed cost-effectiveness in transportation costs and reduced travel time from Kenya to South Africa. In addition, to ease visiting his wife and children, the family could also come to visit him. Aagha (Kenya) explained *‘Visiting home during vacation...visit loved ones because you can be homesick and lonely here’.*

The above provides valuable insights into how vital reduced travel time between the study destinations is advantageous to international students. Firstly, the families of international students could visit them in their home country. Secondly, international students could book cheaper flights. The next section presents international PhD students’ first-year study experiences at UKZN.

5.2.3. First-Year Study Experiences of International PhD Students at UKZN

The experiences of international PhD students at UKZN are classified into non-academic and academic experiences. Experiences are process-oriented actions that appeal to people's senses and can be classified as negative, neutral or positive (Orth, 2015, p.49). The non-academic experiences of international PhD students include the first-year PhD registration, experiences with UKZN International Students' Office (ISO) and experiences related to international students' medical insurance. The academic experiences were largely about their supervisory relationships and PhD proposal writing.

5.2.3.1. Non-academic First-Year Experiences of international PhD students at UKZN

The non-academic experiences of international PhD students are discussed in this section. These experiences are discussed under the following themes: first-year PhD registration, UKZN International Students' Office (ISO) and international students' medical insurance.

5.2.3.1.1. First-year PhD Registration

There were positive responses from the participants about their first -year PhD registration. Most participants, 75% (n=12), are full-time students on a 3-year PhD fee remission. Findings suggest that UKZN postgraduate officers assisted and guided international PhD students with their first-year PhD registration process. The findings show that registration at UKZN entails a cyclical process where international PhD students' 'clear' themselves at the international students' office (ISO). The ISO clearance checks include international students having a study visa to ensure that they fulfill immigration conditions. The following documents are required for international students' clearance: a valid study visa, passport, proof of student medical insurance and payment of tuition fees. In addition there is financial clearance at the UKZN financial section to ascertain whether tuition fees or outstanding debt are paid. Gbenga (Nigeria) states that the Edgewood campus postgraduate officer was very helpful during the registration process.

In his words:

'I was well received... by the attitude of the postgraduate officer. The postgraduate officer assists international students by calling other international PhD students to assist new international PhD students when they arrive...the postgraduate officer says they always do this...' (Gbenga, Nigeria).

Aagha (Kenya) voiced that:

‘The staff at Howard campus are supportive staff...easy to approach and always ready to assist with any information needed’.

Furaha (Malawi) also admits that:

‘The postgraduate office at Edgewood campus assisted me...very communicative and welcoming... Because of the supportive attitude, I marketed UKZN to other international PhD students. Also, I became a liaison officer to other international students from my home country by picking them up on arrival and searching for accommodation for them’.

The above quotations reveal that on arrival at the Edgewood campus, international PhD students were welcomed by staff and liaison officers and twinned with peers for a smooth transition into academia and to assist in their socio-cultural and academic adaptation.

5.2.3.1.2. Experiences with Medical Health Insurance Coverage

Participants had a mixed response on the benefits of having student health insurance. The findings suggest that student health insurance is essential for two reasons. Student health insurance is a requirement that international PhD students must fulfil before being issued a study visa from the South African embassy in their home country. Student health insurance is also one of the requirements to register at UKZN. The findings reveal that international PhD students studying at UKZN could choose from the two recommended student medical health insurance coverage suggested by UKZN: Momentum’s Ingwe Scheme and Compcare Medical Aid.

The findings indicate that the two medical health companies (Momentum Ingwe Scheme and Compcare Medical Aid) also have a vast network of trained and licensed service healthcare providers that international PhD students could choose from should they need treatment. The interviews indicate that 68.8 % (n=11) prefer Momentum Ingwe Scheme to Compcare Medical Aid because of Momentum’s rapid responses to queries and issuing of a student insurance certificate which is crucial for a study visa.

The participants also expressed that they prefer Momentum Ingwe because of the accessibility at the Howard College campus, which facilitates the easy payment of the student medical insurance. Damilola (Nigeria) mentioned that he sent money into the Nigerian bank account of his friend,

who converted it into Rands and paid for the student insurance. Compcare Medical Aid is popular with the participants at the Edgewood College campus. 31.2% (n=5) of participants who use Compcare Medical Aid mentioned that Compcare was cheaper than Momentum Ingwe. They were also dissatisfied with representatives of Compcare Medical Aid because of poor responses to queries and the unavailability of representatives at the Edgewood campus. The other sub-themes that emerged from experiences with student health insurance coverage include international PhD students' dissatisfaction with the annual increment of medical insurance coverage and the services provided by health insurance providers. The other sub-themes that emerged from experiences with student health insurance coverage include international PhD students' dissatisfaction with the annual increment of medical insurance coverage and the services provided by health insurance providers. The sub-themes are discussed in the next section.

a). Dissatisfaction with Annual Increment of International Students Medical Insurance

The participants were dissatisfied with the annual increment of the international student medical insurance cover. The results indicate that medical insurance cover for international students (including international PhD students) was expensive annually. The monthly cost of Momentum Health insurance cover for international students in 2016 was R305, R335 in 2017, R407 in 2018, R407 in 2019, 430 in 2020 and 455 in 2022. On the other hand, Compcare health insurance per month was R285 in 2016, R330 in 2017, 404 in 2018, 404 in 2019 and 435 in 2020 and 435 in 2021. The findings indicate that medical insurance increases annually but it is not exorbitant.

b). Dissatisfaction with Services Provided by Health Insurance Providers

Participants were dissatisfied with the limited medical services international students could access from Momentum and Compare, who were the accredited health providers. The benefit of having student medical insurance is that international PhD students could access medical services from accredited health providers recommended by Momentum and Compcare. The health providers comprise private hospitals, primary care networks and hospitals in KwaZulu-Natal. Some health providers are Durodoc clinic, Prime cure, Crompton hospital, Margate private hospital and Entabeni city hospital. The female participants also mentioned that they accessed public hospitals freely and received free treatment. In particular, the female participants gave credit to the South

African health care system in accessing antenatal care and for delivering babies.

‘Although, they are xenophobic, I thank God for the hospital system ...you give birth for free, attend antenatal and immunization...you eat three meals during your stay at the public hospital...Their government really tried [South Africa Government] ... Even if you put to bed by caesarian operation, you do not pay a dime... Do you know that in my home country, all these are not possible? I know three women who lost their lives in my home country because there was no blood in the blood bank... the amount required for a caesarian operation is outrageous...Even when the new baby dies during the caesarian operation, you won’t be allowed to leave the hospital until you pay...’ (Abidemi, Nigeria).

Chimanga (DRC) also shares the perspective of Abidemi (Nigeria) on the healthcare system of South Africa.

‘My wife delivered our two children at South Africa hospitals. We [My wife & I] contemplated having our baby at private hospital to avoid the early queue at public hospitals, my sister; the price is too costly [12,000 rands]. You have to pay a deposit before your antenatal start in case your wife will deliver by caesarian operation...This is too costly... and in these private hospitals, when your wife delivers you have to pay extra days per bed’.

The views of Abidemi (Nigeria), Chimanga (DRC) and Shade (Nigeria) specified the advantages and disadvantages of accessing public and private hospitals. *The benefit of attending a private hospital and not waking up early to stand in the queue to be attended to by nurses on time compared to public clinics.* They also echoed the benefits of accessing antenatal care in a public clinic as free medical services and specialized health services were available in contrast to costly private hospitals.

‘The benefit of a private hospital is that you ‘do not wake up as early as 5am to be on the queue before the sisters[nurse] start attending to patients because the earlier you come, the earlier you will be attended toothod other benefit is that you could see the doctor or nurse at any time...’ (Abidemi, Nigeria)

'In public hospitals, language barrier [isiZulu] discourages you. You have to wake up early to queue on the line. The advantage is that when you put to birth and your child needs attention like been in specialized children unit[incubator] you can relax and do not incur any charges for staying extra days at the hospital' (Shade, Nigeria)

'In private hospitals, you cannot stay extra days because you have to pay each day per bed. Your student medical insurance is insufficient to cover these costs and this affects the holistic checkup of your new baby before you are discharged' (Chimanga, DRC),'

Taking this narrative further, some participants were dissatisfied that they could not access specific medical services from accredited private health providers. The health provider stated that their student medical insurance does not cover certain services like surgery. Some ISA participants also echoed that only cheap drugs are given to them when they visit private health providers when they are sick. The view of the participant below indicates his unhappiness. Expressing his dissatisfaction, Gbenga (Nigeria, FGD1) ^[16] revealed:

'I visited the optician when I wanted to change my eyeglasses. The doctor said I could not have a specific eye glass because the cost of the eye glasses is not covered in my monthly student health insurance'.

The quote above reveals that inability to access the correct spectacles would obviously impact the student's ability to complete his work towards the PhD timeously.

An ISA Participant 1 ^[17] remarked how he later found out when he needed urgent treatment that the medical cover was inadequate:

'Momentum Health Insurance is fraudulent because it does not cover some medical bills when I was sick or needed medical services...When I was involved in an accident and

¹⁶ FGD1 means that Gbenga was part of the FGD and was the first speaker

¹⁷ ISA is an acronym for the international student Association. Hence ISA1 was participants at the International Students Association Dialogue and was first interviewed

needed surgery, the health provider said my medical health insurance is insufficient for that' (ISA participant 1).

Due to the limited medical services, which international students can access, and their dissatisfaction with the medical insurance cover, a participant queried:

'Do we have to make use of just these two medical companies. International PhD students should get value for their money' (ISA Participant 3).

By contrast, Abidemi (Nigeria, FGD3) had a divergent view explaining the positive role that Momentum health insurance played when an international PhD student died. *She cited the case of a first-year international PhD student who was her flat mate died at an off-campus residence. She also mentioned how costly repatriating the body was to Nigeria. She explained that because of the cost [R, 50,000] of repatriating the body, the deceased student's family in Nigeria suggested that the deceased student should be buried in South Africa and then Momentum health insurance decided to pay for repatriation to Nigeria.*

It must be noted that representatives of Momentum were absent at the ISA dialogue despite the executives of the International Students Association having invited the representatives of Momentum Medical insurance to the ISA dialogue. Due to the absence of representatives of Momentum Health Insurance ^[18] at the ISA dialogue, ISA Participant 3 remarked that:

'If they [Momentum health Insurance] were serious, are they not supposed to be here? They are only interested in our money...only money they know how to collect'.

The above perspectives indicate that having student medical insurance minimizes the burden of medical costs in case of unexpected illnesses while studying.

¹⁸ It needs to be reiterated that data was gathered at the ISA dialogue, as earlier mentioned in chapter four. In attendance at the dialogue were the UKZN international student officers. Representatives from momentum medical insurance were also expected to be at the dialogue, however, they were absent. Their absence infuriated attendees (international undergraduate students, international postgraduate students and international PhD students).

5.2.3.1.3. Experiences with UKZN International Students' Office [ISO]

The study found that the International Students Office (ISO) is the focal point of contact providing support for international PhD students. The ISO duties include clearance of international PhD students to allow them to register at UKZN. Also, the ISO guides international students before departing from their home country and arriving at UKZN. The findings also indicate that international PhD students were not satisfied with the International Student Office services, as revealed in the interviews, FGD and International Students Dialogue. Some of the issues raised by the participants from the ISA and FGD was that *'ISO does not understand international students' challenges because if they do [ISO], they will not maltreat international students'*. Some participants shared unpleasant experiences of clearance and registration linked to the attitude of ISO staff.

A vast majority of students-75% (n=12) rated the International Student Office (ISO) negatively on the support structure for international students. Vimbai (FGD4, Zimbabwe) indicated that staff at the UKZN International Student Office [ISO] are insensitive to the plight of international PhD students' especially accommodation needs, because they [ISO] focus more on their compliance to study permit conditions.

'In some universities, the International Student Office assists International students with accommodation and aid visa application process. In UKZN, the focus of the International Student Office is just study permit compliance' (Vimbai, FGD4, Zimbabwe).

Apart from the costs of accommodation, there is insufficient accommodation. As expressed by the ISA Participant 1:

'Part of our grievances is the lack of international students' accommodation... 60% of upfront payment for campus accommodation is required'.

The ISA participants also raised the issue of airport pick-ups for international PhD students when they arrived in South Africa as new first-year PhD students. ISA participant 2 reiterated the importance of UKZN to arrange an airport pick-up for new international first-year PhD students on arrival because some students are entering South Africa for the first time. The ISA participant 2 explained

‘I don’t know of any case whereby an international PhD student is picked up on arrival at the airport especially coming to a place you do not know’.

According to ISA participant 3, there appears to be a racial disparity in how European international PhD students are treated compared to African students.

‘There is a disparity between international PhD students from Europe and those from Africa...international PhD students from Europe are well received and picked up at the airport by the international student office, not those from Africa’.

In response to these remarks by international students during the ISA dialogue, a representative from the international students’ office provided a detailed explanation:

‘International PhD students from Europe are more specific on the date of their arrival that is why they are picked up, unlike international PhD students from Africa who are not specific, or in instances whereby arrangements have been made they would decide their friends would pick them’ (ISO Representative).

Shade (FGD3, Nigeria) questioned the roles of the ISO and commented on their poor communication with students:

‘I expect more from them [International Student Office] ... Is their [ISO] duty only international student clearance? ...their communication is poor...it is now they have international student whatsapp group...this is because one of the newly recruited personnel is a young person’.

Mukwege (FGD4, DRC) opines on the roles of the ISO stating that:

‘It seems they [ISO] focus more on clearance for the purpose of international students’ clearance for registration which is below their internationalization purpose. There is a low response towards the facilitation of a student visa. When a student visa is delayed at the Embassy... what is the information given to new students.’

Amos (Zimbabwe) an international PhD student who also works at the UKZN international student

office at the Howard campus, explained how the change in registration policy affects the students who arrive in the second semester:

'...With the new UKZN policy now whereby international PhD students who arrive in the second semester cannot register ...in cases like this, we [international student office] send a message to the LAN Manager who does not want to register these students in the second semester. This was not the case before... this is creating problems for me and I cannot clear such students'.

The findings reveal that some newly arrived first-year international PhD students are unaware of being unable to register in the second semester due to late arrival, which puts them in limbo. Because of how international students are treated at UKZN, Lekan (Nigeria) emphasized that

'There is a mismatch because the students are valuable to the institution in multiple ways. This should not be so because international PhD students' research contributes to research output and ranking... Also considering the quest for internationalization, international PhD students are important.'

Findings indicate that the ISO staff capacity also affects the quality of ISO services. The ISO staff explained that the ISO has insufficient staff because three staff work at the five UKZN campuses. The ISO also mentioned that the International Students Association [ISA] works closely with the ISO.

'The ISA across the five UKZN has not been functional except for the PMB campus, so we're making a plan to revive it'.

The participants were explicit about improvement in the services provided by the International Student Office's because international PhD students are not on the same footing as local PhD students in terms of availability of opportunities. The ISA participants emphasized:

'We need more programs for international students, not only UKZN international students' day and orientation week'.

5.2.4. International PhD Students' Experiences at UKZN: Academic Experiences

This section discusses the prominent first-year academic experiences of international students.

These comprise the supervisory relationships and first-year PhD proposal writing. This is unpacked in the following section. This is unpacked in the following section.

5.2.4.1. Supervisory Relationship

The study found that the supervisory relationship between PhD supervisors and their PhD students could be a positive or negative experience during the first-year PhD program. A supervisory relationship is crucial for two reasons. Firstly, one of the push factors, which propelled international PhD students to exit their home country, alludes to the lack of sufficient expert supervisors. Secondly, a supervisor is also one of the determining factors in the timely completion of a PhD. The finding also shows that the supervisor's expertise on the PhD topic and experience with PhD supervision is valuable to PhD students during their PhD journey. The supervisor's role includes feedback on the PhD dissertation, support and guidance.

Few students-18.7 % (n=3), expressed how the supervisory relationship affects the timely completion of a PhD. Olabode (Nigeria), an international student at the Howard campus, described how some departments like International Affairs and the Public Cluster do not have sufficient lecturers to supervise PhD students. He explains that some lecturers have resigned to work at other South African universities or relocated to another country. Due to this, PhD students are supervised by lecturers who are not experts in the field. He cites an example of his colleague who is researching political science but supervised by an academic in anthropology. Olabode (Nigeria) emphasized that his PhD is progressing slowly because of his supervisor's attitude; the supervisor delays in sending feedback timeously on the chapters for his dissertation. Olabode (Nigeria) explained:

'I started my PhD programme in 2014 as a full-time student...By 2016, I went for field study and gathered my data... did the analysis but my supervisor does not give feedback timely...she is either sick or busy....when she resigned from the school and relocated back to her country, it was difficult seeing her...getting feedback...I was frustrated and do not know what to do...I sought advice from the academic leader...yet she kept playing politics

that my work is not up to standard...At a point, the college said they will deregister me...although my supervisor assisted me with funds from her research code annually...She also assisted me with funding when I went to gather data...I am tired of registering at UKZN yearly for her to read my work’.

Another participant also explained:

‘My supervisor does not have time for me because he has much responsibility as the academic research chair and acting Head of Department, he does not send back my work on time’ (Lekan Nigeria).

Other participants (Daraki, Zimbabwe; Chimanga, DRC) shared a similar concern with Olabode (ISI5, Nigeria) regarding their experiences with their supervisor and their supervisory relationship experiences. They stated that their supervisors were experts but they were too busy to read their work. They also pointed out that they had disagreements with their supervisors about their PhD in areas such as the research methodology, which led to a change in supervisors. Daraki (Zimbabwe) echoed that he changed supervisors twice because of the supervisor’s attitude. The supervisor’s attitude in this context comprised a delay in feedback on the PhD thesis. Commenting on the supervisory relationship, Abidemi (Nigeria) mentioned that her supervisor assisted her with information before she arrived at UKZN. She commented on pre-arrival interactions with her supervisor,

‘I was well-received by my supervisor through an exchange of mail before coming to UKZN from my home country’ (Abidemi, Nigeria).

I probed Abidemi (Nigeria) further about what she meant by being ‘*well-received*’ by her supervisor through an exchange mail’. She explained that the content of the mail she received from her supervisor was encouraging because her supervisor provided all the information needed on accommodation when she received admission into UKZN despite still being in her home country.

On the contrary, Vimbai (Zimbabwe) stated that:

‘My PhD supervisor was the person who supervised me during my Master’s programme at UKZN and into PhD level... Our supervisory relationship was not cordial because of the limited expertise on my PhD topic by my supervisor ... he was not admitting that he was not knowledgeable on the topic, he later advised me to find another supervisor, which is ridiculous after the number of years and time I have wasted’.

A different view was expressed by Mukwege (DRC) who highlighted the disadvantage of been supervised by a professor. Mukwege (DRC) expressed sarcastically:

‘I do not like to be supervised by a professor. When supervisors newly become Dr [PhD holder], they are eager to supervise students because they want to rise to the top... along the line when they become a prof., they [supervisors] find it hard to attend to you and complain so much about your work... there is minimal contact... no feedback... you cannot report them to school authority because they always have a way, they defend themselves... excuse for not giving you feedback’.

The above comments and complaints by the participants indicate the tenuous nature of supervision and how it can lead to negative outcomes for timeous PhD completion. A cordial supervisory relationship with adequate supervision expertise contributes to a positive PhD experience and a timely PhD graduation of international students.

5.2.4.2. First-Year PhD Proposal Writing

More than half of the participants, 56.1% (n=9), mentioned that the first-year PhD was challenging for them, notably writing the PhD proposal. The participants explained that drafting a PhD proposal in the first year was challenging and, in a way, it lengthened the time frame in years required for the timely completion of their PhD programme. According to Amos (Zimbabwe),

‘In the first-year PhD programme, you are trying to find your feet... Writing a PhD proposal is difficult because nobody shows you... In other countries such as Brazil, you undertake a course to specialize in research which enhances your writing skills... you have to work as a teaching Assistant to enhance your experience’.

Participants from the DRC expressed that writing a proposal for a dissertation is an arduous task for international students from French-speaking countries (DRC) because English is not their native language.

‘Speaking and writing in French are different from English...Sometimes when writing, I write in French firstly, then convert to English...’ (Mukwege, DRC).

Vimbai (Zimbabwe) explained that,

‘The first year was challenging because your brain is blank... As a PhD, you do not know what you are expected to do. For the six months, I wasted time because I did not know how to go about writing it (proposal) because you are unsure what is expected of you’.

Masimba (Zimbabwe) had a different view:

‘As a continuing student from Masters to PhD in UKZN, I am used to the environment and part of the UKZN community... Although despite that I was used to the UKZN system, I had challenges in the first year in terms of the research proposal. The topic I chose was to be researched in my country, Zimbabwe. I had to redo it... for 6 months I wasted time on it’.

Gbenga (Nigeria) opined on the process of writing a research proposal only to be rejected by a prospective supervisor based on firstly the phenomenon in the proposal, which did not match her research strengths and later her view of plagiarism in the proposal:

‘Before I was admitted to UKZN, in the search for a prospective supervisor, my prospective supervisor asked me to write a research proposal... I wrote the research proposal twice because the topic did not fit her research areas... later she (supervisor) told me she could not supervise me again because of plagiarism in my work. It was frustrating because I had to look for another supervisor for six months before being assigned a supervisor after writing another proposal’.

Blessing (Nigeria) compared her research training at a university in Nigeria to that at UKZN, praising the PhD cohort system:

‘The Masters training programme in Nigeria do not prepare you adequately enough to conduct research...in my first year PhD, there were challenges with finding literature,

references and paraphrasing termed as plagiarism.... The PhD Cohort PhD training greatly assisted me to address this issues’.

Equally, the participants’ perspectives suggest that poor proficiency of the English language could negatively affect writing a PhD proposal and chapters of the dissertation in the first year. Participants’ narratives from the DRC indicate reasons countries like Canada, UK, Australia and the USA require international students to have TOEFL as a requirement for admission to gauge their English language proficiency. The participants echoed that they attended seminars, conferences and research boot camps organized by UKZN, which helped them with their PhD proposal writing, plagiarism and data analysis. The participants consider such training as a positive experience. The overview suggests that the English language is essential for writing and presenting a PhD proposal and successfully writing a PhD dissertation.

5.2.5. Challenges Encountered by International PhD Students at UKZN

Discursive positionality had relevance for the international students: in respect of the following hurdles in their socio-economic adjustment: accommodation, finance, language and discrimination.

5.2.5.1. Financial Challenges

I examined their financial challenges to explore how international PhD students finance their PhD programme, cope with the living costs in South Africa, and access whether they receive any form of scholarship in addition to fee remission. The majority, 81.3% (n=13) of participants, were full-time students who benefitted from fee remission. The participants remarked that UKZN’s fee remission during the first three years of the PhD relieved them financially. Yet, some participants (31.2%, n=5), indicated that the financial challenge was the most prominent challenge during the first-year PhD because they are self-funded. This alludes to a lack of funding from their home country. Notably, some of the participants (31.2%, n=5) who were married with children expressed that fee remission is insufficient to take care of their daily expenses like paying rent, renewal of the study permit, and their annual medical insurance.

Expressing his concern about financial challenges, Masimba (Zimbabwe) noted that initially, he

received financial support from his parent for his living costs until he was financially stable to support himself by working as a tutor at UKZN. Masimba (Zimbabwe) explained that:

‘The living cost as an international PhD student is quite challenging because there is no funding from the school (UKZN) except the Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVC) postgraduate bursary that I was awarded once’.

Furaha (Malawi) also remarked about the end of this funding instrument:

‘Even the Deputy Vice Chancellor’s postgraduate bursary is no longer available anymore because the recent advertisement of the DVC’s funding has a clause that only permanent residents and South Africans should apply’.

Commenting on financial challenges, Blessing (Nigeria), who was registered as a part-time student, expressed her regret about applying for fee remission late:

‘It would have been easy if I had fee remission; I once registered as a part-time PhD student and later changed to a full-time student. The postgraduate officer said I could not have fee remission because the fee remission form is usually filled in the first year of PhD programme... I took a loan to pursue this study and I am still paying back this loan...I also have children in university ...one of my children is also studying at the undergraduate level in Engineering at UKZN... paying the tuition fees and accommodation fee is quite expensive’.

Mukwege (DRC) opined how being an international student equated to reduced funding:

‘As a refugee, there are no finances. Although, when I started the PhD, there was a loan to study, in 2013, they stopped it. As a postgraduate student, the PhD is demanding while our other colleagues from South Africa are funded, I am not because I am not a South African... Although at the institutional level (UKZN), there is a bursary but it’s only for South African’.

The participants also noted that they work part-time to survive and to adequately support themselves while studying due to the lack of funding. Given that two of the participants were in the fourth year (n=1, 6.3%) and fifth year (n=1, 6.3%) of the PhD, their fee remission has lapsed,

requiring them to pay their own fees. Olabode (Nigeria) is one such student:

'I have been doing part-time student jobs (tutor, contract marking) in UKZN to survive'.

Chimanga (DRC) mentioned the following in this regard;

'No single funding for refugee ... access to funding. Although my supervisor helped me in the Department with a lecturing position. Lecturing is the only support I have. The way we (international PhD students) are treated is not good'.

The participants also mentioned that the financial challenge is enormous because of payment for medical health insurance. Participants noted that age affects research funding and scholarships offered to international PhD students. Amos (ISI0) voiced that,

'Age affects funding...if you are above age 35, your chance of funding is limited'.

International students with insufficient finances shared how they would request an allowance from their family members in their home country or partake in part-time jobs to survive in the host country. Also, they mentioned that UKZN does not offer adequate financial support to international PhD students compared to local PhD students.

In this regard, Aagha (Kenya) elucidated that

'The bursary and scholarships are reserved for local students, very little is approved for international students'.

Chinasa (Nigeria) explains the reasons for limited funding for international students at UKZN,

'It appears that UKZN depends on government funding.... other universities have research centres that usually attract funding for students'.

5.2.5.2. Inability to Communicate in isiZulu

The ability to speak in the host country's local language (isiZulu in South Africa) affects international PhD students in terms of their experiences. Explaining the importance of the isiZulu language in South Africa, especially in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, Chimanga (DRC), mentioned that he was initially unaware of the impact of the isiZulu language on his PhD:

'Do you know that the University of KwaZulu-Natal's policy is prioritizing isiZulu as one of the means of teaching students....do you also know that because of this same isiZulu policy, your PhD abstract and certain introductory part of your PhD dissertation would

be written in isiZulu...my supervisor told me this already’.

The participants divulged that they had negative experiences during their first-year because of their inability to communicate in the isiZulu language. The participants mentioned that their inability to converse in the isiZulu language restricted them from making local friends in their attempts at acculturation, accessing employment, and accessing public social services in the community in South Africa. Shade (Nigeria) revealed that the language barrier affected her ability to communicate and make friends with the locals. Shade (Nigeria) revealed:

‘Sometimes it is difficult to make friends with students on campus, particularly South Africans... They [South African students] would be speaking in English language but later switch to their dialect [isiZulu language]’

The participants’ negative experiences due to inability to communicate in the isiZulu Language is discussed in-depth below. This is the isiZulu Language: a barrier to adaptation and accessing social services.

5.2.5.2. (a). The isiZulu Language: A barrier to adaptation?

Shade (Nigeria) hinted that the inability to speak the isiZulu language is not a language barrier at the UKZN campus because the English language is the communication medium. She also stated that despite the English language being the communication medium at UKZN, local students preferred to speak in their home language. However, she emphasized that the language barrier affected her ability to communicate with the locals, especially when she goes shopping. Shade (Nigeria) revealed:

‘Sometimes it is difficult to communicate in the market... haggling [bargaining] prices of goods... You do not understand this...It is embarrassing telling them [locals] you do not understand what they are saying...’

‘I struggled to understand the language [isiZulu], this compelled me to stay in the Durban city centre, which is quite expensive in terms of accommodation. People in Durban city centre communicate more in English than in the township’ (Mukwege, DRC).

Furaha (Malawi) expressed that,

'International students from SADC could live in these areas [township]¹⁹... KwaMashu and Lamontville because they have knowledge of basic isiZulu... but coupled with xenophobia which starts from these areas, I would rather live on campuses.

Furaha's (Malawi) suggests that fear of living in the township exists because xenophobia usually starts in the township. Furaha (Malawi) is also concerned about his safety.

Blessing (Nigeria) articulated that although she does communicate with the local students,

'I make friends with people from my home country because we understand ourselves...I do talk with other South Africans...We meet at research commons and conferences...I know the basic isiZulu greetings ...'

Aagha (Kenya) also expressed the effect of being unable to speak in the isiZulu language on social adjustment,

'Inability to communicate in the isiZulu Language, especially in the community level affects integration... because to integrate into the community you should speak the local dialect or it creates a barrier in the community'.

Furaha (Malawi) claimed that his inability to speak isiZulu was because the language is not an international language like French. Furaha (Malawi) echoed that,

'I do not have interest in learning isiZulu because it does not have international benefit, except only on the local level. If it were an international language I could use in France, I would then learn the language' (Furaha, Malawi).

The responses suggest that international students who cannot speak in isiZulu resort to making

¹⁹ Donaldson (2014); Pettman, (1913). In South Africa, township is an underdeveloped and racially segregated urban area that were reserved for non-whites, namely Indians, Africans, and Coloureds, from the late nineteenth century until the end of apartheid. Townships were typically built on the outskirts of towns. Also, large informal settlements sometimes surround townships. These areas have not greatly desegregated in democratic South Africa.

friends with fellow international students of the same origin because they speak the same language.

5.2.5.2.(b). The isiZulu Language as a Barrier to accessing Social Services

The participants divulged that their inability to converse in isiZulu affected securing accommodation, buying groceries at the local market, limiting their chances of job opportunities that require isiZulu speakers, and accessing public services [boarding public transport, help at public hospitals]. For example, Abidemi (Nigeria) described how the inability to converse in isiZulu affected medical services in a public hospital in Durban. Abidemi stated that when she was pregnant and attended the antenatal unit in a public hospital in Durban, she could not understand the nurses who spoke in isiZulu.

‘Whenever I told them (nurses) I don’t comprehend and asked them for an interpretation ... they (nurses) say this is Zulu land, you need to learn and speak isiZulu...’ Even when I asked other pregnant women to interpret what the nurses were saying, they acted dumb and said nothing...’ (Abidemi, Nigeria).

Speaking on his experience of commuting via public transportation, Damilola (Nigeria) commented:

‘I have reduced taking public transport called ‘kombi- taxi’ because of the fear of being mugged... I rather take Uber and Taxify... sometimes when you are on the bus, when the other passengers know you are a foreigner when you request for your balance or you want to ‘jump off’ [alight] when you get to your destination bus stop, they laugh at you because you cannot call or know this bus stop, in isiZulu.... when I just entered South Africa newly during my first year, I almost got lost because the driver did not take me to the correct bus stop.’

Aagha (Kenya) shared similar views with Damilola (Nigeria) on his experience of commuting within South Africa. Aagha (Kenya) revealed that,

‘I have had bad experiences in these public transport... When you enter a public bus and pay your transport fare ...all passengers contribute their fares and send the transport fare to the driver, some passengers do not pay their fare... on the way to Pietermaritzburg on a

particular evening, the driver packed halfway and said he was not going again because the fare is incomplete...because I do not understand Zulu the driver said I need to 'jump off' because I did not pay the transport fares which I did... I had to pay another fare (R70) because of fear and my safety...because of these bad experiences, I usually hand over my money to the driver myself because I do not want stories.'

This suggests that international students who are not proficient in the local language, 'isiZulu', are limited in fully participating in the local communities. They are also concerned about xenophobia. Due to the language barrier, the process of social integration is limited because international students restrict where they visit. This hindered their acclimatization and integration into their host community. This also affects the relationship between locals and international students.

5.2.5.3. Accommodation Challenges

Findings reveal that accommodation (where they will live, if it is a safe, affordable environment) is an essential component of an international students' experience in the host country. Student visa applications at the South African Embassy require proof of student accommodation as expressed by participants (Shade, Nigeria; Olabode, Nigeria). The study found that international PhD students had challenges during the search for accommodation because of financial challenges and the language barrier. In terms of how financial challenges aggravated accommodation challenges, Furaha (Malawi) stated that,

'Renting is expensive in Durban, because my country's currency is different, and exchange rate to rands... in my first year, I slept in the research LAN and library because I had no place to stay... not that I was conducting any research... but I have nowhere to sleep'.

Furaha (Malawi) also echoed that his friends could not help him because they shared flats to minimize expenses. Equally, Olabode (Nigeria) shared his experience of how the language barrier affected him during his search for accommodation.

'Once they (landlord) hear your voice when you call that you need to rent accommodation you saw the advert online...they say it's taken...some will say bring a three-month bank

statement, proof of income...where will I get all these documents as a new student...'
(Olabode, Nigeria).

The participants echoed that accommodation challenge escalate because of their migration status as a 'foreigner'. Numerous participants, 68.7% (n=11) mentioned that they live off-campus, while the remaining 31.2% (n=5) live on-campus. A sweeping generalization amongst the participants suggest that 'accommodation of international PhD students is not prioritized by UKZN and the most neglected needs'. The participants that live off-campus reside in different residential areas of KwaZulu-Natal, such as Pinetown, Amanzimtoti, Durban CBD (Central Business District) as, Glenwood, Glenmore, Berea, city life and Durban Harbor. Also, off-campus has different accommodation types, such as communal houses, self-contained bachelor flats and bedroom apartments. Some participants live off-campus in residences called 'City Life apartments' where they share the kitchen and bathroom with other occupants. 'City Life apartments' do not allow guest sleepovers; if an overnight guest is allowed, it is at an additional cost per day.

Similarly, responses from the participants reveal that the rationale for living on-campus alludes to access to UKZN Wi-Fi and concentration on conducting research. Living on-campus also saved international students transportation fares commuting. Factors such as the cost of accommodation, ensuring their safety, availability of UKZN on-campus student hostels, marital status and closeness to the social network also influenced where international PhD students choose to reside.

The section below discusses factors that influence the choice of renting accommodation, namely, the rental cost of accommodation, safety, limited availability of specific services on-campus, marital status and closeness to the social network.

5.2.5.3. (a) Rental: Cost of Accommodation

The cost of accommodation (rental) influences where international PhD students live, either off-campus or on-campus. International students who decided to live off-campus expressed that it is 'cheaper living off-campus than living on-campus' (Aagha, Kenya). Viewing the price of UKZN accommodation in the light of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's international student's handbook (2016, p.3) suggests the following prices. On-campus accommodation costs R23, 500 per year, while off-campus accommodation costs R25 892 per year. UKZN students are charged about R28 818 per year for accommodation, including a mattress, desk, chair and eight toilet paper rolls per month (Sun Newspaper, 2018). Accommodation during school holidays on-campus costs R84 per

day (UKZN, 2016). It also appears that the challenge of student accommodation is not limited only to international students at UKZN; local students are also affected by this challenge. The unavailability of a UKZN student hostel is one of the triggers of the repeated 'Fees Must Fall' protests.

Similarly, international students chose to live off-campus because they could share the monthly rent costs with their flatmates by residing together. Chinasa (Nigeria), who lives in a 2-bedroom apartment with her husband and a child, expressed that she is 'flat-sharing' because of rental costs.

'In my home country we are not familiar with flat sharing... but to save costs and reduce rent cost, we have to share by adapting...when I first came to South Africa before my husband joined me, I shared a flat with a roommate in a student apartment block...I moved out to the city life accommodation because it is easier getting accommodation there...not much documentation is required...just that I am not comfortable going to the kitchen outside my room and the toilet late at night...to enter the building you need security thumb access ...even if my friends come to visit...they will use their thumb...I did not like there...I move to an apartment sharing in a two-bedroom flat...the first neighbour has children and they are dirty and leave the dirty plates in the kitchen...when another flatmate came he died in the flat...this affected me because I am scared of staying in the room...I am looking for another apartment ' (Chinasa, Nigeria).

Daraki (Zimbabwe), who shares a similar concern with Chinasa (Nigeria) stated that:

'Flat-sharing is not conducive because you sometimes share a flat with a roommate whose way of life is different from yours... He womanises At times some flatmates do not pay the utility bill (electricity) and this makes the Municipality disconnect your lights'.

Lekan (Nigeria) stated that:

'There is no funding from the National Research Foundation [NRF] so I have to go to town and share a flat ...in such situation, you are forced to adjust'.

Amos (Zimbabwe) revealed: *'I don't have NRF, so I cannot live on campus.*

'I am self-funded and owe some debt in my home country, at a point I do not have

accommodation ... I squat around with friends’.

Blessing (Nigeria) shared that rental cost is high in the host country when compared to his home country;

‘Some off-campus apartment in a flat sharing 3-bedroom is R2, 200 per month...in Nigeria currency (naira) this equates to fifty thousand naira (50, 000) depending on the exchange rate from rand to naira... this could be used to pay one-year house rent for a room in some area in my home country-Nigeria’.

Mukwege (DRC) also indicated that his parents initially assisted him with money for paying his house rent during his first year until he was self-reliant by working as a tutor in UKZN.

‘At the initial stage, my parent assisted me with money for rent until I became self-supported... No funding from school [UKZN] except the Deputy Vice Chancellor’s [DVCs] bursary that was paid once only’.

Blessing (Nigeria) also stated that she lives on-campus and she was able to secure on-campus residence at the Edgewood campus through her supervisor’s help. Blessing (Nigeria) mentioned that her supervisor provided her with the relevant information on how to rent accommodation. Thus, there may be ways to access accommodation, but it depends on who is knowledgeable. For example, some supervisors may be able to facilitate international students securing accommodation.

5.2.5.3. (b) Safety Concerns and the Selection of Accommodation

Safety considerations also influence the selection of accommodation. Safety is one of the reasons international PhD students choose to live on-campus. There was consensus amongst the participants on the importance of safety at on-campus residences, given the wave of protests that usually resulted in disruption and chaos. The ‘Fees must Fall’ protest is one such protest that has been occurring annually at UKZN in recent years. It affects international PhD students that live on-campus because their safety is compromised. Daraki (Zimbabwe) points out that during one of the ‘Fees must Fall’ protests, the Vice-Chancellor (VC) gave a directive that all students vacate the school hostel because of safety concerns. Due to the VC’s communiqué that all students vacate

the hostel, participants in the study queried, “what happens to international PhD students who do not have friends or anywhere to go?”

Olabode (Nigeria, FGD5) cites how the ‘Fees must Fall’ protest affects safety perception amongst international PhD students. He cites an example of his friend who was a newly registered first-year student at UKZN who got an offer to study in Australia despite being registered at UKZN for a PhD in the first -year. He also cites how the ASUU strike²⁰ in his home country [Nigeria] propelled his friend to come to UKZN for study purposes. However, upon getting to South Africa and witnessing student protests, this discouraged him from completing his degree at UKZN. The following excerpts from some participants illustrate the effect of the ‘Fees must Fall’ and its link to students’ safety.

Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe) emphasized:

‘When some students threw a stone at me on Edgewood campus, and I reported this to the Risk Management System, they said we could not guarantee your safety... and when such issue occurs, management is usually quiet about it’.

Masimba (FGD2, Zimbabwe) who lived on-campus mentioned that he previously lived on campus before deciding to live off-campus. He also noted that the decision to live off-campus was attributed to a negative experience at on-campus ‘res’ (res is a word for student residence or hostel).

Vimbai (FGD4, Zimbabwe) indicated that crime impacted his choice of residence;

‘At first, I stayed in school hostel, I had a bad experience when my laptops were stolen three times. I was forced to move to another residence where the security was also bad’.

The participants also mentioned that campus crime is linked to safety. International PhD students that live off-campus pointed out that living off-campus also makes them susceptible to crime.

²⁰ ASUU strike is a friction between the Academic Staff Union of Universities and the federal government of Nigeria. ASUU Strike is caused by poor lecturers' salaries and non-payment of salary arrears by the government.

'It is risky going out at night and going around...there is fear that you may be robbed...'
(Damilola, Nigeria).

Due to crime, the participants also mentioned that they chose to pay a high rental price for accommodation in areas with a low crime rate because such areas are perceived as safe. They also mentioned that the calibre of people living in the neighbourhood is important. Olabode, (FGD5, Nigeria) shared;

'I am married with kids and don't mind paying high rent...If an area has residents that are mostly working-class people... less crime ... if an area has unemployed youths, there is a tendency for high crime rate...In areas such as Chesterville- Mayville, a room is 700rand ... in areas as Umlazi also rooms cost 600 rands. There is high crime rate...living in these areas has many South Africans. They will easily know you are foreigners... because you cannot speak the language and you could be easily attacked...'

Once again, the fear of xenophobia is evident in the articulations of the participants.

5.2.5.3. (c) Limited Availability of specific services on-campus Hostel

The limited availability of specific services on-campus hostel is also a key consideration in the selection of accommodation. Participants who live on-campus mentioned that the decision to live off-campus was because of limited shops on the UKZN campus to purchase 'stuff' [daily needs, grocery] and specific services [hair cut]. They articulated that UKZN on campus hostels in Howard and Edgewood do not have shops where they could purchase groceries or access certain services like 'cutting your hair'. Participants from Howard Campus mentioned travelling a long distance to the Durban CBD to buy goods and services. However, participants from the Howard campus highlighted that such services have improved because local students are now setting up businesses on campus after the 'Fees Must Fall' protests of 2019 to support themselves while studying. As stated by Damilola (Nigeria),

'As a Bachelor, I feel like eating my home country recipes like jollof rice and other delicacies. This type of food is not sold on campus...I am tired of eating starchy food like ...bread...MacDonald...'

'I have to go to Durban CBD to have a haircut' (Gbenga, Nigeria).

In contrast, Masimba (Zimbabwe) stated that navigating can be in the following way:

'Living on-campus and other UKZN off-campus hostel is beneficial because even after you pay UKZN residence deposit... if you do not have your monthly rent you can pay when you have by owing rent in arrears, but the disadvantage of owing is that if you have any funding it would be deducted which could be painful'.

Blessing (Nigeria) opined on the value of living in the Durban CBD in terms of accessing multiple services and her social network.

'I like to live in Durban CBD because I will see my friends and go to church, staying in the school hostel, you have to come to town to make your hair or even come to buy groceries... After all, some of these facilities are not on campus and are far from the campuses.'

5.2.5.3. (d) Living in Close proximity to the Social Network

Responses from the participants reveal that international PhD students selected accommodation based on their social network's advice and the need to be close to their family/friends-social network. Notably, the ISA participants also expressed that renting accommodation can be difficult for international students, especially renting accommodation from outside the country. They allude to a limited understanding of a country's legal procedure for renting and not being present to view properties. They also pointed out that securing accommodation outside the county is aggravated by rental scams targeting international students. They also echoed that their social network advised them about the neighbourhood to rent accommodation because they are aware of safe areas.

For instance, Furaha (Malawi), who lives off-campus, indicates that:

'Securing accommodation is very difficult in Durban, so I had to stay with my friend for some days before finally moving to my place(apartment)'.

Another participant (Lekan, Nigeria) articulated that his social network (friend) did not like living with newly arrived international students from his home country because of previous negative experiences.

‘My friend told me this that...when you help international students as a new comer to stay with you pending when they rent their house ... some (international students) equate the Nigerian currency to South Africa rand...comparing the difference in the exchange rate to house rent in rands to their home currency...some would want to squat with you and not move anymore to their own space...I once squatted a friend, he refused to leave ...in the South Africa housing law you cannot evict anybody like that without the Sheriff’s authorisation ...so nobody wants a problem..’ (Lekan, Nigeria).

The ‘squatter’ in Lekan’s (Nigeria) statement means a friend who temporarily lives/shares a flat with him without paying rental or contributing to utilities.

5.2.5.3. (e) Marital Status

The participants described the effect of marital status on living in ‘on-campus’ accommodation and it was evident that being married placed certain restrictions on the choice of accommodation. Lekan (Nigeria) mentioned that:

‘My wife and I are PhD students with children. We cannot reside in an on-campus hostel’.

Amos, (FGD6, Zimbabwe) also articulated:

‘Before, I was living on campus when I was single but now living off-campus because I am now married’.

Commenting on the link between marital status and accommodation, Furaha (Malawi) mentioned,

‘Renting accommodation in town –the CBD is not easy because most agents and landlords have stringent conditions and rules before letting out the house for you...some landlords say no children allowed ... they only want a couple...’

Olabode (FGD5, Nigeria) expressed,

‘I came with my family as a married man ...school policy does not allow living on ‘res’ (residence) because of the perception their children will be shouting’.

The participants' perspectives suggest that marital status significantly impacts international students' living arrangements and lifestyle.

5.2.5.4. Discrimination – ‘Only South Africans Should Apply’

The study found that international PhD students experience discrimination at UKZN. Most participants admitted that they indirectly experienced discrimination at UKZN in various forms. Such included admission policies, student jobs, funded PhD training/workshops, dignified salaries and postgraduate funding. Such exclusion demeans international students because they ‘feel like outsiders’ (Olabode, FGD5, Nigeria).

‘Discrimination is unwritten UKZN policies and institutionalised policies’ (Vimbai, Zimbabwe).

Vimbai (FGD4, Zimbabwe) mentioned that discrimination manifests subtly during communications with a few South African colleagues. Vimbai (GD4) express:

‘UKZN staff and students ask me when do you want to return to your country...this is baffling because I have won many awards for UKZN internationally.’

5.2.5.4. (a) Discrimination: UKZN’s Admission Policy

The finding suggests that discrimination manifests in UKZN admission policy. Olabode (Nigeria)) exemplifies that:

‘Discrimination comes in different forms as xenophobia that comes through bias... it starts when you get a UKZN admission letter that states that international students should not take the place of South African students... this is not good for internationalisation’.

This indicates that the admissions process for international PhD students differs from that of local South African applicants. Also, South African applicants would be prioritized and admitted before international PhD students are considered.

5.2.5.4. (b) Exclusion from Funded PhD Training, Seminars and Workshops

Findings reveal that participants were dissatisfied with their exclusion from specific funded PhD training, seminars and workshops, which can improve their research skills. Nevertheless, the participants mentioned that they benefitted from other UKZN PhD workshops and the PhD Cohort. Few of the participants, 12.5% (n=2), were lecturers and emphasized that the research skills gained

from training would have equipped them to supervise postgraduate students. While some participants also indicated that after they graduate, they intend to work in academia as lecturers and take up research jobs as post-doctoral candidates; hence such training would have been beneficial. The participants emphasized that the rigors of a PhD like conducting research, conducting literature reviews and publishing in journals, equips them with research skills. The quotes from participants reveal the benefit of attending PhD training.

Olabode (FGD5, Nigeria)) articulated,

‘From the research skills garnered during the PhD, I would be able to contribute to any country I find myself as a researcher, post-doc or lecturer’.

Similarly, Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe) shared:

‘The PhD training taught me how to analyse data’

Abidemi (ISI2, Nigeria) stated:

‘When I attended the PhD Cohort, I learnt how to address plagiarism and the proper way to reference’.

The participants explained that when specific training like seminars and workshops are free, ‘the clause applies that all are welcome’. As Gbenga (FGD, Nigeria) echoed,

‘We all know that when events like workshops are organised, and nobody comes, it is not successful’.

The participants also echoed that they were excluded from specific funded training that will improve their professional development. Blessing (Nigeria)) succinctly explained:

‘The exclusion of international PhDs from funded workshops is not right and sends a wrong message to the international student...it passes the wrong message that we [international PhD] are not wanted and are outsiders.’

Aagha (Kenya) mentioned how he was excluded from the University Capacity Development Plan (UCDP) despite being a contract lecturer at UKZN because he is a ‘foreigner’. He also mentioned that the teaching capacity development programme was meant to improve PhD students’ competence in teaching, learning and developing their capacity as research supervisors. The participants also pointed out that when workshops and training are funded, the clause applies that *‘only South Africans and Permanent residents need to apply’*.

Mukwege (FGD4, DRC) expressed that:

‘When it comes to funded opportunities ‘the goody goody’, the exclusion clause comes in that only South African students should apply’.

Mukwege (FGD4, DRC) describes ‘goody goody’ as opportunities like funding, funded summer school and other opportunities that enhance the PhD experience. Chimanga (DRC) described how his friends studying at other South African universities like the University of Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town attend funded international conferences as part of the PhD students’ training programme. He echoed that at UKZN, there are limited opportunities.

Abidemi (Nigeria) articulated that

‘We [international PhD] need research training, but we are excluded, they (UKZN) are unfair’.

The above is an indication that international PhD students enhance their research skills through workshops, seminars and conference attendance. Yet citizenship is used to exclude them from full PhD participation in all professional growth opportunities.

5.2.5.4. (c) Discrimination & Exclusion in Student Jobs

The study also found that participants experienced discrimination in student job opportunities. According to Gbenga, (FGD1, Nigeria), exclusion from UKZN’s student job opportunities manifests in the differential treatment of international PhD students when compared to local PhD students in work such as tutoring and appointments as contract lecturers at UKZN. Chinasa (Nigeria) expressed that,

‘It is difficult getting a student job as an international PhD student at UKZN ... When I just arrived South Africa and lived in Johannesburg for three months, I visited Witwatersrand and University Pretoria ... In Witwatersrand and the University Pretoria, as a PhD student, you get a graduate assistant job...Other jobs are posted on the school noticeboard by external employers... Working as a Graduate Assistant would enhance

your PhD experience’.

Furaha (Malawi) mentioned how, during UKZN recruitment, the school manager at the Howard campus emphasized that students (local students & international students) working at UKZN should not work in multiple positions. Furaha (Malawi) explained that students could not work in multiple positions simultaneously, such as combining contract lecturing and tutoring. This is to ensure that all students can have equal opportunity and access to work opportunities. However, Chinasa (Nigeria) expressed that he knows local PhD students who work in multiple positions.

Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe) talked about job insecurity

‘Most of the UKZN student jobs you get is three-month contract job which does not guarantee job security...They [Human Resources] know you do not have an option because you have to survive and pay the bills...’. (Amos, FGD6, Zimbabwe).

Not all participants agree about job discrimination like Shade (FGD3, Nigeria) with a contrary view. A response from Shade (FGD3) suggests that there are limited jobs in UKZN, which does not imply discrimination in student jobs. Shade (FGD3, Nigeria) explains why it is difficult for international PhD students to secure a student job at UKZN. She attributed this to tough competition for student jobs between local and international students.

‘Compared to other South African cities like Johannesburg, where students could work outside the school campus, this is difficult in Durban because it is a tourist province. local students will likely be considered to get a job first... International PhD Students need the job to survive...Locals need the job too...UKZN cannot employ everybody because there are few Research centres’ (Shade, FGD3, Nigeria).

Vimbai (FGD4, Zimbabwe) also stated that attending a job interview at UKZN doesn’t guarantee being employed. Vimbai (FGD4, Zimbabwe) stated:

‘After attending an interview, you know you performed very well but after the interview, the interviewer would say the position is for South African students.’

Masimba (FGD2, Zimbabwe) remarked:

‘International PhD students who are lucky to get jobs are those who have either studied

at UKZN from Bachelor or honours-level because they have certificates from UKZN ... The lecturers know them because they have taught them and they are integrated into the UKZN system'.

It is unfair for UKZN staff to shortlist and not to include job reservation criteria for citizens only and only for international students to find out after attending an interview.

'There are limited job opportunities and travel grants like what is obtainable in other South African universities like the University of Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town' (Chimanga, DRC).

Damilola (Nigeria) explained that citizenship is critical when applying for a job:

'Discrimination is everywhere on campus...once they know you are not their person...it is only written that jobs are for South Africans...I applied for a job at the UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus. Three of us came for the interview, me, a black South African and one other white female South African... They picked me over the white lady because they wanted a black...why the discrimination when you are qualified?'

Aagha (Kenya) shared the view of Damilola (Nigeria) on how citizenship matters when applying for a job at UKZN.

'I attended a contract lecturer interview, one of my colleagues was never interviewed. He never applied for the job because he asked me when the job application would be advertised. By the time he asked me about the vacancy, the job application deadline had passed]. He however told me that the person in charge of recruitment asked him to send his documents to process his appointments. He was appointed, but I was not appointed, because locals are preferred even if the deadline has passed. Even if they are unqualified, the recruiter believes they [South African] will learn on the job' (Aagha, Kenya).

Mukwege (DRC), who once used a study permit which then changed to Permanent Residence [PR], voiced that it did not matter when compared to citizenship:

'Permanent Residence [PR] is not a guarantee to secure a job... I received a job offer at DUT to lecture English, I filled out all the appointment forms...when I returned to start the

job, the Human Resource Personnel said were sorry I could not start the work because the Department of Home Affairs said it is only South Africans that the jobs should be given to...It seems they [South Africa] do not want us here’.

5.2.5.4. (d) Discrimination & Exclusion: No Decent Salaries

Participants’ responses indicated that they were unhappy with the salary paid at UKZN working as a tutor or contract lecturer. The Howard campus participants mentioned that local students at UKZN receive higher salaries for the same job for which international students were employed. Olabode (FGD5, Nigeria) explained that,

‘When you work as a contract lecturer or tutor... They [Finance office] do not pay your salary on time because it was not processed on time at the finance office and not properly captured...No wonder their students [South Africans] protest when they are aggrieved because it seems that is the only language the school management understand...’.

Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe) shares a similar view with Olabode (FGD5, Nigeria) on dissatisfaction with salary payments. He further draws attention to a difference in salary between two campuses of the same institution which he cannot understand.

‘When you also get the job and want to sign the contract form... You do not know how much your salary is...when you have started the job you discover it is R1,700 you earn as a tutor...if you are lucky as a lecturer, you earn R3,500 per module as a contract lecturer at Howard campus...working in Westville campus is not like that...working in Westville pays a higher salary....’ (Amos, FGD6).

Daraki (Zimbabwe) also mentioned that salary payments become difficult depending on the type of study permit international PhD students use. Daraki (Zimbabwe) explained that:

‘As an international student with an asylum permit, although you study without paying the compulsory medical insurance... It is frustrating getting a student job in UKZN that pays high... At times when the finance section wants to process the finances that involve a high salary (R6, 500) like I experienced on the Westville campus, you hear words like I cannot understand your permit... We (asylum seekers permit holders) are given a six-month

renewal which you have to travel to Pretoria every six months to renew the permit... The implication is that when your permit is one month to expiration to start the job, then the student has to forfeit the job based on reasons by the UKZN Human Resources that you have to work within a valid visa based on the Department of Home Affairs directive’.

Damilola (Nigeria) cites an example of his friend who, after completing his PhD, changed his study visa to a Permanent Residence Visa [PR]. He revealed that his friend’s PR visa was stated non-South African. Damilola (igeria) revealed that visa processing time for status change from study visa to PR is faster for international PhD students from SADC than international PhD students from other countries, which is a bonus. Damilola (Nigeria) also commented that the visa processing time for international PhD students from SADC takes three days to one week, while international PhD students from other African countries takes between one month to eight months. This suggests that SADC policies facilitate regional travel and disadvantage international PhD students from other African countries attempting to enjoy the same rights with equal footing.

5.2.5.4. (e) Discrimination & Exclusion: Postgraduate Funding

Another subtle form of discrimination highlighted by participants is the exclusion of international PhD students from funding and bursaries apart from fee remission. Some participants 43.8%, (n=7), hinted that in the first-year of their PhD they were awarded the UKZN Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) scholarship valued at R10 000,00 to support postgraduate students in their research. The UKZN Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) assisted the participants in continuing their studies.

Chinasa (Nigeria) articulates;

‘The way they (UKZN) treat international PhD students in UKZN cannot be compared to other international PhD students in Universities like the University of Pretoria and University of Johannesburg who have access to bursaries and finances.’

On the contrary, Lekan (Nigeria) mentioned that a colleague of his in Engineering received an NRF scholarship valued at R120, 000. He also cited how an international PhD student in Media studies received an NRF bursary. Further, Lekan (Nigeria) explained that the NRF allocates more

funding to local students than international students. Also, Lekan (Nigeria) explained that students are awarded NRF funding based on research topics and problem-solving research. Aagha (Kenya) stated that in 2014 when he arrived at UKZN as a first-year PhD student, he was awarded the UKZN Deputy Vice Chancellor's scholarship valued at R10 000,00. Aagha (Nigeria) contends that from 2019, it became difficult to obtain such a scholarship because of the clause that suddenly became attached to it that '*only Permanent Residents and South African students can apply*' when the bursary was advertised. Damilola (Nigeria) argues that the reason for the limited bursary is the upsurge in the number of PhD students studying at UKZN amidst inadequate financial support.

5.2.6. Conclusion

This chapter presented the perspectives of international PhD students through their lens. The chapter commenced with a demographic representation of the sixteen international PhD students who participated in the study. The chapter unpacked the push and pull factors that influenced international PhD students to study at UKZN and their first-year experiences. The finding suggests that the majority of the participants were from African countries. The participants studied through three PhD modes: full-time, part-time and sandwich. The push factors allude to the economic situation related to unemployment, a lack of job security and lack of scholarship. Other reasons were the unavailability of specific PhD courses/programmes, insufficient expert supervisors to supervise PhD topics in the home country university, a lengthy time to complete a PhD, and inadequate infrastructure/facilities.

The participants were attracted to South Africa and UKZN because of several pull factors. These include university ranking, fee remission, a cheaper cost of living in South Africa, the social network, availability of superior infrastructure/facilities, the English language as the medium of instruction and reduced travel time to the home country.

The data indicated positive and negative experiences about first-year PhD at UKZN and the host community. Positive experiences include benefitting from UKZN PhD training, boot camps, workshops and PhD Cohort that addressed the challenges of writing a PhD proposal. The PhD workshops equipped international students with research skills to address referencing, plagiarism and data analysis. Whereas negative experiences manifest in challenges such as renting accommodation, financial challenges, language barriers, and discrimination. The data also

underscores the importance of funding and finance for rent, cost of living, and student medical insurance.

Equally, the chapter reveals that international PhD students experience discrimination at UKZN and in their community. The chapter also demonstrates that a social network is crucial in providing relevant information to international students during the migration process and their arrival in South Africa. This information relates to SAQA evaluation, UKZN admission process, renting accommodation, UKZN ranking, UKZN fee remission and information tips on acclimatization in South Africa. The next section discusses the study's findings and theorization.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS & THEORISATION

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses findings that emerged from the study (in chapter five) on the push and pull factors propelling international PhD students to study at UKZN. It also discusses international students' first-year experiences at UKZN and why they have these experiences. The findings below are discussed with the relevant literature and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

6.2. Demography of Participants

The participants in the study were mainly International PhD students from the following African countries: Nigeria, Zimbabwe, the DRC, Malawi and Kenya. Findings reveal that the majority of the participants were from Nigeria (50%); followed by Zimbabwe (25%); 12.5% were from the DRC; 6.25% were from Malawi and 6.25% were from Kenya. In light of this demography, IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021 p.5) found that Nigeria is the fifth-largest sender of postgraduate students to South Africa, followed by Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, and Swaziland. A significant proportion of the participants were males and married. Also, a considerable proportion was between the ages of 35-40 years. The majority had a Master's Degree from their home country. The participants also studied through one of three PhD modes: full-time, part-time and sandwich. However, the majority (75%, n= 12) of the participants studied on a full-time basis.

6.3. Discussion of Findings and theorisation: Why International PhD Students Exit their Home Country for UKZN

Numerous push factors from the home country work together with pull factors at UKZN to attract prospective PhD students to study in SA at UKZN specifically.

6.3.1. Push Factors

The study found that the participants exited their home country for varied reasons, not merely one reason. These reasons are the home country's economic situation, inadequate infrastructure/facilities, the unavailability of specific PhD Course/Programme, the lengthy time to complete PhD.

6.3.1.1. Economic reasons in the Home Country

Economic push factors included unemployment, a lack of job security, a poor salary structure, and a lack of student scholarships. The economic reasons vary for the international PhD students depending on their nationality. Lack of opportunity to study in the home country and a difficulty accessing a scholarship due to Zimbabwe's economic situation was a significant push factor for international PhD students from Zimbabwe. The narrative of Vimbai (Zimbabwe) is instructive; he stated that his reason for exiting Zimbabwe was Zimbabwe's dire economic situation, making it difficult to study in Zimbabwe. Vimbai started his undergraduate study at UKZN in 2010 and progressed until his PhD study. This indicates that Vimbai (Zimbabwe) is part of the international student cohort (31.25%) who had prior education at UKZN, as shown in Table 1 in chapter five. Thus, UKZN is contributing to the human capital development of Zimbabwe's citizens. The interview indicates that by migrating to South Africa and studying at UKZN, Vimbai's knowledge, skills and capabilities were improved by the education offered at UKZN. As the findings demonstrated in the case of Zimbabwean international student, Vimbai: he started his undergraduate study at UKZN in 2010 and progressed until his PhD study. This suggests that UKZN improved his skills, and competences thus he experienced a growth in human capital because Vimbai remained at UKZN from his bachelor's degree until his PhD. Through improvement in intellectual skills, capabilities and knowledge obtained from UKZN's education and training, he progressed to study at PhD level.

a) UKZN contributes to the human capital development of international PhD students from SADC

UKZN is contributing to the human capital development of international PhD students from SADC by attracting them to UKZN, training and retaining them in South Africa. Human capital development is the improvement in an individual's skills, productivity, competence, and experiences crucial for economic growth (Confait, 2018; Nsanganwimana, 2018). Confait (2018) found that PhD students' human capital is developed during the PhD program because PhD students acquire expertise and research skills by conducting research. Confait (2018) noted that the human capital of PhD graduates is developed during the PhD program because they are experts with extensive knowledge in a particular field of study and transferable skills that benefit society. She also found that PhD students have amassed human capital and invaluable human resources

due to their ability to contribute to national development. She states that due to their value, host countries are also 'pushed' to recruit and train international PhD students to meet critical or scarce local needs (Confait, 2018, p. 187). The study's findings are similar to previous studies that examined the relevance of PhD students' human capital to host countries (Confait, 2018; Nsanganwimana, 2018).

Masimba's motivation to exit Zimbabwe alludes to the difficulty in obtaining a scholarship to study. Mukwege (DRC) stated that unemployment caused by the war made him leave the DRC for the greener pastures of South Africa. The DRC's political and economic situation propelled participants from the DRC to leave for South Africa, not initially for study purposes but survival and work purposes. Similarly, participants from Nigeria stated a similar reason as unemployment in their home country was one of the reasons they migrated to South Africa (Abidemi, Olabode). This suggests that the participants are motivated to migrate from their home countries to South Africa because of their home countries political and economic conditions. It is evident that the participants left their home country hoping to secure a job because either they were unemployed in their home country or (and) they wanted to escape the economic downturn. In light of these findings, Ogujiuba, Anjofui, and Stiegler (2019, p.220) posit that the major push factors that compel Cameroonian and Congolese migrants to South Africa are economic reasons, political factors and migrant social networks. Ogujiuba, Anjofui and Stiegler (2019, p.221) suggest that many Congolese are forced to flee their countries for better lives and opportunities. Gumbo (2014, p.90) found that countries like the DRC, Sudan and some African countries have undergone economic and political instability, which makes learning challenging in such countries.

Manik and Singh (2013, p.1) also stated that human migration drivers are political conflict and a better standard of living. They also found that migrants come to South Africa because South Africa is perceived as 'the big apple of Africa where dreams can be accomplished'. They contend that because of the challenges in African countries, migration is perceived as the solution. In the Australian context, Cohen (2017) examined the decision-making processes of international postgraduate students studying in public universities in Perth. He found that the push-pull theory applies to international postgraduate students in Australia. Cohen also found that postgraduate students, especially those from countries experiencing economic or political difficulties, perceive

international study as a pathway to immigration (Cohen, 2017, p.iv). Cohen further discovered that such students perceived Australia as a stable and prosperous nation, which offered them a ‘good life’ without their home countries problems.

Boelen (2017) similarly found that international PhD students’ study abroad because of their home country’s economy. The findings corroborate Ravenstein’s (1885, p. 199) push-pull theory that the principal cause of migration are economic factors. The findings also correspond to Mazzarol and Soutar’s (2002) push-pull theory that economic forces within the home country ‘push’ international students to travel outside their home country for study purposes. IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021) found that Nigerian postgraduate students’ study at South African universities because of infrastructural deterioration, inadequate support for research and poor remuneration of university staff -all persistent concerns in the Nigerian education sector, which propels their emigration. Because successive Nigerian governments have failed to address the educational problem, there have been periodic industrial confrontations between the government and organized university workers' unions [ASUU]. Some students have given up on their studies (IseOlorunkanmi et al. 2021).

6.3.1.2. Inadequate Infrastructure and Facilities

Inadequate Infrastructure and facilities in the home country were also instrumental in the participants' decision to exit their home country. These were inadequate internet, ICTs and erratic electricity.

a) Inadequate infrastructure and facilities like the internet and ICTs

Electricity is crucial for research. Chimanga (DRC), Abidemi (Nigeria) and Olabode (Nigeria) shared the same sentiments about the poor state of infrastructure in their home country influencing Olabode (Nigeria) and Abidemi (Nigeria) and propelling their exit from their home country. They access research materials at public internet café. Infrastructure/facilities and access to the internet are valuable for research.

Dahir (2017) argues that the quality of African universities is questionable because they cannot compete globally because of the lack of necessary facilities. IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021) found

that Nigerian postgraduate students study at South African universities because of infrastructural deterioration and inadequate support for research in their home country. They further assert that Nigerian postgraduate students migrate to South African universities because of modern facilities for training.

b) Erratic Electricity

International students brought to light that they use generators due to poor electricity in their home countries. Also, universities in their home countries do not have a backup plan for electricity in case of power outages. Chimanga (DRC) mentions that electricity is one of the scarce commodities in the DRC that hinders conducting research. Abidemi's (Nigeria) view suggests that *Nigerian public universities lack a backup plan for electricity to power their schools*. Because of erratic electricity in Nigeria, the residents rely on a generator for electricity. Given that, most of the participants in my study are from African countries, which are classified as low-income countries. Low-income African countries typically experience power outages because millions of people live without adequate electricity (Tena, 2021; Zita, 2021; McDonnell, 2019). Zita (2021) reported that the prevalent power outage in Congo affects Congolese residents' livelihood resulting in frustration. Due to power outages, many residents of Congo use generators to power their activities (Zita, 2021). Tena (2021) also noted that Nigeria's electricity infrastructure is unstable, making several houses and companies use generators. He adds that using generators makes the environment frequently filled with noise disturbance and pollution.

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6.3.1.3. The Unavailability of Specific PhD courses at Home

The unavailability of specific PhD courses in the home country is another push factor. Notably, participants from Nigeria shared three reasons for the unavailability of specific PhD courses in the home country. Gbenga (Nigeria), Lekan (Nigeria) and Olabode (Nigeria) list the reasons as the year in which a university was established, the rigours involved in the quality assurance process for PhD programmes and insufficient expert supervisors to supervise particular PhD topics. Gbenga (Nigeria) highlighted the lack of expert supervisors for the proposed research topic he intended to research in Nigerian universities as a push factor. Mukwege (DRC) also cited the same reason as the lack of a specific PhD course in the DRC as a push factor. Universities in Nigeria must be registered with a quality assurance organization and go through a

quality assurance process approved by the Nigerian University Commission to offer PhD programmes (Chinasa, Nigeria). Newly established universities are also limited in their PhD courses (Blessing, Nigeria). Limited expert supervisors are tied to the availability of some PhD programmes in the DRC and Nigeria (Gbenga, Nigeria; Mukwege, DRC).

Buttressing the participants' views, IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021, p.2) found that challenges in Nigeria's educational sector trigger Nigerian postgraduate students' migration to South African universities. They found that educational challenges manifest in limited government funding for education and the dilapidated lack of infrastructure in Nigeria's universities. A significant result of this is frustrated postgraduate students pursuing PhD more time than expected. They posit further that dissatisfaction with pursuing higher education in Nigeria often results in a stalled career progression. They further assert that this resulted in an alternative decision to migrate abroad in search of higher education. As a result, Nigerian postgraduate students migrate to South African universities because of modern facilities for training and guarantee timely completion of PhD.

Zhang, O'Shea and Mou, (2021, p.69) also found that international PhD students enrol in a PhD in Canada because of limited specific PhD program in their home country. The study's findings corroborate Xiong's (2017, p.238) findings that Chinese international PhD students' study in Ireland because of the unavailability of particular PhD courses and programs in China. Similarly, a study by Boelen (2017, p.7) on international PhD students from Hué, Vietnam, found that international students' study abroad because of the low quality of PhD education and insufficient expert supervisors without a PhD to mentor PhD students in the home country universities. He also found that students' study abroad because of limited educational space to accommodate students in their home country.

6.3.1.4. The importance of Timeous Completion of a PhD

The lengthy time to complete a PhD at Nigerian public Universities was mentioned extensively by international students from Nigeria. Two reasons cause a long time to complete a PhD at Nigerian public Universities. These are the incessant strikes by the ASUU and the supervisor's attitude. Olabode (Nigeria) describes how Nigerian supervisors believe their PhD students should not graduate within a reasonable timeframe unless they finish their PhD within seven to ten years.

Such supervisors behave that way because they did not graduate on time while studying at the PhD level. Taking these narratives further, IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021, p.2) found that Nigerian postgraduate students pursue PhD education for more time than expected, resulting in the decision to migrate abroad in search of higher education. As a result, Nigerian postgraduate students migrate to South African universities because of the guarantee of timely PhD completion.

Echoing the negative effect of strikes amongst Nigerian PhD students who migrated to the USA to study, Ntiasagwe (2020, p.1) argues that Nigeria has a troubling history of university strikes. He posits that strikes result from government negligence and failure to fulfill ASUU's collective bargaining agreement. He maintains that when the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) goes on a nationwide strike, the unintended consequences are severe. Ntiasagwe (2020, p.1) also stressed that constant strikes turned into a cankerworm that ate deep into many university undergraduates' lives. Ntiasagwe emphasized that in some cases, students were diverted into a life of crime and became bandits for politicians as a way to pass the time. Similarly, IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021, p.2) found that challenges in Nigeria's educational sector trigger Nigerian postgraduate students' migration to South African universities. They found that frustrated postgraduate students pursue PhD more time than expected in Nigeria compared to guarantee timely completion of PhD in South Africa.

Factoring in the study's data, 12.5% (n=2) of the participants were lecturers; hence completing the PhD on time is essential to them. Confait (2018, p. 187) maintained that the Kenyan, Nigerian, and Zimbabwean governments have developed policies, plans and higher qualification thresholds for appointing university lecturers to earn PhD degrees within a specific timeframe. Xiong (2017, p.238) also found that PhD programs in China TAKE longer to complete than those in Ireland. He expounded that international PhD students who studied in Ireland from the Bachelor's level could study onwards to PhD level, unlike what is obtainable in China, where they have to take an additional course before they start PhD.

6.4. Pull Factors: Reasons for Migrating to South Africa and Choosing UKZN

The study's finding reveals that international students are attracted to UKZN because of seven pull factors. The pull factors attracting international PhD students to UKZN were: fee remission, university ranking, availability of superior infrastructure/facilities, the cheaper cost of living in South Africa, social network enhancing mobility to South Africa, the medium of instruction being English and the reduced time to travel to the home country.

6.4.1. Dangling the Carrot- Fee remission to attract students

Fee remission in the form of scholarship was a key factor why participants selected UKZN from the 26 public South African universities available to study a PhD. No wonder 75% of participants prefer to study at UKZN. Chimanga (DRC) termed it 'UKZN's Fee Remission as Bait'. Discussions from the interviews and FGD related to fee remission also revealed that international students explored other options to study at various South African universities like the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria during their university search process. This is because these institutions have funding (bursaries, scholarships) for PhD students. However, the participants chose not to enroll at these universities because they had to pay tuition fees before accessing such funding. Instead, they chose UKZN because of fee remission.

Olabode (Nigeria) admitted that while such funding is enticing, paying tuition fees does not guarantee access to funding because it is competitive. Olabode (Nigeria) argued that UKZN would likely introduce tuition fees in the future due to the high number of international PhD students migrating to UKZN. Damilola (Nigeria)) stated that universities in Nigeria charge almost the same tuition as UKZN for a PhD, so the fee remission makes a difference. Lekan (Nigeria)) mentioned that South Africa was not his first choice as a study destination initially, but the USA. However, fee remission made him reconsider studying at UKZN.

Also, participants with social networks studying at UKZN receive helpful information about the UKZN fee remission. UKZN's fee remission also assisted participants who are married with children and those unemployed to study free. Abidemi (Nigeria) illustrated this by pointing out that fee remission ease paying school fees for struggling students and married students with children. This suggests that various South African universities devised strategies to recruit

international PhD students. However, UKZN's strategy is to offer international students, a fee remission. The study's findings are consistent with previous studies that underscored the significant role that scholarship plays in attracting international students (Zhang, O'Shea, & Mou, 2021; Diogo & Carvalho, 2019; Cohen, 2017).

With a focus on international PhD students who study at public universities in Canada, Zhang, O'Shea and Mou, (2021, p.69) found that international students' decision to enroll in a PhD in Canada are based on a three-layer push-pull framework. They posit that individual, institutional, and national decisions influence these decisions. Further to this, their study highlighted that various push-pull factors influence international PhD students to study in Canada. They also found that these pull factors range from scholarships, students', faculty members, and immigration policies. They discovered that the factors differ depending on the students' origins and fields of study. Their findings also echoed that financial considerations are a major concern for international PhD students when selecting a university for their PhD. They add that international PhD students choose universities that provide scholarships. Cohen (2017) also found that international postgraduate students are attracted to Australian universities because of pull factors such as scholarships and recommendations from the social network as family and friends. Another study by Diogo and Carvalho (2019, p. 4496) on international PhD students who study at Aveiro (Portugal) identified similar pull factors as university ranking, scholarship, cheap tuition fees, and quality academic staff.

6.4.2. University Ranking

The second important pull reason cited by the participants is UKZN's ranking. Majority, 68.7%, of the participants were studying at UKZN because of university ranking. The participants mentioned that UKZN is highly ranked, more than their home country university. From the responses, Vimbai (Zimbabwe) chose UKZN because of its ranking compared to universities in Zimbabwe. University ranking is a significant factor for participants for different reasons. Participants like Chinasa, a Nigerian university lecturer, was studying at UKZN because of funding from her home country's government. She expressed that the Nigerian government sponsored her PhD if the university she studies in is highly ranked. Chinasa mentioned that the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), an academic staff training and development Program, funded her. She also

mentioned that PhD funding from the home country, aimed to improve Nigerian lecturers' quality because a PhD is a mandatory requirement to teach at Nigerian universities. TETFund also sponsors lecturers to ensure that Nigerian universities compete with other ranked universities.

The findings suggest that international PhD students also conducted internet searches on several universities before choosing UKZN. Abidemi (Nigeria), conducted an internet search on universities and discovered that UKZN is highly ranked in Africa. This suggests that university ranking is one of the deciding factors that international PhD students consider before studying at UKZN. University ranking is also tied to funding from the participants' home country. The view of Abidemi, indicates that international students are also inclined to search the internet to obtain information on the universities where there will be studying. The study's findings align with previous studies highlighting the importance of university ranking (Wut, Xu & Lee, 2022; IseOlorunkanmi et al., 2021; Zhang, O'Shea, & Mou, 2021).

According to Wut, Xu and Lee (2022), employers are inclined to employ graduates from ranked universities due to the quality of education offered in such schools. Equally, students who attend ranked universities derive satisfaction and pride. Wut, Xu and Lee (2022) maintain that ranked universities produce quality graduates, a high standard of education, suitable programs, high-caliber lecturers, and good career prospects for graduates. Nonetheless, Wut, Xu and Lee contend that in the UK, ranked university is insignificant for students whose families had little or no direct experience of higher education. The findings indicate that the participants conducted internet searches on South African universities before finally choosing UKZN as where to study PhD. IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021) also found that Nigerian international PhD students' study at UKZN because of university ranking. Gumbo's (2014) findings that Zimbabwean students' study at South African universities because of the recognized standard of education and international recognition. The findings also correspond with the push-pull theory of Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) that international students choose a university because of university ranking. Most of the study's participants were aware of UKZN's ranking. The participants' perspectives correspond with previous studies on the importance of university ranking during the decision-making process in selecting a university.

Xiong (2017, p.39) notes that based on the investment decision, international PhD students will first look for high-ranking universities and then narrow down the number of choices such as the courses provided, funding and scholarship availability. He asserts that university ranking is vital for enhancing opportunities and career prospects after graduation.

In the same tone, Dahir (2017) stressed that amongst universities in Africa, South African universities are highly ranked despite having 136 universities for 54 million population. He expounded that South African universities were ranked 6th out of the 15 best universities in Africa in the 2016 Times Higher Education ranking because of their universities, reputable international recognition and capacity to attract funding. However, university ranking might not have the same significance across the sixteen participants. Nevertheless, ranking is a key consideration for international students sponsored by their home country's government, in this context, the lecturers. The study's findings suggest that international PhD students are pulled to UKZN because their home country's government also sponsors their education. This also demonstrates why international PhD students compare their home universities to UKZN and rank UKZN highly.

6.4.3. Access to Superior Infrastructure and Facilities

The recurrent pull factors for participants from Nigeria were superior infrastructure and facilities, coupled with constant electricity. UKZN facilities include access to the internet and ICTs that enhance research. Most participants also highlighted that access to the internet and ICTs influenced research output. Inadequate infrastructure (internet, Wi-Fi, ICTs) was one push factor for international students exiting their home country; correspondingly, the availability of superior infrastructure and facilities at UKZN was a pull factor. Furaha (Malawi) mentioned that UKZN's environment is conducive for research because of unrestricted internet access, an academic resource needed to meet PhD students' research needs in conducting research. Damilola (Nigeria) stated that his reason for studying at UKZN is the standard of UKZN internet, which is better than his home country's internet. Echoing these findings, IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021, p.2) found that challenges in Nigeria's educational sector trigger Nigerian postgraduate students' migration to South African universities. They found that educational challenges manifest in limited government funding for education and the dilapidated or lack of infrastructure in Nigeria's

universities impact decision-making. A result of frustrated postgraduate students pursuing a PhD dissatisfied with higher education in Nigeria, and career stalling due to delays, leads to them migrating abroad. Nigerian postgraduate students migrate to South African universities because of modern facilities for training and they guarantee timely completion of the PhD. Xiong (2017, p.23) echoed that infrastructure availability indicates the degree of development in a study destination. Kumah (2015) also asserted that the internet is essential for graduate students' research during the PhD programme. He found that graduate students use the internet more frequently than the physical library to access internet search engines, e-print servers, websites, online journals and printing tools for their research.

6.4.4. Cheaper Cost of living in South Africa

The cheaper cost of living in South Africa is also a significant pull factor. The participants' response suggests that living in South Africa is inexpensive compared to other countries, such as the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom. Few of the participants (12.5%) who obtained their Master's Degree in Cyprus and the UK attest that studying in these countries is expensive. Findings also show that the participants factored in the host country's currency and compared it to their home country's currency exchange rate.

In this study, international students in UKZN also consider lower living costs. This is vital given that most of the participants in this study are from African countries and are classified as low-income countries. This is also crucial when the economic situation in African countries is considered. Low-income countries are characterized by extreme inequality, inadequate education, high unemployment, rapid population growth and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, between \$1,026 and \$4,035 (Street, 2016). Julia (2022) highlighted the GNI Income per capita in African countries that 19 low-income African countries recorded a GNI per capita below 1,045 U.S. dollars in 2020. She observed that in 2020 GNI of Nigeria was 2000, Kenya 1, 760, Malawi, 580, Congo, 497, Zimbabwe, 1,090, and South Africa, 5,400. The statistics on the six countries GNI indicate that South Africa has the highest GNI per capita and Congo has low GNI in 2020 among these six countries.

Also, factoring in the participants' demography, like marital status, the cheaper cost of living in South Africa is a critical key pull factor. This is because the participants also have family responsibilities (e.g., paying their children's tuition fees, repaying study loans). As a response from Blessing (Nigeria) reveals, she has a child studying Engineering at UKZN. Given the participants' responses, Mokhothu and Callaghan (2018) reverberated that the demography of international students' age, country of origin, gender and marital status also influence their study experiences in the host country. Similarly, Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.364) found that international PhD students' demography and circumstances, such as financial support, living arrangements, and the number of children, affect their progress in the PhD program. Zulkifli, Abdul-Aziz, Jamil, Zuraini, Ali, Hashim and Mohd (2020) also found that the lower cost of living in Malaysia attracted international PhD students to enrol in Malaysian public universities.

6.4.5. English as the Medium of Instruction

English as a prerequisite to study and a medium of instruction at UKZN is a pull factor for some participants (18.7%, n=3). The participants (Olabode, Nigeria; Damilola, Nigeria; Shade, Nigeria) divulged that universities in countries such as the USA, UK, and Canada require TOEFL to assess international students' English language proficiency. Findings indicate that international students with TOEFL have the chance of being offered a scholarship. However, the cost of writing TOEFL every two years and the high cost of TOEFL discouraged the participants. Due to TOEFL's high price, participants prefer South African universities and instead have their prior qualifications evaluated by SAQA. Hongdu and Samantha (2021) illuminate that countries whose medium of instruction is the English language attract international students. They stated that English is the world's lingua franca and dominant as the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Martirosyan, Hwang and Wanjohi (2016, p.62) indicate that international students who are proficient in the English language complete their program timely compared to non-English speakers who struggles to speak English and write. They also contend that TOEFL does not accurately measure the academic performance of international students.

Similarly, the findings of a study by Orth (2015, p.53) amongst international students from Saudi Arabia in Australia found that some universities use their in-house assessment to evaluate applicants' language competence. She notes that through such assessments, higher education

institutions assess whether students require more language training to succeed while studying. Son and Sang Park's (2014) study on seven international PhD students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) in Australia found that international students experienced the language barrier. She noted that to address the English language barrier, they attended the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program to prepare them for their academic and writing skills in the PhD program.

6.4.6. Social Networks enhance Mobility to UKZN

The social network is also a critical pull factor cited by participants for studying at UKZN. The social network is the link that connects prospective migrants to migrants in the host country by affinities of kinship, friendship and shared community origin (Blumenstock, Guanghua, & Tan, 2021; Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Masja & Sónia, 2016). The social network is also a critical pull factor cited for studying at UKZN. The participants mentioned that their social network played a significant role in their coming to South Africa by providing recommendations and advice. According to Masja and Sónia (2016, p.47), the social network facilitates migration by giving valuable feedback mechanisms regarding information, assistance, and resources that minimize migration costs and risks.

Mukwege (DRC) was influenced to study at UKZN because his cousin and twin sister study at UKZN's Westville campus. Same as Lekan (Nigeria) his friend, a PhD student and a lecturer at UKZN, urged him to study at UKZN. The participants also indicated that they chose UKZN because they have friends (social networks) at UKZN and did not know anyone in other South African universities (Western Cape University and Witwatersrand University). This also leads to the cumulative causation of migration. Cumulative causation of migration implies that as the migratory experience increases within a sending community will result in the probability of other sending members initiating a migration (Massey et al., 1987).

Thus, migrants introduce other prospective migrants to follow in their path leading to a flow of migrants to a particular destination. Social network's role is visible during the migration process of international PhD students from facilitating admission at UKZN, SAQA evaluation, airport pick and in accommodation search. Similar findings from previous studies on push-pull factors on why

international students migrate were evident (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002.) Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) found that social networks are a critical pull factor for participants to consider during university selection. They emphasize that international students choose a university because of recommendations from their social networks. They further found that social networks recommend a university because they are enrolled or have graduated from such a university. Blumenstock, Guanghua and Tan (2021, p.1) affirm that social networks influence migration decisions by providing information on the host country [jobs opportunities and circumstances in the host country] and as a source of socioeconomic support before and after migration. The social networks possess social capital based on 'interconnected' networks that provide social support.

According to Kasese-Hara and Mugambi,'s (2021) findings, international students cope with adjustment difficulties, new environments and academic contexts through support structures like their social network. Kasese-Hara and Mugambi,'s (2021) study on international postgraduate students in a South African university located in Gauteng province provides relevant comparisons in terms of findings. Kasese-Hara and Mugambi, (2021) found that the other challenges international students contend with are recurring expenses such as food, transportation, and housing, which may necessitate financial assistance from their social networks. According to Kasese-Hara and Mugambi, international students rely on family structures for money and to cope with loneliness, especially if they live in the same host country. The study's findings revealed the same pattern in the case of Mukwege (DRC). Mukege (DRC) expressed that his parents initially assisted him with money for his house rent during his first year until he was self-reliant, working as a tutor at UKZN.

Wut, Xu and Lee (2022, p.1) maintain that verbal recommendations from social networks are valued because it has credibility. The study's findings align with a previous study on international PhD students at Fort Hare University and Rhodes University (Olujobi, 2014). Olujobi (2014) discovered that social networks provide a support system and a connection hub for the students who experience challenges at the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University. A similar study by Natalia and Donald (2019, p.126-127) also discovered that international students utilize social networks to learn about universities abroad. They maintain that international students without social networks receive limited information, which creates unforeseen challenges in the host

country and, in some cases, may hinder such students' timely graduation. Diogo and Carvalho (2019, p.4495) found that family members influenced international PhD students to study in Portugal. According to Kasese-Hara and Mugambi,'s (2021) findings, international students cope with adjustment difficulties, new environments, and academic contexts through various support structures like the social network. Blumenstock, Guanghua and Tan (2021, p.2) aver that although migrants prefer to go to countries with extensive social networks; such networks could deter migration if migrants compete for the same opportunities and resources in the host country with their networks. On the contrary, Xiong's (2017, p.24) study on international PhD students studying in Ireland contended that international PhD students prefer to select a study destination with a smaller size of students from their nationality to avoid competition. This was not evident in the current study. The overview suggests that social networks are crucial in marketing UKZN to prospective international PhD students.

6.4.7. Reduced Travel Costs to the Home Country

Specifically, participants from Nigeria highlighted that the short travel time between Nigeria and South Africa encouraged them to visit their families in their home country. The reduced travel hours to the home country also meant that the participants could book cheaper flights. The findings also indicated that the participants also maintain ties with family and friends in their home country by collecting local food from their families because of reduced hours commuting to and from Nigeria to South Africa.

The participants' response suggests that reduced travel hours are crucial to connect to their home countries and still feeling a sense of belonging (Boelen, 2017; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The seven pull factors tally with Natalia and Donald's (2019, p.126-127) findings. They state that the pull factors that attract international students to a study destination are summed into the 'four P' model: place, prestige, price, and promotion. Natalia and Donald (2019, p.126-127) explain that place is the university's physical environments. They note that price includes financial and social costs, such as tuition fees, cost of living and travel costs. Prestige implies university ranking. Promotion are the referrals or recommendations from parents, relatives and friends on a study destination (Natalia & Donald, 2019).

Building on the study's research findings and adapting Natalia and Donald's (2019) theory, five pull factors attract international students to UKZN. These are place (UKZN), Prestige (UKZN ranking), Price (PhD fee remission), Promotion (Social network marketing UKZN) and People.

The significance of social networks by international students in UKZN is a critical fifth pull factor. Abidemi (Nigeria) lends credence to this perspective

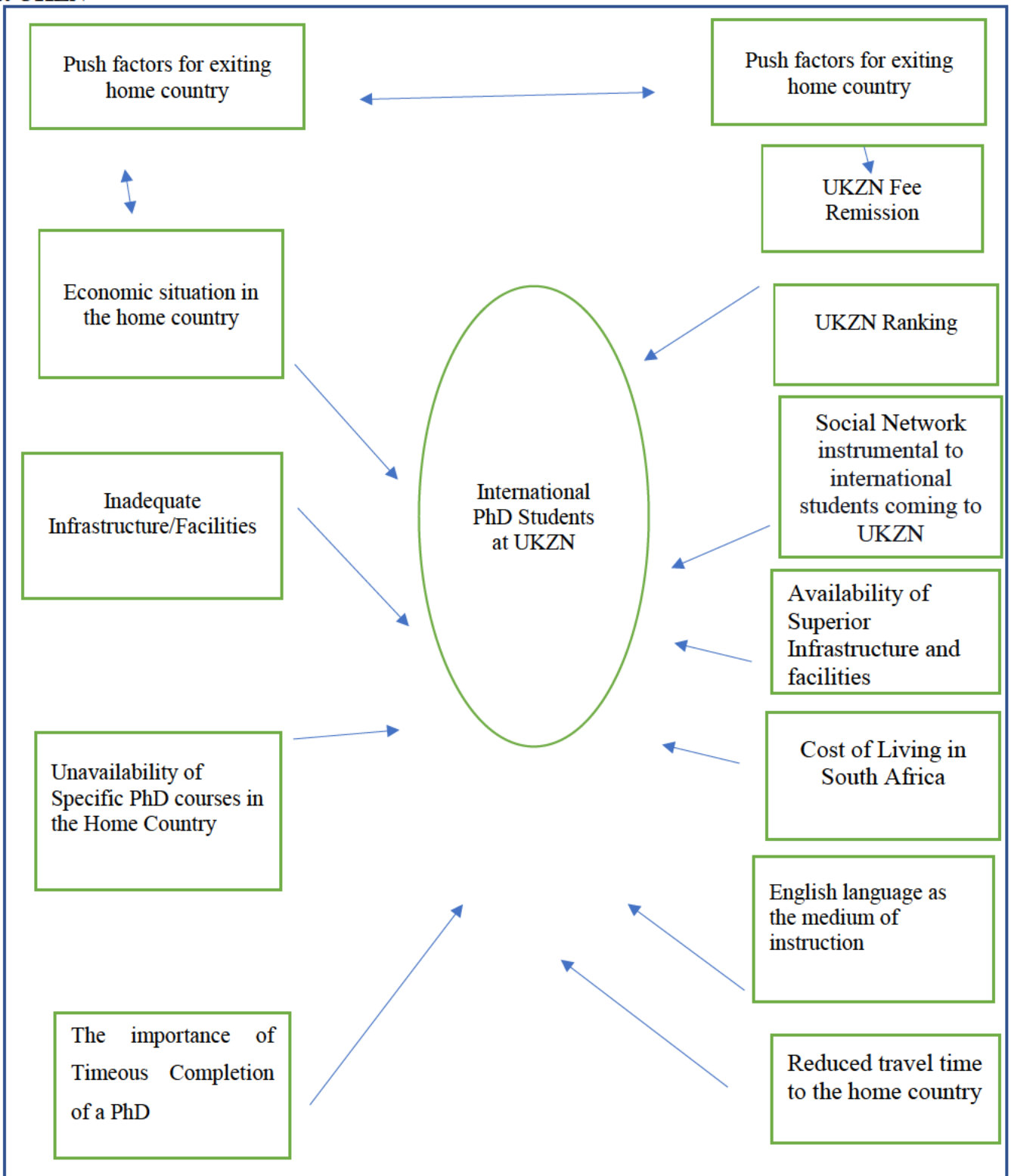
'It was the people I know that is why I came to Durban... It was my friend that facilitated the admission and guided me on the visa requirements'.

People are the fifth-factor international students migrate to UKZN. Due to social relations (relative, acquaintances, or classmates), international students tap such social capital: information and assistance that can assist with acculturation.

6.5. Theorization: A Cocktail of push-pull factors

This section provides theorization on the Framework on Push-Pull factors International PhD students study at UKZN. Figure 3 below captures the cocktail of push and pull factors that lure international students to UKZN.

Figure 3: Framework on Push-Pull factors influencing International PhD Students to Study at UKZN



6.5.1. Theorization: the push and pull factors propelling international students to study at UKZN

International PhD students in this study pursue their PhD at UKZN because of a cocktail of push and pull factors. This study revealed that the reasons that influenced international students to leave their home country were related to the push and pull factors which triggered the decision to migrate to South Africa.

a) South-South Migration Trajectory

International students studying at UKZN come from different African countries. Although the literature indicates that African international students migrate to the Global North for study purposes (Zhang & O'Shea, 2021; Naylor, Chakravarti, & Baik, 2017), this study demonstrates that international students' mobility can be South- South. South-South migration in this study constitutes mobility within African countries (Woldegiorgis, 2017). South-South migration of international students has increased in the past decade, with a significant pole of attraction being South Africa (Woldegiorgis, 2017, p.110) for numerous reasons. Due to the increase in this migration, Nawyn (2016) emphasized that studies of South-to-South migration are needed to contribute to the existing limited literature.

b) Diversity of Economic Reasons

Economic reasons are the biggest push factors for international students at UKZN and relevant to all international students in the study. The economic push factors vary in each international students' home country but cuts across international students at UKZN. African international students were propelled by different economic situations in their home countries to exit and migrate to South Africa. There is an array of economic push factors, such as an economic crisis, a lack of job security, unemployment and limited scholarships. The economic reasons vary for international PhD students depending on their nationality as explained below.

i. Zimbabwean International students' economic push factors

International students from Zimbabwe exit their country because of high unemployment, a lack of job security, and a lack of scholarships for study, as brought to light by international PhD students Vimbai (Zimbabwe) and Masimba (Zimbabwe).

ii. Nigerian International students' economic push factors

Difficulty getting a job due to age after graduation is a push factor for international students from Nigeria, as mentioned by Olabode (Nigeria) and Abidemi (Nigeria).

iii. DRC International students' economic push factors

For international students from the DRC, an economic crisis was triggered by war forced Mukwege (DRC), with a refugee status, to migrate to South Africa. His migration was not initially for study purposes, but to earn a living. Economic stability, peace and safety from war are the paramount concern for refugee students before deciding to embark on any study. These international students fled from an economic crisis and volatile situation in their home country and opted to study when there was an opportunity. This was the case of Mukwege (DRC), who pursued a PhD because of opportunity. This also suggests that economics as a push factor has varying degrees of importance for international students from different countries, considering the economic dynamics of their countries. This is in addition to other economic perks: access to monetary sources to study such as sponsorships, bursaries, loans and personal savings. In comparison to international students not fleeing war, international students with asylum seeker status like Daraki (Zimbabwe) or a refugee, like Mukwege (DRC), the economic push factor is great.

Also, international students not fleeing war in their home countries have different monetary sources to study such as sponsorships, bursaries, loans and personal savings. Chinasa (Nigeria) was awarded a TETFund Nigerian federal government scholarship for Nigerian academic staff. Blessing (Nigeria) a part-time PhD student, and she borrowed money- taking a loan from her friends to sponsor her education at UKZN. Thus, she converted social capital into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Other important push factors were inadequate infrastructure/facilities and the unavailability of specific PhD courses in the home country. However, the importance of timeous completion of the PhD was a major push factor for international students from Nigeria.

Correspondingly, international students study at UKZN because of pull factors such as fee remission, university ranking and social networks. These are the major pull factors for international students studying at UKZN besides the cheaper cost of living, which leads to higher disposable income in South Africa, the availability of superior infrastructure and facilities, the English language as the medium of instruction and reduced travel time to the home country.

c) Fee Remission

Fee remission offered to international PhD students at UKZN was the major pull factor for all the participants in this study to pursue PhD at UKZN. This is a significant pull reason for choosing UKZN compared to other South African universities that offer bursary and scholarships after registration. Despite the attractiveness of the scholarships, paying tuition fees is not a guarantee to access university funding or scholarships. International students could register at such universities and not access scholarships because the scholarships are competitive. This suggests that international students choose UKZN with its fee remission policy rather than universities without a fee remission policy, where they are obligated to pay tuition fees first and then try to access student scholarships. Fee remission ensures quick economic gains before registration at UKZN. Interestingly, fee remission is linked to timely completion of the PhD within 3-years at UKZN

d) UKZN Ranking

UKZN ranking is the second significant reason international students choose UKZN to study at PhD level. International students prefer to study at a ranked university. Vimbai (FGD4 Zimbabwe) chose UKZN because it ranks highly compared to universities in Zimbabwe. Chimanga (DRC) chose UKZN because universities in the Congo are not as highly ranked as UKZN. University ranking in international students' home countries could be affected by a limited government budget for education and educational infrastructure due to war. Sponsorship from the home country government also influenced international students to study at UKZN. Chinasa (Nigeria) chose UKZN because of its ranking and because she obtained funding from her government in her home country. International students also compared several universities through the university rankings based on internet searches and recommendations from their social networks at UKZN. Aagha (Kenya) conducted an internet search on South African universities and discovered

that UKZN is highly ranked in Africa. The social network of international students plays a critical role in this aspect of marketing UKZN's ranking to international students.

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) allude to social networks as vital pull factors for international students when selecting a university because of recommendations from their social networks. Kasese-Hara and Mugambi (2021) mentioned that the reasons African international postgraduate students choose to study at South African universities are due to specific pull factors and university ranking appears to be one such factor. Studies on African international postgraduate students at South African universities also identified push-pull factors of receiving a quality higher education, available bursaries and high university ranking (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Ogujiuba, Anjofui & Stiegler, 2019; Nwokedi, 2015)

e) Social Networks instrumental to international students at UKZN

The social networks at UKZN were a valuable pull factor that emerged from the study. The social network was instrumental to international students coming to UKZN. International PhD students come to UKZN because of their social networks- friends who previously studied or are currently studying at UKZN. Mukwege (DRC) came to UKZN in 2012 because his cousin and twin sister are studying at UKZN Westville campuses. Abidemi's (Nigeria) friend facilitated the admission process and guided her in the student visa requirements.

Shade's (Nigeria) friends from the time of her studying for a master's degree are currently studying at UKZN. Aagha (Kenya)'s friend, a former PhD student at UKZN and a lecturer at UKZN, assisted her with a research topic that helped her get a supervisor. Similarly, Amos's (Zimbabwe) friend assisted him in integrating into South Africa by picking him up at King Shaka International Airport, renting an apartment before he arrived and taking him to various places to familiarize himself with social norms. International students in this study chose UKZN because they have friends (social networks) at UKZN who could facilitate their adaptation and they did not know anyone at other South African universities. The reasons why international students were receptive to coming to UKZN stemmed from the following pull factors in UKZN: UKZN's ranking, fee remission and UKZN's superior ICT facilities and internet speeds.

Social networks assisted international students by offering social and economic support as newcomers in South Africa. The roles performed by the social networks assisted the students in acclimitising with ease, and adapting. The social network facilitates international students' mobility leading to the cumulative causation of migration (Massey et al., 1987). As a result of the cumulative causation of migration, the number of international students from African countries keeps increasing at UKZN.

Social networks are also forms of social capital, as highlighted by Massey et al. (1993). Massey et al. (1993) mentioned that relationships between people are social capital, and the resources from the interaction leads to forms of support initiating cumulative causation of migration. Social networks ease the migration process by providing information on UKZN. The mobility of international students to UKZN is facilitated by their social networks, who provide diverse information to them. UKZN was recommended to international students in this study by their social network. Also, through their social networks, students quickly obtained accurate information on the migration process, which facilitated UKZN admission, SAQA evaluation, payment of student medical cover, airport pick up, accommodation search and integration into the South African way of life. This is evident in the significant increase in international students at UKZN, especially those from other African countries.

f) Access to Superior Infrastructure and Facilities

Gaining access to superior infrastructures such as LANs, internet, Wi-Fi, and constant electricity enhanced international students' research at UKZN. Inadequate infrastructure (internet, Wi-Fi, ICTs) was a push factor for international students in their home country, which was addressed by the availability of superior infrastructure and facilities at UKZN was a pull factor.

g) Cheaper Cost of living in South Africa

Given that, international students studying at UKZN are involved in South-South migration, South Africa's inexpensive cost of living is significant compared to other Global North countries.

h) UKZN's timeous three-year PhD Completion

Another valuable new insight theorized from the study is that UKZN's three-year PhD completion correspondingly addressed the lengthy time to complete a PhD as a push factor.

6.6 Analysis linked to Push-Pull Theory

This section analyzes the data from the interviews and FGD on the push-pull factors which propelled students to migrate to South Africa against a background of push-pull theories (Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

6.6.1. Everett Lee's (1966) Push and Pull Theory

The study's findings correspond with Lee's (1966) theory. Lee postulates that migrants' home country circumstances, namely the push factors force them to leave their home country. Lee's push factors are famine, drought, political instability, persecution, slavery, forced labour, poor medical care, natural disasters, discrimination and civil war. Some of the push-pull factors mentioned in Lee's (1966) theory apply to international PhD students at UKZN. The study reveals how international first-year PhD students are 'pushed' from their home country due to unfavorable conditions and 'pulled' into South Africa, particularly UKZN, due to favorable conditions. These study's findings indicate that the home country's economic crisis in the DRC was caused by political instability and war. Also, Lee's (1966) push-pull theory posits that migrants are pulled to the host country because of numerous factors such as employment opportunities, better living conditions, education, improved health care, attractive climate, security and social network. The study's findings tally with Lee's theory because international PhD students are pulled to South Africa and specifically UKZN because of financial incentives: fee remission and student job opportunities, a cheaper cost of living in South Africa and social networks.

Likewise, the findings of this study tally with Lee's personal factors. These are migrant education, knowledge of the host country and social networks, which either facilitate or hinder migration. From the study's findings, it can be inferred that personal factors such as international PhD students' previous education evaluation by SAQA, knowledge of South Africa/UKZN and social networks facilitate such migration and do not hinder it. Regarding personal factors such as South Africa/UKZN, international PhD students are aware of UKZN because they searched several

universities before choosing UKZN. International students are also aware of UKZN ranking, fees remission, and living costs in South Africa by conducting an internet search. In addition, personal factors like social network play a crucial role in the migration decision of international PhD students studying at UKZN. The social network promotes UKZN as a study destination for international PhD students. The social network assists international students to settle on arrival in South Africa and offers social support. The study's findings also highlighted how international first-year PhD students are 'pushed' from their home country due to unfavorable conditions and 'pulled' into South Africa, particularly to UKZN, due to favourable conditions.

a) UKZN Students' jobs: a path to Social capital & Professional acclimatization

Beside studying, the benefit of being a PhD student at UKZN was professional acclimatization and access to social capital. Part-time work, such as tutors, contract lecturers and contract markers, enhances international students' social capital and competence for future academic roles. This is in addition to developing their soft skills. Nsanganwimana (2018) emphasized that the human capital of PhD students is developed during the PhD through socialization that develops and integrates PhD students with the standards, norms, and expectations of their university, faculty, department, and research groups. Nsanganwimana (2018) notes that socialization through the PhD orientates PhD students to fit into multiple intertwined roles. Olabode's (Nigeria, FGD5) perspective aligns with Nsanganwimana's (2018) view of fitting into multiple roles. The research skills garnered during the PhD would equip Olabode's (Nigeria, FGD) to contribute to any country as a researcher, post-doctoral scholar or lecturer.

Additionally, the human capital of international students is developed from on-the-job training working as contract lecturers, tutors, and markers. The data suggests that (31.2%, n=5) participants were employed at UKZN in student jobs. Participants, like Masimba (Zimbabwe), was a tutor at UKZN. Chimanga (DRC) was a lecturer and Mukwege (DRC), a tutor. Olabode (FGD5, Nigeria) worked in multiple positions as a contract lecturer, marker and tutor. Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe), a tutor. Also, international PhD students are assets to UKZN because their knowledge and skills are valuable to UKZN in achieving its teaching and research outcomes. This is evident in the students 'role as a part-time workforce of UKZN. It is evident that being a PhD student at UKZN, provides

access to social capital at UKZN. Bourdieu (1986, p.247) defines social capital as the sum of actual or potential resources resulting from institutionalized interactions due to common recognition and familiarity. International students' access to social capital because of a long-lasting network of associations from knowledge and skills through the PhD education in UKZN.

b) International students at UKZN: building Social Capital in South Africa

International students at UKZN are also willing to remain in South Africa as permanent residents and contribute to the economy of South Africa due to their enhanced human capital. Mukwege (DRC), who was once used on a study permit before changing to Permanent Residence [PR]. This is also evident in international students who are working in jobs such as tutors, contract lecturers and contract markers, thus contributing to fulfilling UKZN's teaching needs.

6.6.2. Extending on Mazzarol and Soutar's Theory

The study's findings are congruent with Mazzarol and Soutar's push-pull theory specific to international students' migration. Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) theory was context-specific to international students from Asia, Indonesia, Taiwan, China, and India on how international students choose study destinations through three decision-making stages.

The study's findings also reveal that international students at UKZN are involved in three decision-making stages during the migration process and university selection. In stage one, the decision-making process, international PhD students are propelled to leave their home country because of numerous push factors, notably the economic factor. In this study, the economic factors are unemployment, lack of job security, poor salary structure, and insufficient student scholarships. Hence, the economic situation propels such students' migration to find employment in South Africa. In the second stage of the decision-making process, as Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, p.4) highlighted, international students consider several study destinations based on pull factors that make such study destinations attractive. From the study's findings, international PhD students at UKZN also weigh several South African universities based on several pull factors. In the stage three of the decision-making process, international students finally select a university from various competitor universities based on additional 'pull' factors.

Based on pull factors, international PhD students choose to study at UKZN out of the 26 public South African universities. The pull factors that lure international PhD students to UKZN are fee remission, the cost of living in South Africa, the social network, availability of superior infrastructure/facilities, the medium of instruction being English and reduced travel time to the home country. The most significant pull factor is the UKZN fee remission. The commonality that cuts across the participants is that their migration is primarily caused by unfavourable circumstances in the home country and favorable circumstances in South Africa/UKZN.

Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) theory, on the three-levels of decision-making, also applies to African international students at UKZN. Decision-making in this study demonstrates that in stage one, international PhD students in UKZN are propelled to leave their home country because of numerous push factors. These push factors are economic situation, inadequate infrastructure/facilities, unavailability of specific PhD courses and lengthy time to complete a PhD. In the second stage, international PhD students at UKZN consider many options in terms of the host country and host university to select based on consideration of several pull factors. As shown in this study, in deciding which country and university to select, international PhD students at UKZN consider several study destinations both in the Global North (USA, Germany, Canada) and in the Global South specifically in South Africa (the University of Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town). They also consider the host country and university pull factors in the second stage.

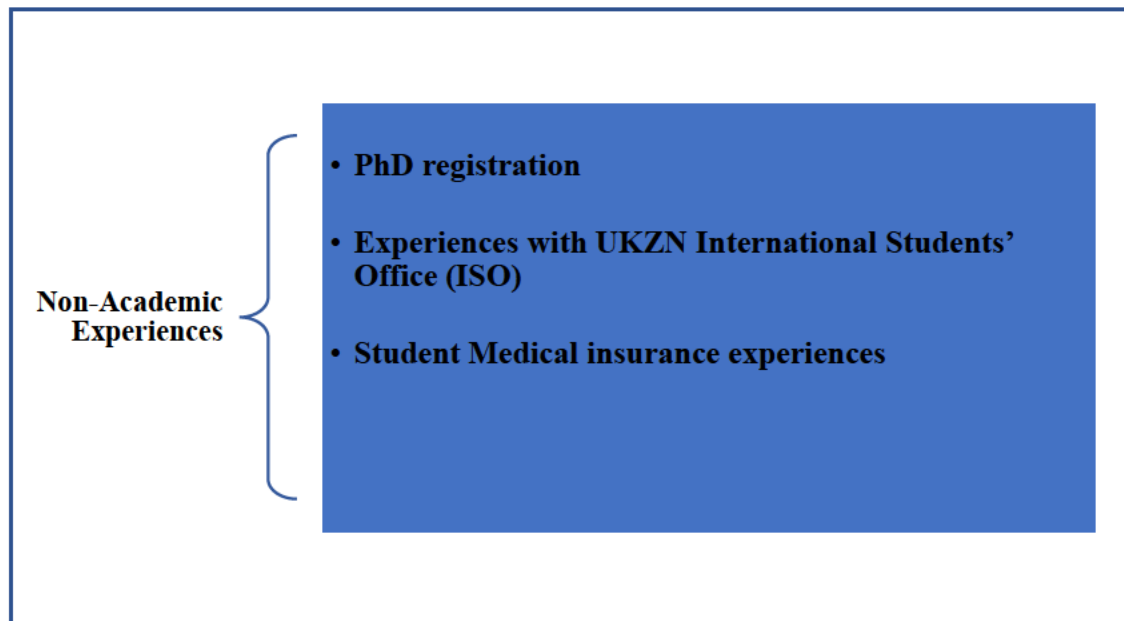
However, in the third stage of the decision-making process, international PhD students at UKZN eventually chose UKZN due to additional pull factors (UKZN fee remission, ranking, social networks) when compared to several competitor universities in South Africa (the University of Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town).

6.7. First-Year Study Experiences of International PhD Students at UKZN

This section pulls together the findings with the literature and theorization. The findings indicate that while international PhD students are studying at UKZN, they have diverse experiences that are combination of negative or positive experiences. The participants' experiences fall into academic and non-academic experiences. During the first-year PhD, the participants' non-academic experiences fall under the following; PhD registration, experiences with UKZN

International Students' Office (ISO); and international students' medical insurance experiences as depicted in figure 4.

Figure 4. Non-Academic Experiences of International PhD Students' at UKZN



6.7.1. Non-Academic Experiences of International PhD Students at UKZN

During the first-year PhD, the participants' non-academic experiences fall under the following: PhD registration, experiences with UKZN International Students' Office (ISO); and international students' medical insurance experiences.

6.7.1.2. First-year PhD Registration

A majority of participants (75%, n=12), reported a positive response about their first-year PhD registration. The postgraduate officer plays a critical role in the nature of the experiences of international PhD students. Gbenga (Nigeria), described how the Edgewood campus postgraduate officer assisted him during his first-year PhD registration. Gbenga also emphasized how postgraduate officers collaborate with returning international PhD students to help new students adapt to the environment at UKZN. Blessing (Nigeria) explains that the postgraduate officers at the Edgewood campus are supportive and approachable with information. Similarly, Abidemi

(Nigeria, also mentioned that the postgraduate officers at Edgewood are welcoming. Abidemi echoed that because of the postgraduate's officers' attitude; she (Abidemi, Nigeria), was encouraged to also assist new international PhD students by receiving them at the airport and encourages prospective international students to study at UKZN. Majority of the participants, 75%, mentioned a positive response about their first-year PhD registration. The postgraduate officer plays a critical role in the nature of the experiences of international PhD students. As echoed by Gbenga (Nigeria), Blessing (Nigeria) and, Abidemi, (Nigeria). Higher-quality service yields a positive student experience, resulting in improved satisfaction (Cong, 2017).

The study also demonstrates that besides the ISO, other designated UKZN units provide services to international students such as the Students Service division to assist international students in academic and non-academic matters. The UKZN Students' Services comprise six departments namely, student finance/ funding, student residence affairs, disability support and HIV/AIDS Programme, student health/Sport department, and student governance and leadership development (UKZN, 2021). The findings revealed that the first-year PhD registration at UKZN involves a cyclical process that involves international students 'clearing' themselves at the international students' office (ISO). The ISO offices check international students' compliance with student medical insurance and their study visa to ensure they fulfill immigration conditions. International Student Services (ISS) are programs and services offered to students through a specific unit to assist and support international students in academic, cultural, and social transitions while studying abroad (Ravichandran & Perez-Encinas, 2020) and these services are beneficial in welcoming students and assisting with their integration.

The study's finding also reveals that international students engage with UKZN student finance to ascertain whether tuition fees or outstanding debt is paid. Gbenga (Nigeria) states that the Edgewood campus postgraduate officer was very helpful during the registration process. Gbenga (Nigeria) mentioned how the postgraduate officer *'assists international students by calling other international PhD students to assist new international PhD students when they arrive'.* ...' International Student Services (ISS) are programs and services offered to students through a specific unit to assist and support international students in academic, cultural, and social transitions while studying abroad (Ravichandran & Perez-Encinas, 2020). Based on the study's findings, Cong (2017, p.17) stated that services in higher education institutions are divided into two

categories: core level services and augmented level services. They explain that core level services comprise teaching quality, expert faculty and dependability of administrative staff. In light of this, Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.373) underscored that departmental structures enhance students' experience. They found that PhD students were supported at the departmental level to complete their program timeously. Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.373) define department structures as financial support, supportive relationships with supervisors, faculty, peers, and information types (orientation courses, skill development).

6.7.1.3. Experiences with the UKZN International Students' Office (ISO)

The International Student Office (ISO) plays a crucial role in the experiences of international students. Most of the participants (75%) were dissatisfied with their experiences and services with the International Student Office (ISO). Vimbai (FGD4, Zimbabwe) indicated that staff at the UKZN ISO are insensitive to the plight of international PhD students' especially in the area of accommodation, because ISO priority is international students' study visa compliance. Similarly, from the findings, it is deduced that the most critical need of international PhD students in their first-year PhD, are the services provided by the UKZN International Students' Office (ISO). At the same time, other experiences such as the PhD registration process and international students' medical insurance were also deemed to be important.

a) UKZN International Students' Office (ISO): Helping with accommodation needs

The study shows that the significant non-academic experience for international students in UKZN, is accommodation. Accommodation is one of the immediate needs of international PhD students, which affects the quality of their experience at UKZN. The findings reveal that international students expect more assistance from ISO and the Students' Service Division regarding accommodation. In this case, privately renting accommodation can be expensive for international students, especially renting accommodation prior to their arrival in South Africa. Students' experiences pertained to a limited understanding of South Africa's procedure for

renting, the language barrier, rental fraud and not being present to view properties. In this case, ISO may assist students in areas such as accommodation and confirming their proof of accommodation to the relevant immigration authorities. Thus, assistance and guidance from ISO in accommodation alleviates the transition hiccups to living and studying abroad and minimizes stress for students looking for accommodation in another country. University involvement in accommodation is vital to students 'quality experience with UKZN services. Data from FGD suggests that UKZN underestimate the depth of the accommodation challenge because it appears that ISO's top priority is international students' clearance and study visa compliance.

From the findings, it is deduced that the most important experience and need of international PhD students in the first-year PhD are the services provided by the UKZN International Students' Office (ISO) especially assistance with their accommodation. While other experience such as PhD registration and international students' medical insurance experiences were also important. The ISO is a critical contact point for first-year PhD students before their arrival to UKZN. Based on the dissatisfaction with non-academic experiences, especially with UKZN ISO and international students' medical insurance, it appears there is a disconnect between international students' pre-enrollment expectations and their actual non-academic experiences. This also suggests that the International Students' Office plays a critical role in meeting the needs and expectations of international students in areas such as registration, accommodation assistance, immigration and cultural activities. UKZN's ISO and SSD are devoted to supporting international students in their academic and non-academic issues. The participants also underscored the importance of UKZN's ISO in designing quality services to meet students' needs and expectations efficiently.

The study also demonstrates that aside from the ISO, other designated UKZN units provide services to international students. This includes the Students Service Division (SSD), which assists international students in non-academic matters. The Students Service Division (SSD) comprises six departments: student finance/ funding, student residence affairs, disability support and HIV/AIDS programme, student health/sports department, and student governance and leadership Development (UKZN, 2021).

In the light of these findings, the International Student Office is an administrative unit that exclusively provides international students services (Cong, 2017, p. 13). A similar study by Chaguluka, Ramraj and Amolo (2018, p.439) found discrepancies between international postgraduate students' expectations and the services offered at the UKZN Westville campus. They discovered that alumni and cohorts of international postgraduate students at the UKZN Westville campus were dissatisfied with the services provided, which made them discourage prospective students from studying at UKZN. They further indicated that dissatisfaction with services were gaps in the service quality aspects such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy to the situation of international students. Qadeer, Javed, Manzoor, Wu Min, and Zaman (2021, p.2) classify international students as customers and education as a service. Qadeer et al. (2021, p.2) examined the services offered to international students in developed countries (America, Europe, Australia) and developing countries (Asia and Africa) in areas such as accommodation, academic, sociocultural, discrimination, health, safety, and support services). They buttress that service quality influences the satisfaction of students. In the university context, student satisfaction emanates from the appraisal of a student's educational experience (Cong, 2017, p.16).

Qadeer et al. (2021, p.2) explain that customer's satisfaction is influenced by service quality. They explain that customer satisfaction is linked to the difference between an individual's pre-choice expectations and the service's post-choice performance as perceived by the customer. They stressed that if the customer's expectations are met or exceeded, they are satisfied; however, the customer is dissatisfied when perceived performance falls short of expectations. Further, they state that service quality is the customer's assessment of an organization's overall superiority or excellence. Chaguluka, Ramraj and Amolo (2018, p.440) defined service quality as the customer's perspective about an organization and its services' relative inferiority or superiority to competitors. Chaguluka, Ramraj and Amolo (2018, p.440) state that service quality's focus is creating a positive perspective of the service offering and superiority of the service processes to competitors. Chaguluka, Ramraj and Amolo (2018, p.440) also contend that a university's reputation may suffer if it fails to meet international students' expectations. Consequently, prospective international students may not recognize the university as a quality education destination. They also suggest that a positive perception of university services and students' expectations should correspond with

their experience in their university. Service quality is based on experience quality dimensions because it is unmeasurable (Cong, 2017, p.16).

b). *Are there Discrepancies in Services offered by UKZN ISO to international PhD students?*

An ISA (participant 3) describes how the ISO shows a preference for international PhD students from Europe compared to international students from Africa, indicating a discrepancy in services offered to international PhD students. The ISA (participant 3) discrepancy in services offered to international student in this context is that European international students are picked up at the airport by the UKZN International Student Office. It cannot be assumed that European international students are favoured over African international students in this context. The findings reveal that the reason European international students are picked up at the airport alludes to *‘International PhD students from Europe are more specific on the date of their arrival that is why they are picked up unlike international PhD students from Africa who are not specific, or in instances whereby arrangements have been made they would decide their friends would pick them’* (UKZN ISO Representative). This does not indicate discrepancy in services offered to international PhD students or discrimination because European students may not have the same social network support (friends and family) as African international students, which makes it easier for African international students to migrate to South Africa/UKZN compared to European students.

c). *Does the quality of Services provided by UKZN ISO matter?*

The quality of services rendered by ISO matters and it is affected by staff capacity. However, the participants echoed that more programmes other than international students’ day and orientation week are needed. The participants’ underscored improvement in the ISO programmes, such as international students’ day, which showcases different international students’ cultures critical for students’ integration and fostering student diversity. These views corroborate Cong's (2017, p. 6) findings on international students’ satisfaction with educational services and adjustment in USA higher education institutions. Cong (2017, p.7) likened international students to ‘customers in the education sector who need high-quality services’. They also likened higher education institutions to business owners who sell educational services. He echoed that higher education institutions

should provide international students with unique services to help them adjust to the host country's culture and minimize their challenges. Previous studies mentioned that customers of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities have varying expectations and perceptions of the services provided (Cong, 2017, p.18). According to Cong (2017, p.18) an efficient means of satisfying customers during service interactions is to offer them unexpected pleasing experiences. This suggests that a university that provides high-quality service is likely to meet the needs of international PhD students and their expectations while also remaining economically competitive in the higher education industry. Assistance provided to international students directly impacts their satisfaction level and experience at UKZN.

Service quality is an important aspect of the experiences of international students. Data from the ISA also indicates ISO's lack of empathy and slow responsiveness due to limited awareness of international students' related problems because if they do (ISOs), they would '*not maltreat international students*'. Some participants shared unpleasant experiences of international student clearance and registration linked to the attitude of ISO staff: '*In UKZN, the focus is on International student clearance*'. Empathy is the extent staff understand customer's specific needs, care and interest of customers at heart (Chaguluka et al., 2018). Responsiveness also involves addressing ambiguity, customer complaints, needs and flexibility in service delivery. Expounding further, Chaguluka, Ramraj and Amolo (2018) clarify that assurance implies that staff displays courtesy and trust to customers.

Empathy is the extent staff understand customers specific needs, care and interest of customers at heart (Chaguluka et al., 2018). The study argues that the service quality offered by UKZN ISO did not meet their needs and expectations. The service quality is affected by the limited staff at UKZN ISO, as acknowledged by the UKZN ISO representative at the ISA dialogue. The ISO officer reported that the ISO has insufficient staff because three staff work at the five UKZN campuses. The ISO also mentioned that the International Students Association [ISA] works closely with the ISO. The data from the ISA suggest that the participants were dissatisfied with the services offered by UKZN ISO. It could be inferred from the participants that they are customers because they pay for student medical insurance, UKZN registration fees and UKZN student residence. Service quality is critical in education, so international students should be treated like customers

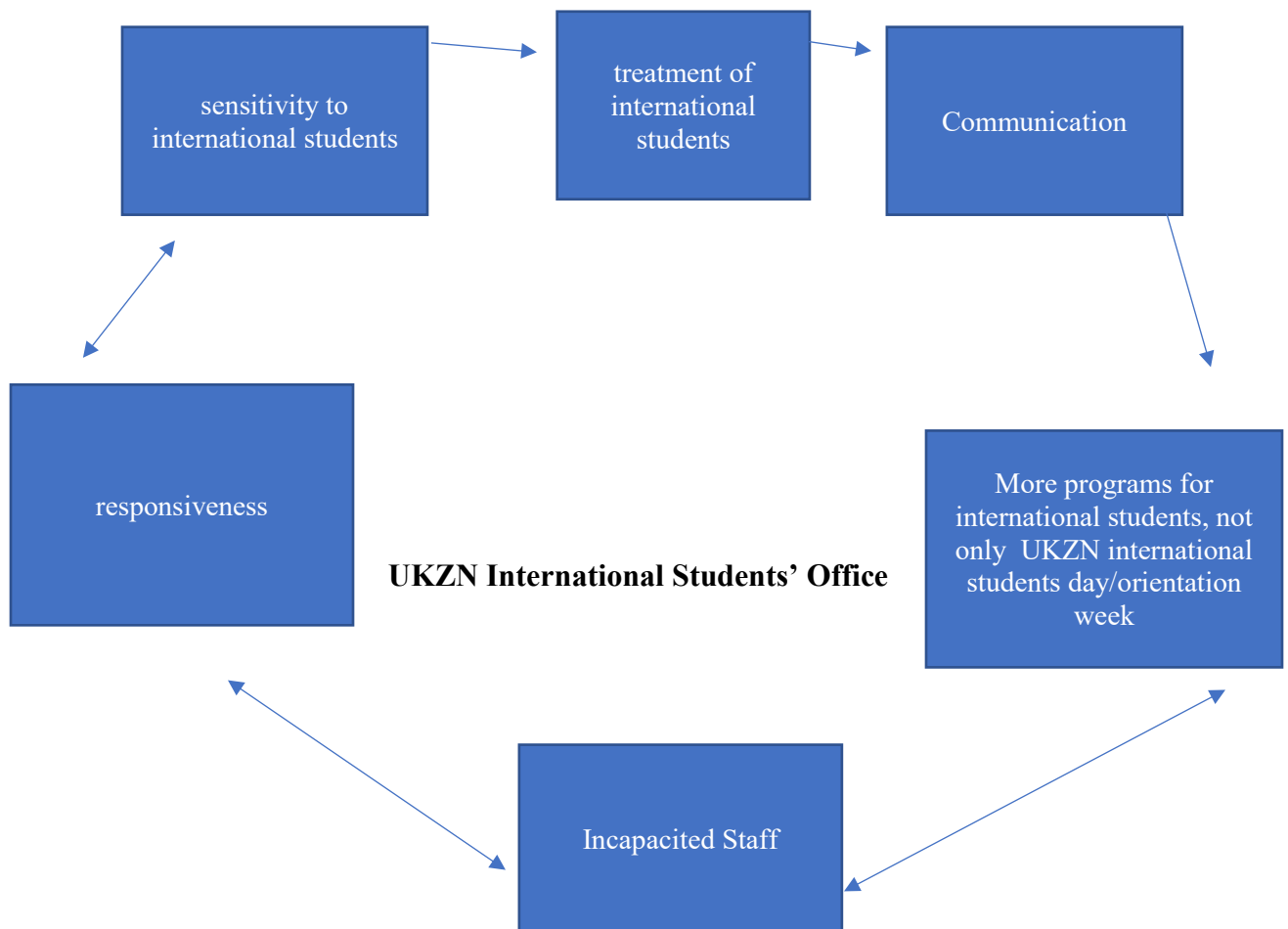
because they pay for services at UKZN. The non-academic experience of international student is impacted by service quality. The study argued that the quality of service provided by UKZN ISO alludes to being incapacitated to meet international students' needs and expectations because they have limited staff (3 staff serving the 5 UKZN campus), which negatively impacts the quality of services provided to international students. The quality of services provided by UKZN's ISO cannot be reliable, empathetic and responsive to international students because the ISO are short-staffed.

Echoing these findings, Mlambo (2017, p.67) found that international students at UKZN, at the Pietermaritzburg campus, were dissatisfied with how the UKZN International students' office does not assist international students. The study's findings are consistent with those of studies by Olujobi (2014), which highlighted the significant role International Offices play in international students' experiences at African universities, namely the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University. She found that the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University meets international students' needs and expectations by conducting regular surveys to speak about their experiences. She suggests that the International Student Offices should employ open-minded and multicultural trained staff in ISO offices. The response from the participants reveals that UKZN ISO was insensitive to the plights of international students.

Chaguluka et al (2018) contend that service quality is an essential aspect that UKZN should address in its drive to internationalize and recruit international postgraduate students. They also stated that public universities need quality service to meet students' needs and expectations efficiently. They further stressed that providing a high level of service at UKZN will increase student satisfaction and enable UKZN to actualize its internationalization objectives. Chaguluka et al. (2018, p.439) assert that when postgraduate students are satisfied with the quality of services at UKZN, they become 'word-of-mouth' agents to other prospective students. Students should be treated as customers (Naidoo, 2021, p.9). An organization's services should satisfy the customer (Naidoo, 2021, p.9). On the contrary, Orth (2015, p.45) found that Australian universities have a range of services to support international students during their studies to make their lives easier. They contend that international students do not utilize students' services because they are unaware and have difficulty accessing them. Qadeer et al. (2021, p.4) also found that the international

Student Office is essential unit in Chinese universities, and international students interact with them from admission until they complete their program. They also buttressed that ISO's services to international students, such as registration assistance, accommodation assistance, counseling services, cultural activities, tuition, and scholarship services, are critical in ensuring academic success and university experience.

Figure 5. Framework on Service Quality provided by UKZN ISO to international students at UKZN Howard and Edgewood campus



i. International Students as UKZN's Customers

Figure 5 above captures the service quality provided by UKZN ISO to international students at UKZN Howard and Edgewood campus. There are perceptions of insensitivity to the plight of international students, unfair treatment of international students, poor communication, a lack of responsiveness, incapacitated staff and the need for more programs for international students, not only the UKZN's international students' day/orientation week. Figure 5 reveal that the non-academic experiences of international students regarding services provided by UKZN ISO is crucial in the first-year PhD study and influence the students' adaptation to the host environment. Analyzing these findings according to Chaguluka et al. (2018), in terms of the service quality dimension, suggests that service dimensions such as reliability, assurance, empathy and assurance are of great value and this current study expands on this. Chaguluka et al.'s (2018) service quality dimension framework was applicable to UKZN Westville. The framework is a valuable lens to analyze international students' experience with UKZN's ISO at the Howard and Edgewood campuses.

Chaguluka et al. (2018) had previously underscored the service quality provided by UKZN's ISO to international students at the UKZN Westville campus. Chaguluka et al. (2018) clarify that reliability is the degree to which the service provider delivers service consistently, timeously and accurately within the time frame. They state that responsiveness is staff's willingness and readiness to assist customers promptly. Responsiveness also involves addressing ambiguity, customer complaints, needs and flexibility in service delivery. Expounding further, Chaguluka et al. (2018) clarify that assurance implies that staff displays courtesy and trust to customers. They also distinguish that empathy is the extent to which staff understands customers specific needs, care, and has customers' interest at heart. In this present study, this finding resonates with Chaguluka et al. (2018).

The experiences of international students in the present study were similar to those of international students at the UKZN Westville campus. This was in areas such as a lack of empathy and reliability, except for poor communication, limited staff capacity and more programs needed for international students- these are novel to this present study. Service quality is an essential aspect of the experiences of international students. The present study, parallels Chaguluka et al.'s (2018)

study on services provided to international students at the UKZN Westville campus. Interestingly, the present study reveals there is a mismatch between services provided to international students at the Howard and Edgewood campus. Like Chaguluka et al.'s (2018) study this study revealed that UKZN ISO's services was unreliable and responsiveness because services were not delivered consistently and timeously. This is evident in the poor communication, unresponsiveness and incapacitated ISO staff. Another finding from the study suggests that ISO is insensitive to the plight of international students, especially in the area of accommodation.

Consequently, international students at UKZN want to be treated as customers by UKZN's ISO in aspects such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. International students expect quality services based on consistency, reliability, timeous response, assurance, and empathy.

6.7.1.4. Student Medical Insurance

The study also found that the participants were unhappy with the annual increment in student medical insurance. The participants were also dissatisfied with the limited medical services that international students could access and limited health services. The participants' responses suggest that they were unhappy with the two health insurance services recommended by UKZN; Momentum and Compcare. Due to the economic importance of international students to host universities and countries, previous research suggests that international students' experiences should be handled as a customer satisfaction matter (Qadeer et al., 2021; Chaguluka et al., 2018; Cong, 2017; Mlambo, 2017). Interestingly, Abidemi (FGD3, Nigeria) mentioned Momentum Health insurance services, such as repatriating deceased international students to their home countries. According to an article by the World Education Services (WES) (2019), international students enrolled in the USA with F-1 visas are not required to have health insurance. The report further states that most USA universities offer student insurance policies and allow international students to choose health insurance. The report also underscores the importance of health insurance because of healthcare costs in the USA.

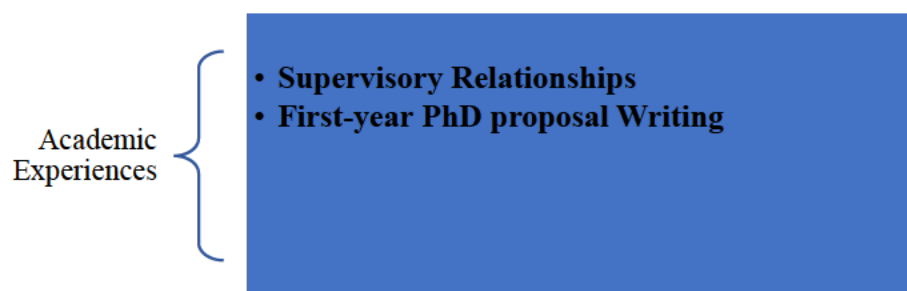
Findings also reveal that female participants have access to free public health services in South African public hospitals without necessarily using their student medical insurance. This alludes to South African public hospital's free primary health services [Antenatal for pregnant women, free

immunization for their children under the age of six and other free health care services]. The female participants also positively rated South African public hospitals because they have access to free antenatal care and deliver babies' without paying any money. Michael et al.,(2017) argue that international students are unprepared for expensive and unexpected medical bills. They further explain that there are numerous treatment alternatives in the USA, such as traditional providers like urgent care centres, walk-in clinics, student health centres, private doctor's offices and hospitals (Michael. et al., 2017).

6.8. Academic Experiences of International PhD Students at UKZN

The study revealed that numerous factors influence international students' academic experiences at UKZN during their PhD study. These factors include supervisory relationships and the first-year PhD proposal writing. Their experiences were dependent on the type of academic support offered to them in their research. Positive experiences include benefitting from UKZN PhD training, boot camps, workshops and PhD Cohort that addressed the challenges of writing a PhD proposal. The PhD workshops equipped international students with research skills to address referencing, plagiarism and data analysis. Figure 6 below summarises the academic experiences of international PhD students' at UKZN

Figure 6: Academic Experiences of International PhD Students' at UKZN



6.8.1. The nature of the Supervisory Relationship

Supervisors play a critical role in the experiences of international PhD students during the first-year of the PhD. Few of the participants reiterated that the supervisory relationship influenced their study experiences. The supervisory relationship could be affected by the supervisor's workload. As in the case of Lekan (Nigeria), who explains how his supervisor's workload as the academic research chair and acting Head of Department affects timely feedback for his thesis. Supervision by supervisors with limited expertise and knowledge also lengthens the timely completion of PhD at UKZN. The demography in chapter five reveals that two participants were in the 5th year (6.3%, n=1) and 4th year (6.3%, n=1).

Disagreements with supervisors on the direction of a PhD research and research methodology could result in friction working together and an eventual change of supervisor, as the case of Daraki (Zimbabwe) suggest. Also, the supervisor's attitude in providing timely feedback on PhD thesis is critical. In light of this, Oumarou and Uddin (2017) surveyed forty African international PhD students studying in the Middle East. He found that many students had difficulty choosing a research topic. Oumarou and Uddin (2017, p.83) describe the process involved in writing a research proposal and how PhD students could change their supervisors. The caliber of a supervisor, either a professor or Dr, also matters in the supervisory process. Like Mukwege (DRC), who prefers not to be supervised by a *'professor because they have much workload'*.

The participants views corroborate Akala's (2021, p.3) view who reported that relationships exist in a supervisory encounter. He also noted that productive dissertation experience only occurs due to the supervisor's and PhD students' significant efforts. Due to these, Akala 2021(p.1) suggests that university management should address supervisors' concerns about increased workload and other learning experiences. Gao (2021) also found that the supervisory relationship between PhD students and the supervisor(s) played a vital role in the experience of such students. Gao (2021, p.509) found that some students had positive, equal, and collegial relationships with their supervisors. In the meantime, challenges may arise due to unequal power dynamics caused by friction and misalignments between research and expectations. Qadeer et al. (2021, p.3) reiterate that international students face various challenges due to their unfamiliarity with the new academic system and the demands of new skills. They echo that the quality of teaching and easy access to

faculty influence student satisfaction in the academic experience.

This study's finding is mirrored in Sverdlik et al.'s (2018) study, which reiterated the importance of supervisors in the PhD experience and the timely completion of a PhD. Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.364) found that university factors such as supervisors and university regulations affect the PhD experience. They found that supervisory aspects such as the extent to which supervisors defend their students' in contentious situations, productivity, respect for timelines, helping students with job opportunities, and openness to different research approaches are critical. The academic status of the supervisor also impacted the supervisory relationship. Ndayambaje's (2018, p.59) study on international PhD students at Kenyatta University in Kenya shows minimal interaction between the supervisor and PhD student, insufficient supervisor's guidance and inadequate supervisor's feedback which affects the PhD experience. The supervisory relationship is critical if one considers that one of the push factors for international PhD students exiting their home country is insufficient expert supervisors. Supervision is not limited only to the academic context but includes complex social and human relationships (Ndayambaje et al., 2018, p.59). Akala (2021) discusses the difficulties that PhD supervisors face supervising PhD students at South African universities. His findings revealed that PhD supervisors faced various challenges, such as overworking and time constraints. He asserts that supervisors influence timely completion of PhD studies timely.

6.8.2. International PhD Students' First-Year PhD Proposal Writing

Writing a proposal during the first-year of the PhD could be challenging for international PhD students because of English language proficiency, research topic, and previous research training. Half of the participants, 56.1% (n=9), revealed that writing a PhD proposal during the first-year PhD was challenging. Specifically, participants from the DRC mentioned that the French language, their home country's native language, which affected their writing skills. Mukwege (DRC) stated that communicating in French is distinct from English. Mukwege mentions that he writes in French and translates to English when writing. Buttressing these findings, Chatterjee-Padmanabhan and Nielsen (2018) echoed that understanding academic writing conventions in a new educational context can be especially challenging for international PhD students who speak English as a second language. They also echoed that research difficulties encountered by PhD students emanate from conducting research and unfamiliarity with research writing style conventions for academic

purposes.

Equally, Masimba (Zimbabwe) stated that he had challenges because of the topic he chose for his PhD. Vimbai (Zimbabwe) asserted that the first-year PhD was difficult for him because he was unsure what to do as a PhD student. He wasted six months from his first-year PhD because he could not write a proposal. Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.364) state that PhD requires planning, revision, structure and control. In the same tone, the previous research training that international PhD students received from their Master's education affected their ability to draft a PhD proposal in the first-year PhD. Blessing (Nigeria) describes how the Master's programme at a Nigerian university did not prepare her adequately to conduct research. Blessing mentioned that because her Master's programme did not adequately prepare her for research, she experienced difficulties with references and paraphrasing in her first year of PhD. However, Blessing stated that the PhD Cohort offered by UKZN immensely helped her overcome these writing problems.

a) *Expanding international students' research capital*

The interview and FGD revealed that PhD students studying at UKZN also accumulate and expand their human capital. This occurs by attending UKZN postgraduate workshops, PhD Cohort PhD training and having the benefit of well-equipped infrastructure: dedicated PhD research centres with the necessary software to support research. The benefit of such training is evident in the statement of Blessing (Nigeria), who was equipped to conduct a literature search, references, and plagiarism. Such PhD Cohort training is valuable to Blessing whose Master's training programme in a university in her home country did not adequately prepare her for research depth at PhD level. Commenting on the impact of her Master's program on her research capacity, she expressed that *'the Masters training programme in Nigeria does not prepare you adequately enough to conduct research...in my first year PhD, there were challenges with finding literature, references and paraphrasing termed as plagiarism.... The PhD Cohort PhD training greatly assisted me to address these issues'*.

This is similar to Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe), who also mentioned that he learned data analysis using various programs at the UKZN PhD workshop. *'The PhD training taught me how to analyse data'* (Amos, FGD6, Zimbabwe). Equally, Abidemi (Nigeria) highlighted how the PhD workshop/seminar equipped her to cite references properly using software and paraphrase to avoid plagiarism. Her view suggests *'When I attended the PhD Cohort, I learnt how to address plagiarism and the proper way to reference'* (Abidemi, Nigeria)

This suggests that UKZN's PhD workshop/seminar develops international students' research capital. Nsanganwimana (2018) emphasized that the research capital of PhD students is developed during the PhD through 'research socialization' that develops and integrates PhD students with the standards, norms and expectations of their university, faculty, department, and research groups.

Akala (2021) stressed that PhD students encounter problems of research design, data collection and thesis writing in addition to their personal challenges. Akala (2021, p.3) note that the problems could be attributed to a lack of knowledge and mentorship. Chatterjee-Padmanabhan and Nielsen (2018) reiterate the importance of a thesis-writing group (TWG) in guiding PhD students in research proposal. She found that before PhD students attended thesis-writing groups (TWG) they were trapped; however, after participating in the thesis-writing group, they gained confidence and developed the skills and information necessary to prepare for their proposal presentation. They echoed that collegial support given by a TWG is a potent pedagogical for enabling PhD students to negotiate crossing the thesis proposal boundary successfully. This suggests that the participants' inability to paraphrase and reference made them plagiarism unintentionally because they were not adequately prepared for academic writing at the Master's level in their home country university. Gbenga (Nigeria) also describes how difficult writing a PhD proposal was during the first year because of plagiarism, making prospective supervisors reject supervising him. This also underscores why international PhD students studying at South African Universities evaluate their previous qualifications by SAQA to place them on NQF educational band in South Africa.

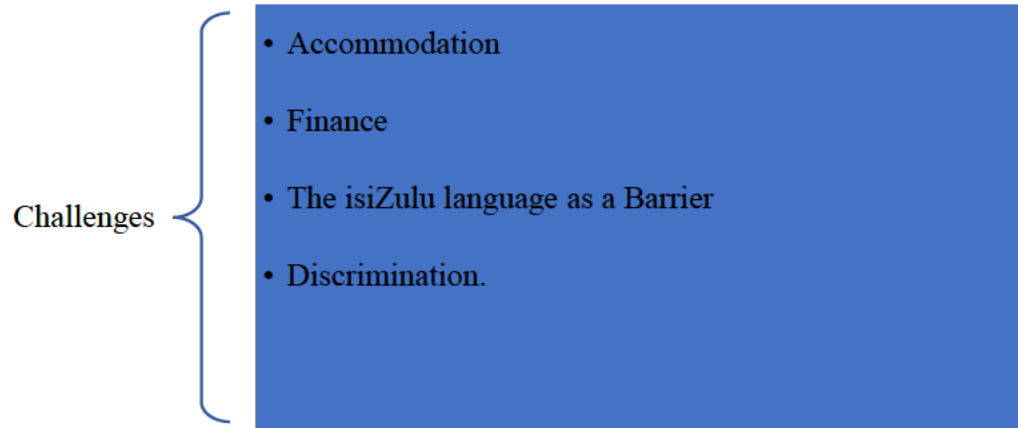
In light of the above narrative, Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.364) mention that PhD students are portrayed as independent researchers in training; they might fail at first in unstructured situations

because of self-regulation difficulties. Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.369) also found that PhD students experience challenges during the dissertation process, such as identifying a research problem and the rigors involved in conducting research, leading to frustration. Due to the difficulties of writing a PhD proposal, Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.369) emphasize that the supervisors play a crucial role in guiding, redirecting and ensuring that the dissertation is completed promptly. Drawing from study conducted amongst postgraduate students in Britain, Chien (2020) echoes that studying abroad has advantages and disadvantages. Oumarou and Uddin (2017, p.86) contend that research is tricky because it involves proper time management, setting deadlines, and committing to research.

Akala (2021) discusses the difficulties that PhD supervisors face supervising PhD students at South African universities. His findings revealed that PhD supervisors faced various challenges, such as overworking and time constraints. Akala also found that PhD students raised some pertinent issues concerning their supervisors. He asserts that supervisors influence timely completion of PhD studies timely. He also stressed that PhD students encounter problems of research design, data collection and thesis writing in addition to their personal challenges. Akala (2021, p.3) note that the problems could be attributed to a lack of knowledge and mentorship. Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.364) mention that PhD students are portrayed as independent researchers in training; they might fail at first in unstructured situations because of self-regulation difficulties. Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.369) also found that PhD students experience challenges during the dissertation process, such as identifying a research problem and the rigors involved in conducting research, leading to frustration.

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Figure 7: Challenges Encountered by International PhD students at UKZN



6.9. Major Challenges Experienced by International PhD students at UKZN

This section unpacks the challenges experienced by international students as depicted in Figure 7.

6.9.1. Financial Challenges

Financial challenge is an overarching theme that links to other challenges that international PhD students experience. The majority of the participants reported being constrained by available finances. Arguably, the financial challenge of international students is aggravated because they are self-funded. It is inferred that finance is a significant constraint that negatively affects the participants' experiences at UKZN. Masimba (Zimbabwe) mentioned how his parents temporarily assisted him with funds as a new student until he supported himself financially by working as a Tutor in UKZN. Although, Masimba (Zimbabwe) has fee remission, it is insufficient to take care of his living expenses and annual renewal of student medical insurance. To cope financially, Blessing (Nigeria), a part-time PhD student, borrowed a loan from her friends to sponsor her education at UKZN. Blessing (Nigeria) illustrated how challenging it is for a part-time student without fee remission. Blessing (Nigeria) also mentioned that she has a child studying Engineering at UKZN, which increases her financial burden at UKZN in terms of tuition fees. Mukwege (DRC) also reported that he had access to a loan as a refugee to study at UKZN.

Masimba (Zimbabwe) explained the financial challenges he had to confront, even though he received fee remission and the Vice Chancellor's (DVC) scholarship. Masimba (Zimbabwe) stated that the cost of living in South Africa is expensive. The findings reveal that UKZN also provides postgraduate scholarships like the DVC's scholarship alongside fee remission. This suggests that finance is needed for accommodation, living costs, and student medical health insurance. Also, financial challenges amplify the challenges of international students. To address the financial challenges, international students work part-time at UKZN, such as tutors, contract lecturers and contract markers. International students also coped financially by obtaining a loan, working part-time and scholarships. Compared to local PhD students who have several funding options such as loans, NRF bursaries, grants, or an acknowledgment of debt when in financial need, however, it is extremely difficult for international PhD students who have limited funding options.

Through the 'Fees Must Fall' protests, the UKZN SRC also negotiated favorable terms for local students who experienced financial challenges. The positive impact of such protests on local PhD students is that they pay low tuition fees and reduced debts. In contrast, international students pay total tuition fees compared to local PhD students, who pay 15% of their outstanding debt, up to a maximum of R10, 000 if registration is for tuition and R15,000 if registration is for tuition and accommodation.

Also, local PhD students could sign an acknowledgment of debt. In contrast, international PhD students are not eligible for loans or special consideration like local PhD students who can study with the 'acknowledgment of debt'. The study also reveals that the international students' office plays a critical role in meeting the needs and expectation of international students in areas such as registration assistance, residential assistance, counseling services and cultural activities, which is significant to maintaining a positive academic experience.

Kasese-Hara and Mugambi (2021) elucidate that compared to international students from North America and Europe, many African students in South Africa are not well-funded by their home countries. Buttressing the importance of funding, Sverdlik et al. (2018, p.364) assert that international PhD students who have access to funding complete their PhD timely and are unlikely

to drop out of the programme. They highlight that funding comes in various forms, such as loans from the government, banks, scholarships, grants, and university job opportunities like research assistantships or teaching assistantships. Sverdlik et al. also expounded that many graduates do not understand the impact of funding on their well-being and timely completion of a PhD program upon enrollment. They also emphasized that international PhD students combine family commitments and academic research, making difficult decisions on priorities and allocating resources (Sverdlik et al., 2018, p. 371). Similarly, Oumarou and Uddin (2017) examined the experience of African international PhD students studying in the Middle East. They found that funding availability and access to funding are crucial factors affecting international PhD students' experiences. They further maintain that financial support, especially scholarships, facilitates PhD progress by engaging international PhD students more rigorously in their research. They also echoed that the difficulty in accessing sustainable funding is an obstacle for international PhD students, particularly those from low-income countries. Qadeer et al. (2021, p.2) found that the Chinese government devised ways to recruit many international students by increasing scholarships. They found that in 2016, 440,000 overseas students from 205 countries studied at Chinese institutions because of these initiatives. Scholarships were awarded to 49,022 international students from 183 countries. Some of the findings of Yang (2019) also reveal that Chinese international PhD students in STEM PhD programs at Australian university encounter financial challenges. Also, international students who brought their families and children to UKZN and South Africa faced even more financial difficulty.

6.9.2. The isiZulu language as a Barrier

The participants disclosed that they had negative experiences during their first year of the PhD in the community where they live due to their inability to communicate in the isiZulu language. The language barrier affected having friends, accommodation search and accessing public healthcare. Abidemi (Nigeria) reported that local students usually speak English and switch to the isiZulu language. Abidemi (Nigeria) echoed that it is embarrassing when she visited the hospital for antenatal and the nurses spoke in isiZulu language that she did not understand. Abidemi (Nigeria) mentioned that it is awkward to ask nurses or other pregnant South African women attending the antenatal clinic for an interpretation of the nurse's communication. Abidemi reported that the nurses were insensitive and suggested that she learns the isiZulu language. Similarly, Chimanga

(DRC) underscored the importance of the isiZulu language in research because the UKZN PhD abstract has to be written in the isiZulu language.

Damilola (Nigeria) describes how the isiZulu language affected taking public transportation. He mentioned how he has reduced taking public transportation by taking Uber because some passengers laugh at him. The study's findings tally with Nwokedi and Khanare (2020), who found that international students at South African universities have difficulty speaking the local language, making communication and interaction with the local students and community challenges. They also found that the language barrier affected international students' integration within the campus and their host environment and limited their participation within the university. Nwokedi and Khanare (2020, p.57) suggest that universities must create programs for international students to integrate and socialize with the local students socially. The host country's language is a means international PhD student interact, develop networks, make new acquaintances in a new environment and learn culture while studying overseas (Gao, 202, p.510). Gao (2021, p. 510) argues that the language barrier is the roots of adaptation, yet amplified by cultural variations between the home nation and the host country.

Echoing the challenges of international PhD Students' in China, Qadeer et al. (2021, p.3) found that these students struggle with sociocultural adjustments. They found that international students might prefer to retain their specific inborn socio-cultural values and norms. In contrast, domestic students in the host country may desire international students to integrate and assimilate into the host country's culture. This also suggests that international students' proficiency in one of South Africa's languages, isiZulu, will easily facilitate their integration into their local community. The ability to speak isiZulu will significantly affect their experience and integration in South Africa/UKZN. Oumarou and Uddin (2017) found that African international PhD students who study in the Middle East experience unfamiliarity with the host country's official language. They also noted that the language barrier caused a delay in completing their research and integrating. Son and Park's (2014) study on international PhD students in Australia from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) found that international students experienced language barriers. Natalia and Donald (2019, p.13) underscored the advantages of becoming friends with local students. They argued that it is difficult for international students and local students to become close friends for

many reasons. They echoed that the cultural difference amplifies the communication difficulty. They established that international students come from diverse countries with diverse cultures regarding their communication and friendship perceptions.

Further, they assert that international students make friends with other international students because they have the same 'foreign status' despite coming from different countries and sharing similar difficulties. They assert that the 'foreign status' and similar problems bring their hearts closer' to each other than making friends with local students (Natalia & Donald, 2019, p.13). Although the participants reported that the English language is the medium of expression in UKZN, the isiZulu language is a barrier as it is commonly spoken on the UKZN campus. This suggests that the host country language also affects the experiences of international PhD students. The responses suggest that international students who cannot speak in isiZulu resort to making friends with fellow international students of the same origin because they speak the same language.

a) Acculturation and 'belonging'

The integration of international students at UKZN in this study is analysed according to Berry's (2004; 1992) acculturation model. Berry's model of acculturation is also used to analyse the international students' experiences at UKZN in South Africa. Previous studies underscore the importance of acculturation and integration in international students' experience in the host country (Wang & Zhou, 2021; Nwokedi, 2015; Berry, 1992; Tinto, 2004; 1993). Acculturation is a change in an individual's social, psychological, and cultural areas from balancing two cultures while adjusting to the host country's culture (Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020; Wang & Zhou, 2021; Tinto, 1993). Acculturation also entails how an individual embraces and adjusts to a new cultural environment due to being in a new culture or being exposed to another culture (Wang & Zhou, 2021; Tinto, 1993; Berry, 1992). During the acculturation process, individuals may experience four acculturation dimensions: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization (Berry, 1992). Integration happens when people can maintain their own culture while assimilating the cultural norms and culture of the host country. Integration results in biculturalism and is frequently used as a synonym for it.

Integration occurs when people maintain their cultures while also accepting and adapting to the cultures of their hosts (Wang & Zhou, 2021; Tarisayi & Manik, 2020; Berry, 2007; Tinto, 1993). Acculturation and assimilation are two distinct processes. Assimilation is the process of assimilating a culture until the individual most closely resembles the new culture (Berry, 2004; 1974). The difference is that assimilation necessitates out-group approval, whereas acculturation does not. Assimilation necessitates a positive perspective toward the outsider, unlike acculturation (Berry, 2004). This suggest that acculturation occurs when people learn a language, adhere to social and cultural customs, and prefer the new culture to their own.

Berry (1992) also mentioned that separation happens when people choose to preserve their own culture over the dominant or host culture. Ethnic enclaves frequently aid in separation. When people reject their own culture and the dominant host culture, marginalization results (Berry, 1992). Limited isiZulu language proficiency affects many aspects of international students' experiences. It impedes their ability to make South African friends with native language speakers, integrate easily, and access social services.

The integration of international students and assimilation of South African culture (e.g, isiZulu language) during their first year PhD are explained with Berry's model. The challenges experienced by international students result from inability to speak the isiZulu language. Some international students who assimilate the South African language accurate while others choose not to assimilate the language. Assimilation is part of integration by learning isiZulu. For international students who choose not to assimilate the culture is because of being perceived as 'outsider' and 'foreigners.' The problems experienced by international PhD students at UKZN, South Africa is due to discrimination and an inability to speak isiZulu. International students in UKZN experience two dimensions of acculturation namely integration and separation in their first year of PhD. They experience challenges adapting to the new environment during the first year because of the inability to converse in the isiZulu language.

The acculturation and integration of international students in UKZN and the local community is hampered by exclusion, perceptions of 'outsider/foreigner', discrimination, language barrier and financial problems. This also resulted in a barrier to their adaptation and a barrier to accessing

social **services**; International students at UKZN have negative experiences during their first year PhD because of their inability to communicate in the isiZulu language. Because of their separation from host country locals and local PhD groups, it was challenging for international students to integrate into the new environment successfully (South Africa). Acculturation and integration *are* essential in international students' first-year PhD experience at UKZN.

6.9.3. Accommodation Challenges

The study's finding shows that numerous factors influenced international PhD students either to live on-campus or off-campus. These factors range from the rental cost of accommodation, safety, limited availability of specific services on-campus, marital status and closeness to the social network. Due to the inability to communicate in isiZulu, the participants also had trouble when searching for accommodation. Participants also encountered challenges renting accommodation due to their migration status as a 'foreigner'. Regarding the rental cost of accommodation, the participants live off-campus because of difficulty renting accommodation as a newcomer to South Africa and the lack of documents, such as 3-month bank statements, to rent such accommodation. Furaha (Malawi) indicated the challenges of renting accommodation off-campus because of the strict requirements and regulations. Furaha echoed that some property owners do not rent accommodation for couples with children. Equally, the limited availability of specific services on-campus hostel makes international students live off-campus.

The participants' reasons for living on-campus include access to UKZN Wi-Fi, safety, spaces for concentration to conduct research, and low cost of transportation fare commuting within Durban. Safety is a critical reason why international PhD students' initially live on campus. However, a negative experience with a crime made Vimbai (Zimbabwe, FGD4) reconsider living on campus when his laptop was stolen.

A majority, 87%, of the participants live off-campus. The reasons for living off-campus include many documents required to rent accommodation, affordability, financial challenges, insufficient services on-campus, proximity to the social network, and negative experiences of living on-campus. Due to financial challenges, international PhD students are compelled to share a flat with unfamiliar people. For instance, Lekan (Nigeria) and Amos (Zimbabwe) stated that they live in

flat sharing because of insufficient finance. Furthermore, participants like Damilola (Nigeria) and Amos (Zimbabwe) divulged that they previously squatted with their friends because of inadequate finance. For this reason, international students consider flat sharing to minimize monthly expenses. This demonstrates that living in South Africa could be challenging if international students do not earn a monthly salary (or) have sufficient funding. Daraki (Zimbabwe) describes the negative aspect of flat sharing because his lifestyle differs from his roommate, who womanizes. He also cites how some flatmates default on paying the electricity bill.

Olabode's, (FGD5, Nigeria) response indicates that he does not mind paying high rental costs provided the neighborhood is safe. Olabode (FGD5, Nigeria) stated that living in houses with low rental cost in areas like Chesterville, Mayville and Umlazi make international students easy targets to xenophobic attacks because of their inability to speak the isiZulu language. Marital status also influences where international students live. Some participants lived on campus when they first arrived at UKZN as new students because they were unmarried. Amos (FGD6, Nigeria) cited how being married with children influenced his choice of accommodation. Some participants hinted that they once lived on-campus before living off-campus because of their marital status.

Based on these discussions, Elham, Rumaya and Siti (2015, p.30) stated that family is a critical element in success in various life situations, including education. They assert that marital status influences where married international students live and their lifestyle. They also stated that married international students have unique challenges, such as adjusting to a new society, financial issues and children's education. Elham, Rumaya and Siti (2015, p.32) stated that inevitably, couples share the financial concerns and budget of relocating abroad.

In same vein, Qadeer et al. (2021, p.3) found that the quality of accommodations is essential in improving international students' experiences in a host country. They also found that postgraduate international students in China expect universities to provide affordable accommodation that meets minimum satisfaction standards. They echoed that residing in an on-campus university benefits international students' experiences. They also echoed that living in university accommodations assists international students in developing a sense of belonging and make it easier for them to form new social networks. Qadeer et al. (2021, p.3) buttress that universities should provide adequate hostels for admitted students. In addition to amenities required daily life, such as Wi-Fi,

air conditioning, hot and cold water, and cooking facilities. They also discovered that the quality of housing had the most significant influence on the level of satisfaction of international students living experience.

Similarly, Ncame (2016), in his study on private student housing in Braamfontein, highlighted factors that influence renting accommodation. He found that international PhD students rent accommodation based on lifestyle, location, affordability, finance, taste, quality, services, privacy, safety and proximity to shopping malls. He also found that internet access and residential laundry facilities are crucial in how students are satisfied with their accommodation (Ncame, 2016; p.15). Mlambo's (2017, p.67) study on postgraduate international students at UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus offered interesting findings. He found that UKZN ignores the accommodation needs of international students. He also found that local students are prioritized in the allocation of accommodation over international students.

6.9.4. Discrimination: ‘Only South Africans Can Apply’

Almost all the participants in the study reported that they experienced discrimination. They describe discrimination as exclusion from job opportunities, postgraduate scholarships/funding, decent salary and postgraduate trainings. Vimbai (FGD4, Zimbabwe) stated that xenophobia manifests subtly during his communications with a few South African colleagues and students who ask him when he is returning to his home country. The various forms of discrimination made international PhD students feel unwelcome and considered as ‘outsiders’ at UKZN. The participants’ narratives match Qadeer et al. (2021, p.4) findings who echoed that discrimination impact international students' satisfaction and experiences in their academic programs and social relationships. They contend that large-scale discrimination can be severe, causing significant fear among international students and it may reduce the number of international students. They echo that discrimination prevents international students from recommending their university to prospective international students and social networks

Gao (2021) specified that social disconnectedness, homesickness, discrimination, and culture shock negatively affected international students. Previous studies found that international PhD students in other countries also encounter challenges such as discrimination and exclusion (Whatley & Heidi, 2022; Gao, 2021; Baker, 2020; Nwokedi & Khanare, 2020). Akande,

Musarurwa, and Kaye (2018, p.87) found evidence of xenophobic perceptions and behaviors in the views of first-year students from rural UKZN areas, studying at DUT. The found that first-year students and young students are more susceptible to xenophobic tendencies. This tendency evokes prescriptive perceptions of xenophobia in South Africa, particularly as a phenomenon rooted in socioeconomic shortcomings. Akande, Musarurwa, and Kaye (2018, p.87) found that South African students usually ask international students whether they have no university in their home country. He also found that xenophobia is not limited to violent acts like burning but shows in different shades through non-violent manifestations like exclusion in jobs and indifference. He echoed that xenophobia is pronounced for students from countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Congo and Tanzania because of their ability to speak the local language. They state further that the attitude of most students toward xenophobia, on the other hand, reinforces the significance of public universities in preventing negative ethnic/racial sentiments and needs to call for the intensification of integration programs and their application into the community.

a). Discrimination: UKZN's Admission Policy

Olabode (Nigeria) is of the view that discrimination manifests in UKZN admission letters stating that 'international students should not take South African students' place. Olabode (Nigeria) contends that such a statement is not a good indicator of internationalization. Akoojee and Nkomo (2007, p.385) provide a plausible reason for the clause that 'international students should not take the place of South African students'. They explain that this is caused by the exclusion of black South Africans from higher education institutions during the apartheid regime. They further explain that at the end of apartheid, the government increased access of black South Africans in higher education institutions to ensure equity and access (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007, p.385).

Another plausible reason for such a clause is that international PhD students compete for limited available places at UKZN because of the rigorous application. Thus, they have to distinguish themselves during the admission process. Such requirements include SAQA evaluation and fulfilling their study visa conditions. Mlambo (2017, p.67) found that UKZN has more stringent requirements for international students than local students during the admission process. He also found that international students feel isolated because 'they do not have much voice'. This

indicates that the admission process for international PhD students differs from that of local South African applicants.

b) Discrimination & Exclusion: funded PhD Training, Seminars and Workshops

Although, the participants were dissatisfied with their exclusion from funded postgraduate training, which would improve their research skills. Yet, they highlighted that they benefitted from other UKZN PhD training, seminars and workshops in several ways. Amos (ISI0, FGD6) mentioned that he learned data analysis at the UKZN PhD workshop. PhD training equipped her to conduct a literature search, references, and prevent plagiarism. Such PhD Cohort PhD training is significant for Blessing (Nigeria) because the Master's training programme in her home country university did not prepare her for research at PhD level. In alignment with the participants view, Chien (2020) found that the advantages of studying abroad include personal advancement, knowledge enhancement, and better education. However, Mukwege (FGD4, DRC) divulged that international students are excluded from funded training because specific training is only earmarked for South African PhD students. Olabode (Nigeria) stated how he could not attend the University Capacity Development Plan (UCDP) workshop despite being a contract lecturer at UKZN because he is a 'foreigner'.

Chimanga (DRC), mentioned that there is limited funding for international PhD students to attend conferences compared to international PhD students studying at other South African universities such as the University of Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town where they receive funding to participate in international conferences as part of their PhD training. The participants also point out that when workshops and training are funded; they are excluded based on the clause that '*only South Africans and Permanent residents*' could attend such training'. Chimanga (DRC) argue that exclusion from training opportunities limits the professional development of international PhD students. Exclusion from such training makes Blessing, (Nigeria) contend that international students are 'outsiders'. Attending workshops and conference is a mandatory component of PhD training (Ndayambaje, 2018, p.58). Oumarou and Uddin (2017, p.83) emphasize that workshops and seminars equip PhD students with research skills. The negative consequences of perceived discrimination against minority students are more pronounced (Slobodin, Icekson, Herman & Vaknin, 2021).

The South African Employment Equity Act (1998) provides justified reasons the participants of this study could be excluded from funded training and opportunities. The Employment Equity Act (1998, p.18) states that designated people are trained and retained. This explains why qualified local UKZN students are prioritized and considered in the recruitment process over international students. This also indicates why Aagha (Kenya) was excluded from the University Capacity Development Plan (UCDP) despite being a contract lecturer at UKZN and not because he is a ‘foreigner’. As Aagha (Kenya) mentioned that the UCDP is a teaching capacity development programme to improve PhD students’ competence in teaching, learning, and developing their capacity as research supervisors. The Affirmative Action measure also explains why the clause applies that *‘only South Africans and Permanent Residents’ for specific funded workshops and training.*

c) Discrimination & Exclusion from Student Jobs

Data from the interview and FGD reveals that discrimination and exclusion from student jobs carry much weight among the participant. Although, the primary motive of international students being in UKZN is to study. However, international students also work part-time in student jobs ‘to survive due to the lack of funding and to adequately support themselves while studying’. The data shows that students work as contract lecturers, markers and tutors. The findings suggest that local PhD students are prioritized over international PhD students in UKZN student jobs such as markers, tutors and contract lecturers. The findings suggest that international students who work at UKZN are based on intermittent contract employment, usually three months. Working on a contract basis does not guarantee job security as divulged by Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe). Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe) notes that he does not mind student jobs despite job insecurity to pay his bills. Olabode, (FGD5, Zimbabwe) illuminated that international students are restricted, working in a single position, while local students work in multiple positions. It is also challenging for international PhD students to secure student jobs at UKZN because of competition between local students and them.

Discrimination could be fair discrimination; and unfair discrimination (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). Unfair discrimination is permitted on reasonable grounds like Affirmative action-based discrimination, like discrimination based on the conditions required for a job; compulsory

discrimination by law; and productivity-based discrimination (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014). One of the employment policies introduced in South Africa is positive discrimination and reinforced by the legislation referred to as the B-BBEE (Sharp, 2012). The B-BBEE is an acronym for Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, implying employers prioritize applicants from previously disadvantaged groups when hiring and promoting workers (Sharp, 2012). Gbenga (Nigeria) describes how difficult it is to be employed at UKZN. He recounts how easily international students studying at South African universities such as Witwatersrand and the University Pretoria quickly get student jobs because there are many companies in Johannesburg where universities like Witwatersrand and University Pretoria are located. It is difficult for international PhD students to get a student job at UKZN, unlike what is obtainable in the Witwatersrand and University Pretoria. In Witwatersrand and University Pretoria, PhD students have several opportunities to work in Graduate Assistant roles, enhancing their PhD experience. Also, external employers recruit students in these universities, reducing competition for students' jobs on campus.

Findings also reveal that international students are treated differently than local students in job opportunities. The other contributory factor is that most of the participants do not speak isiZulu and some jobs require proficiency in isiZulu. Also, in terms of student employment, visa status would undoubtedly play a role in deciding who to hire, as in the case of international students on asylum permits. Considering also that the student visa condition of international students restricts their working hours to 20 hours. Sverdlik et al. 2018 (p. 376) buttress that PhD students who work as research assistants are provided with financial support and prepared them for research roles.

The findings revealed that international students (81.3%: n=13) are impacted financially in terms of daily expenses like paying rent, renewal of study permit, and paying annual student medical insurance. Thus, to meet their needs propels them to work as teaching or research assistants while studying to alleviate financial stress. The constraints of the student permit and the inability to apply for loans like local students put international students at a disadvantage. The participants' views complement Kasese-Hara and Mugambi's (2021) findings that international students in South Africa, particularly those from other African countries, struggle with discriminatory and restrictive immigration policies, which exclude them from job opportunities. They maintain that

exclusion from specific employment opportunities within the university reserved for local students, premium international fees and the lengthy visa application process are discriminatory. They contend that these conditions promote exclusion rather than inclusion and negatively impact students' integration. Integration could be academic or social (Wang & Zhou, 2021; Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) explains that academic integration is students' academic performance, intellectual development, and perception of a positive experience in academic settings. Thus, meeting their needs propels them to work as teaching or research assistants while studying to alleviate financial stress. The constraints of the student permit and the inability to apply for loans like local students put international students at a disadvantage.

The participants' views complement Kasese-Hara and Mugambi's (2021) findings that international students in South Africa, particularly those from other African countries, struggle with discriminatory and restrictive immigration policies that exclude them from job opportunities. They maintain that exclusion from specific employment opportunities within the university reserved for local students, premium international fees and the lengthy visa application process are discriminatory. They contend that these conditions promote exclusion rather than inclusion and negatively affect students' integration. Tinto (1993) explains that academic integration is students' academic performance, intellectual development, and perception of a positive experience in academic settings. Taking this narrative further, Mlambo (2017, p.67) found that postgraduate international students at UKZN's, Pietermaritzburg campus experience discrimination. Mlambo (2017, p.67) identified forms of discrimination such as exclusion from job opportunities. He found that employers/ companies that recruit students through career fairs do not employ international students because the recruiting companies state in their advertisements that only South African citizens are eligible for such employment. Xiong (2017, p.24) also found that international PhD students studying in Ireland, especially students from Africa, Asia, and Oceania, were significantly affected by perceived discrimination.

The South African Labour law is helpful in analyzing discrimination in jobs and salary as reported by the participants. The Department of Labour Employment Equity Act (1998) offers useful insight into the justification for fair and unfair discrimination in recruitment. The Employment Equity Act (1998, p.14) emphasized the need for employees to promote fair and equal opportunity in the workplace. The Employment Equity Act (1998 distinguishes between justified and unfair

discrimination. The Employment Equity Act (EEA) highlights criteria for fair or unjust discrimination. The EEA states that when evaluating the value of a job, an employer will typically consider the following factors to decide 'fair' grounds for discrimination. These are the duties and responsibilities of the job. Secondly, the skills (formal, informal) and qualifications required to perform a job. Thirdly, the job requirement in aspects such as physical, mental, and emotional effort. Fourthly, the work conditions as the physical environment, psychological conditions, the time when work is performed and the location of work.

i) Race, discrimination & Social integration

Race and discrimination influenced social integration. Social integration is the incorporation of newcomers into the social structure of a host country (Wang & Zhou, 2021; Berry, 2007; Tinto, 1993). Discrimination is known to affect the social integration of international students. International student's motivation to integrate into the host community, namely at UKZN depended on being considered as 'insider' and the provision of opportunities that indicate they 'belong'. However, a dissatisfaction for many international students, were that South Africans were prioritized over international students in numerous opportunities allocated for PhD students. Statements such as 'only South Africans and permanent residents should apply' for specific PhD opportunities made international students feel that they did not belong. This manifested in international students being classified as 'other' based on traits that set international students apart from local students (Mountz, 2009). UKZN structures and policies were hindering and alienating African international students and preventing them from easily integrating. Also, to successfully integrate, international students need appropriate social support from the social network, namely the university (ISO) and the host community.

d) Discrimination & Exclusion: Funding Opportunities

Not all participants reported negative experiences in funding opportunities. The responses from some participants indicate that they were excluded from funding opportunities. Some of the participants hinted that they were awarded the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) scholarship valued at R10 000. The participants that accessed UKZN funding stated it was the DVC funding they assessed once off. Responses from the participants indicate available UKZN funding from the

NRF, fee remission and from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's (DVC) grant for international PhD students. Fee remission is specific to the PhD programme at UKZN for full time students. Lekan (Nigeria) described how two of his friends were awarded an NRF scholarship valued at R120 00,00. Findings reveal that scholarships are awarded to international students based on nationality and research topics that relate to specific research areas involving problem-solving. The findings reveal that 31.2% (n=5) of the participants who had previously studied at UKZN before pursuing a PhD and selecting their PhD topic based on the research interest of their former lecturers, who later became their PhD supervisor. Damilola (Nigeria) mentioned that he received the UKZN DVC's scholarship valued at R 10 000 during his first-year PhD in 2014. Damilola (Nigeria) contends that the number of international PhD students that could receive the UKZN DVC's scholarship was reduced because of the number of postgraduate students enrolled at UKZN amidst limited funding. This finding aligns with previous studies on the importance of funding and its link to the PhD experience, well-being and the timely completion of a PhD programme (Qadeer et al., 2021; Sverdlik et al., 2018; Oumarou et al., 2017; Mlambo, 2017).

The study's findings corroborate the findings of Qadeer et al. (2021), who found that international PhD students from Africa and Asia encounter discrimination whilst studying in China. They found that international students face different levels of discrimination depending on their race and nationality. They stated that international students were stereotyped because of preconceptions about their culture, language, and other distinctions. This suggest that international students do encounter higher levels of discrimination than local PhD students. Funders such as the local NRF does not allocate a large percentage of scholarships to international students can be constructed as discrimination.

It is reasonable to expect that not everyone will be funded if resources are limited. It appears that the exclusion of international PhD students from funding opportunities could be because of limited funding, which is insufficient to serve all students. Most of the available funding, such as that provided by the NRF scholarship and bursaries from UKZN are mainly earmarked for sciences and local students, which is extremely competitive for international PhD students. Additionally, there is limited funding for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (Sverdlik et al., 2018; Mail & Guardian, 2011). In South Africa, the Humanities are fully funded because of the public

perception that humanities-related courses are soft options and of limited value to society, unlike the sciences (Mail & Guardian, 2011). In the Nigerian context, Akudolu and Adeyemo (2018, p.14) found that some Nigerian universities award fifty percent remission on PhD tuition fees to lecturers as a means of staff development. They also found that TETFund allocates more resources to staff studying in engineering and science-based PhD programs than in the Humanities. Sverdlik et al.'s (2018, p.364) study on British and American PhD students suggests that international PhD students studying the natural sciences enjoyed more financial benefits than those studying in the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

In countries such as in the Middle East, Oumarou & Uddin (2017) examined the factors that influence the progress of international PhD students from Africa. They found that international PhD students from Africa experience difficulties while studying abroad. They found that the availability of funding, the involvement of a supportive supervisor and research opportunities impact the experiences of international PhD students. It appears that access to financial opportunities such as loans, grants or bursaries helped international PhD students meet their financial obligations, alleviating some financial problems and enabling them to concentrate more on their studies. Cong (2018, p.7-8) found that universities increasingly use educational service augmentation like university facilities, location, alumni connections, recommendations, academic support, social support, and financial services to enhance students' experiences. The nature of students' experiences and other indicators such as people's recommendations/brand reputation indicates service quality (Cong, 2018, p.7).

e) Discrimination: Exclusion from a dignified salary

Participants' responses indicated dissatisfaction with the salary working as a tutor or contract lecturer at UKZN. The Howard College campus participants mentioned that local students are paid higher salaries for the same jobs when compared to international PhD students. Olabode (FGD5, Nigeria) commented on job insecurity and late salary payment while working as a contract lecturer. Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe) indicated that the UKZN human resources did not inform him about his salary until the signed contract form. He reported that when he found his salary was meagre, he had no option but to accept it because he needed to survive. The participants also stated that UKZN campuses have different salary structures for student jobs and, the Westville campus was known

to pay higher salaries. Amos (FGD6, Zimbabwe) mentioned that he uses the asylum permit (renewed every six months to work). However, students who use the asylum permit are disadvantaged because the UKZN Human resources claim that their permit is invalid. Mlambo (2017, p.67) found that postgraduate international students at the UKZN, Pietermaritzburg campus do not consider UKZN a Premier University as international students are not treated equally to local students because they are discriminated against in trying to access scholarships, bursaries, on-campus residences, and job opportunities.

i. Overt Discrimination, an Afrophobia Lens

Discrimination experienced by international students can be analyzed from the lens of Afrophobia. Afrophobia is a distinct form of xenophobia and the target of discrimination is black foreigners from Africa (Hungwe & Divala, 2018). Xenophobia is a dislike, hatred, fear, negative attitudes, and stereotypes against black foreigners from African countries (Hungwe & Divala, 2018; Manik & Singh, 2013). Afrophobia experienced by international students can manifest in various ways, including interpersonal interactions at UKZN, job opportunities and UKZN recruitment procedures. International students at UKZN encounter various nuances of Afrophobia in general.

a) Overt discrimination from the local community

Overt discrimination occurs in the local community because of international students' inability to speak isiZulu. This occurs in statements such as the locals reminding international students they were in Zulu land and they must speak isiZulu. Because of Afrophobia in the local community, international students fear community members because of victimization and thus isolate themselves to avoid violence and hostilities, resulting in them living in enclaves.

b) Afrophobia and UKZN Human Resources

The UKZN Human Resources applies different criteria to international students during recruitment. Discrepancies in the recruitment practice were evident but it is evident that the practices are in keeping with the laws of South Africa. Apart from exclusion in job opportunities, elements of Afrophobia were evident in the recruitment process with discrepancies in recruitment practice evident in the preference of locals over international students for all opportunities. Daraki

(Zimbabwe) mentioned that salary payments become difficult depending on the type of study permit which international PhD students use.

Mukwege (DRC) acknowledged that in other South African higher education institutions where he worked, xenophobia was evident in job recruitment practices. Hungwe and Divala (2018) identified such exclusion as Afrophobia. They mentioned that Afrophobia exists in the South African higher education system and threatens internalisation initiatives. They found that Afrophobic attitudes toward African international students are prevalent in most destination countries where they will be studying. Hungwe and Divala (2018) classify favoritism of locals over international students and this type of discrimination experienced by international students as "neo-racism. Hungwe and Divala (2018) stated that racial discrimination is based on skin color, cultural and national differences. In this regard, African international students in America are discriminated against in the same way that students from the Middle East, East Asia, and Latin America are.

In view of this, the Employment Equity and the prohibition of discrimination in the workplace Section 6(2)(b) of the South African Employment Equity Act, No. 55 (1998) justifies differences in remuneration. Based on fairness and rationality, highlighted in the Codes of Good Practice, employee remuneration discrimination should be considered justified. The Employment Equity and the prohibition of discrimination in the workplace Section 6(2)(b) identifies what comprises "fair" discrimination. The South African Minister of Labour announced the Codes of Good Practice on equal pay/salary for equal work of equal value on 1 June 2015. The Codes of Good Practice guide fair discrimination in remuneration. The codes' application is discussed further below. The codes refer to factors when assessing an employer's compliance with the "same work, same pay" principle. These are factors such as the jobs being evaluated by comparing considerably similar or of equal value (in objective evaluation). Secondly, are variations in the employment terms and conditions, such as the remuneration of the employees who perform the relevant jobs. Gender is one of the factors listed as unfair discrimination in the Employment Equity Act. The Codes of Good Practice considers pay disparity based on gender as unfair discrimination. In addition, employee remuneration is determined by employee years of service, employee's

qualifications, ability, competence, potential and duration of the job (Employment Equity Act, 1998).

6.10. Social Capital Theory and International Students

The forms of capital which international PhD students possess and access at UKZN are analyzed according to the social capital theory of Bourdieu (1986). Social capital theory provides insights into the forms of capital available to international PhD students and how students are impacted by the resources (physical capital, human capital and social capital) at UKZN.

The study shows that international PhD students at UKZN access and build different forms of capital such as economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. International students at UKZN access economic capital like material resources such as money, financial resources, and loans during the migration process to UKZN and as students applying and successfully receiving scholarships and bursaries. Economic capital at their disposal allows international students to pay for their UKZN application fees, SAQA evaluation fees, and student health insurance on arrival in South Africa. International PhD students also have money for their cost of living and tuition fees. It also appears that the more economic capital international PhD students have at their disposal enhances their positive experiences at UKZN. The findings showed that UKZN provided resources that improves the quality of the PhD education. These resources include libraries, competent supervisors, computer LANS, postgraduate funding and postgraduate training.

Social capital was also evident in various forms. International PhD students chose UKZN because of the social networks that marketed UKZN to them. The social network assisted and guided participants in the admission process, processing SAQA, payment of the UKZN application fee, lodging a UKZN application, payment of student insurance, and accommodation. In addition, the social network informed international PhD students about UKZN's fee remission policy, and marketed UKZN as having superior ICT facilities/internet. The form of capital applies to international PhD students at UKZN. Conversely, international PhD students are also restricted from accessing forms of capital at UKZN. Such restriction manifests in exclusion from UKZN postgraduate funding (DVC's bursary, NRF), postgraduate training, a decent salary and UKZN students' jobs. The reason being that only South Africans are eligible for such economic capital. Also, the different types of capital seem to have various degrees of impact on international PhD

students' experiences. The study suggests that the 'forms of capital' (economic capital, human capital and social capital) at UKZN impacted international PhD students' experiences. Social networks in UKZN are equated with social capital because they provide social support to international students in diverse ways in South Africa. Economic capital also helped them migrate to South Africa to acquire a quality PhD unavailable in their home country. At UKZN, international PhD students also have access to economic capital such as NRF funding, fee remission and UKZN DVC's bursary. Although, due to the increasing number of postgraduate students, NRF is restrictive. As Aagha (Kenya) mentioned that from 2019, it became difficult to obtain NRF postgraduate funding because of the clause attached that '*only Permanent Residents and South African students can apply*'. The NRF requires a minimum academic requirement of 65 percent for postgraduate funding. The maximum age requirement for PhD studies is 32 years younger in 2022-2023 (NRF, 2022).

6.11. Conclusion

The chapter discusses and analyses the findings in light of the literature review and theoretical framework. The theoretical framework of the push-pull theory (Ravenstein, 1885; Lee, 1966; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), explains why international PhD students study at UKZN. Similarly, the chapter also highlighted how the forms of capital (economic capital and social capital) at UKZN impacted international PhD students' experiences negatively or positively.

CHAPTER SEVEN: KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's significant theoretical insights, which emerged from the data to understand international PhD students' first-year experiences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The chapter starts by discussing the demographic profile of participants. The second section explains why international PhD students exit their home country to study at UKZN, international students' first-year experiences at UKZN, and why they have these experiences. The last section concludes the study by providing recommendations to the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

7.2. Demographic profile of international PhD students at UKZN

The participants in the study were mainly international PhD students from African countries such as Nigeria (50%, n=8), Zimbabwe (25%, n=4), the DRC (12.5%, n=2), Malawi (6.25%, n=1) and Kenya (6.25%, n=1). A significant proportion of the participants were males and mostly married. Males were 62.5% (n=10) and females (37.2%, n=6). Also, a considerable proportion was mainly between the ages of 35-40 years (43.8%, n=7). The majority had a Master's Degree from their home country. The participants also studied through one of three PhD modes: full-time, part-time and sandwich.

7.3. Research Questions Revisited

The study answers the following research questions:

1. Why do international students exit their home country to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN?
2. What are international students' first-year experiences at UKZN, and why do they have these experiences?

To address the questions, data were generated from several sources such as interviews, focus group discussion (FGD), International Students Association (ISO) dialogue, and ongoing email communications to answer the research questions.

7.4. Concluding theoretical comments

The sections below highlight the key areas of theoretical insight.

7.4. 1. The Push Factors

Research question one was concerned with reasons for international PhD students exiting their home country to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN. The commonality that cuts across international PhD students is that unfavorable conditions in the home country primarily influence their migration. There are several overlapping reasons for international PhD students exiting their home country. The push factors are the home country's economic situation, the unavailability of a specific PhD Course/Programme, a lengthy time to complete the PhD, and inadequate infrastructure/facilities. In the study, the economic situation in the home country included unemployment, lack of job security, poor salary structure, and insufficient student scholarships. Hence, the economic situation propels international students to migrate to pursue a PhD and find employment in South Africa due to their enhanced skills. The push factors are different for various international PhD students given their home country dynamics and contexts.

7.4. 2.: The Pull Factors

Correspondingly, favorable conditions in South Africa at UKZN enticed international PhD students. The favourable conditions, namely the 'pull factors' are UKZN's university ranking, its fee remission policy, the cost of living in South Africa, the social network, availability of superior infrastructure/facilities, the medium of instruction being English and reduced travel time to the home country. The most significant pull factor for international PhD students is UKZN's fee remission. From the study's findings, international PhD students at UKZN consider other South African universities; however, they eventually select UKZN based on the additional 'pull' factor of fee remission.

7.4.2.1. UKZN Fee Remission as Bait to attract students

UKZN fee remission policy is a significant pull factor for international PhD students and ‘a bait to recruit international students. The timely completion of the PhD is also a significant factor for full-time PhD students on UKZN’s fee remission. This alludes to finishing their PhD within the stipulated period of three years (UKZN, 2020). Also, fee remission alleviates international PhD student's costs of living in South Africa and studying at UKZN. Fee remission is also a marketing strategy UKZN recruits international PhD students. Although, the participants mentioned that there is the possibility that UKZN might introduce tuition fees in the future because of the high influx of international PhD students flocking to UKZN. The findings suggest that various South African universities have different marketing strategies for recruiting international PhD students, such as scholarships. The study found that international PhD students choose UKZN with fee remission rather than universities without a fee remission policy. The findings also revealed that social networks informed international PhD students about the UKZN fee remission policy.

7.4.2.2. Social Networks facilitating Migration, leading to cumulative causation

Social networks play an essential role in the migration of international PhD students. In this study, family and friends’ recommendation was one of the main reasons for international PhD students studying at UKZN. The study found that acquaintances with friends and family in UKZN had assisted many international PhD students to settle-in quickly at UKZN. They also provided relevant information about UKZN and South Africa during the migration process and on arrival. The social network also played a critical role in promoting UKZN as a study destination because of university ranking, fee remission and superior infrastructure/facilities. The social network provided relevant information to international PhD students during the migration process and arrival in South Africa. The social network assisted international students with the UKZN admission process, processing SAQA, payment of UKZN application fee, student insurance, and accommodation rent. This ongoing stream of international students due to friends/ family informing them of opportunities, reflects cumulative causation. The findings demonstrate that international student’s immigration was facilitated by their social network from their home countries. Given the pull factors in UKZN, like fee remission, university ranking and the availability of superior infrastructure/facilities, the social networks facilitate migration by word of mouth.

7.4.3. International PhD Students' First-Year Experiences at UKZN

Research question two addressed international PhD students' first-year experiences at UKZN and why they have these experiences. The study found that international PhD students' first-year experience at UKZN included academic and non-academic experiences. The non-academic experiences of international students at UKZN are impacted by the quality of services provided by UKZN's ISO.

International students were dissatisfied with the annual increment of students' medical insurance coverage and the services provided by the UKZN International Student Office (ISO). International students reported that the UKZN ISO staff appeared insensitive to international PhD students plight because the International Student Office (ISO) focused more on international students' compliance with their study permit conditions. The quality of services rendered by the ISO is also affected by staff capacity. The findings revealed that service quality is an important aspect of the experiences of international students. There was a mismatch between the services provided to the international students at the Howard and Edgewood campus.

The findings revealed that UKZN ISO's services were perceived by international students to be unreliable because the services were not delivered consistently and timeously. The findings also indicated that international students perceived the UKZN ISO as lacking empathy because they did not understand international students' related problems. Service quality is critical because international students expect service to have the following features: consistency, reliability, timeous response, assurance, and empathy.

The non-academic experiences of international students relate to service quality. The quality of service provided by UKZN's ISO alludes to staff being incapacitated to meet the needs and expectations of international students. Limited staff (3 staff serving the 5 UKZN campuses), which negatively impacts the quality of services provided to international students. The quality of services provided by UKZN's ISO are compromised in respect of reliability, empathy and responsiveness to international students due to staff shortages. In terms of academic experiences, supervisors play a critical role in the experiences of international PhD students during the first-year PhD.

Another first-year PhD experience relates to supervision. Supervision is vital for the timely completion of a PhD. PhD supervision could be negatively affected by the supervisor's workload, lack of expertise on a PhD topic, friction, disagreement between PhD students-supervisors on the direction of a PhD research and research methodology. Supervision by supervisors with limited expertise and knowledge also lengthens the timely completion of PhD at UKZN.

Supervisors sometimes also plays pastoral role during the supervisory relationship providing research stipend and other relevant information on UKZN resources such as postgraduate accommodation. Also, PhD students should be paired with supervisors with research expertise on a PhD topic. In addition, timely feedback is crucial to the timely completion of a PhD.

Writing a PhD proposal during the first-year PhD is perceived as challenging for international PhD students because of their poor English language proficiency, the research topic chosen for study and their previous research training. However, international students benefit from UKZN's PhD training, boot camps, workshops and the PhD cohort that addressed the challenges of writing a PhD proposal. The PhD workshops equipped international students with research skills to be competent researchers and to address critical aspects such as referencing, plagiarism, theory and data analysis. The human capital of international students is developed through postgraduate training at UKZN and on-the-job training whilst working as contract lecturers, tutors and markers. International PhD students are thus an asset to UKZN because their knowledge and skills are valuable to UKZN in achieving its mission of teaching and research. UKZN is thus contributing to the human capital development of international students by attracting them to UKZN, training and retaining them in post graduate studies in South Africa.

7.4.4. International PhD Students' Challenges

The study found that international PhD students' experiences in the first-year PhD is a combination of positive and negative experiences. The negative experiences of international PhD students manifest in the several challenges which they encounter while studying at UKZN. While there are numerous challenges, the findings reveal financial challenges, the isiZulu language as a barrier,

accommodation issues, and discrimination as paramount. The study found that international students coped financially by obtaining a loan, working part-time, and being successful in applying for some scholarships. International students work part-time at UKZN as tutors, contract lecturers, and contract markers to support themselves financially. Compared to local PhD students who have several funding options such as loans, NRF bursaries, grants or an acknowledgment of debt when in they are faced with financial challenges; however, international PhD students perceived themselves as having limited funding options. The UKZN SRC negotiates favorable terms for local students and not international students through the 'Fees Must Fall' protest movements when they experience financial challenges compared to international students. Also, international PhD students are not eligible for loans or any special dispensations like the local PhD students.

7.4.4.1. isiZulu Language Barrier

The host country's language is crucial for international PhD students' acculturation and their ease of interactions with the 'locals' in a new environment. The language barrier affected making and maintaining friendships, in accommodation searches and in accessing public healthcare. The inability to communicate in the isiZulu language exacerbated international PhD students' negative experiences during their first-year PhD. Although the participants reported that the English language is the medium of communication at UKZN, the isiZulu language as a barrier was more pronounced outside the UKZN campus. International PhD students' inability to communicate in the isiZulu language negatively affected their first-year experiences in the community where they live. The language barrier affected their efforts at renting and attempts to get medical assistance off campus because of their inability to converse in the isiZulu Language.

7.4.4.2. Accommodation Challenges

It appears that UKZN management is unaware of the accommodation needs of its international students. International students believe that local students are prioritized in allocating on-campus accommodation.

7.4.4.3. Discrimination and Xenophobia

International PhD students experienced discrimination and a distinct form of xenophobia, namely Afrophobia in subtle ways at UKZN and in the local community. In this study, international students from African countries are different from local students from South Africa because of specific features such as their inability to speak isiZulu, their physical appearance and dressing. These characteristics set them apart as outsiders and predisposed them to discrimination. Afrophobia is rudimentary aspect of xenophobia because of it is less noticeable compared to the sporadic violence witnessed in South Africa society since 2008 (Tarisayi & Manik, 2020, p.296). Xenophobia can manifest in less evident ways such as the allocation of postgraduate opportunities. Opportunities such as a job, salary and postgraduate funding at UKZN are allocated based on not being 'the other' (Tarisayi& Manik, 2020, p.295).

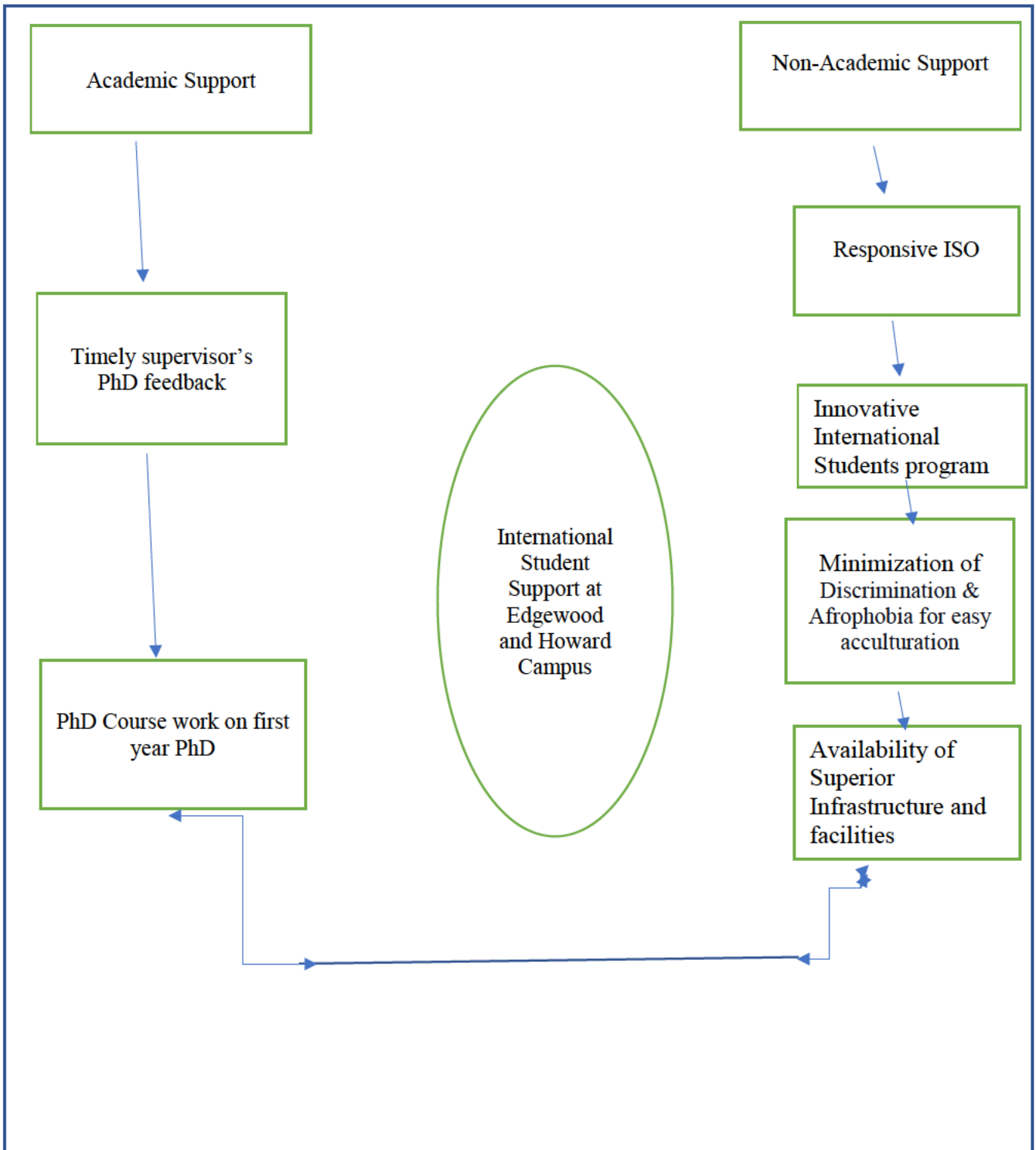
7.4.4.4. Brain drain, Gain or Brain Circulation

The mobility trajectory of international students in UKZN results in a brain drain for the home country, a brain gain for the host country and brain circulation. This alludes to leaving the home country to pursue a PhD education in South Africa. International PhD students who remained in South Africa as permanent residents contribute to a brain drain in their home country and brain gain for South Africa/ UKZN while publishing and working as a tutor and lecturer.

Some intend to stay in South Africa permanently after graduation if they can secure a job. Students who stay or plan to return to their home country yet maintain ties to both home and South Africa and continue to travel contribute to transnationalism and brain circulation.

7.4.5.5. International Student Support

Figure 8: International Student Support



The above diagram sums up international students' academic and non-academic experiences at the UKZN Howard and Edgewood campuses. Academic support comprises timely PhD supervision feedback and PhD Course work in first-year of PhD study. Conversely, non-academic support includes a responsive ISO, an innovative international students' program, support and structures to address discrimination & Afrophobia for easy acculturation, and the availability of superior infrastructure/ facilities.

The available academic support is strong and positive, but it needs improvement. While the non-academic support is weaker and needs to be strengthened. Non-academic support includes aspects such as responsive ISO, innovative international students' program, and minimization of discrimination & Afrophobia for easy acculturation. Consequently, UKZN staff working with international students should recognize the toll that discrimination & Afrophobia have on international students' experiences. This necessitates that UKZN student support personnel[ISO, student service Division] who work with international students develop strategies and structures to support students by providing "an extra arm of support" by addressing the issue in their policies and practices. International students' success or failure at UKZN is contingent on the support system [academic & non-academic] offered by UKZN, which trickles down to students and is evident in their interactions with local students and through additional opportunities at UKZN. This is in addition to international students managing the challenges and opportunities of studying at UKZN.

7.5. Recommendations

- i. The study shows that international PhD students are a significant component of student population diversity and they are of benefit to UKZN; hence they should have positive experiences. It is suggested that the UKZN internationalization policy and strategic plan on international students be revised to reduce their negative experiences which can affect their internationalization mission.
- ii. It is paramount that UKZN's International Students Office (ISO) is perceived in a positive light and improving the quality of the services offered to international PhD students is paramount. To improve the level of satisfaction of international students, the service provider [ISO, Student service Division] should seek to support the needs and expectations of international students and conduct research to evaluate their services.
- iii. The staff at the International Students Office should aim to improve their efficiency and responsiveness. The International students Office should adopt strategies to work closely

with international students. Personnel working in the International Students Office also need to be trained on the strategies to sensitively manage international students. The international students' Office should survey international students to assess the level of services and programs they require for success in the PhD program and in the host environment.

- iv. There should be coursework in the first-year PhD that adds to the cohort model which teaches and trains students in research ethics and other aspects of research (data analysis, theory building) in addition to proposal writing which prepares international PhD students for PhD education. Also, there should be a module on adjustment and support which helps to socialize students and addresses aspects such as Afrophobia.

7.6. Further Study

It is suggested that the first-year experiences of international PhD students studying at other UKZN campuses should be researched and this study at Edgewood and Howard College can be upscaled to a mixed methods study so that further insights can be achieved.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview for International PhD Students: Experiences of International PhD Students at UKZN

Demographic Data:

Gender: Male/ Female:

Age Bracket:

Previous Education:

PhD study mode.

Marital Status:

Nationality

Level of PhD

1. Tell me about yourself?

a) Tell me about how you got to be here, at UKZN doing a PhD.

b) What was your experience in the first-year PhD at UKZN?

2. What attracted you to come to South Africa and UKZN?

(Possible probe: Why do you want to do a PhD specifically at UKZN and not other 26 South African universities?)

a) What are your experiences so far at UKZN [academic and non-academic]?

b) What are your experiences studying at UKZN from the point of registration?

(Possible probe: would you say your experiences are positive or/and negative)?

c) Have you encountered any obstacles that negatively affected your studies?

(Probe: Do you receive any support from anyone?)

d) What do you find satisfying about your PhD studies?

3. What major event at UKZN has affected (Please feel free to talk)

Appendix B

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

International PhD Students: Experiences of International PhD Students at UKZN

The study's objectives are:

1. To examine the reasons international PhD students exit their home country to study in South Africa, particularly at UKZN.
2. To explore international students' first-year experiences at UKZN and understand why they have these experiences.

Date	October 2018
Venue of Meeting	UKZN Edgewood Research Commons UKZN Howard PhD room
Time	
Duration of Meeting	
Number of participants	
Topic of Discussion	To explore international students' first-year experiences at UKZN and understand why they have these experiences.

Introduction

- a) During the interview, you hinted that you experienced discrimination in accessing funding, opportunities and jobs at UKZN. Please could you be explicit on these?
- b) I observed that most of you were dissatisfied with your experiences with student health insurance in your interviews. Please describe these experiences and its impact on you?
- c) During the interview, there was consensus that international students' office has a lackadaisical attitude and were ineffectiveness in the services provided. (Probe: please, could you be explicit on this?)

APPENDIX C

PROJECT TITLE: International PhD students' first-year study experiences: the case of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)'.

2 July 2018

Dear Participants

Re: Invitation to Participate In a Research

Dear Participants,

My name is Oyewo Adetola Elizabeth (Mrs), a PhD candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I am conducting PhD research to understand international PhD students' first-year study experiences: the case of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). This study is part of the requirements for the PhD.

You are requested to participate in the research, and your views will be critical in shaping this study. The research is approved by the UKZN Ethics Research Committee. Your consent is required.

Participation is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw anytime from the research. Confidentiality is guaranteed.

If you consent to participating in the study, please sign the attached 'Informed Consent' form. I appreciate the time and effort to participate in this study.

I, _____, (full name of participant),

10 January 2018

Mrs Adetola Elizabeth Oyewo (214582712)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Oyewo,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0745/017D

Project Title: International PhD students' first year study experiences: The case of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 09 June 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



.....
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/ms

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