TRANSNATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF UGANDAN STUDENTS IN GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN; CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Title: Transnational Experiences of Ugandan Students in Gothenburg, Sweden; Challenges and Adaptation strategies
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The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the transnational experiences of Ugandan students in Gothenburg; Sweden. The focus was to understand how cultural differences affect the academic and social life of these students, the ways in which they adapt to the new host country Sweden, challenges they might have encountered and how they have managed to overcome them. Furthermore, the study also aimed to ascertain the impact of the families back home on students' life while abroad. In this study, there is difference between the use of terms coping mechanisms and adaptation strategies. The study engaged nine Ugandan students who were within the region of Gothenburg and were affiliated to any institution of higher learning. In-depth face to face interviews were employed for the nine participants. While a focus group interview guide was used to conduct focus group discussion. The focus group discussion consisted of four participants. Insights were employed from the acculturation theory by Berry (2005) and the migration network theory (Collyer, 2011; Oreilly, 2012). These two theories were used as a theoretical framework and a lens through which meaning was developed in the study. Thematic analysis was used to identify meaningful and recurring ideas from the data and later develop themes.

The findings led to the conclusion that cultural differences emerged with both positive and negative impacts to students' academic and social lives. The study revealed that students experienced more positive impacts in the academic life than social life. The findings also allowed concluding that even though students encountered challenges, they devised coping mechanisms that helped them. In addition, social networks were discovered as vital in helping students to cope with their problems for example the friends students had made during their stay in Sweden. The study recognized the creative adaptation strategies employed by the students that helped them to fit into their new environment. The findings revealed that families provided emotional and practical support that motivated and partly enhanced student's wellbeing. The study found out that support given by families is transmitted through communication by use of digital technologies. Despite the positive vital role played by the family to enhance the wellbeing of students abroad, the study revealed that families also caused stressful impact to the students while abroad through their demands for remittances.

Acknowledgement

Dedication

I dedicate this piece of work to my family and friends. Special gratitude goes to my loving parents. Mr. Kayonga Alex and Ms Nalwanga Jennifer whose love and words of encouragement have guided me through my life. To my brothers Derrick, Zitoni and Noah who have always been by my side through it all, you are such a blessing in my life.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my friends and church community who have supported me throughout this journey. I will forever be grateful for all your kindness that enabled me to persevere throughout this journey. I would like to thank my best friend Elastus for being there for me and cheering me on throughout this entire process. To Vicent I would like to thank you for your kindness and accepting to proofread through my work. To my Erasmus Mundus cohort 6 classmates you made this journey worthwhile.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to the participants in this study. Your upfront and enthusiastic willingness to share your stories is moving. Thank you for enabling this study. To all those individuals seeking better academic opportunities I dedicate this to you. I hope you never give up on your dreams.

Acronyms

EEA: European Economic Area

EU: European Union

FGD: Focused Group Discussion

IASSW: International Association of Schools of Social Work

IFSW: International Federation of Social workers

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

OECD: Economic Co-operation and Development

UBOS: Uganda Bureau of Statistics

UIS: UNESCO Institute of Statistics

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Structure of the report

This thesis is composed of seven chapters. The thesis begins with chapter one that is comprised of the introduction, problem statement, purpose and aim of the study, research questions, significance and the relevance of the study to social work. The report then captures chapter two which is the background of the study with elements such as the characteristics of Sweden as a host country, social and economic demographics of Uganda as a country of origin for the participants and the definition of concepts. Chapter three reveals the literature review. This section consists of the works of previous scholars about the topic of international students. Chapter four consists of the two theoretical frameworks that are used within this study. Chapter five exhibits the methodological choices taken within the entire research process, data analysis methods used, limitations of the study and the ethical considerations that were observed within the study. Chapter six shows the findings and discussions that were erected form the study while chapter seven shows the conclusions and the recommendations that emerged from the study.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad can be one of the most rewarding yet an unsettling experience in an individual's life. At twenty-four years, being offered a master's scholarship program by Erasmus Mundus was a dream come true (I the researcher). Indeed, my European dream had come to pass, the fact that I had spent 24 years of my life in one country where my sense of self and identity were crafted. So, I set out for this new adventure which has changed my life. That I presume will never be the same again because of the experience and lessons learnt. The fact that I had to move to a new country by myself, use the subway for the first time, eat new foods, get introduced to new ways of life, and to crown it all, fit into the new environment fast as I needed to focus on my academics. Many other students have had to go through the same fate in the pursuit of higher education. The researcher's own experience and inquisitiveness triggered her need to know more about the experiences of other students abroad. Hence this research develops from the researcher's commitment to give a voice and tell the stories of those students that have embarked on an education past the borders of their own countries that whilst would have not been heard.

Through familiarizing with literature of the host country (Sweden) were the researcher intended to do the research, it became evident that students only occupy a small number of the immigrant population. Due to their small numbers and temporary migration status, students did not form big costs to the government, nor were they a center of societal debates or social media attention like other forms of migrants like asylum seekers (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). Besides, even if many students decide to leave their home countries in pursuit of a better education, after arrival to the host countries, not so much is done to track their wellbeing (Lin & Kingminghae, 2018). Joining a new community always comes with new changes, some simple to adjust to and some may be hard to get by. These include but are not limited to the new language, cultural differences, making new friends, climate differences, working conditions, missing family members and friends among others (Buchanan, 2019; Guo & Guo, 2017). This sometimes leaves students at the mercy of fate and their own individual skills to survive through the systems of the host countries. Making especially the first time international students vulnerable to the new unknown circumstances in the host country (Buchanan, 2019).

As an avenue to understand and give a voice to students especially the smaller groups, Ugandan students were chosen. This is because they mainly represented a small group of students in Sweden compared to other groups like the Chinese (UIS, 2020). The research interest was tailored around the need to investigate how cultural differences affect the student's academic and social life, challenges and coping mechanisms encountered by students, the student's adaptation strategies in their new host countries, and lastly how their families (back home) affect their lives abroad.

Therefore, this comes as an inspiration for this research thesis which will focus on; *"Transnational experiences of Ugandan Students in Gothenburg, Sweden: Challenges and adaptation strategies"*. To elaborate the study, the next sections articulate the different contents such as the study objectives, problem statement, scope, literature review, methodology, findings and later the conclusions.

1.1 Problem statement

Today, international students are viewed as incentives to host countries. This is because of the immense contribution they bestow, like impact on the economy, labour market and education system through the enhanced exchange of knowledge and as a future resource for skilled labour (Dunn & Wallace, 2013; Swedish Migration Board, 2012). This has therefore ignited many countries especially the global North that is considered supreme in quality education and general lively hood to station and attract large numbers of international students to gain from them (Park, 2019).

There have been remarkable efforts to attract international students by the European Union member states including Sweden, through its parliament and government policy revisions. For example the introduction of the "Ny värld– ny högskola" New World - New University bill 2004/05:162 that was formulated to ensure the quality education in Swedish higher institutions of learning (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). In addition, there was simplification of residence permits acquisition through introducing online application options. Furthermore, enabling students to have easy access to the labour market while studying and through the increased number of scholarships (Swedish Migration Board, 2012).

Most of the efforts are emphasized on the structural level, leaving out the micro level were not so much is known about the students' voices like their experiences, challenges or even the things that impact their lives in the host country (Tran, 2016). In addition, since student migrants only consist of a small portion of the immigrant statistics, it's easy not to have as much attention on them by different stakeholders (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). The case becomes even worse were it is a minority population among the students themselves whose needs might not be adequately represented on different student boards and committees like the Ugandans. Even though some scholars like (Buchanan, 2019; Guo & Guo, 2017; Kang & Kim, 2017; Martin & Rizvi, 2014; Raghuram, 2013) have tried to avail literature about the experiences of students, their research is tailored about students from specific parts of the world like Asia and is not representative of all student populations in the world. Hence, leaving a big gap about the unknown experiences of students from other origins like Africa, specifically Ugandans in host countries like Sweden.

Even though this group of students have survived for years without their experiences being documented, we are quite unsure of the effects they have had to endure in silence (either positive or negative). Not knowing means that there cannot be learning from the mistakes or even strengths to make better policies and practices that enhance the academic and social functioning of international students to proactively address their needs. Besides, tackling these experiences gives a valid addition to the existing body of knowledge as it will be carried out on a unique group of international students and in a context of a non-Anglo-Saxon country Sweden. This is because Ugandan students and Sweden as a host country have not been researched about in this context like other groups of students with Asian origin within countries such as United Kingdom, United states, Canada and New Zealand.

It is upon this background that this research will be built upon, to bridge this gap within the literature, add to the existing body of knowledge, give a voice to the students and also provide recommendations to guide policy formulation on how the welfare of minority international students like the Ugandans can be enhanced in a host country like Sweden.

1.2 Purpose and Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to obtain better understanding of the transnational experiences of Ugandan students in Gothenburg. Focusing on how cultural differences affect a student's academic and social life. Besides, this study seeks to find the ways in which students have adapted to their new environment, the challenges they might have encountered and how their families back home affect their life while abroad.

1.3 Research Questions

General question: What are the transnational experiences of Ugandan students in Gothenburg?
Specific Questions
1. How does cultural difference affect a student's academic and social life?
2. How do students adapt to their social life in the host country?
3. What challenges are students faced with and how do they cope with them?
4. How do student's families back home influence their way of life while abroad?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Through giving a platform for students to air out their experiences, this study is envisaged to provide touchstone information for the concerned stakeholders about the real-life situation of students. Furthermore, through investigating the students' challenges, adaptation strategies, and recommendations, this study is visualized to inform policy makers about the aspects that need to be tackled to enhance students' wellbeing and social functioning in Sweden. The study is predicted to avail vital information to future students and the public who hope to embark on studies outside of their home countries through illustrating the lived realities, expectations and probable adaptation strategies they can utilize.

1.5 Relevance to Social Work

This research is in part a fulfillment of a Masters of Social Work with Families and Children, and therefore it is vital to show the relevance to social work with families and children. Social work is a helping profession and everyone's social functioning is vital including minority groups of immigrants like students (Horner & Kelly, 2008; Lewis & Silberman, 1982). In addition, according to the international federation of Social work 2014, social work is described as the following;

> Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities, and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014)

Drawing from this definition, the aspects of social change, liberation of people, collective responsibility, human rights all stand out as important and worthy to be pondered about in relation to this current study. Furthermore, the early pioneers of the social work profession like Mary Richmond and Jane Adams laid a foundation that advocated for the needs of the most vulnerable people in society through fighting discrimination and ensuring better living environments (Kam, 2014). The social work profession has diversified in terms of its scope where social workers not

only handle the needs of the very poor but rather work with different groups of people from all walks of life in diversified settings (Csikai & Rozensky, 1997). The diversified settings in this case include international students who go abroad to pursue their higher education. Currently, the aspects of immigration and globalization have created great changes and challenges in the lives of many people. These changes have also included students that move from their home countries to other countries in search of quality education, thus acquiring transnational identities, activities and challenges (Wit, Agarwal, Said, Sehoole, & Sirozi, 2008).

Drawing on that background, the lenses of the social work profession will be used to understand the experiences and recommendations of the students that will emerge from this study. Consequently, adequate understanding of these aspects will aid practitioners' efforts to appropriately diagnose and accord suitable solutions that will curb negative experiences of students and enhance their social functioning.

Besides, students are part of family life as this study explores the impact of student's families back home on their lives while abroad. This directly links to this Master of Social Work with families and children program. Thus, this study is envisaged to reveal the complexities of family life and doing family for such a unique group of international students. Being in the know of such aspects is forecasted to inform and be a learning point for social work practitioners about the likely strengths and shortfalls entangled in student's transnational relationships. The availability of all this knowledge is envisaged to compel practitioners and concerned parties to draft appropriate policies and to come up with best practices on how to advise international students and to handle these situations in the future.

In conclusion, this chapter has conferred the aspects that will be investigated in this study and the reasons as to why the study is important.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

The structure of international higher education has indeed changed over the years. This has been attributed to factors such as globalization, development, transnationalism and human rights (Oreilly, 2012; Wit et al., 2008). As a response to globalization, many countries, governments and institutions have provided international education (Wit et al., 2008). Consequently, this has hyped the trends of student mobility all over the world in the search for quality education. Several countries that have emerged as benchmarks for international higher education include the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany and France (Buchanan, 2019). Notable increase of students was recorded from 0.8 million students in 1975 to about 3.7 million students in 2009, registered at institutions of higher learning outside their country of origin (Bacigalupe & Bräuninger, 2017; Swedish Migration Board, 2012). Some of the notable causes of student migration have been identified as the need to access high-quality education and career development for the case of pull factors, while the presence of low wages and the low quality education in home countries has forced many people out of their countries to search for greener pastures as push factors (Lin & Kingminghae, 2018).

While international education continues to have a steadfast trend, it doesn't just happen in a vacuum alone, but rather as part of the general aspect of migration. Normally, the discourse of migration occurs when people move between countries (emigration) and within countries (immigration) (Oreilly, 2012). International migration mainly consists of categories of people moving from one country to another and these include; student migrants, skilled or professional migrants, retirement migrants, labour migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, nomads, and return migrants.

Globally, the number of international migrations has drastically increased making it a key issue. In 2019, about 272 million people were involved in international migrations, which is about 3.5% of the entire world's population (International Organisation for migration (IOM), 2019). Some of the reasons for these international migrations have been categorized as study, family reunification and work. Notably, these are not associated with many problems. However, other people migrate because of disaster, persecutions, and conflicts. And are considered more vulnerable and require interventions from other people, communities or nations (IOM, 2019).

Zeroing down to individuals who move for the purpose of study, quality and inclusive education is a human right to all (United Nations, 2015). It is placed fourth on the global sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2015). It is stated as goal four that stipulates that, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2019 p. 10). As such, there has been a great endeavor by individuals, states, philanthropists and other agencies to achieve quality education for all in order to contribute to national and international development (United Nations, 2019). This has been done through both personal finance and scholarships. Hence, international student migration has become one of the largest channels of migration next to migration based on humanitarian grounds, labour migration and family reunification. About 20% of resident permits were granted to students in the European Union member states with an expected growth of up to 7 million mobile students by 2022 according to Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Calvo, 2018; Swedish Migration Board, 2012).

As part of the international student migration, many individuals from all over the world including parts of Africa like Uganda have traveled in search of quality education especially among countries that have established themselves as hubs of quality education, Sweden being among one of them. Therefore, this study tackles Sweden as a host country for international students specifically students from Uganda.

2.1 Sweden as a host country.

Sweden is a Scandinavian Nordic country in the north of Europe that borders Norway to the west and Finland to the North with estimated population statistics of about 10,343,403 people by 2019 (Statistics Sweden, 2020b). Due to the fact that Sweden is a welfare state with relatively liberal migration policies and laws, it has attracted many immigrants in the hope of a better life and access to resources including students (Burner, 2017). Since Sweden is a welfare state, it practices equality of all people men and women (Esping-Andersen, 2016). This kind of equality ranges within the parameters of child rearing, where both men and women take responsibility, and where the views of all genders are taken as important. Esping- Andersen (2016) opines that the ability of the state to provide welfare standards and the provision of equal employment opportunities for both men and women has made people independent. This has limited people's dependence on their extended families and communities, thus creating mostly self-reliant individuals.

Sweden has not been left out regarding the increased numbers of international migration of students. In 2010, about 14,118 first time resident permits were granted for study purposes (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). However, in 2011, the Higher Education Act was changed to the introduction of tuition fees payment for non-European students (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). This caused a decline in the flow of international students to Sweden. This decline was about 52% of the number of students by 2011 with only 6,836 resident permits granted. This decline persisted into the first half of 2012. (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2018; Swedish Migration Board, 2012).

The trends of international students in Sweden have changed overtime. There has been gradual increase of international students between the years of 2013 and 2017 (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2018). In the autumn semester of 2016 and 2017, the numbers of international students were reported to have increased from 1,310 students to 18,310 students (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2018). There was also an increase of students that came from non-EU/ EEA countries from 4000 students in the autumn of 2012 to 6,630 within the space of six years. According to the Swedish higher Education (2018) the number of new tuition paying students increased by 215 percent from 1,100 students to 3470 students in 2016. The greatest numbers of students in the academic year 2016/ 2017 arrived from countries such as France, Germany, China, Finland, the United States, Netherlands, India and United Kingdom with majority on exchange programs.

However, with the positive attitude of Sweden about international education, the Swedish Government and Parliament put in place attractive policies (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). Some of Sweden's attractive strategies include broadening of scholarships and exchange programs, students having right of entry to the labour market during their studies and also the possibility to extend or grant permits for students to search for employment after their studies which has indeed influenced students in Sweden (Swedish Migration Board, 2012).

The modes of study for the programmes offered in Swedish institution of higher learning are diverse. These include the study on campus (face to face interactions) that constituted of 273,300 students (79 %) in the autumn of 2017. Distance learning composed of only 17% fully and 4% for partial students.

In 2017, about 76 Ugandan students were studying in Sweden (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2020). There was evidence of a declined trend from 2015 with 121 students, 102 students in 2016 and then finally to the 76 students that was recorded in 2017. As a focus on Ugandan students, the table below shows trends of Ugandan students in Sweden from the year 2014/15-2018/19 as per statistics Sweden.

Figure 1 : Trends of Ugandan Students in Swedish higher Education from 2014/15-2018/19
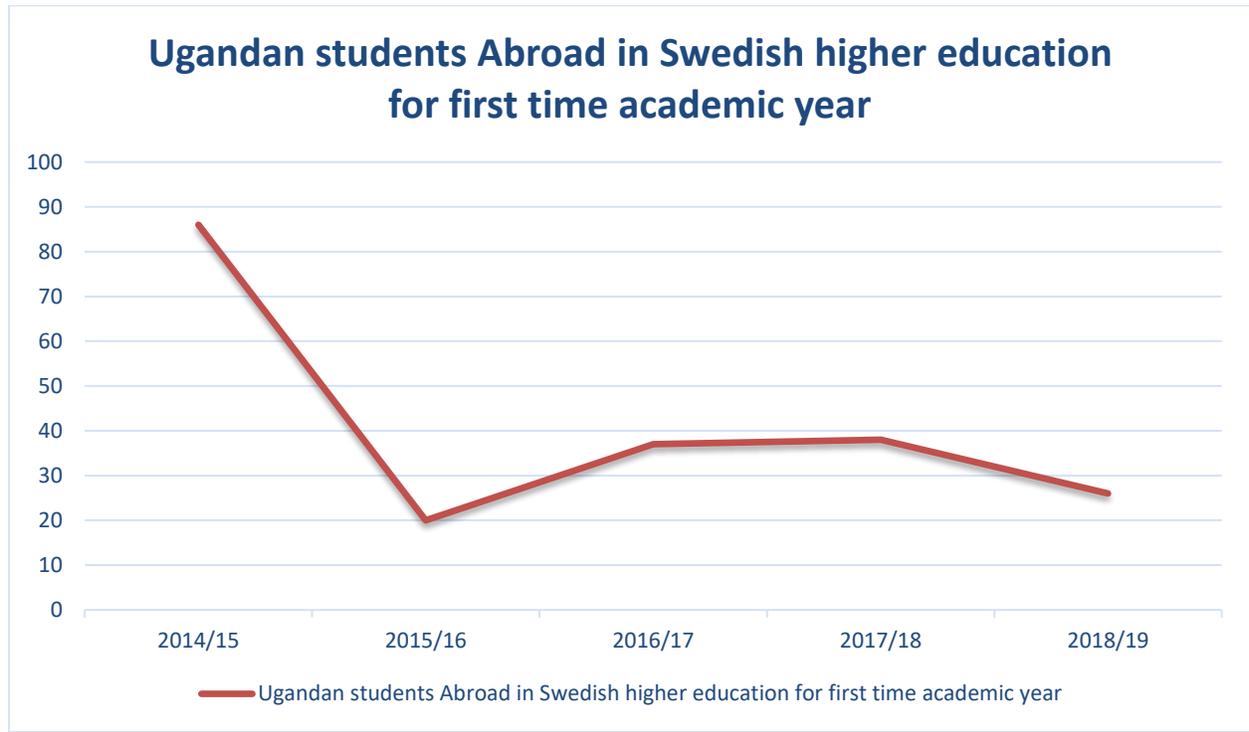
Source: Statistics Sweden (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018)

The statistics above indicates that there was a sharp decrease in the entry of Ugandan students in Sweden between 2014/ 15 to 2015/16. This is demonstrated by the drop-in number from 86 students in 2014/15 to 20 students in 2015/16. This decline could be affiliated to the introduction of tuition payment for third world countries(Swedish Migration Board, 2012). In 2016/17, there was a slight increase to 37 students which continued to 2017/18 with 38 students. However the year 2018/19 was engulfed with a decline to only 26 students (Statistics Sweden, 2020a).

Figure 2: Inflow of Ugandan Students by Sex between 2014/15- 2018-19

The table below shows the number of Ugandan students that came into Sweden from 2014/15-2018-19 by sex.
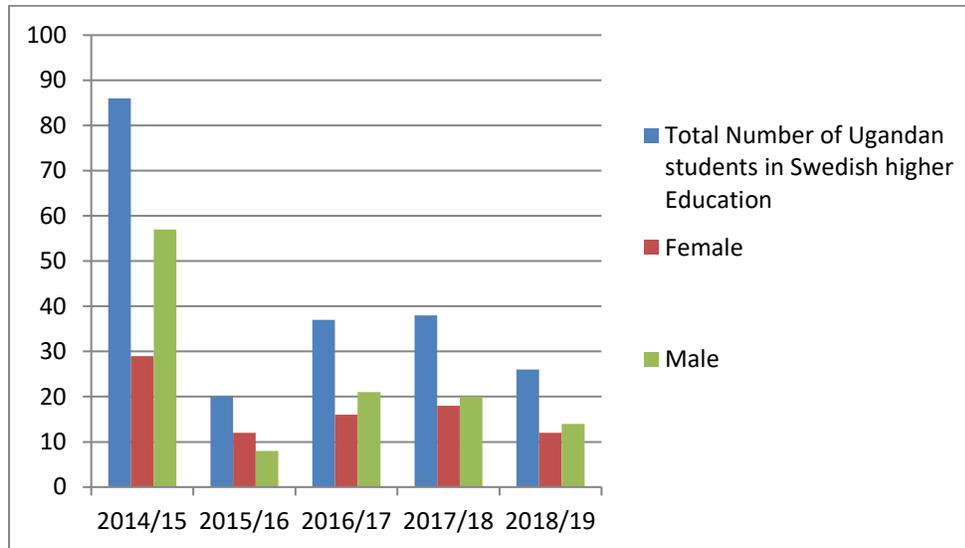
Source: Statistics Sweden (2014/15, 2015/16, 2017/18, 2018/19)

Figure 2 above shows that from 2014/15 the number of male students who came to Sweden were more than their female counterparts. In 2015/16, this took a different turn when more female students were recorded. However, as the years have progressed from 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19, a greater number of male students has been recorded compared to their female counterparts in Sweden.

The current number of Ugandan students has not been documented yet however this brings on the question of what exactly happens to these students after entry to the country in terms of adaptation to this new society. This study therefore seeks to answer this question through the investigation about the transnational experiences of Ugandan students.

2.1.1 Higher Education policy framework in Sweden
According to the laws of Sweden, the migrant status of international student does not come without regulations, policies and guidelines as these have helped to shape the flow of international students in the country. The National policy is drafted in accordance with the government and the parliament as the main responsible parties. The development of international education has been received positively by Sweden (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). Through the Government Bill 2008/09:175, p. 15, the Swedish parliament envisaged that further expansion of the globalized education would strengthen education and benefit the society and individuals through exposure to diversified knowledge and culture (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). In addition, the "Ny värld– ny högskola" New World - New University] (Bill 2004/05:162) was also formulated to ensure the quality education in Swedish higher institutions of learning (Swedish Migration Board, 2012).

In view of the above frameworks, Sweden has been a favoured destination for many international students a factor that has attracted many of them to Sweden.

However, the introduction of the Bill 2009/10:65, that introduced school fees payment for third world countries led to a fall in the number of international students. In this justification, Sweden's focus was to compete internationally as a quality education harbor rather than as a free education provider (Swedish Migration Board, 2012). In the researchers view, even though Sweden has attracted many of the international students, payment of school fees especially for the third world countries has brought up the gap in education acquisition. This is because the financial muscle has been left as the determinant factor for quality education acquisition, a factor that has left out other gifted and talented and qualified individuals who cannot afford.

In 2015, Sweden was ranked among the countries with the most favourable integration policies for immigrants ranking the first out of thirty eight countries (Migrant Intergration policy Index, 2015). Sweden as a country of immigration since the 1950's was recognized for its policies such as the 2009 anti-discrimination Act, that created comprehensive law and equality ombudsman to ensure the right to justice and access to rights for migrants like the citizens (Migrant Intergration policy Index, 2015). Conclusively, drawing from the policies above, it is quite evident that these have a huge bearing on the experiences of students in Sweden. Berry (2005) and Fawcet (1989) concluded that public policies within a country either improve the social cultural and psychological adaptation of individuals or either contribute to acculturative stress. Therefore, policy makers should always be informed about these influencers. Specifically, it is quite evident that the "Ny värld – ny högskola" New World - New University] (Bill 2004/05:162) had a positive impact on international student migration while the Bill 2009/10:65, affected and led to a decline in the number of international students.

2.1.2 Comparison of approaches towards International Education in OECD countries

The payment of tuition fees has also had great influence on the flow of international students (OECD, 2019). For countries like Norway, Korea, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, foreign students pay the same tuition fees as the locals. While in counties such as the United States, Canada, Australia, nonresidents pay more for their education. Besides, Australia and Sweden have higher payment fees for foreign students and non-EU students (OECD, 2019). In Sweden, non- EU students pay over USD 14500 per year at bachelor's level, unlike the locals and students from EU or EEA countries that get free education. Although the payment of fees has mainly been inclined to low attraction of international students, there is evidence that on the other hand, this has attracted some internationals students due to the expectation of quality education in countries like Canada and Austria were international students made up 11% of students enrolled at the bachelors compared to 4% across other OECD countries (OECD, 2019. p. 321).

International student support systems have also been implemented differently within countries (OECD, 2019). According to OECD (2019) there are four strategies that are used by countries to support international students. One strategy includes countries with both no tuition fees payment and with generous student support policies. Some of these include Finland, Denmark and Norway. The second strategy encompasses high tuition fees and well-developed student support systems with countries such as Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States. The third strategy embodies high tuition fees but with less developed support systems with countries such

as Chile, Korea and Japan. While the last strategy encompasses the strategy of low or moderate tuition fees and less developed student support systems like France, Spain, Belgium, and Switzerland (OECD, 2019). It should however be noted that these policies are not constant and have changed from time to time within the different countries (OECD, 2019).

Drawing from the lenses of the global perspective, Sweden was praised as one of the countries with the most responsive integration policies that supported and heeded to the needs of the new immigrants and was ranked (1) out of 38 other European countries as compared to countries like Turkey (38), Latvia (37), and Slovakia(34), that did not have adequately satisfying policies as evidenced by their ranks against them to enhance the integration process of immigrants (Migrant Intergration policy Index, 2015).

2.2 Uganda as a country of Origin for Students

To adequately understand people's experiences, it is vital to understand the characteristics of their culture of origin, since these have a bearing on shaping and influencing an individual's life views and experiences (Berry, 2005). It is therefore for that reason that some characteristics of Uganda are stipulated to have a better understanding of the participants' country of origin that might also influence how they embrace their life while abroad.

Uganda is an East African country that is bordered by Kenya in the East, Tanzania in the south with a projected population of 40,898,375 million by mid-2020 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Uganda is endowed with different cultures with many tribes and languages. With more than half of the population below the age of 18 years, the Ugandan working population of only about 15 million people have to work and provide for the others (Uganda bureau of statistics, 2017). Uganda has not been left out in the migration plight, as it has been a hosting country to many migrants like refugees and asylum seekers from Burundi and Somalia over the years (International Organisation for migration, 2015). The highest percentage of the working population which is 65% engages in subsistence agriculture as their economic activity which does not bring in a lot of income. The unemployment rate is relatively high at 9.2% and was ranked among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa (POSEC, 2012) as cited by (International Organisation for migration, 2015). In addition, there was a crime rate of about 667 victims per 100,000 people by 2017 (Uganda bureau of statistics, 2017). In the education sector, the government has tried to support and ensure provision of this service. This has been through establishment of free and subsidized education like universal primary education, secondary, and other higher institutions. However, this has been characterized with low quality especially in the rural areas. Thus, to maximize their opportunities, some Ugandans decide to venture into other countries to access quality education.

Currently, there is no recorded data about the exact number of Ugandan students who study abroad by the Republic of Uganda itself. However, some international authorities have tried to record some numbers as presented below. The number of Ugandans who went abroad for study varied from year to year (UIS, 2020). The graph below helps to elaborate this.

Figure 3 : A graph showing the number of Ugandan students abroad
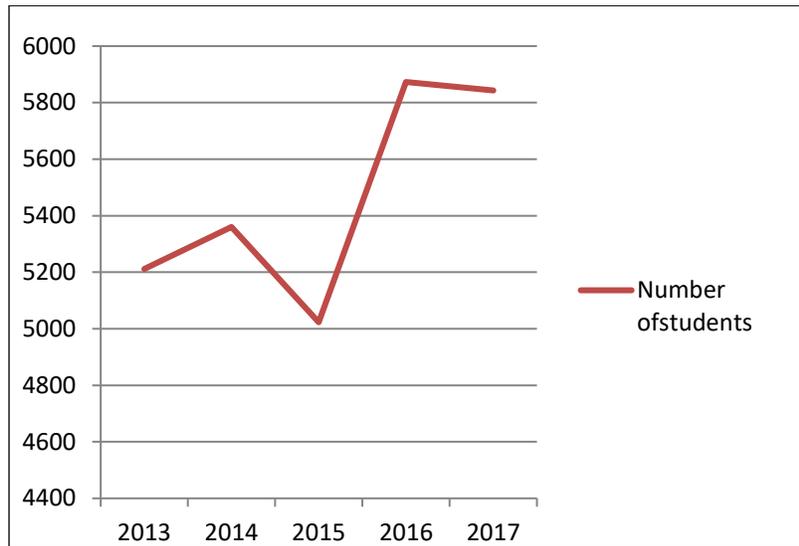
Source: UIS, 2020

In 2013, the number of students who moved out of the country for study were 5211. In 2014, there was an increase to 5360 students abroad. However, in 2015, there was a decrease of students going abroad to study with about 5023 students recorded. In 2016, the number increased to 5873 students while in 2017 further increase was recorded with about 5834 students.

2.2.1 Family Context in Uganda

The Family structure in Uganda is not systematically documented however a lot of the information will be drawn from the general African context of which some similar norms and customs are shared. Unlike the Western family composition where family is based on independence and individualism, in the African society, family life is based on the principles of collectivity and interdependence (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998).

The 1995 constitution of the republic of Uganda stipulates that, all individuals are recognized with the right to have life and the family is recognized as the basic unit in society that is responsible for protection of its members (Constitution of the republic of Uganda, 1995). Furthermore, a family also creates a sense of belonging, socialization and also a place of learning where children learn the ways of life and culture (Nankunda, 2017).

Africa's family system is characterized with strong patriarchal traditions, large scale polygamy, immense cultural weight on lineage and fertility, social and cultural patterning through kinship and extended families (Therbon, 2004). In Uganda, the total fertility rate per woman by 2016 was 5.4 children which saw a decline from 6.9 children per woman in 2000-01 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ICF, 2018).

In definition of present day African families, not much can be said without the reference to colonization and its impact on the shaping the African family (Weisner, Bradley, & Kilbride,

1997). This is mainly because of the constant comparisons to the Western marriage and family life style deemed to be more superior a factor that has led to the gradual erosion of the African culture (Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998). This is because many individuals are abandoning some of the very traditional cultural traits to adopt the western culture like abandoning of patriarchy and a move to nuclear families rather than the extended families. In this regard, Theran (2004) & Nankunda (2017) opine that the trends of Urbanization, development of wage labour and industrialization have gradually led to the erosion of the traditional family characteristics and support system in Africa. Therbon (2004) continues to assert that even though the supremacy of the male gender has been gradually eroded, traces of this remains dominant in some societies

Drawing on the above-mentioned factors, many people have migrated out of the country in search of better-quality life and services including students who have even crossed borders to secure a brighter education and future.

2.3 Definition of Concepts

This section operationalizes the concepts that are used in this study. It also further later gives a description of how these words will be used in this study to enable better alignment and understanding of the words used.

Migration: Migration is the movement of people from one place, country, area to another (King, 2010). King (2010) continues to allude that migration is a spatial aspect that involves crossing borders, geographical distances and residing in different places. Oreilly (2012) also asserts that migration is characterised by some economic factors that push and pull people in certain directions depending on where they gain. Push factors are those that force people from their country of origin while pull factors attract them to other countries.

Transnationalism : Transnationalism is a concept that has been extensively described by several scholars and some of their descriptions include;
Transnationalism can be described as interactions that connect people across country borders (Oke, 2012). In addition, transnationalism is where national localities are connected by migration and the diaspora created by the movement of people (Willey-sthapit, Valdovinos, Teyra, & Borja, 2019). Transnationalism is a concept that is used to show the link of people and places across boundaries including how their identities are impacted (Oreilly, 2012). The term enables to broaden the view from what happens when people move to other countries like assimilation and fitting into the new communities to put some focus on the continuing power, culture, way of life that an individual migrates with and how this can also impact them (Oreilly, 2012).

International Student: In the Swedish Migration Board (2012, p.10), an international student is described as;

> A third-country national accepted by an establishment of higher education and admitted to the territory of a Member State to pursue as his/her main activity a full-time course of study leading to a higher education qualification recognized by the Member State, including diplomas, certificates or doctoral degrees in an establishment of higher education, which may cover a preparatory course prior to such education according to its national legislation.

Furthermore, International student can be described as an individual who is undertaking face to face course but is not a resident of the country they are pursuing their studies including those who received their previous education in another country (Gemmell & Harrison, 2017).

In this study, the concept uses both meanings to elaborate an international student.

Culture: There is virtually no universally known definition of the term culture. However, several scholars have come up to define this term. Scollon and Scollon (2001, p.3) defines culture as a way people are put into categories depending on their special features that differentiate them from other groups. Scollon and Scollon (2001) further describes culture as those values, day to day practices, kinship system, customs, world views , social organizations and other practices which may be taken for granted that make a group of people unique from the rest (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Sato (2013, p.1) described culture in many ways that included the ethos underlying phenomena. In addition, there was attribution of culture to aspects in everyday life such as food and clothes. (K. Sato, 2013).

Coping Mechanisms: These are behavioral and cognitive efforts that are ever changing and that are employed by individuals to manage internal and external demands that people do not have resources for (Baqutayan, 2015) who drew on the works of Lazarus and Folkman, (1984). In addition, Baqutayan (2015) asserts that coping entails actions that that individuals partake to overcome or resist stressful situations they encounter. In this study, the term coping mechanism is used specifically for strategies that the students used to overcome their challenges.

Adaptation: This refers to steady changes that occur within individuals or groups of people as a result of external demands (Berry, 2005). Furthermore, adaptation was defined as both the outcomes and strategies used during acculturation (Berry, 1992). Besides, adaptation does not necessarily mimic each trait so that individuals become exactly like their environment, however, it may also be characterized with some conflict and opposition in order to change environments (Berry, 2005). Henceforth the likelihood that the process of adaptation consists two outcomes either positive or negative. According to Berry (2005), adaptation of people happens in two ways that is the social- cultural and psychological adaptation. Social-cultural adaptation relates to how individuals deal with day life in new cultural surroundings while psychological adaptation mainly dwells with one's physical and psychological wellbeing (Berry, 2005).

In this study, the term adaptation is used generally for the ways in which students manage to survive in their new environments and not necessarily tied to their problems, but rather tied to other realms of life too.

Family: The concept of family has gained traction and diversified over time. This is because many scholars have come up with terms associated with families and understanding of Families. Finch (2007) proposes that the family is demonstrated through display to highlight the essential social nature of family practices by people who constitute a family. Typical family is illustrated through the nature of family practices where the one transmitting should be understood by the others to make the family practices effective (Finch, 2007). Some of the examples the author gave included making phone calls to a loved one or ensuring to be there for a family member during times of need. Therefore, this study investigates to find out how the students' stay abroad is affected by their families. And additionally, to investigate the various strategies of how the students and their relatives do family from a distance and its impact.

Practicing family life has been associated to numerous ways like sharing resources, obligations, responsibilities, solidarity, caregiving and intimacy demonstrate putting into practice family life. (Bakker, Karsten, & Mulder, 2015). Even though Finch (2007) uses another which is displaying family, she brings to light how families demonstrate concern and display family even in the absence of close proximity for example a weekly phone call, caring enough to offer a present to a step child or even hanging photos of loved ones in a special place in a home. Finch (2007) contends that with the evolution and the ever-changing nature of Individual lifestyles, the institution of family is bound to change and be modified especially with the aspect of migration. Finch continues to assert that as children leave home during different stages of their lives, as new phenomena such as cohabitation comes up, this leads to even greater redefinition of family relationships.

To sum up this chapter, there is recognition of the differences that exist between Sweden as a host country and Uganda as a country of origin for the students. For example, the focus on the independence of individuals in Sweden, and equality in terms of gender roles. While Uganda is characterized with patriarchy, interdependence and collectivity of people. With this in mind, it will give an understanding from what point of view the students experience their new life in Sweden and why some aspects stand out for them as will be seen in the analysis chapter.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents literature from earlier studies and research about the experiences of transnational/ international students and highlights the gaps that ought to be filled by this study. This literature aids to better understand the topic and draw more appreciation about international students mainly in line to the thesis Topic *"Transnational experiences of Ugandan Students in Gothenburg, Sweden".* This section further explains what various authors have written about the research questions including, how cultural differences affects a student's academic and social life, what challenges international students face and how they cope and adapt to them, and how families and communities back home and in the host countries influence the student's way of life abroad. In total, over 50 literatures were reviewed. These and other studies reviewed in this section give a foundation for better understanding of the topic as elaborated below.

3.1 Reasons for student migration

For migration to occur, there has to be interplay between the dichotomy concepts of push and pull factors (Oreilly, 2012). Push factors compel people to move from country of origin while the pull factors attract them to different places with more opportunities (Oreilly, 2012). Hence these have been referred to as starting points for understanding the reasons for migration.

Students like any other category of migrants are pushed by many reasons to migrate. Raghuram (2013) alludes that study is only part of the facets of migration and not its entirety. Buchanan (2019) claims that some students choose to migrate for purposes such as the need to make international friends and due to family and friend's recommendations. Furthermore, the need for language improvement, career enhancement and the search for better job prospects were jotted as motives for student migration. Therefore, from the findings of the authors above, it is quite evident that friendship formation and family views are quite important influencers of migration among students and not just the sole motive for study.

Baláž & William (2004) whose qualitative study was done on fifty-five students from Slovakia with UK as a host country derived some reasons. Students mentioned their motivations which included the need to get better job opportunities, experience of living in a foreign country, better educational opportunities, the need to acquire skills, high salary and to improve their English language (Baláž & Williams, 2004). Raghuram (2013) asserts that another reason for migrating by students pertains to the knowledge and skill that is envisaged to be obtained. Conclusively, the findings from the two authors agreed about the need for the acquisition of skills.

The inability to acquire access to quality higher education, opportunities and the search for a pursuit of advantage has been one of the factors that has drove students out of their home countries (Waters & Brooks, 2010). Normally the movement to many places adds some sort of value that many students want to associate with, hence the search for opportunities to move.

The need to boost mobility is a reason as to why some decide to take on as students in other countries (Raghuram, 2013). Geographical mobility is enhanced when students move from country to country. The emergence of a global village that lays the ground for acquisition of skills and

knowledge is one of the factors. In addition, the need for most people to get connected and exposed out of their own comfort zones and countries (Raghuram, 2013).

In addition, aspects of excitement, fun and the ability to flee away from familiar phenomena have been noted as beneficial and great determinants of student migrants (Waters, Brooks, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). According to the study by Waters et al., (2011), British students who pursued their studies abroad said that they did so to avoid the strict British education system, to prolong their youthful selves and to escape their old lives as they venture and start new lives (Waters et al., 2011). In addition, some students reported that they needed to escape the pressures and expectations that were associated with life in the UK (Waters et al., 2011). The authors in this paragraph are therefore in consensus of how some students embark on studies with the motive of fleeing familiar things. Hence making this a vital element of the reasons as to why students migrate.

This portion of literature is important because it helps give a firm background that suggests the motivations for student movement. It is however evident that although studies cover students from different origins and different host countries, none of the studies articulate aspects about motivations for students in Uganda. Therefore, creation of a gap regarding the present literature.

3.2 Effects of Cultural Differences on Students Academic and Social life

3.2.1 Academic experiences of international students

International students always find education systems that differ from those back at home, significantly difficult, which sometimes affects their academics. In a study done about Korean students in the United states. Kang & Kim (2017) discovered that the students expressed some challenges in many aspects of their learning. The challenges included the difficulty in understanding class activity objectives and materials due to English language deficiency (Kang & Kim, 2017). These hindrances further extended towards not understanding instructions to assignments and exams. Students also reported that most of their time was instead occupied with looking up the meanings of the English words (Kang & Kim, 2017). In liaison, Li et al., (2010) argued that students also underwent academic shock that was declared a subset of cultural shock. This was caused by elements such as the education system, learning environment, lecture styles, relationship between lectures and fellow students and the assessment styles (Li, Chen, & Duanmu, 2010). The consequences of these included being left out in most academic activities.

Andrade (2006) also agrees with Kang & Kim (2017) saying that, students had a hard time adjusting to the academic systems and language. With difficulties associated to understanding the contents of the study. This was because of the vocabulary used and the first pace of speech by the instructors. Furthermore, proficiency in the English language through writing skills proved to be a great factor and determinant of academic achievement among international students (Li et al., 2010). Consequently, as a result of most courses being taught in the English language, the mastery in speech and writing becomes a vital aspect if students are to excel in their studies (Li et al., 2010). This hence shows that difference in the language of instruction at school in the host country has a bearing on student academic life. It is therefore obvious from the consensus of the authors above that difficulties of the English language ranks high among the difficulties encountered by international students.

A sense of attachment and belonging to the institution is also necessary for effective student engagements in host countries. Kang and Kim (2017) opine that students expressed negative attitudes and emotions towards their school hence a low sense of school belonging. In this study, the students alluded that they felt frustrated and bored to sit in a class where they hardly understood anything (Kang & Kim, 2017). Besides, a low interaction was reported between the Korean students with their other student counterparts and the teachers in the school setting (Kang & Kim, 2017). This therefore demonstrated the lack of social integration by the students which affected their ability to navigate and even fit better in the school setting (Kang & Kim, 2017). This reveals that students who easily adopt the sense of belonging in the host country are much likely to adapt adequately in their academic life. Since this study affirmed this aspect about Korean students, there still exists a gap regarding the impact on students from other parts of the world. Therefore, undertaking research about Ugandan students will to some extent fill this gap.

In relation to academic performance, international students are influenced by many factors. Li, Chen & Duanmu (2010) discovered in their quantitative study in the United Kingdom that students from different nationalities such as Chinese, Nigerians, Thai, Greek, and Taiwanese were affected by the perceived importance of academic success to their families back home. These expectations sometimes imposed immense stress on students to ensure that they do not disappoint their families back home (Li et al., 2010). Pressure due to the fear of failure sometimes occured to students who were financially sponsored either fully or partially by their families (Li et al., 2010; Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). The performance pressures also arose from sponsors who threatened to withdraw sponsorship in case of low performance ratings (Li et al., 2010). The envisaged consequences of this pressure may include effects on the mental wellbeing of students, effects on their academic performance and even their social life. Therefore, this current study will seek to investigate and to ascertain if the same experience applied to Ugandan students.

For some students, social communication with compatriots also proved likely to have a positive impact on academic achievement of international students (Li et al., 2010). It was discovered that communication with each other enhances social support and helps the students to sort out their problems through sharing their experiences (Li et al., 2010; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). This factor made them confident and hence gave them the zeal to overcome their academic challenges.

From the literature above, its been quite evident the aspects that affect international students' academic life like the English language problems, hard times adjusting to the different academic system, the positive communication that enhances student's social support to overcome academic challenges. Therefore, the section below will look at the factors that affect students' social life.

3.3 Social experiences and Challenges of International students

Equally important to study is the social wellbeing of international students in their host countries. Several social challenges are faced by transnational students which affects their endeavors. Kang & Kim (2017) in their study asserts that Korean students did not have a peer network with students who were not learning English. This was because of the limited interaction with such students. Matsushima (2016) opines that the selective friendship choices also made it hard for some students to find new friends sometimes. It was rather established that more connectivity existed with students in the same category of learning English probably because of the proximity. More challenges included lack of resources, little knowledge about the host country and the inability to station themselves. Besides, separation from their parents and their temporary status as immigrants including different cultures all posed as a problem to students (Kang & Kim, 2017).

Loneliness among international students comes in strongly as a challenge of many international students (Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008). According to their study done on students who lived onshore Australia, it was discovered that two thirds of the students experienced loneliness. According to the student participants, the main causal factors for their loneliness included the absence of intimate persons that they could relate to, the lack of cultural fit, and their inability to secure social networks (Sawir et al., 2008). Three types of loneliness as experienced by the international students were jotted by the researcher which are personal loneliness, social loneliness and networking loneliness in institutions settings and loneliness that is brought about because of personal characteristics of an individual student (Sawir et al., 2008). In the same light, Andrade (2006) concludes that the limited social support given to international students because of the distant proximity of their friends and families makes it harder to pull through the hard times.

A more severe social challenge however is isolation and marginalization. Buchanan (2019) whose study tackled the US education systems experienced by international students, asserts that international students felt marginalized and isolated. This occurred when the students attempted integrating in the American institutions (Buchanan, 2019). This is in line with earlier scholars that asserted that international students felt isolated from their host communities sometimes (Robertson et al., 2000). To overcome this, some students sought refuge with visiting and making bonds with other international students (Buchanan, 2019). This was elicited because of the similar values and adjustment problems. Even though these helped them to obtain some sense of belonging, Buchanan (2019) concluded that these also deprived them of the opportunities that came with indulging with the local communities. In addition, Berry (2005) eluded that students that only kept to themselves were prone to stress and integration problems.

The presence of discrimination and racism in some host countries was a challenge to some international students. A research done by Benson (2016) about Asian students in New Zealand reveals the low acceptance levels of foreigners, discrimination and some racist connotations most predominantly in white communities. The unwillingness and individualistic nature of local inhabitants in New Zealand and the US specifically made it hard for integration of students to occur (Benson, 2016; Buchanan, 2019; T. Sato & Hodge, 2009; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). In the same spirit, Guo & Guo, (2017) and Zhang & Brunton, (2007) also mentioned in their studies the unwillingness of the local students to connect with the international students in Canada and New

Zealand respectively. Research continues to assert that the negative treatment and discrimination was not only evident in New Zealand but also the UK were students from all over the world like Asia, Europe and USA have experienced it (Buchanan, 2019 who draws on the works of Ledwith and Seymour, 2001).

The aspect of cultural diversity also posed challenges for international students. As international students try to integrate, they are faced with a dilemma on which culture to take precedence either their own or that of the host country (Gomes & Tran, 2017). Even though the students would prefer to have both, it is impossible to maintain sometimes (Gomes & Tran, 2017). Therefore, in this case, some students decide to disconnect with their families and friends back home to focus on the new host culture. This sometimes makes them lose and miss a part of themselves hence causing a strain on their emotional and social wellbeing as their social support is cut off (Gomes & Tran, 2017). Through seeking the experiences of Ugandan students, this current study is envisaged to ascertain or disapprove if this aspect applies to other groups of international students and hence adding to the body of knowledge

The lack of a sense of belongingness was highlighted as a challenge to international students (Gomes & Tran, 2017). This came up in their study to find out student's experiences of connectedness and disconnectedness in the host country. This ranged with their friends, families and institutions in host and home countries (Gomes & Tran, 2017). Since the host environments are quite unfamiliar in terms of the social and cultural surroundings, students sometimes did not feel a part of it. It is even made worse when it's the first time students are traveling away from their home countries to study in other countries (Gomes & Tran, 2017).The fact that the authors above had this findings on a specific group of students left a gap. The researcher therefore hopes to minimize this gap with this current study.

Besides, Martin & Rizvi (2014) in their study about international students from India and China in Melbourne, aspects of connect and disconnect surface. In reference to Chinese students, it was discovered that students endeavored to retain high communication with their friends and families back home. However locally in their host countries, they were only able to connect transnationally with other students and friends from China but not with the local people in Melbourne (Martin & Rizvi, 2014). For some students, this disconnect came in as a result of bad experiences like anti-Chinese racism, and racial abuse like being kicked on a tram. Hence a factor that robbed them of the opportunities to integrate and gain from their new environment. Regarding the Indian students, they were reported as being ambivalent towards referring to incidences of racism. However, among the two groups of students, it was quite evident that their sense of belonging was short lived as their existed more disconnect with the locals

Church (1982) mentioned that the most pronounced problems that students face include financial problems, racial discrimination, homesickness, adjusting to new educational systems norms and customs and language problems. Although these have been jotted out as the most common, financial difficulties have stood out for many (Church, 1982).This is in line with studies such as (Li et al., 2010) who mention the financial situation, social and economic support and social integration as some of the aspects that's affect Chinese students performance in UK universities.

Some scholars reported that international students reap positive experiences on their international journeys (Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014; Reid, Brown, Peterson, Snowden, & Hines, 2009). Empowerment came out strongly as a positive achievement students had encountered in their host countries. This form of empowerment ranged from changed perspectives about decision making and change in attitudes (Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014). Even though this came out as a positive aspect, it was mainly reported to be achieved in the later stages of student migration after they have learnt the host culture.

Even though most of the experiences are attached to negative aspects, as per the works of previous scholars, the section below demonstrates how international students worldwide have tried to cope with their problems and how they have managed to adjust to their new host countries.

3.4 Coping and adaptation Mechanisms of students

Joining a new community always comes with new challenges, some simple to adjust to and some may be hard to get by. These include but are not limited to new language, human behavior, making new friends, climate, working conditions, missing family members and friends among others (Buchanan, 2019; Guo & Guo, 2017). These new experiences may pose challenges hence making individuals affected to diverse coping mechanisms and adaptation strategies. The course of adaptation is often never a straight path, but rather encompasses several influencing factors. Zhou, Jindal- Snape, Topping & Todman (2008) opine that variables such as the length of residence in the host culture, general knowledge about a new culture, friendship networks, previous experience abroad, quantity and quality of contact with host nationals, acculturation modes, temporary versus permanent residence in a new country all influence the way people adapt to a new culture (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). Buchanan (2019) also elaborated the gradual process adaptation occurs through his illustration of Indian graduate students who confessed that their adaptation was gradual and had traversed the phases of cultural shock, excitement and later on the adaption

Building connections with local people, institutions, and organizations through integration have been amongst the strategies devised by students to cope (Gomes & Tran, 2017). This has been a strategy to increase their chances of future employability. However, students also try to preserve their own cultural, religious and social identities as it is important for them to cope (Gomes & Tran, 2017). Even though this is the case, there is admission to the difficulties in keeping both origin and host cultures. This, therefore, creates a mismatch in practice regarding their life choices. However, most students are reported to have prioritized connections with locals as they deem it more important (Gomes & Tran, 2017). From the literature, it is therefore evident that connections with the local people are quite important for coping.

Gomes & Tran (2017) and Buchanan (2019) suggest that international students use advancing more affordable communication technology and media to connect with their friends and families back home. In addition, Gomes & Tran (2017) stipulate that apart from the communication, students also use technology to reconstruct familiar household environments. This is done using technologies like Skype and live streaming of families and friends that has helped them to dwell in the translocal spaces and hence enable them to feel more at home. The presence of consensus among authors about the use of technology therefore reinforces its importance and use among international students.

As one of the mentioned challenges of students being limited financial resources, to handle this, students have devised means such as engaging in paid work to overcome the challenge. Engaging in paid work was one of the coping mechanisms done as a response to limited financial resources (Raghuram, 2013). This was done to enable them cover their living expenses with some of the examples including working in shops and restaurants, driving taxis and other activities that enable them to earn (Raghuram, 2013). Even though these have been singled out, it is not fully known if these mechanisms are universal to all students or are only employed by Asian students. Therefore, this current study aims to close this gap to ascertain if all students go through the same coping mechanism or if its only specific to country of origin.

Support given by the university has been deemed vital to enable international students to combat loneliness (Sawir et al., 2008). Such services include, personal counseling, arrival services and structuring social activities like student clubs and networks. In addition, the orientations provided by the university to the international students like disseminating knowledge to them about the range of support services and activities provided by the institution has been deemed important for the wellbeing of the students (Sawir et al., 2008). Therefore it becomes crucial for the concerned parties especially institutions of higher learning to always take into considerations the needs of students to enhance their wellbeing (Sherry, Thomas, & Hong, 2010). Besides, the characteristics of host countries like type of relationships between lectures and the students is vital to the achievement of their goals (Arends-Tóth & Vijver, 2006; Due, Zambrano, Chur-hansen, & Turnbull, 2015; Leong, 2015) This therefore confers the essential role universities play in supporting international students in adapting to the new country. This current study however comes in timely to add to the body of literature to either prove or disapprove this claim.

The good relationships between international students and their university supervisors proved vital to the students coping and adaptation process. Andrade (2006) reported that international students valued friendly warm relationships with their instructors in contrast to what was previously known about them like being used to a formal student professor relationship. Thus emerging as an important aspect in student's coping.

To combat loneliness, international students in the study of Sawir et al., (2008) mentioned some of the following support systems. Students admitted to using personal support where they called home, social networks like converging with people who spoke the same language which was rendered therapeutic. Besides, some admitted to, consumption of university services like counseling, while others sought positive solitude to combat loneliness. Through the positive solitude, students joined crowded places to forget their own loneliness; others sought refuge in religious activities while some male students referred to it as intrinsic for them because of their gender (Sawir et al., 2008).

The personal characteristics of individual students were also deemed important in their adaptation. Andrade (2006) alluded that aspects such as the age of the student, year of study, student's motivations, peer partnership were great determinants of their adaptation process. In conclusion of this section, the students devised different mechanisms to overcome their challenges and to adapt to their new host country. However, the next section illustrates the relationship of students with their families back home and how these relationships affect students.

3.5. Student Relationship with Families

Families are central to the emergence of student migration as they have been referred to as both drivers and beneficiaries of student migration (Raghuram, 2013). Hence when students migrate, it does not only impact them but also their families left behind. Migration causes separation of family members leading them to be stretched out in different places (Raghuram, 2013). Even so, after separation, normal day to day life activities have to go on which brings on the need for mediators. To bridge this gap, students and their families have taken advantage of ICT to keep in contact and for students to influence activities back home including the cultural and political activities (Collins, 2009).

Tazanu (2015) whose study was carried out among Cameroonian youth/ students in Germany, discovered the role of remittances. The students sent remittances in the form of money to their families back home (Tazanu, 2015). Through this action, the students were showing their gratitude. Furthermore, this acted as a pay back to their past economic dependence on their family members back home. Besides, Krzyzowski & Muncha (2014) stipulate that sometimes remittances were sent by migrants to their families back home as compensation for their physical absence. This therefore stipulates the role that remittances do in the encouragement of transnational experiences of students. Since this study was done on students with an African origin, it is quite encouraging in terms of closeness of origin. However, even with the closeness in African origin, there still exists a gap that this study ought to close.

For some migrants, communication with families was regarded both as advantageous and as carrying some disadvantages. Tazanu (2015) opined that some migrants felt compelled to communicate with their families back home. This compulsion was brought to light because of the presence of mobile phones and other digital equipment that render it easier to communicate (Tazanu, 2015). Although this has to a higher extent been viewed as advantageous, some migrants identified the use of mobile phones as a means of exploitation from their families back home. This is because it was used to monitor the migrants through the constant calls, and further use it to acquire money from the migrants. Besides, Ambrosini (2014) opines that troubles back home like emergencies, job loss, diseases, and any abrupt misfortunes were expected to be handled by immigrants abroad. On the other hand, students felt that their folks back home did not need the money because they could hardly account for the money used (Tazanu, 2015). This later brings about conflicts between the migrants and their families because of the distrust. Conclusively, two sides regarding communication emerge. Whether or not both happen for all immigrants is something further research should ascertain. Therefore, this current study aims to either ascertain or disclaim this assertion through investigating the experiences of Ugandan student in Sweden.

Hindrance in communication because of the generational divide (Castells, 2010). Even though the zeal for communication ranks high, sometimes there exists a generational divide between those born before the internet Age (1969) which could be the parents and family members of the students. Due to the advanced technologies, sometimes family members are not able to adjust to the complicities of the technology therefore making them unable to use them (Castells, 2010). Therefore creation of a drift in the communication (Castells, 2010). This further diminishes the student's support system of family and friends making it harder for them to pull through in hard times (Andrade, 2006)

In regards to some students, they affiliated their stay away from their families as liberating and full of relief whilst on their studies abroad (Buote et al., 2007). This is due to fact that students were free from the constant supervision and pressures that was brought about from being close to their families, that made them uncomfortable (Buote et al., 2007). Therefore, looking forward to such moments.

Closing the gap

In conclusion, from the works of previous scholars, it is quite evident that most of the studies about international students have focused on students of Asian origin as evidenced in studies of several authors like (Gomes & Tran, 2017; Kang & Kim, 2017; Li et al., 2010). Although these have been quite informative in generally understanding the experiences of international students, there is need to tackle students from other parts of the world with different cultures, identities, and even characteristics. Therefore, this still leaves a huge gap that ought to be filled in tackling students from other parts of the world like Africa, Central America and even European students who go to study in other parts of the world. The mentioned literatures have also focused on Anglo Saxon host countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and New Zealand. This has also left several gaps because many more countries across the world are involved in the transaction of international education. Therefore, this current study aims to reduce this gap by tackling a unique group of international students "Ugandan students" that has not been investigated about before because of the absence of literature and Sweden as a host country.

In addition, in the works of previous researchers, it's been stated that international cross cultural experiences cannot be generalized (Berry, 2005). Boccagni (2015) emphasized the need for more research to show the contribution of non-migrating friends and family on individual migration. This was because of the little works in this area. Therefore, the focus on how students' families affect their lives abroad contributes to this literature and further closes this gap.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents the theoretical framework to guide the data analysis throughout the study. The theories provide lenses through which the study is contextualized and given meaning. Furthermore, the merger between theory and practice are vital because they provide a foundation of the study to focus on the aim of the study (Swanson, 2007). The theories used in this study are the acculturation and the migration network theory. The acculturation theory looks at the changes that occur when there is contact between two or more cultures (Berry, 2005), while the migration network theory illustrates how people's networks affect them in their new host countries (Collyer, 2011). In the study, the researcher uses the acculturation theory to understand how transnational students adjust to their new environment with the different culture. While the migration network theory will be used to discover how the students use the networks and how they are affected by the different networks around them.

4.1 The Acculturation theory

Originally, acculturation theory had its origin as a one-dimensional aspect with the assertion that the receiving and retention of culture were at opposition with one another and on different sides of the continuum (Gordon, 1964) as cited in (Schwartz, Unger, & Zamboanga, 2010). This was of the view that with the acquisition of new cultural values meant the abandonment of the cultural values with the assumption that two cultural values did not coexist (Schwartz et al., 2010). However, with time there has been change as will be defined below.

 Acculturation can be defined as a practice of psychological and cultural changes that occurs as a result of contact between individuals and groups of people from two or more other cultural groups (Berry, 1992, 2005; Gibson, 2001). Furthermore, for acculturation to occur in a group dynamic, it necessitates the change in cultural practices, institution and social structures. While at a personal level it encompasses alteration of a person's behavioral repertoire (Berry, 2005).

Berry (2005) continues to assert that acculturation consists of acts like learning each other's language, adopting the dress code, food preferences and practicing social traits of interaction that are a feature of the groups involved. However important to note is that these psychological and cultural changes are not one time acts but that may take a long period of time that may be months, years, or even generations (Berry, 2005). It explains that when there is continuous contact between people who come from different cultures, the outcome is change in behavior, values and even attitudes of people (Cheung-blunden & Juang, 2008). It says that it occurs when there is migration and an individual into another culture where one's own culture becomes supplementary to another cultural.

Berry (2005) asserts that to entirely appreciate acculturation, emphasis should be done on understanding the cultural characteristics of the country of origin, including the social, political and economic aspects. In addition, Berry (2005) continues to assert that with the knowledge of the origin culture, comparisons can then be done with the host culture to establish the diversities in the two cultures and the extent of acculturation. Ward & Kus (2012) also opines that to better understand acculturation, some emphasis should be put on the individual acculturation conditions.

Such traits could include the individual's relationship with their mainstream culture and heritage (acculturation orientations), their self-reported acculturation behaviors, their acculturation outcomes like social cultural skills and their acculturation attitudes or preferences (Ward & Kus, 2012).

Berry & Sabatier (2011) also refer to the term acculturation attitudes. Acculturation attitudes refer to the numerous ways that individuals prefer to live with the cultures they have come in contact with (Berry & Sabatier, 2011). Within Berry (2005)'s framework, a two-dimensional structure was developed to illustrate acculturation attitudes. According to the authors, the two issues include the degree to which people desire to maintain their identity and culture of heritage and the degree to which individuals would like to have contact with other people in society (Berry & Sabatier, 2011).

There are mainly two outcomes of acculturation (Berry, 2005). One of the outcomes is the behavioral shifts that consist of cultural learning and shedding that occur easily in the form of intentional loss of behavior which are replaced with traits that fit into the host environment and are not characterized with many problems. Another outcome of acculturation happens when individuals or groups of people decide to withdraw or separate from the acculturation process to avoid conflicts (Berry, 2005). Therefore, according to Berry, the lasting solution for cultural conflict is the presence of multiculturalism with mutual acceptance and accommodating each other's cultures between the hosts group and the immigrants trying to integrate and settle in.

Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress is defined as a kind of stress that originates from the process of acculturation (Berry, 1992, 2005). Some of the attributes of this kind of stress include depression, anxiety, psychosomatic and psychological challenges, and feelings of marginalization and alienation. These traits are caused by poor adaptation, for example confusion of identity, school, work and family problems (Berry, 1992). Hence the qualifying factor of acculturative stress is the acculturative experience. Important to note is that for acculturative stress to occur, other factors like individual characteristic also play a vital role (Berry, 1992). For example, were some people see acculturation changes as opportunities some see them as stressors. Besides the causal factors for the stress does not only evolve from the presence of stressors, but also by the ability of people to develop coping mechanisms. Mainly because people with coping mechanisms don't get stressed. With the acculturative stress theory, it is emphasized that people are forced to adapt to the cultural differences like the values, appropriate behavior and even the language. Although this is a matter of fact, sometimes it becomes challenging and hence is likely to bring in some tendencies of stress to individuals (Cheung-blunden & Juang, 2008). Acculturative stress happens majorly among individuals who are new immigrants due to the absence of coping resources and the cultural distance between home and host country (Wette & Furneaux, 2018).

4.1.1 Acculturation Strategies
Berry (2005) draws on his own works in 1980 to derive four acculturation strategies that individuals use. These strategies are integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. According to Berry (2005), the four strategies stem from two issues that are faced by acculturating people. These issues include the individual's preference for maintaining one's identity and cultural heritage while the other is the preference participating and having contact with the larger society in addition to other ethno cultural groups within where they live in (Berry, 2005).

There are four strategies that make up this theory, these include;

a) *Assimilation Strategy*: The assimilation strategy occurs when people decide not to maintain their identity and culture but instead seek interaction with other cultures (Berry, 2005). Besides, the individuals become absorbed into the dominant society where they live and hence shed off their own culture of heritage (Berry, 2005). In addition, it has been asserted that assimilation is context dependent, can be discontinuous, nonlinear or even reversible (Hallsten, Edling, & Rydgren, 2018)

b) *Separation Strategy:* Berry (2005) asserts that the separation strategy happens when an individual values and holds onto their own culture of origin and avoids interaction with others from other cultures. In this case, individuals shun any involvement with other cultural groups and turn inwards to concentrate on their own culture. More so, people who experience this undergo midway adaptation (Berry, 2005).

c) *Integration strategy:* This is where individuals prefer to keep both their own cultural heritage while also having interactions with other cultural groups (Berry, 2005). Furthermore, it is asserted that people who undergo integration strategy adapt better. To its advantageousness, it has been stipulated by several scholars that self-esteem and psychological wellbeing is enhanced when individuals have a well-built attachment to their culture of origin (Hallsten et al., 2018; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013). In addition, Lee & Ciftci (2014) views individuals who integrate as having multicultural personalities like flexibility, open-mindedness, social initiative, cultural empathy, and emotional stability. These characteristics stand out as vital because they enable individuals to adjust to new environments (Lee & Ciftci, 2014).

d) *Marginalization:* It encompasses characteristics where individuals have little or no interest in maintenance of their own cultural heritage and also little interest or no interest in relating with others from different cultures (Berry, 2005). Hence people who embark on this strategy are least adapted. Hallsten, Edling, & Ryden (2018) refer to this strategy as the least successful for acculturation.

Figure 4 : Researcher's interpretation and illustration of the acculturation process
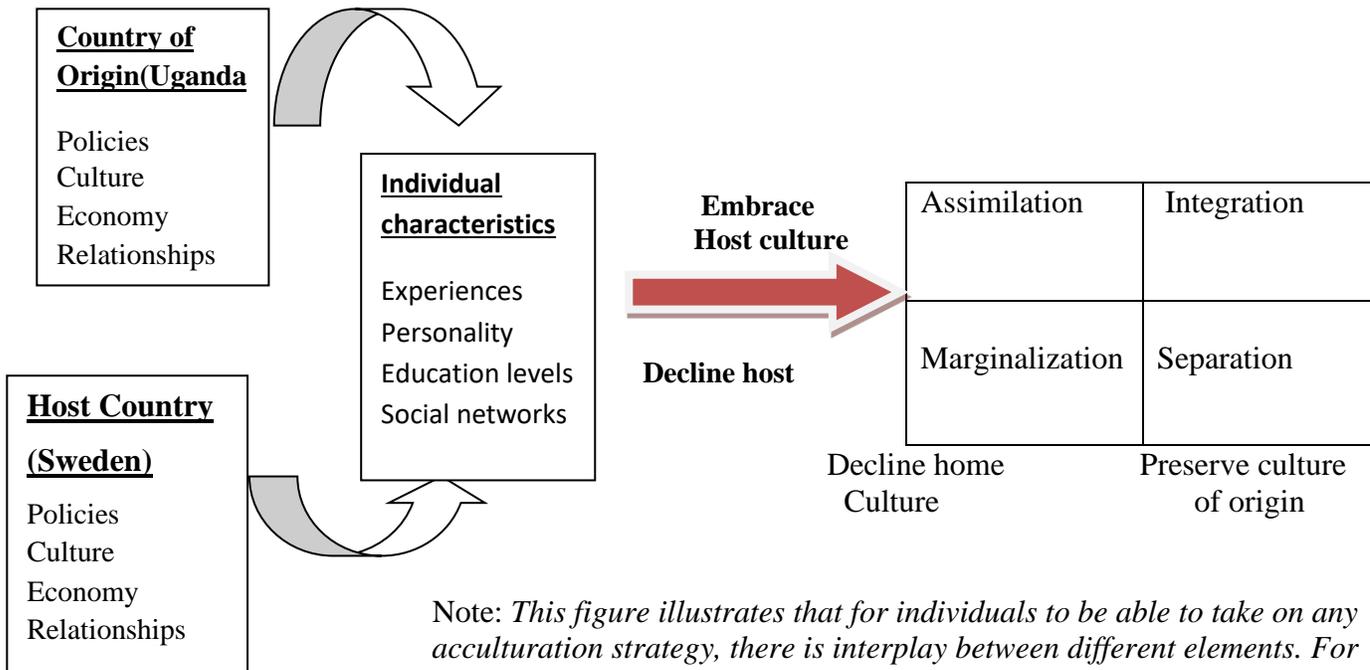
Note: *This figure illustrates that for individuals to be able to take on any acculturation strategy, there is interplay between different elements. For example the characteristics a student is exposed to in both the host and country of origin with their own unique individual traits.*

In view to the study, the different strategies are used to guide the researcher and ultimately to show what stage of acculturation the individual students had chosen to undertake.

Regarding the strategies, Berry (2005) concluded that these generated different outcomes, in his assertion; he opined that integration involved acquisition of new behavior in a selective way from the new culture while also striving to retain their valued culture. Besides, it was discovered that the most behavior shifts happened in the assimilation strategy while the least occurred in the separation strategy. Whereas lastly, marginalization was ruled out as a strategy that mostly leads to deviance and dysfunction behavior while also causing cultural loss.

While modern research on acculturation has its roots on how European domination impacted indigenous groups, and its impact on immigrants entering other countries (Berry, 2005). It should be noted that this action has existed for centuries. People experience acculturation in many different ways even when they are in the same environment (Berry, 2005) hence the occurrences cannot be generalized completely even amongst a group. Whereas for some adaptation is easy with characterization of aspects like cultural learning and cultural shedding, the experience may vary for other people who experience acculturative stress and theory (Berry, 2005; Cheung-blunden & Juang, 2008).

Social cultural and psychological adjustment/ adaptation have been some of the examined outcomes of acculturation (Schwartz et al., 2010; Ward & Searle, 1991). Psychological adjustment refers to emotional and psychological wellbeing like self-esteem, life satisfaction, on the positive part while feelings of depression, loneliness, anxiety, on the negative side. On the other hand, social cultural adjustment was defined as behavioral competence with traits such as social skills,

career success, academic achievement on the positive side while delinquency, and risky sexual behavior on the negative side (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013).

In conclusion, there is evidence that acculturation is no longer just a pit fall that obliterates people but also an avenue that people utilize to achieve their goals and opportunities (Berry, 2005). He further argued that acculturation and cultural diversity are inevitable aspects that are part of human life therefore should be embraced (Berry, 2005). While Schwartz et al., (2010) asserted that acculturation resulted to the change of cultural values especially those enlisted across ethnic groups for example as collectivism in the African descent contexts and individualism for other contexts.

4.1.2 Criticisms to the acculturation theory

Even though acculturation theory stands out as fundamental in explaining adaptation, it still brought to light some criticism for example other scholars like Rudmin (2003) who criticized that the strategies/ categories enlisted by Berry (2005) is of the assumption that all the categories are in existence which may not be the case. Besides in the author's argument he asserts that clustering people into categories may miss some groups of people hence a factor that brings on a gap in the categories (Rudmin, 2003). However, some researchers have come up to authenticate to some degree the strategies for example (Schwartz et al., 2010) who recalls on their work in 2008 where they found out similar existing strategies of integration, assimilation and separation in their research with only a few traces of marginalization. This therefore authenticates the acculturation theory to some degree and hence making it worth to be used in this study.

The marginalization strategy has also been cautioned and criticized as low because it is quite not usual that a human being would keep to themselves and not within a bigger shielding culture (Schwartz et al., 2010). This has therefore rendered research on marginalization have limited reliability compared to the other categories (Schwartz et al., 2010).

4.2 The migration network theory

The Migration network theory elaborates more on the family's and communities' function to aid student migration, settlement and integration into their new cultures. Migration theories have their origin in the chain migration that occurred in the 1960's (Collyer, 2011). This was brought to light when it was discovered that subsequent migrations happened and people from the same geographical area followed others who had already arrived in the same routes. Hence the clear illustration that this sort of migration was caused by the presence of networks that enabled for continuous movement of people (Collyer, 2011). It was therefore concluded that this caused social duplication of the migration process (Collyer, 2011).

Migrant networks refer to interpersonal ties that connect people either non migrants, former migrants or even migrants to each other through a shared community, friendships and even kinships (Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, & Espinosa, 2001). Well-built social networks can be used to diversify risks through aspects like job referrals that enhances reliability

The Migration theory suggests that families and communities play a great role in facilitating the migration process and decisions that are made by migrating individuals (Oreilly, 2012). Oreilly (2012) further asserts that family and communities are vital in aspects like funding the

travels/passage, encouraging, facilitating settlement or retaining ties to home (Oreilly, 2012). The theory also urges that migrant networks aid settlement and formation of communities as more and more people get initiated and settled. Furthermore, these are likely to facilitate the formation of own economic and social infrastructure like shops, places of worship, associations and even other professional avenues (Oreilly, 2012).

Elrick & Lewandowska (2008) opine that migrant networks can be referred to social networks that are created and sustained with the rationale of easing the migration and integration of immigrants in the host country. Elrick & Lewandowska (2008) continue to assert that the kind of relationships that exists within social networks differ with varying degrees of social distance, and these range from family, friends, acquaintances, organizational contacts, to strangers who are instrumental (Elrick & Lewandowska, 2008).

According to Oreilly (2012), it is acknowledged that migration doesn't just happen, rather there are forces such as social networks that justify that there is a connection between the micro(individual), meso(networks and community) and macro(Government policies) structures that influence migration (Oreilly, 2012). Therefore, for this study, the research aimed to investigate how these structures influence the adaptation and the coping mechanisms of students. The macro structures comprise the state control of migration through the laws and policies that dictate the state's governance, international relations and the state of the political economy. The micro structures in this case comprise of the informal networks that the individual finds that eases their process, before, during and after migration (Oreilly, 2012). These micro structures may include family friends and others who help for example with the finances or in the acquisition of legal stay in countries that individuals have moved into (Oreilly, 2012). The meso level was pointed to include mediators such as organizations, groups and individuals who intervene between the systems in the new society and the migrants (Oreilly, 2012).

The importance of social networks lies in their ability to provide migrants with resources such as information and goods through utilizing several relations in the network (Elrick & Lewandowska, 2008). People take advantage of resources in their personal networks differently for example some use reciprocity, bounded solidarity, value introjections and the exchange of trust (Collyer, 2011 and Elrick & Lewandowska, 2008). Reciprocity refers to when people exchange information for goods. Bounded solidarity may be the values that are practiced within a group of people based on introjections. While trust is based on ethnic communities or norms and is mainly practiced within families (Elrick & Lewandowska, 2008). On the other hand, some scholars also recognize that reciprocity is not always possible hence making the social networks non dependable (Collyer, 2011).

Through provision of resources and information, migration networks actively contribute to the increased number of migrations through reduced migration costs and the risks that might be generated by migration (Liu, 2013; Palloni et al., 2001). Another complementing factor noted by the author comes to the function of migration network which is totally dependent on the individual characteristics and the networks they are in contact with (Liu, 2013)

Migration policies have been mentioned as vital influencers of social networks to thrive whereby favourable policies and laws favors the enactment of social networks while their absence diminishes the role of social networks (Collyer, 2011). Collyer, (2011) asserted that the role of social networks remains well-built however depending on the circumstances its roles have changed

for example to disseminating remittances and transfer of information. Hence therefore the role of social networks does not only just stop at encouraging geographical migration.

Apart from family ties, other relationships like weaker ties and friendships were also considered important in the process of migration (Collyer, 2011). This is because such connections ease the migration of people without which some migrating people may face challenges of being faced with new environmental contexts like the new languages and general environmental situations (Collyer, 2011). Collyer (2011) who draws on the works of Lin (2001) eluded that weaker ties provided for the acquisition of resources while the stronger ties helped to maintain the resources that were gained

The presence of network were said to lead to either friendship or ethnic obligations (Fawcett, 1989). It was further argued that due to these ties and obligations, practices of preference hiring, and priorities towards sponsorship depended on personal networks and friendship ties (Fawcett, 1989). Even if this literature draws back in comparisons to the other literatures used, it is important to note that evidence of these aspects still exist now regarding the role of networks hence making it a vital addition to the literature.

Furthermore, Palloni et al., (2001) asserted that the presence of social networks leads to the aspect of social capital. Social capital occurs when the relationships made transform into habits that yield action. This mainly transpires because the created friendships and social ties sometimes create resources such as referrals to foreign employment, remittances (Palloni et al., 2001). Hence creation of a viscous cycle of gains/ social capital for those related to the person who has migrated.

In a nutshell, the acculturation and the migration network theory are envisaged to provide a lens through which the data collected will be analysed and interpreted.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

This chapter entails the methodological choices, epistemological and ontological approach used. Furthermore, this section reveals the research design, target population, data collection methods and procedures. Besides, a description of how the data analysis process was done, entailing the methods used and justification for decisions taken. In addition, the ethical considerations, validity, reliability, reflexivity will also be covered.

5.1 Epistemological and Ontological Paradigm

The research aimed to explore the transnational experiences of Ugandan students in Gothenburg. With their unique lives, one thing that makes this group of students common is their personal stories and experiences throughout their transnational life. Bryman (2012) asserts that to be able to understand the social world of people, there is a need to reflect on their distinctiveness and put emphasis to understand how they interpret their world. Therefore, to understand the experiences of these students, the interpretivism epistemology approach guided the study.

This study employed a constructivist ontological perspective. This is of the view that social actors continuously make meaning out of their social reality through interactions as it is part of them rather than just an external aspect (Bryman, 2012). It is through writing, talking, and arguing that people continue to actively make meaning of their world (Potter, 1996). Furthermore, it is dependent on the assumption that there exits different construction of meaning depending on the background, perspectives and context in which individuals are placed (Elder- Vass, 2012). This approach is against the notion that there exists one reality that people should adhere to (Elder-Vass, 2012). Therefore, the study uses this approach to investigate how the students construct meaning of their experiences, how cultural differences affect their academic and social life, how families and community affect their life abroad, their challenges, and how they have adapted.

5.2 Description of Research Design

To develop an appropriate research design, the researcher had to first have a better understanding of the topic. This was done through an extensive literature review that was accessed as seen in one the of chapter before. Through the University of Gothenburg library page, the researcher used databases in the social science realm like Scopus and ProQuest where the researcher used search terms like "International students" AND "Academic Experiences". This was done continuously for several important search terms used in this study that helped to shape the researcher decisions on what design to use as elaborated below. Since the researcher discovered that this was a new aspect of international students being tackled, the researcher decided to use an exploratory research design that was cross sectional in nature. This was because the study took place at a single point in time and also its exploratory nature to enable generation of knowledge about the experiences of Ugandan students in Gothenburg (Bryman, 2016).

The study employed a qualitative research method. The use of qualitative method was motivated by the researcher's need to capture in-depth perspectives of the participants and to take advantage of its flexibility. Bryman (2012) asserts that qualitative methods ensure flexibility and limited

structure. Besides, qualitative research is one where meaning is constructed out of the personal lived experiences of individuals about phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, the qualitative method was employed to understand the experiences of the participants. The study employed individual face to face interviews and a focus group interview with the participants.

Geographical Setting
The study was carried out in Gothenburg, Sweden. Gothenburg is located in Vastra Gotaland County and has a population of 571,868 people with about 36,492 immigrants (Statistics Sweden, 2020b). This area was chosen because of its convenience to the researcher and its being the second biggest city in the country made it more advantageous in terms of the population of people, including student immigrants. Within the region of Gothenburg, the study was carried out among Ugandan students who lived in Gothenburg and were affiliated to any institutions of higher learning.

5.3 Data Collection

5.3.1 Sampling Procedure and Sampling Size
The study employed purposive sampling which is a non-probability type of sampling. This was employed on two levels that included sampling to establish the geographical context of the study and acquisition of respondents. This was done whereby only Ugandan students affiliated to any institutions of higher learning within Gothenburg were chosen. Bryman (2012) proposed that using this sampling is strategic because it ensures inclusion of participants with relevant characteristics to the study.

The snowball sampling approach was used in this study that enabled access to the Ugandan students. Bryman (2012) suggests that researchers employ this technique in the absence of sampling frames from which to choose the participants. Since there was no available data base for Ugandan students registered, it was impossible to establish the real numbers of Ugandan students therefore the need to employ this technique. First, the researcher used her initial contacts of two Ugandan students who were interviewed. After these two initial meetings, each participant recommended and provided contact details for two other Ugandan students. All the recommended participants agreed to be part of the study and one even further provided contact details for two other participants making the total to eight participants.

Lastly, one of the participants was recruited through convenience sampling. This happened while the researcher was at one of the institutions of learning were the researcher recognized the participant through the language they spoke on phone. This language "luganda" (a local native Ugandan language) automatically identified this student as having origin in Uganda. Since the researcher is fluent in the language, they were able to recognize it. Therefore, the researcher approached the student to request if they could be part of the study. The student agreed which brought the total number of participants to nine. Although the student became available to the researcher by chance, they fulfilled the characteristics of the study group making them vital to the study. Bryman (2012) supports this where he stipulates that convenience samples give birth to interesting data. However, one of the shortcomings of these procedures was that they did not allow for the generalization of data as it only focused on a specific group of Ugandan students in Gothenburg and affiliated to institutions of higher learning.

5.3.2 Population of the Study

The study constituted of nine respondents with four female and five males. The study focused on Ugandan students who were either currently enrolled or had just finished their studies in any institution of higher learning and were living in Gothenburg. Eight of the participants were pursing their master's level while one pursued their Bachelors. The participants who qualified for these studies were those that were studying and had a connection back home through either communication or some other ways. The participants were enrolled for various programs in different departments and institutions of higher learning.

Four students had spent a short time (less than a year) in Sweden, while the other five students had spent more than a year in Sweden. Four of these students also participated in a focused group discussion.

Table 1: Number of participants

	Male	Female	Total
In-depth Interviews	5	4	9
Focus group Discussion (FGD)	2	2	4

5.3.3 Data Collection Instruments:

5.3.3.1 Semi structured Interview Guide

A semi structured interview guide (Appendix 3) was used as a tool for data collection. It consisted of different sections that were composed of the major topics in accordance to the research questions that were discussed in the interview. Bryman (2016) opined that the use of these questions enables the researcher to keep focused on the major topics. It also gives participants an opportunity to approach them in a way they see fit because it allows for flexibility, rephrasing and even the ability to ask missing questions when need arose (Bryman, 2016). For the individual interviews, the interview guide consisted of sections for example "personal identification," "cultural differences" "relationship with families", and "recommendations". For the individual interviews, the interview guide was developed in reference to the research aim, and from reference to previous research to be able to collect rich data and fill in the missing gaps.

Field notes were also recorded by the researcher. These included reflections about what had occurred in the field.

5.3.3.2 Focus Group Interview Guide

Secondly, the focus group interview guide (Appendix 4) was formulated after realization of what issues needed further enhancement and discussion in the group. Hughes & Dumont (1993) define focus groups as a qualitative method tool that enables in-depth interviews with a homogenous group about a study. They further continue to opine that these generate information that reproduces social realities (Hughes & Dumont, 1993). Therefore, the researcher saw it fit to use this as a way to capture the vital information and collective opinions about the students (Hughes & Dumont, 1993). The focus group interview guide was divided into sections that reflected the research questions. To complement and enhance discussions, the researcher ensured to focus on those aspects that had yielded more interest and relevance within the personal interviews.

5.3.4 Personal Interview Process

The interviews were conducted between February and April 2020 within the region of Gothenburg. The interviews were carried out in different locations that included quiet rooms within the institutions of higher learning, to participants' residential places were the researcher had to meet up with the participants. I did all the interviews by myself and I interviewed all the participants using face to face interviews. Majority of the interviews took between 40 to 50 minutes; two interviews took about 30- 35 minutes, while the least interview took only 14 minutes. For each of the interviews, the researcher used a phone voice recorder to capture the discussions after prior permission and request from the participants as stipulated in the consent form. The researcher did a pilot study that informed her on how to go about with the interviews and enabled her in some cases to readjust the questions in accordance to what was practical in the field. The researcher also memorized some questions to prevent the distortion that came about from looking at the interview guide every time. This therefore helped the researcher to maintain eye contact throughout the discussions and listen actively and probe the respondents when the need arose. The empirical study comprised of nine face to face personal interviews that employed a semi structured interview guide that included a pilot study. The interviews were done in English language although sometimes the participants used phrases in their mother tongues to emphasize their points. In such cases, the researcher translated these words.

5.3.5 Focus Group Interview Process

The focus group technique can be described as a group interview that consists of at least four people or more people that talk about a specific subject (Bryman, 2016). A focused group discussion was used in this study to find out the joint construction of meaning from the Ugandan students about their experiences in Gothenburg. Besides, this technique was also used to gather in-depth information about the student's transnational experience and to find out how the students complement each other's views and how the students interacted. Bryman (2012) mentions that focus group discussions enable researchers to observe how participants collectively make meaning out of phenomena. In addition, Bryman (2012) also argued that the constant arguing within the participants made the information rich hence yielding more realistic and truthful responses.

The focus group interview took place at an agreed upon venue after the consensus of the participants. The composition of the focus group discussion included two females and two male students who were part of the earlier individual interviews. Recruitment to the focus group was done at the beginning of the study through the information guide. In this, participants were notified about the focus group discussion and hence only those that had accepted were included into the discussion. While three of the participants attended in person, one participant joined the discussion through a communication app called zoom at 4pm on a Saturday evening. This was chosen as the time for the focus group discussion because it was the most convenient for all participants. The discussion started with the connection of one of the participants who joined in via zoom. At the beginning, the researcher thanked the participants for their time and willingness to join the discussion and emphasized the need for confidentiality of the information among the participants. To start off the discussion, the researcher started with an icebreaker were the participants were asked about their favorite hobbies. Guided by the focus group interview guide, the participants followed suit into discussing their experiences.

As a moderator, the researcher ensured that the participants were audible especially the one that had joined in on zoom, probed in areas that needed to illicit more discussion and gave an

opportunity for the moderately silent participant to talk. Although silence is often an enduring feature that exists within human interaction, having this technique often helps the silent individuals to speak in a group setting (Smithson, 2000). Furthermore, Bryman (2012) suggests that moderators are not only limited to the role of asking questions but also in ensuring the smooth flow of events like encouraging participants to speak one at a time for audibility and also encouraging the silent participants to take part of the discussions.

The focus group took1 hour and 20 minutes a factor that helped to produce rich in-depth data. Since the researcher is a Ugandan lady, with the same student status, (with relatively the same age bracket as the participants, this made the participants feel comfortable with sharing their experiences a factor that made the discussion rich. This is in tandem with Smithson (2000) that stated the moderator's attitudes and behavior affect the outcomes of the focus group. Hence the similar characteristics with the participants helped to close this gap.

5.4 Data Analysis

Bryman (2012, p.578) states that findings acquire significance in the intellectual realm only when they have been interpreted, reflected upon and theorized by the researcher. The analysis and interpretations in this study were done from the point of view of the researcher as guided by the following methods. The study employed the thematic technique of analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) define it as an approach that identifies, analyzes and reports patterns (themes) within data. Latent thematic analysis was employed specifically because the researcher sought to interpret the underlying ideas and assumptions behind the uttered experiences of students and why certain aspects affected them the way they did. Latent thematic analysis occurs when the researcher seeks to find the underlying conceptualizations, assumptions and ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was also employed because of its flexibility that enabled the researcher to be creative and explore the data adequately (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Denaturalized transcription was used in the study. This precisely describes information reported but limits the involuntary sounds reported (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). Manual data transcription was used for the first six interviews. The researcher chose this approach to help her familiarize and note down initial ideas within the data. Braun & Clarke (2006) urge that transcription is a vital phase that helps to interpret and create meanings out of the data rather than just being a mechanical step done to convert sounds into written words. A software called Temi was then used to convert speech to words for the final three interviews and the focused group discussion. This was used because the process of manual transcription became tedious and time consuming hence the need to opt for the software. However, to ensure quality and precision, the researcher went through the transcript to ensure that the written text generated matched the verbal data. After reading the transcripts several times, and getting familiarized to the data, the researcher coded interesting aspects that were either words or sentences across the data. Bryman (2016) asserts that coding must be done immediately through thorough rereading. Subsequent to the coding, the researcher used a table that enabled her to assemble similar codes to make potential themes. This illustration table is attached in the appendix 5.

This process was not a onetime occurrence as it followed a repetitive cycle of merging data that felt distant at first but later started yielding meaning. This proceeded with coming up with the names of subthemes and then themes that were dependent on the meanings created out of the

different codes. The researcher further rechecked to ascertain the connectivity between the codes and the themes that were being developed. This was done concurrently with attaching meanings to the codes that were similar while also placing the unique codes on their own as they researcher attached meaning to them too. Consequently, the researcher erected five themes as seen in the next chapter as outputs from the coding process that was built from the small meanings that the participants expressed from the data. Järvinen (2000) states that meanings are derived when linkages within data is established. Finally, the interpretation and analysis of the underlying meanings occurred concurrently with choosing the most compelling extracts to represent the different themes while also referring to literature and chosen theory. Even though there is no well-defined step by step process for thematic analysis, the researcher referred to some essentials in Braun & Clark (2006).

The study used both inductive and deductive theory (Bryman, 2012). The deductive approach was manifested where the researcher went to the field with semi structured questions about the topic that guided the data collection. Bryman (2012) asserts that this approach occurs when the process of data collection is guided by preconceived notion. Inductive theory was also used in this study. This is because the data findings directed the choice of theory and interpretation of the data. Bryman (2012) asserts that for inductive theory to occur, theoretical ideas are guided by the data derived from the study. Therefore, the conclusion is that both approaches were used within the study.

5.5 Validity and Reliability

Bryman (2016) and Lecompte & Goetz (1982) opined that validity and reliability is important in any research since it's the determining factor for the quality of any research. Nevertheless, these terms have often been emphasized more in positivistic research that deals with measurements than in qualitative research. Lecompte & Goetz (1982) recognized that it was quite difficult to ascertain validity and reliability in the qualitative realms because it was impossible to freeze the exact conditions and social setting within which the initial study takes place. On the other hand, several scholars have come up with suggestions on how to ascertain the validity and reliability of qualitative data with similar methods such as having researchers play the same role as the initial researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lecompte & Goetz, 1982). In the need to increase the reliability of this study, the group of Ugandan students included in the study was diverse with different attitudes, gender, personalities, points of views, life stories, studying different courses in different universities. But all from the same country of origin, therefore it is likely that another researcher with the same role would be able to redo the study. However, it is important to acknowledge that these results cannot be generalized to other groups of students in Sweden or even to other international students probably because of the different cultural origins or even the different geographical influencers.

In addition, Lecompte & Goetz (1982) established some types of validity in qualitative research for example internal validity that represents the extent to which the researcher can represent realities in an authentic way. In the need to increase the validity of this study, the researcher used different data collection methods that included the personal in-depth and the focused group discussion that collected vital information for this study. Besides, the study provides an elaborate way of capturing the views of the participants using direct quotes in the findings. In addition, the study was grounded in theory that provided lenses through which the data was interpreted and

handled. External validity that compares representations within groups was increased were the researcher supported the findings with works of previous scholars.

5.6 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the research is also a vital aspect in establishing the quality of the research. Guba & Lincoln (1994) developed four components of trustworthiness with similar meaning within quantitative research. These include confirmability which is equivalent to objectivity, transferability equal to external validity, dependability equal to reliability and credibility equal to internal validity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

In this study, credibility was achieved through the distribution of the findings to some participants before submission of my final thesis, these validated that the results indeed adequately represented their opinions. To amplify the transferability of the data, the researcher provided detailed accounts of the Ugandan student's experiences within the findings. Furthermore, to ensure confirmability, the researcher ensured not to assert her own personal opinions within the data through adhering to research ethics and having reflections about the data. It should however be noted that not asserting personal views did not hinder the critical analysis like making sense out of the emerged data.

5.7 Limitations of the Study

The absence of a sampling frame and the fact that the researcher had not stayed in the research geographical area for a very long time, access to participants at the beginning was challenging. However, with the use of the snowball technique, this was made easier through the recommendations to acquire other participants. Furthermore, the fact that the snowball method was used, it is likely that the participants reached were limited to those in the networks of the first respondents. In addition, there is a likelihood that some students that might have known each other on a personal basis before the research might have hindered their ability to freely share their personal experiences especially in the focused group discussion due to fear of judgement.

Acquisition of Swedish literature was challenging because not all the documents are written in English that the researcher is conversant with but rather in Swedish. This limited the search scope. and even though the researcher tried to translate some aspects, it was tedious hence missing out some information that was in Swedish.

The phase of data collection occurred at a time as the world was hit with a very dangerous outbreak COVID 19. This affected the response rate of the participants especially during the focus group discussion. This is because the participants declined their attendance and were also afraid for their health and safety. This made them unable to attend the focus group discussion as anticipated hence having only four participants. This further brought about the researcher's fears as she was also afraid for her own life and the lives of the participants. Even though only four participants attended the focused group, this enabled them to have in-depth discussions that generated rich data as showed in the findings.

In addition, the short time period of five months within which the study was to be done was a great limitation. This is because it limited the number of participants that could be interviewed because of the need to seal off data collection and continue with other aspects like transcription and

analysis. The researcher tried to solve this through scheduling of the different activities in the research process by using deadline technique for each activity to ensure adequate distribution of time to all the activities.

5.8 Ethical Considerations

This study was ethically approved according to the rules and guidelines of the department of social work at the University of Gothenburg. Besides, this study was guided by the social work ethical principles as stipulated in the (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) & International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), 2004). In addition, reference was made to the Codex rules and guidelines for research to in cooperate the stipulated guidelines within the context (Sweden) in which the research was carried (Centre for Research Ethics & Bioethics, 2020).

Informed Consent; prior to the interviews, the researcher provided introductory letters to the participants that introduced the researcher, rationale for their selection and the purpose of the research. The researcher sought consent from the participants through a consent form that stipulated ethical principles adhered to by the researcher. These included confidentiality, anonymity, the participant's rights to ask questions and even the right to withdraw at any stage of the research in case they felt uneasy to go on. This was done with the rationale to give participants the opportunity to participate in the study without coercion or force of any kind Atkinson & Hammersley (2007). The researcher achieved this through acquisition of a signed consent from each participant before each interview and focused group discussion. A sample of this form follows in appendix 2.

Confidentiality; the researcher upheld the principle of confidentiality to the best of her ability before, during and after the research. In the need to protect the identities of the respondents, the research did not include the institutions of higher learning to which the students were affiliated. This was because of their few numbers as Ugandan students and their likelihood to be identified with the mention of the institutions from which each participant attended. Still, the researcher ensured confidentiality through not sharing personal nor family information of the students. Besides, tags were used instead of the participants' real names in addition to holding interviews in secluded places to ensure this principle. Recordings from the interviews were transferred and well kept on a password protected laptop with accessibility to only the researcher and supervisor to minimize the unlikely events of data leakage. All these were undertaken in reflection to the works of Atkinson & Hammersley (2007) who emphasized the need to ensure utmost confidentiality of the participants as there was only a thin line between private and public because of its subjectivity.

Conflict of interest: Even though the researcher is of Ugandan origin, the same as the participants, she ensured to exercise ethical principles to the best of her ability during the study. Even though it was tempting, the researcher distanced her own personal assumptions and rather enhanced the voices of the participants. The researcher therefore declares no conflict of interest in the findings discovered and the conclusions drawn from them

5.9 Reflexivity

Lynch (2000) asserts that reflexivity is relative to situations of human experiences and realities. For this study, the researcher ponders upon some issues that transpired throughout the duration of the study. As a researcher, I have my own experiences in regard to being an international student,

however, I lack an understanding of how other individual students have experienced their lives abroad and how they have been able to adapt to their new lives in host countries. Therefore this study was centered about the experiences of other students for which I sought to find answers.

In addition, being a Ugandan international student myself, this enabled me to be connected through race, and similar student background to the participants (insider effect). This eased rapport building and access because I easily gained trust from the participants. This very trait of insider effect also enabled the researcher to understand some idiomatic expressions when participants wanted to stress their points and used their own mother tongues. These were captured and then interpreted to emphasize the statements of the participants. On the other hand, the insider aspect does not go without some shortcomings. This is because sometimes the participants assumed that the researcher being a fellow student, already knew every aspect of their experiences because they kept on using the phrase "As you know". This was solved were the researcher clarified that she indeed wasn't aware of many aspects because experiences are personal and unique to everyone. Hence encouraging the participants to share their stories in detail.

On the methodological reflexivity, at the start of the study it was envisaged that both personal interviews and focused group discussion would be used for the study. Even though both methods were used, some unpredicted occurrences altered some plans of what was envisaged that is likely to have altered the direction of the research. For example, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, it was impossible to have more numbers of participants in the focused group discussion because of the fear for the spread of the virus that caused a threat to both the lives of the participants and the researcher. And to also have the different focus discussion groups that the researcher had envisaged to do. Even though the research elicited rich data, this phenomenon altered the course of the research and had an influence on the outcome of the study.

In conclusion, this section informed the decisions and research methods that were undertaken during the process of the study. In summary, the study used qualitative research methods, with the use of both personal interviews and focused group discussions as data collection methods. Thematic analysis was employed including adherence to ethical considerations like confidentiality. The next section therefore shows the results that were derived from the use of these methods.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of this study. Berry (2005)'s acculturation theory and the migration network theory are used to make meaning out of the findings. These two theories are used to interpret the experiences of Ugandan students in Sweden. The chapter begins with a small presentation of the profiles of the participants, and then the presentation of the themes that emerged. The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of transnational Ugandan students and in view of the research problem, the research sought to answer the following questions

1. How does cultural difference affect a student's academic and social life?
2. How do students adapt to their social life in a host country?
3. What challenges are students faced with and how do they cope with them?
4. How do student's families back home influence their way of life while abroad?

The themes derived include **Theme 1**: I *think they have the best education system*, **Theme 2:** *Rewarding moments*, **Theme 3:** *Will I manage this new life?* Theme 4: *There is always a way*, and the last Theme 5: *Reciprocal support*. These themes tell the stories of the experiences of Ugandan students as will be seen below.

Table 2: A table showing the themes and subthemes derived

Theme	Subthemes
Theme 1: I think they have the best education system	• Understand course content rather than just reproducing it. • Lecturer-Student relations
Theme 2: Rewarding moments	• Student empowerment • Beneficial Friendships
Theme 3: Will I manage this new life?	• Feeling of Isolation • Language barrier • Unfamiliar and Pricey foodstuffs • Housing problems • Difficulty in learning new behavior • Negligible feelings of Assault
Theme 4: There is always a way	• Embracing the Swedish culture • Use of disclaimers • Cultural appropriation • Cultural accommodation • Self-awareness and Behavior consciousness • Utilisation of previous experiences of living abroad
Theme 5: Reciprocal support.	• Emotional and practical support • Motivation to work hard • Stress through pressured expectations of remittances • Homesickness

6.1 Characteristics of Participants

The study composed of nine participants, with four female and five male Ugandan students. Four of these students also participated in a focused group discussion. At the point of the interviews, four students had spent a short time (less than a year) in Sweden, while the other five students had spent more than a year in Sweden. The mode age of the students was 30 years although the ages of the students that participated in the research ranged from 30 – 40 years.

Additionally, all the nine participants qualified as transnational Ugandan students because even though they stayed in Gothenburg they were also involved in the lives of family and friends back home in Uganda through communication and other ways hence criteria that rendered their experiences transnational. All the nine participants had attended higher institutions of learning in Uganda (Bachelors level). Upon their migration to Sweden, some of the participants had established careers while others engaged in some sort of economic activity for survival. Seven of the participants migrated solely for education purposes. The other two participants had reasons such as family reunification, and the need to work as their primary motivating factors to come to Sweden. Hence the aspect of education came in after the initial motivators.

There exists difference in time periods within which students have attended higher education in Sweden. This was solely done because it was envisaged to enrich the data through showing the difference in experiences as a result of the number of different times spent.

Table 3: Social demographic characteristics of participants

Tag	Focused group discussion identity	Age	Sex	Education Level Pursued	Time spent in Sweden at time of data collection	Status of study
R1	FGD-R1	30	F	Masters	7 months	Ongoing
R2	FGD-R2	30	M	Masters	7 months	Ongoing
R3	FGD-R3	30	M	Masters	3 years	Ongoing
R4		30	F	Masters	6 years	Ongoing
R5	FGD-R4	32	F	Masters	3 years	Completed
R6		33	M	Masters	7 months	Ongoing
R7		40	M	Masters	6 years	Completed
R8		32	F	Masters	7 months	Ongoing
R9		30	M	Bachelors	7 years	Ongoing

NB: FGD- Stands for Focused Group Discussion. It is important to note that the FGD tag correspondents to the initial tag means it's the same person who participated in the focused group discussion

6.2: I think they have the best education system

This theme tackles the academic sphere of the student's experiences. Majority of the participants were in consensus about the admirable experiences they had encountered in the learning environment of Sweden. The participants also revealed the difference in the learning environment in the institutions of higher learning in Sweden as compared to those in their country of origin Uganda. Under this theme, two subthemes emerged that expressed how students were impacted. With each subtheme, a series of ideas articulated by the participants are captured below.

6.2.1 Understand course content rather than just reproducing it.

Due to the different learning environment, one of the cited impacts by the participants was their ability to understand course content rather than just reproducing it. In the students' view, the emphasis on practical learning rather than theory helped to better understand the content and even prepare them for the field something they appreciated. This experience was also compared to the students' former institutions of higher learning in Uganda that were reported to instead emphasize theory rather than practice. Hence a preference for the Swedish education system as the students expressed. One student tells;

> *I think this system prepares you more for the field. It is more practical. They teach you to understand and be able to implement yet in my country it's more of pumping you with a lot of theory and then you figure it out from the field. So, I think here I have learnt much more than I probably would have learnt even if I would do this masters degree in Uganda.* (**R8**).

Similarly, another participant had the following to say;

> *Here it is not what the teacher tells you, it is you, the teacher gives you a few concepts, and tells you to read a book. When you read the book, you start understanding what they are talking about unlike in Uganda, it is more of producing what the teacher has given you and in some cases if you don't produce exactly that, then you are wrong.* (**R4**).

Furthermore, regarding the examination procedure of the courses, one participant noted the difference in the system. There was articulation that the Swedish system accorded multiple opportunities for students who failed their exams to rewrite them. In her view, this was impressive since it bestowed upon students' opportunities of about five times to redeem themselves with the first redo being only 2-3 weeks after the original exam. The benchmark for her opinion was based on Ugandan Universities that only offered a redo in the next semester. This is indeed a clear manifestation of how the education system in Sweden has affected her academic life in a positive way. As illustrated in her extol for the system. She says;

> *I think I like their education system, did I mention it, ooh my God I think they have the best education system these guys. I have not failed an exam myself but people who fail can repeat 5 times and the repeating is not like next semester as it is in Makerere and Mbarara (Ugandan Universities) rather here the schedule for the redo will be in like three weeks* (**R1**)

The revelations above agree with several studies regarding the experiences of international students who explain that there exist different learning methods across different nations (Leong, 2015). And that the characteristics of the host countries which in this case are the different learning methods in Sweden are vital determinants for the acculturation process of students (Arends-Tóth & Vijver, 2006; Berry, 2005) This is further emphasized by the acculturation theory that highlights that appreciation for the host country's characteristics illustrates adaptation of individuals. In this phenomenon, the students use the assimilation strategy of the acculturation to get used to the new learning environment since they embrace all aspects of the system in Sweden without rejecting any aspects of it (Berry, 2005).

Since the benchmark for people's experiences is built on what they already know and encountered in the past, it was obvious that the benchmark for students in this study were their experiences with the learning system in Uganda as reported in their extracts above. Berry (2005) affirms this claim

where he declared that the knowledge about the culture of origin enables comparisons to be made when individuals interact with new cultures. Hence this explains the student's reference to Uganda's systems as it's their culture of origin.

6.2.2 Lecturer-Student relations

Most of the participants expressed that there existed great difference in how the lecturers related to them in Sweden compared to how they knew it back home in Uganda. These included the absence of hierarchy that existed between lecturers and students during interactions in Sweden. This is in line with Leong (2015) who discovered from his study that Swedish lecturers were less formal than American lectures and were viewed more like friends than as parents. From the participant's assertions, this improved classroom discussions and boosted their confidence. The participants were quick to note that the lectures preferred to be called by their first names rather than their titles like professor or doctor. Thus, a factor they found advantageous and useful in their learning process. One participant said;

> *I think it is also nice the way lecturers here interact with students… I like it, they kind of lower themselves to our level and so it doesn't cripple the discussion in class. So, we are able to talk freely as if we are the same level, have discussions like real-real discussions. Meanwhile in Uganda, you have to put professor so and so.* *(R1).*

Leong's (2015) findings further stipulate that these traits enabled the students to say whatever they wanted in class and induced more learning. In the same spirit, student supervision relationship was viewed as a vital factor for the achievement of student success, goals and wellbeing in the new environment (Due et al., 2015).

The emphasis on spotting this difference was triggered by the experience of the participants in their higher institutions of learning in Uganda. In these, one of the students confessed to almost having their exam antagonized because they did not address a lecturer by their right title. She said;

> *There is a time in Uganda I had an exam. So, there is one of the professors who was conducting the exam. And then I called him, I didn't call him professor so and so, I just called him Dr. so and so, you know professor is higher than Dr., he got mad, he almost disorganized my exam because I said Dr so and so and not professor.* *(FGD- R1).*

With an earlier experience like this before migrating to Sweden, it is likely that the absence of hierarchy in Sweden drew a lot of the student's attention. And triggered a lot of memories that enabled the student to identify this kind of difference and reflect on its impact on their learning. This aspect yielded a lot more discussion especially during the focus group, were one of the participants complimented. In her view, this very act of easy interaction compensated for the emotional gap that students missed out as a result of being far from their loved ones back at home in Uganda. Besides, this also facilitated the student's integration within the new Swedish environment. One participant said in the FGD;

> *I think also it compensates for the difficulty that you experience outside school. Being a new student, I came alone, and everything was new to me. So, having easy interaction with my teacher within the academic context reduced the pressure of actually having to deal with the society. It helped to compensate for that emotional element missing from home* *(FGD- R4).*

However, on the other hand, some of the students also admitted that it was difficult for them to address the lecturers by their first names even though they wanted to. This was because according to one participant, he saw it as disrespect to the lecturers. He says; *Back home we call our lecturers by their title, here it is flat. You just call him John. So, I felt a bit uncomfortable to call the professor by his name. [..]To me I felt it as disrespect. (R7).*

While another participant admitted that since she had grown up in an environment addressing people with their titles, changing over night was hard. She says:

> *I am experiencing difficulty. Even though, I've tried to become accustomed to the easy way of referring to professors without titles, I haven't stopped it. I'm always like, Hey, lärare* (Swedish word for teacher*) instead of saying their name so it's a bit difficult. (FGD- R4)*

The difficulties expressed by students in addressing their lectures without tittles are in tandem with the works of Andrade (2006) who asserted that sometimes students do not easily adjust to some aspects in a new education system. In my study, this brought about the confirmation of this assertion. To sum up this subtheme, these findings reveal two strategies in line with the acculturation theory namely assimilation and separation strategy (Berry, 2005). Evidence of assimilation is manifested among the students that preferred to address their lecturers without titles. This is because assimilation enables individuals to drop their own culture of origin and embrace host cultures (Berry, 2005). In other words, the directed admiration from students towards the nonexistence of hierarchy and titles showed appreciation and hence assimilating to this cultural connotation. Separation strategy on the other hand also transpired among the students who found it hard to address their lecturers by their titles. Since it occurs when individuals hold on to their own cultural orientations and find it hard to embrace new cultures in host societies (Berry, 2005). Therefore the manifestations of these two diverging experiences of these students illustrate the differences of how people adapt to new environments even when faced by the same new environment (Berry, 2005; Cheung-blunden & Juang, 2008).

6.3. Rewarding moments
This theme acknowledges some of the positive impacts that the students achieved through being in a different cultural setting. These feed into the social life experiences of the participants.

6.3.1 Student empowerment
Through their exposure to the Swedish culture, some participants articulated that they had been empowered. The empowerment surfaced in two forms. One as women's empowerment from a lady's perspective while the second as a result of changed perception about women's roles from a gentleman's perspective. To further unpack the two perspectives, one female participant alluded to the fact that she had been empowered as a woman. In her description, her encounters within the host country propelled for her voice to be heard and her opinions embraced as important. To illustrate this, she revealed that her bosses at work and classmates provided a respectful platform were her views were welcomed and respected unlike in her home country. She further acknowledges that even though she has been empowered, she still gets challenges when relating with her friends and family back home in Uganda who view this change as disrespect especially to the males back home. In her expression, she said;

*It has impacted on me positively. It has empowered me as a woman. But at the same time, it can be a bit challenging when I go back home like for that one-month holiday. The way people look at you when you are speaking to your partner. So sometimes people might think I don't respect him when I critique his views. But it's not that I do not respect him. Because where we live (Sweden) we know that respect doesn't mean that a woman should not speak (**R4**).*

This opinion is likely to have been triggered by the fact that the participant was born and raised in a patriarchal society were her views may have been suppressed (Nankunda, 2017; Siqwana-Ndulo, 1998). The second form of empowerment came in as a declaration from a male participant about his changed views about women's roles in the society. In his elaboration, he emphasized that through the laws and his own observation, women held high positions in society for example leadership posts in companies and were indeed respected. Furthermore, his amusement was heightened by the involvement of fathers in childcare, something which he thought was only affiliated to the women as per his upbringing. Esping- Andersen (2016) also reports the same traits about Sweden were both men and women were involved in childcare. This therefore changed his point of view from that of patriarchy to equality/ shared responsibility. He said the following;

*I can say, yes it has changed me especially my way of thinking, about women and gender. I can say Sweden is kind of extreme like when it comes to gender issues and women really have a very high position in society, which is the opposite to Africa which is like is more of predominantly patriarchy, so I think it has changed my way of thinking and especially how I think about women and the roles of women (**R3**).*

The findings coincide with the works of (Brunton & Jeffrey, 2014). These noted that empowerment occurs when students learn to employ appropriate skills to influence other life events. Furthermore, Brunton & Jeffrey (2014) declared it is impossible to achieve empowerment at the early stages of immigration since international students have low levels of cultural knowledge, intercultural competence and efficacy. It is no wonder that the participants who claimed that they were empowered had spent more than one year in Sweden to be precise 6 years and 3 years respectively. In the same spirit, there was articulation that empowerment was closely related to acculturation (Reid et al., 2009). The assimilation strategy is demonstrated in this experience mainly because it occurs as a result of acceptance of the new culture (Berry, 1992). Mirroring back to one of the questions that guided this research which was how cultural differences affect the student's social life, this finding is a clear manifestation of positive impact on the students.

6.3.2 Beneficial Friendships
From the results, the participants had different experiences when it came to finding and connecting with friends. The views extended from some students having friends while others were unable to secure any friends. Students who had secured friends noted it as a rewarding experience that made their lives easier and worthwhile. The newly found friends were from different origins like Swedish, African, fellow Ugandan and others from several parts of the world. The participants admitted that the newly found friends assisted them in certain elements of their lives. Their help ranged from recommendations on were to access different social services, taking them around to sightsee the city, doing fun activities and assistance in learning the Swedish language (for the Swedish friends). One participant said;

So, I think they've been helpful for me, especially in learning Swedish, but also being able to interface with institutions that are difficult. They could always advise me what websites to try in case I need to buy something. It's the basic support of course, but they shaped my way of thinking (FGD-4)

However, they admitted that for the Swedish friends particularly, it took a lot of effort, initiative and time on the participants part to initiate the talks and hang out in places where they could meet new friends. One participant said; *You must be very patient to engage somebody to be able to get to know them better. I can say it is an initiative and an investment (participant laughs) (R9).* In this quote, the participant laughs as a result of reflecting on his own journey and what he had to go through to get Swedish friends.

In line with the discussion of having friends, some students admitted that even if they had friends, sometimes they were not reassured of these friends. This was because sometimes they had friends only in class and once outside, they were not friends, a factor that made these relationships complicated. Benson (2016) supports this assertion where he stipulates that students pursuing higher level of education develop friendships that are more flexible and functional. This explains the functional friendships that the participants referred to, were friendships existed at school because of the academic purpose. But later, prone to flexibility and dissolved when the binding function education ceased. One participant said; *Eh, someone is a friend at school. Uh, when you meet that person on the way that friendship does not apply (R7).* Furthermore, Scollon & Scollon (2001) contend that most intercultural relationships are prone to uncomfortable misunderstandings due to the absence of common grounds on cultural frames.

In contrast, students who were unable to make friends admitted it to the different cultures especially the individualistic Swedish culture that could have hindered friendship formation. While others viewed that they were just unlucky and maybe just haven't met people with whom they shared the same interests. For the students who did not secure any friends, they expressed it as an encounter that had affected their social life. One participant said; Unfortunately*, I haven't been lucky to get someone very close as would pass the different criteria that I have grown up knowing as a friend who is Swedish honestly" (R2).* By Individualistic nature, the students refer to the fact that people keep to themselves and are not so much interactive in society. These findings rhyme with the works of other scholars like (Benson, 2016; Buchanan, 2019; Guo & Guo, 2017; T. Sato & Hodge, 2009; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). These assert that sometimes the individualistic nature and the unwillingness of local inhabitants made it difficult for international students to integrate and connect with the locals, hence, curtailing the friendship formation process.

Inspite of the fact that the inability to make friends was directed towards differences in culture, nonetheless, two participants declared that their own personal characteristics hindered friendship formation rather than the cultural differences. In their view, one of the participants described himself as someone who took long to make friends but once they did, it would last for a long time. His perspective was;

> *I think here it's about my personality, I am the kind of person, I don't make friends very easily, I know that about myself, I take time to make friends, but once I make friends then they become for a lifetime. So with that in mind, I know it will take me time to make friends, (R6).*

The failure to find friends due to personal characteristics as seen above agrees with the works of (Matsushima, 2016). In his study of situational change, Matsushima (2016) observed that students who were doubtful about their social skills often maintained their privacy in most social contexts. These students were also highly selective in their friendship choices, that made them only have a few friends compared to their counterparts who were highly self-confident that had many friends (Matsushima, 2016). These findings further collaborate with the acculturation theory that stipulates that individual characteristics are great determinants to how people fit into a new culture (Berry, 2005). Therefore, in this case the student's characteristics limited their friendship formations. Benson (2016), mentions that the kinds of friends that students make determine their intercultural adaptation levels. Therefore, it is no wonder that from this empirical study, the students who had secured friends enjoyed privileges like going out for "fika", (Swedish culture of going out for tea) being rendered assistance to learn the language and referrals for different social services as seen above. Unfortunately, such incentives did not happen to the students who had not secured any friends hence missing out on these experiences.

Despite the fact that acquisition of friends varied among the participants, they all anticipated the likely benefits that were inclined to having friends. For the participants who had not yet found friends, they hoped on and looked forward to making friends as they spent more time in Sweden.

6.4: Will I manage this new life?

This theme is tailored around the challenges encountered by students and the coping mechanisms they devised to overcome them. The students echoed their candid feelings about these experiences that made them question many things especially if they would manage to survive amidst these difficult encounters. Therefore, this theme tells the stories of these participants through the subthemes as revealed below.

6.4.1 Feeling of Isolation

The findings reveal that the students admitted to the feeling of being isolated. In their view, this claim was affiliated to the individualistic nature of the Swedish culture. Buchanan (2019) and Gomes & Tran (2017) support the student's assertion where they declared that when international students encounter unfamiliar social and cultural surroundings, they felt left out and did not feel a part of it. Elaboration on this phenomenon dwelt on the students' experiences while on public transport like trams and in other social places. Using practical examples, the participants expressed that on trams, some people preferred to sit alone even on a two-sitter seat rather than share seats with the students. In other narrations, they also observed that some individuals preferred to put their bags even when they clearly saw that other people did not have where to sit. Besides, participants felt that their salutations and greetings extended towards some people in trams and on the streets were not adequately replied. A factor that triggered the feeling of being isolated, disconnected, and being pinned with an outsider status from the society as one of the participants stipulates below;

> *If I am sitting with someone in a bus in Kampala, the first thing I do is to greet that person. If I don't do it people will frown at me. But then here, you come to a tram and if you greet them, they will frown at you actually. They will respond certainly but, the response is not of the same quality as someone who is from Kampala. They are more skeptical than feeling it is normal to greet someone when you meet them in a public transport…. I think the power of community here is quite low, than in Kampala. (R2)*

The feelings of isolation felt by the participants further rhymes with the works of Due et al., (2015) and Sawir, et al., (2008) who articulate that international students faced issues like the feeling of loneliness and felt as if they were isolated. This feeling of loneliness is likely to have come up because of the participants 'culture of origin that predominantly emphasizes the values of socialization, and collectivity. In relation to this, Siqwana-Ndulo (1998) asserted that African society is based on the principles of interdependence and collectivity. Thus, presence of an individualistic culture perhaps made it hard for the students to feel part of the host community, hence having an immense impact on the students' life.

Contrary to the feeling of being isolated, two participants however admitted that they appreciated the individualistic nature of the Swedish culture. According to them, they felt comfortable as they knew no one had eyes on them. In the participant's view, the overly close supervision practiced back home deprived them of the freedom to do whatever they liked. Thus, an encounter with the Swedish individualistic culture restored their freedom to do anything they wanted without expectation of accountability from family and friends. So, they were free to do whatever they felt like doing. One of the participants explains it like this below;

> *In the Swedish society people generally mind their business, so that makes you kind of comfortable because you will know that there are no eyes on you (laughs). You are just living your own life and no one cares even about how you are doing or what you are doing. I think that has been, one way it has impacted me in a positive way. Like if you are reading, no one is going to come and start telling you stories and everything because they respect your privacy (R3).*

The expression above further confirms previous research that explained that students who were far from their families were away from the supervision and pressures brought about by their families and communities (Buote et al., 2007). The two counter arguments yielded from this subtheme present two differing outcomes the students underwent in their interactions. These include acculturative stress and assimilation. The first argument in the subtheme above could be interpreted as acculturative stress through the narration of the student's feelings of isolation (Berry, 1992, 2005; Cheung-blunden & Juang, 2008). The fact that the students associated their feelings to negative connotations, it symbolized their challenges and hence development of stress. Wette & Furneaux (2018) opines that acculturative stress happens majorly among individuals who are new immigrants due to the absence of coping resources and the cultural distance between home and host country. It is no wonder that most of the students that complained about this had just been in Sweden for only six months by the time of the interview, for example R2. The second counter argument views change an opportunity through the manifestation of the assimilation strategy. Here the participants fully embrace the individualistic culture hence an arena for their easy adaptation (Berry, 1992, 2005; Cheung-blunden & Juang, 2008). Referring to the aim of this study, these two perspectives give a clear manifestation of what students go through, hence once again bringing on the uniqueness of the students' experiences even though they were faced with the same host environment.

6.4.2 Language barrier
All the participants expressed that they had encountered some form of language challenge. Language barrier was faced in the Swedish language since the students did not understand it. In their view, the problem surfaced while purchasing items in markets, reading official Swedish

documents, even generally listening to communication in public places since Swedish is the main language used for communication. One participant had this to say;

> *One of the biggest problem was language barrier, sometimes a tram could get a problem and they could say okay everyone get out because we cannot continue, and for me I would remain seated because I don't know what they have said so you know. Another time I went to buy milk but I ended up buying something else, it was not milk nor yoghurt and it tasted funny so I had to throw it away, all because I could not read what it said (R3).*

Due to the language problem, some students were forced to find ways to learn the language so that they could fit in the society. Hence this was done were some students decided to apply for and attend Swedish classes (SFI) so that they could learn the language. This is in tandem with Berry's (2005) assimilation strategy were people seek interaction with the host culture. In their revelations, even in the short time, some admitted that they had gained some survival Swedish skill that helped them. One participant said;

> *Swedish classes' level 1 and level 2 was very good. At least it is the basis of what I know now. I have some survival Swedish in just six months. I can understand, I can write Swedish, I can speak a little, I can try to read. (R1)*

This finding supports works of previous scholars who talked about language differences as a major challenge for international students (Kang & Kim, 2017; T. Sato & Hodge, 2009). However, on the other hand, some differences also emerge from this study. This is because in previous studies English language is mentioned as the main language problem experienced by international students especially those of Asian origin and within the academic realms (Kang & Kim, 2017; T. Sato & Hodge, 2009). Even if the major element of language barrier still emerges, this empirical study differed in some way were by it discovered that for the Ugandan students, the English language wasn't a challenge but rather the Swedish language and only in their social engagements rather than academics realms that the previous scholars asserted to. Thus, making a distinctive addition and discovery between their studies that tackled Asian students and this study that tackled students of Ugandan origin.

6.4.3 Unfamiliar and Pricey foodstuffs

From the data, some participants alleged that the kind of life in Sweden was way too expensive. Besides the high prices, unfamiliar tastes and absence of the local foods the students were familiar with was a challenge that the students faced. One participant said;

> *Oh my God, I miss real food. Here the cheap ones are the unhealthy foods, the healthy foods are very expensive and then I will not afford to keep going for the healthy foods. We have to eat the kyckling (Swedish word for chicken) laughs. So, you have to eat it all the time and then you grow fat"* **(R1).** The respondent laughs as a result of her reflections on her constant visits to McDonalds' chicken that she refers to as the "cheap ones and unhealthy foods" because of its relatively cheap prices.

Nonetheless, one of the students devised a coping mechanism for this where she explored and found cheaper offers; she says;

*About the nutrition I discovered cheaper markets where they sell products like vegetables fruits and other things, on Saturday and Sunday. Things are a bit cheap compared to other places. For example, what you might find at Netto at 10 kroner. That side is a half. (**R8**).*

The student's willingness to go out of their way, investigate and find cheaper places for healthy food supplies implies that they wanted the be part of the community. This demonstrates the assimilation strategy from the acculturation theory (Berry, 2005). Referring back to one of the research question that sought to find out how students cope with their challenges, this gives a clear illustration of how students overcome their challenges but also their ability to fit into the society.

6.4.4 Housing problems
All the nine participants declared their difficulties in securing a place to stay on their arrival to Sweden. One participant referred to the overly expensive accommodation option that was offered to her by the university without any other choices. This resulted to their only option being hostels that were overly expensive as payment was done per day, something that greatly burdened the participants. A participant said; *The issue of accommodation was difficult, (**R7**)*

Nonetheless, some participants devised ways through which they could get cheaper accommodation. These included getting sublet rooms within other people's houses which were a little bit cheaper. These were secured through the social networks the students had formed in Sweden. For example, fellow Ugandans and other Africans who had lived in Sweden for a longer period that helped to connect them to these places. One student said; *A Ugandan connected me to some Ghanaian lady with whom I stayed with for two months. (**R1**)*

While another participant said; *Well, it's a Ugandan colleague who helped me find a sublet room. I was so lucky because I lived in a hostel much shorter than my colleagues (**R2***

Acquisition of accommodation by participants with the help of their connections is supported by the migration network theory that suggests that communities play a great role in facilitating the settlement of immigrants (Oreilly, 2012). In helping the students to access accommodation, these individuals facilitated the student's settlement process, something that made their life easier. This act therefore illustrated the vital role that these social networks do. On the other hand, the willingness of students to reach out for help from fellow Ugandans also signified their readiness to do what it takes to be part of the Ugandan community in Sweden and keep their Ugandan identities because they reached out to Ugandans. This signifies integration. Since the students engaged with fellow Ugandans, it signified that they were willing to engaged with the community in Sweden while also keeping on their own cultural interactions connecting to Ugandans hence terming this integration (Berry, 2005).

6.4.5 Difficulty in learning new behavior
The participants admitted that it was challenging to learn new behavior. This is because they felt that they had to unlearn somethings and values that were important to them in order to learn other things. One student elaborated; *Adopting a new thing means unlearning your old ways. Unlearn and learn. That means you're giving up some things you are used to doing. And the things you are comfortable with (**FGD- R3**).*

Some of the things that were pointed out as difficult to change included the participants exalt and belief in God and respect for other people. This emerged as a result of students' reflection on their encounters with individuals who did not pay heed to God in Sweden. One participant says

> *I think for me my belief in God is unchangeable, (laughs) I will always, and then my respect for people even when I know that I can call my professor by their names, there is that respect I will always uphold them with (FGD-R1)* -The participant laughs because she reminisces about her own experience where she met some people who believed in science and nature as more sovereign and did not have a place for God.

Another factor given for the inability to change behavior was the age. A participant said it was impossible at his age because he was way past the changing capability. In his words he asserted;

> *It can't change because I came here when I was about 30 years. I cannot change because somethings are nurtured within me. (R7)*

The amplified deduction which was the unwillingness of students to change their traits completely rhymes with the separation strategy of Berry (2005). This strategy occurs when individuals hold onto their culture of origin, and don't heed interaction to other cultures. This kind of behavior makes individuals concentrate inwards on their cultures hence making them unable and unwilling to change.

6.4.6 Negligible feelings of Assault

From the findings, two students mentioned that they had undergone some uncomfortable situations inflicted upon them by some people. In the student's views they expressed that they were treated unfairly even when they did not do anything wrong. One student said:

> *I have felt some kind of assault, but these were drunkard people, so I don't want to take them seriously. I was on the bus and this guy started saying things to me. By then I didn't know Swedish, so he was just saying things in Swedish and some people came and stopped him. But he was pointing at me that means he was talking to me. I didn't know what he was saying, so I don't want to insinuate he was being racist because I didn't understand. But maybe in a way it was from the general narrative about black people and how people perceive us, this is my own perception of course (R3)*

The second student had the following said

> *I was in town with a friend. Some guy bumped into us and then he went away without saying sorry and then his friend called us whores. So we kind of ended up having a very bad quarrel and then eventually they walked away anyway. I don't want to associate this with my skin colour skin or racism but it happened anyways (R8).*

The feelings of assault expressed by the participants agree with previous researchers who discovered that Indian and Chinese students underwent bad experiences in their host countries (Martin & Rizvi, 2014). These experiences were racial abuse that included being kicked on the tram and generally having bad encounters. Drawing on this study, even though the students did not want to affiliate their encounters to their different race and colour, it was quite clear that they had gone through bad experiences that were not in their control. Even though the students did not openly say it, these encounters are likely to have caused them psychosomatic and psychological

challenges after these feelings of alienation (Berry, 1992, 2005) According to Berry (2005), these two traits are qualifying traits for acculturative stress, hence implying this impact upon students.

6.5 There is always a way

Apart from just reacting to problems through finding coping mechanisms as illustrated in the theme above, the participants were intentional on devising ways that helped them fit into their new environment even when they were not faced with problems. Therefore, this theme tackles the intentional adaptation strategies that were devised by these participants as a way of fitting into their new environment.

6.5.1 Embracing the Swedish culture

Some students embraced the Swedish culture to fit into the community. Some participants admitted that they had got used to being to themselves, and even grown an unwillingness to share seats on trams as they had emulated the traits of the local people. Furthermore, they became accustomed to less social interactions while others adopted the food and the language too. To fully assert this feeling, one student used an idiomatic expression in Luganda one of the common languages spoken in Uganda that carried great meaning in terms of why she had decided to embrace the Swedish culture. She said *"Bwogenda ebulya mbwa nawe olya mbwa"* (R8). This assertion is directly interpreted in english to mean that when you go to a land where they eat dog meat, you should also eat dog meat". However, the contextual meaning of this idiom is that it emphasizes the need to quickly adapt to the dominant culture to be able to survive which the student did to in this case. Another participant said;

> *When I seat on the tram or on the bus, I don't get any feeling that I am different from other people. I don't know actually that I am black. I don't feel it unless I see myself in the mirror. I don't see any difference between me and the Swedish person. I know the language; I can read posters and everything. I think I can say I am fully integrated (R3)*

Similarly, another participant concluded this by saying;

> *I think I am becoming Swedish yes, I run after trams, that is something, I am learning to speak the language, the food I am getting used to eating foods that I would not be eating if I was back home for example frozen food that is not something I would do because we have fresh food always. But now here I have to prepare food for the week, and put it in the freezer, so yes, I am adapting (R6)*

The participant's decision to adopt the Swedish culture is in line with the acculturation theory. Berry (2005) asserts that the practice of the host culture by immigrants through adopting social traits, learning the language, adopting food preferences and dress code signifies that assimilation has occurred. Based on the findings, the students admitted to having embraced the Swedish way of life for example the food, language and mannerisms on public transport. Berry (2005) states that the shift in behavior like cultural learning and shedding where individuals intentionally lose their former behavior and replace it with traits of the host environment illustrates the occurrence of acculturation. Therefore, referring to the participants, it was quite evident that the students had intentionally accepted the host culture and assimilated into the environment.

6.5.2 Use of disclaimers

Some participants admitted that they always gave disclaimers to fit in the new environment and to avoid uncomfortable situations. These disclaimers included the declaration that the participants had different cultural origins and therefore were not so conversant with the host culture. In their opinion, this shielded them when mistakes arose. This is in line with Benson (2016)'s study about Asian students who had devised creative ways to fit into their new environment. Using the same approach, my participants brought forth some aspects of what they had done that arose out of an intensive focus group discussion. Two participants had the following to say;

> *When I'm discussing with Swedish people, I always try to give a disclaimer, like you know for us who come from patriarchy societies, so that kind of thing.* (**FGD- R3**)

Another participant complimented this assertion through the focused group discussion as she said;

> *I want to relate with R3's view. I once asked a girl who her boyfriend was and she said what makes you think it's always a boy? So immediately I said where I come from, it's almost impossible to think otherwise. And she said, like oooh Africa, I know, Africa. So to me that was some sort of escape for my assumption.* (**FGD- R4**)

The use of disclaimers by participants is supported by the works of Benson, (2016) who stipulated that Asian students found new ways to avoid intercultural clashes. These ranged from students asking questions about the host culture, while others developed creative solutions that reduced the impact of intercultural miscommunication (Benson, 2016). In this case, the disclaimers relate to the creative ways that were stipulated by (Benson, 2016). It is therefore evident, that even though the empirical studies tackled students within different races and host countries, similarities exist between the adaptation mechanisms employed by students to fit in. In reference to the acculturation theory, it is emphasized that individuals with coping/ adjustment mechanisms in place avoided stressful encounters (Berry, 2005). In this case, the participant's acquisition of this disclaimer strategy liberated them from stressful situations that would otherwise have occurred in the absence of this strategy

6.5.3 Cultural appropriation

From the findings, it was evident that the students employed another way of fitting into their new society which they referred to as cultural appropriation. In their explanation about this strategy, two students explained that their behavior was determined by who they interacted with. In other wards they acted in accordance with the expectations of the individuals' culture with whom they interacted with. For example, if they met a Swede, they would behave like a Swede expected, and when they met a Ugandan, they would behave like a Ugandan expected them to behave. Therefore, to them this was a strategy that saved them from judgmental inclinations. One said;

> *It's not a pick and choose reaction, it is an appropriation reaction. I don't pick and say okay I will go with this. I rather appropriate where it applies, If I meet a Swedish friend, I will behave like a Swede would expect or at least as I understand a Swede would expect, and If I meet a Ugandan friend, whether we are meeting at Nordstan or Central station, I will still greet them as they would expect. If I also don't do that then, they would look at me as someone who is pretending to be Swede and that will not cement our relationship* (**R2**)

Another participant said; *I don't know what is good or what is bad therefore I act as I am expected to depending on the person I am talking with (R5).*

This aspect is cognizant with Berry (2005)'s strategy of integration. This strategy occurs when individuals prefer to keep both their own culture of heritage while also having some interactions and with other culture (Berry, 2005). Lee & Ciftci (2014) views these individuals as possessing multicultural personality. Multicultural personality occurs when an individual possesses traits like flexibility, cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative and emotional stability (Lee & Ciftci, 2014). These traits enable for multicultural effectiveness that helps them to adjust to new environments (Lee & Ciftci, 2014). However, something slight differed within these findings. This is because for integration to occur, people voluntarily accept and are involved in both cultures (Berry, 2005). However, in the student's case, they did not admit to acceptance of both cultures and their motivation to employ appropriation was to fulfill society's expectations and to avoid judgment by people from both cultures rather than their own will. Therefore, this strategy helped some participants to adapt to their host country.

6.5.4 Cultural accommodation.
Though most likely to be confused with cultural appropriation strategy employed by the students above, cultural accommodation differs in meaning and application by the Ugandan students. One distinctive difference that emerged from the data stipulated that within cultural accommodation, students were mostly just tolerant and passive about cultural practices. Therefore, did not engage in practice but rather watched from a far without being judgmental towards the host's culture. Students admitted that to live in harmony, they had to accommodate some practices in the host country even though they did not believe nor were willing to embrace them. This kind of behavior pattern rhymes with the works of Benson (2016) who identified that at some point students learn to respect the values and behavioral differences in the host countries. One participant said;

> And then, the accommodating of LGBT, it's not one thing that I thought I would really put up with. But slowly by slowly by slowly, I'm like, accommodating. So I don't think I have ever accommodated too much in life than I have here. Yeah. And when you get along with others then you manage to live on. So when you learn to accommodate things that are different from you, from what you know, then you learn to move on […] and do other things that build you. *(FGD-R1)*

Another participant said; *For me what I think by the time you accommodate not adapt that means you remain the same, all the things you value, are almost untouchable. By the time you're saying I want just to accommodate, that means you remain the same, but you just agreed to, you know, see things in a neutral way without being judgmental. (FGD- R3)*

This cultural accommodation technique employed by students reveals some aspects of the separation strategy of the acculturation theory (Berry, 2005). This is because the students chose not to get involved in some practices present in their host country that they did not believe in. But instead watched from afar without being judgmental, with the goal of living in harmony. It is therefore quite evident that this strategy facilitated the adaptation process of the students.

6.5.5 Self-awareness and Behavior consciousness
The participants reported that they became self-aware of their actions and were conscious on how they behaved. Most participants alluded that through their exposure to the host culture, they started

to be conscious of their behavior especially during interactions with people from different cultures. This behavior arose because they did not want to make mistakes nor offend anyone unknowingly. Besides, some students admitted to lots of pressure and limited social engagements consequently because they were unsure of other people's expectations of them. Benson (2016) and Berry (2005) alluded that intercultural communications were prone to stressful situations or even misunderstandings because of the absence of common cultural grounds. Therefore, a factor that made the participants cognizant of their own self reevaluation of their own actions and culture if they were wrong or right. One participant said;

> *I had a moment where I wasn't very sure if I should say hello to someone in the bus. If I should help a mother whose child is crying on a tram, you know, what does it mean to be quiet or to speak on the phone in a tram. It was that uncertainty of not knowing what the culture means that made me conscious everywhere I went (**R5**).*

The second participant had this to say regarding the political realm;

> *That means all the time you have to be conscious, you have to be politically correct. You don't want to say wrong things you know. [...]. You have to be very, very, very, very careful about the terms you use. Just a simple term you use, will label you a weird person. You have to be very careful when it comes to LGBT. You have to be very neutral. Well, even if its about women, and men, you have to be very careful which terms you are using and how you use them. (**FGD- R3**)*

Reflecting back to the acculturation theory, this technique of self-awareness and behavior consciousness undertaken by the students demonstrates the separation strategy (Berry, 2005). However, to differ a bit from Berry (2005)'s definition of separation, that occurs as a result of people's preference for own culture, the situation in the students' separation strategy in this study differed. This was because Ugandan students in this study chose to separate not because they prefered their own culture but rather separated because of the fear to offend others and making mistakes. This could therefore be branded as an additional aspect and definition of the separation strategy from the researcher's perspective, hence yielded and adding something unique to the existing body of knowledge while exposing the student's life stories.

6.5.6 Utilisation of previous experiences of living abroad

From the findings, it was indicative that the student's previous exposures and experiences to other cultures helped them in their adaptation process. In relation to this, Wette & Furneaux (2018) stipulated that students learnt from their previous experiences. One student alluded that their previous experiences in other countries like the United States gave them an expectation of life in Sweden. While another vocalized their previous knowledge about the existence of different cultures around the world enabled them to be open minded about life and their encounters in Sweden. In their own words, two of the participants had the following to say;

> *Because I came to do my masters, I had already studied my bachelor's degree and I had already studied about these things, cultural diversity and you know people of different backgrounds and races, so it helped me (**R3**)*

The second student referred to the experience in the USA as being helpful in understanding the Swedish culture. She said;

> *I think the six weeks I spent in the USA helped me a bit because I got to know how to use google maps, public transport, how to use the buses so I think the experience I had in the USA made it easy for me in Sweden because everything is almost the same (**R1**).*

From the acculturation theory, Ward and Kus (2012), vocalized that individual characteristics and conditions are great determinants of the acculturation experiences of people. In support of this notion, the study elaborates how the individual characteristics (visit to the USA), and having prior intellectual understanding about diversity by these students helped them adapt to the new environment, something that did not happen for the other students that were not exposed in the same way. Hence having a huge manifestation of the importance of this trait.

To sum up this theme, there is illustration that student employed different adaptation strategies depending on the situations they had encountered. In view of this, Berry (2005) adds that even when individuals are faced with the same new environment, their reactions are different a factor that is truly demonstrated in these findings.

6.6 Reciprocal support

This study further aimed at establishing how students' families back home impact the students' lives while abroad in a host country. This theme therefore captured the different ways in which the families of the participants impacted them while they were in Sweden. The subthemes stipulated below further describe this phenomenon.

6.6.1 Emotional and practical support

First, to illustrate the composition of the participants' families, they mentioned their parents, siblings, stepparents, grandparents, cousins and even some referred to the communities as part of their families. Therefore, the type of families differed from participant to participant with some having nuclear while majority had extended families. Therbon (2004) is in liaison with this composition where he mentions that some African families are extended.

From the findings, there was consensus about the vital role played by student's families back home in provision of emotional support. This support was rendered through the caring inquiries from their families about the student's wellbeing. Besides, this support also included assistance to students in decision making and through giving students advice in cases where the students had problems. This finding is in tandem with Oreilly (2012) who stipulated that families were a source of encouragement and great influencers of decisions made by migrants. Support rendered to students was cultivated through internet-based communication like WhatsApp calls, skype, Facebook and Instagram, and through direct messaging for those relatives without internet access. Bacigalupe & Bräuninger (2017) assert that social support was encouraged through use of emerging technologies. In principle, the channels of communication acted as great determinants for transmitting emotional support. Finch (2007) and Tazanu (2015) alluded that it was through phone calls that family members extended support to other family members when need arose. The students alluded that extension of this support from their families helped them to get a feeling of being cared for even from a far. In his words, one participant said; I*f I get a problem, I have to call the people at home, I can say they are the closest even though they are far. (**R7**).* Another participant said;

*Most times they call me and check if I am okay. They ask are you okay? Are you well, are you healthy? So that constant calling, you know, keeps you going (**FGD-1**)*

The findings concur with the works of previous researchers who found out the immense impact families back home had on individuals who had migrated abroad (Boccagni, 2015; Oreilly, 2012). In the same spirit, Boccagni (2015) added that families rendered emotional support to people who had migrated. In her explanation, Finch (2007) described this act as doing family that bared great importance to immigrants. The migration network theory also emphasized the vital role families play in enhancing decision making and general welfare of individuals (Elrick & Lewandowska, 2008; Oreilly, 2012). In relation to the aim of this study that sought to investigate the impact of families back home to students, it was quite evident that families were important to the wellbeing of the students.

6.6.2 Motivation to work hard

Some participants opined that their families motivated them to work harder. The participant's need to provide for their families, maintenance of status as individuals who have been abroad and the need to make their families proud were the top influencers for this motivation. This motivation pushed them to work harder in their academics and to strive hard in overcoming their daily struggles. Since their families were to benefit at the end of it. One of the participants said;

> *If I know that okay, I have a responsibility and my family is depending on me and all. Then it gives me a reason to actually study hard, work hard, and make sure I pass. (**FGD-R1**)*

This finding collaborates with the migration network theory that emphasizes the important role played by the family in motivating and helping out migrants, through inspiring them in their daily lives (Oreilly, 2012). Therefore, this answers the research question that sought to investigate the impact of families to individuals abroad.

6.6.3 Stress through pressured expectations of remittances.

On the other hand, the participants reported that their families caused them a lot of pressure and stress. This was associated to the financial expectations (support) the families had towards the students. Such expectations included demands for remittances that were to be contributed by the students who were abroad to support the needs of family back home. Since Sweden is known as a developed country, students asserted that it further escalated the pressure that they received from their families. Discussion in the focused group yielded the following assertions. One participant reported;

> *I think sometimes the family brings about mostly stress. Speaking from my own experience and from other close people, it's mostly stress, because all the time. They ask you to bring them abroad or to send them money. Most times you receive a call not to ask about how you are doing but rather how there is a problem.* (**FGD- R3)**

Another complimented that because of the pressures she was sometimes afraid to call home. She said;

*Sometimes I'm afraid to call home because I don't have the money to send. If they ask so what is happening my dear […], but financially it's straining to think that the month is coming. I need to pay tuition at the university for nieces and nephews. Do I have the money? I don't have, am I struggling? I am struggling. (**FGD-R4**)*

The extracts support the works of previous scholars who noted the student migrants sent remittances to their families back home as a pervasive expectation from their families at home (Boccagni, 2015; Tazanu, 2015). Mirroring to one of the questions of this study, that sought to find effects of families on students, these expectations put a lot of pressures on the participants, hence impacting them negatively. This further illustrates the negative impact caused by social networks.

On the other hand, remittances were accorded as a sign of gratitude and compensation for the participants absence. In their view, one student said; *You have to compensate for being absent through something which is financial remittance* (**FGD- R4**)

This portion of data relates to the works of scholars like (Boccagni, 2015; Krzyzowski & Mucha, 2014). These stipulated that sometimes remittances were sent by migrants to their families back home as compensation for their physical absence (Krzyzowski & Mucha, 2014). Therefore with this declaration, the student felt the need to send money that would feel in the vacant space of mutual care, and availability that was caused by their absentia (Boccagni, 2015). Hence it was viewed as help rendered to do the things that otherwise would have been done by the students back home. This made students calmer knowing that they were doing something nice for their families back home even in their absence.

6.6.4 Homesickness

Almost all the participants expressed that they felt downhearted because of the absence of their families and friends. This arose due to their stay abroad that made them miss out on many important ceremonies of friends and families. The occurrence worsened in times of sadness and bereavement that their families back home experienced in their absentia. Two of the students had the following to say;

> *I miss them very much. If a member of my family is getting married and I am not there well I feel I should be there. But when I lose someone, and I have not been able to bury them, that thing pains me a lot. That is what I am saying where we would be sad together and probably have some warmth because we are all sad, I am all by myself and it really influences the way I live.* (**R2**).

The situation has been worsened during these hard times of Covid 19. One student reported that on top of missing his family, he was worried about his family's general wellbeing. This ranged from his inability to travel back home to comfort and be with his loved ones. In addition, his worry expounded to the likelihood of his families' inability to access basic needs and services due to the country lock downs in their home country Uganda, coupled with their families' small earnings. Therefore, this triggered the need to send unplanned money to their families back home for survival. Something that has drained him not only emotionally but also financially, since he had not planned for these specific events. He said;

> *Normally, I plan and send money to my relatives usually on days like Christmas and Easter. But because of the lock down, my close relative stopped working, that means I have to send him money for rent and for food even if I did not plan for it* (**R3**).

The findings above contend with the works of some scholars who articulated that sometimes separation from loved ones caused distress among people that migrated (Boccagni, 2015).

Furthermore, the second portion of the findings is in tandem with the works of previous scholars who found out that situations of emergencies like diseases, job loss were expected to be handled through the money of immigrants (Ambrosini, 2014). Drawing back on this empirical study, this is reflected in what the students were faced with during these hard times of Covid 19 that caused about drastic changes to the students' families back home. This demonstrates the microstructure and the immense impact it creates on the participants as stipulated in the migration network theory.

In conclusion, five themes were talked about in these findings and discussion that included, I think they have the best education system, Rewarding moments, Will I manage this new life?, There is always a way, and Reciprocal support. There has been manifestation of different acculturation strategies from the student's experiences were by their application also varied. The assimilation strategy has been the most embraced strategy by the participants in this study. Although a few experiences demonstrated the separation strategy, there were some differences that emerged in this strategy that slightly differed from Berry (2005)'s definition of separation. For example Berry's 2005's strategy occurs when people don't want to be part of the host country, while in this study, the participants did not separate because they did not want to be part of the host culture but rather due to the fear of offending other hence a probable addition to the definition of the separation strategy. The integration strategy was manifested slightly while the marginalization strategy did not apply at all in this study. The non-application of the marginalization strategy further proves the critique directed towards the acculturation theory in regards to this strategy as stipulated by scholars like (Schwartz et al., 2010).

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine the transnational experiences of Ugandan students, focusing on how cultural differences affect a student's academic and social life, how students, adapt to their new host country, challenges they may have encountered and how they managed to overcome them and finally finding out how the students families back home affect their life while abroad. In presenting the findings, the researcher's interpretation and analysis was guided by a combination of the Acculturation theory by Berry (2005) and the Migration Network theory (Collyer, 2011; Oreilly, 2012).

The first research question of this study sought *to find out how cultural differences affect the academic and social life of Ugandan students*. Notably, the research findings exalted the immense impact cultural differences rendered on the students' academic and social life. This impact emerged in theme 1: "I think they have the best education system", that with just its mention demonstrated the positive way students were impacted, for example through better understanding of course content rather than just its reproduction. Similarly, interesting to reveal was the fact that students affiliated the non-hierarchical relationship between lecturers and students as a culture that eased classroom discussions and led to better learning. Furthermore, the social life of students was impacted as illustrated in the second theme rewarding moments. Here, the participants felt empowered (women empowerment) and changed perceptions about women's roles in society. The participants also acknowledged the beneficial friends that helped them to sight see, learn Swedish and accomplish so many activities whilst in Sweden, a factor that eased the participants stay in Sweden. As a synopsis, cultural differences both impacted the academic and social life of the students. To crown this up, there existed previous literature that supported these findings like (Benson, 2016; Buchanan, 2019; Gomes & Tran, 2017; Kang & Kim, 2017; Li et al., 2010; Raghuram, 2013).

The second research question was *to examine how students adapt to their social life in the host country*. This was answered by theme 4; There is always a way. In a nutshell, participants revealed compelling strategies on how they got used to life in Sweden, like cultural appropriation where they acted based on who they met, use of disclaimers, cultural accommodation and embracing the Swedish culture. These were impressive in that they revealed how far these Ugandan students were determined to find a way to adapt even though everything in Sweden was new to them. It should be noted that since the acculturation theory (Berry, 1992, 2005) was used as a lens in the analysis, traces of adaptation exits in all the themes. However, this theme 4 magnifies its occurrence. It was obvious from the findings that even though students had devised their own adaptation mechanisms, these fitted in within Berry's (2005) strategies of acculturation theory which were used as a lens to analyze the findings in this study. For example, aspects of assimilation emerged as students embraced the Swedish culture like the language, food, and mannerisms on the tram. Nonetheless, some students also insisted on both accepting the host culture while also keeping their own cultural inclinations through the strategy of integration. These emerged in cases students kept their own beliefs for example the belief in God while also in cooperated into some cultures in Gothenburg.

Important to note were the differences that emerged from the findings in student's adaptation mechanism in comparison with Berry (2005)'s acclaimed definition of the acculturation strategies. For example, Berry (2005) asserted that the separation strategy occurs when people do not want to be part of the host culture. Contrary to this previous assertion by Berry (2005), my study discovered that students separated not because they did not want to be part of the host culture, but rather due to the fear of making mistakes and offending people in the host country because they were not conversant with the cultural expectations. This aspect is evident in theme 4 particularly in the behavioral consciousness mechanism used as an adaptation strategy by the students. Therefore this finding makes a vital addition to the acculturation theory and also gives a challenge and a critique to the existing definition of the separation strategy in the acculturation theory. The marginalization strategy was not applicable in this study because the participants did not exhibit characteristics of shunning both their own culture and the host culture. Hence being in tandem with earlier critics of the acculturation theory who asserted that the marginalization strategy was rare and sometimes not applicable to human experiences (Schwartz et al., 2010).

The third question was to find out *the challenges students are faced with and how they were able to cope with them*. This was answered by theme 3; Will I manage this new life. This theme articulated some challenging encounters by students that made them question their ability to manage their new life. These included psychological impacts, like the feelings of isolation, to the physical effects like language barrier, pricy and unfamiliar foods, housing challenges and negligible feelings of assault. It was eye opening to discover that the students did not just feeble at the encounter of problems but rather devised mechanisms to overcome the hard situations. Nonetheless, the students did not execute these coping mechanisms alone. But rather sometimes acquired support from their social networks like friends, fellow countrymen (Ugandans) who had stayed longer in Gothenburg. Therefore, social networks played a great role in helping the participants hence demonstrating the role of the micro system. Collyer (2011) confirmed this assertion where he rendered social networks as vital to easing student's stay abroad.

Essentially, this section of student's challenges yielded consensus, differences and additions to the works of previous scholars. One of the significant differences that emerged was within the challenge of language barrier. Previous scholars like Sato and Hodge 2009; Kang and Kim (2017) concluded that English was the main language barrier faced by International students especially those of Asian origin. This current study however discovered that Ugandan students did not have any problems with the English language but rather the Swedish Language as a language barrier. Further divergence in results is seen were Ugandan students in this study are only affected by Swedish language barrier in the social realms and not both in the academic realms and social realms as stipulated by the previous scholars. Hence bringing on an addition to the existing body of knowledge.

Finally, question four was *to find out how student's families back home influence their way of life while abroad.* This theme was answered by theme 5 (Reciprocal support). This entailed the vital role played by families towards the wellbeing of the students. This was through the emotional support and families being a source of motivation for the students that helped them to work hard. Students also admitted to being home sick and were indeed saddened to miss important functions of family members like marriage ceremonies and even burial. However, on the other hand, student's relationship with their families was filled with "stress" as some students termed it. This was because of the pressured expectations of remittances from their families. Due to the

expectation of support from the students, their families made demands that stressed them. Some students disclosed that this very act sometimes made them avoid contact with their families. Internet based communications like video calls, WhatsApp, normal calls and messages were the mediums through which the reciprocal support was harvested. Although remittance were affiliated to stress, some participants declared that they sent it as compensation for their absentia. The migration network theory was vital in showing the impact families back home had on students' lives while abroad.

7.1 Recommendations

Several recommendations evolved from this empirical study. Some of these recommendations are extracts from the results section as the students lamented of their troubles and gave suggestions for areas of improvement to the concerned parties like policy makers and University administrations. Besides, other recommendations were erected from the interviews but were not presented in the results. Recommendations were given for both the policy makers and also some practical advice to future international students.

7.1.1 For policy makers and social work practice

From this study, the following recommendations sprang for policy makers in Gothenburg to enhance the wellbeing of students

- Provision of accommodation for at least the first six months for the new international students because finding accommodation was hard.
- Creation of social programs to enhance interactions between the international students and the community.
- Expansion of the orientation period not only in the academic sphere but also the social sphere about the do's and don'ts of the Swedish culture so that students are aware.
- Provision of different amenities for the Swedish and non-Swedish students like job posts on university websites so that students don't get disappointed when opportunities are only tailored to Swedish speaking students.
- To wave application fees especially for students from undeveloped countries to grant opportunities to talented but financially vulnerable groups of individuals.

Although these recommendations are opinions derived from this study. Some investigation and reflection from the policy makers and concerned people should be made to further ascertain their relevance and have some action taken. This is because this is a likely bridge for enhancement of cultural diversity and multiculturalism especially in such a growing sector of internationalization of education. To ascertain the importance of these suggestions, scholars like Sherry, Thomas and Hong, (2010) emphases the need to take into consideration the needs of international students. While Gomes and Tran (2017) who recognizes the vital role played by the society institutions and organizations like universities in enhancing the wellbeing of students into the host country.

7.1.2 To future International students (Practical)

- Need to be open minded in all aspects like different cultures.
- Be quick to learn and avoid being in transition forever.
- Need to be focused on their academic goals and not fall prey nor be derailed by the exciting new things in host counties.

- Need to learn as much as possible about the host country before travel
- Ensure to have emergency first aid medicines because not knowing the host country's health care systems may make it hard.

7.2 Emerged questions for further research

The trends of international higher education are sprouting with more students from different countries of origin across the world. Therefore, for future research, the researcher suggests for a comparative study with other groups of international students to investigate and gather their voice, about challenges and collectively ascertain their recommendations on how to improve their education experience. The researcher also recommends other areas for investigation finding out the active role social workers to project the voice of this minor group of immigrants like international students and their contribution to restore their social functioning. The researcher also suggests that future research could be carried out to ascertain how cultural appropriations mechanism as developed from this study could be used by international students to help them in their adaptation process.

Even as a researcher, this study has been a learning point and has greatly empowered my perspective towards international education. This is because it has revealed student's experiences for example adaptation strategies that are not only unique but also likely to be a learning point for other individuals who would like to embark on international education and points of reference for policy makers. The study tackled a small group of international students (Ugandan students). With no evidence of prior research about these international students, this study has voiced their experiences hence making it unique and a vital addition to the existing body of knowledge and to lessen the gap that exists in previous research. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to do further research as given in the suggestions above to totally empower international students worldwide, as they have become channels through which development, knowledge exchange and positive social cohesion can be achieved.

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Appendix 1- Information Guide

Topic: EXAMINING THE TRANSNATIONAL LIFE EXPERIENCES OF UGANDAN STUDENTS IN GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN: CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

Dear Respondent,

My name is Suubi Catherine Kayonga, a Ugandan international student pursuing a European Masters of Social work with Families and Children, at the University of Gothenburg. I am currently undertaking a research study on transnational experiences of Ugandan Students; that is, Ugandan students studying and living in Gothenburg, Sweden.

PLEASE, READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BELOW IN ORDER TO BE WELL INFORMED ABOUT THE RESEARCH BEFORE CONSENTING TO PARTICIPATE.

Purpose of the study.

The aim of this research is to study the experience of Ugandan students in Gothenburg, Sweden. The study specifically focuses on how students adapt to Sweden as their host country of study, the challenges students face and their relationship with their families back home? This research is intended for academic purposes and is in partial fulfilment of my master program in order to successfully complete the course.

How will I benefit from the study?

There will be no direct benefit gained from participating in the study. However, your experience through the research will help offer a voice to smaller groups of students, the Ugandans in this case. Besides, to hopefully be a base to guide future students, and possibly inform policy makers on how to better enhance the conditions of students in Sweden.

How will the interview be conducted?

In-depth interviews will be used to collect data with the participants. An interview guide will be used to enable the researcher stay in line with purpose of the study will also be employed. The interviews are envisaged to take between 45 minutes to an hour and the meetings and venues will be scheduled according to the availability and preference of the participants. Participants will share their transnational experiences, their relationship with their families back home, challenges and how they have been able to overcome any negative experiences. A voice recorder will be used to capture the interviews and to help gather the information.

What will happen to the information about the participant?

Participant data information will be transcribed and kept on a laptop with a secure password and accessibility to only the researcher and the supervisor. Participant's real names will not be used in the research as pseudonyms will be assigned to each participant. This will be to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants to the extent that is possible. The research is projected to be

finished by June 2020. Therefore the audio recordings of the interviews and the transcripts will be deleted after the research has been approved.

Additional/ Optional activity: Focused group discussion and how it will be conducted.

Focused group discussion
I would request you to come together in a discussion group with other participants to collectively discuss your experiences in Gothenburg at a time that would be agreed on by all. A focused group discussion will take about 30 – 45 minutes. To promote confidentiality in these discussions, participants will be requested to be discrete about the information they get exposed to. So that nothing that goes on inside the discussion room is taken outside.

Can I withdraw from participation during the process of interview?

You are free to withdraw at any stage of data collection during your participation in the study; you are free not to allow the focused group discussion or even to request removal of certain information even after data collection. It is okay not to provide a reason for withdrawal, but if the reason would be helpful to me whether in line with the research or in dealing with other respondents, I would be happy if you shared it. You are entitled to requesting for a transcript of the data you have provided and that which has been observed.

Thank you so much for taking your time to read through this information. In case you need any further information please contact me (Suubi Catherine Kayonga) on the contact details below. I have also provided my research supervisor's contact in case you need to get in touch with her.

<div align="center">

Contact details of the researcher (Suubi Catherine Kayonga)
Telephone number: +46769713869
Email: cathysuubi3@gmail.com

Research Supervisor
Professor Elin Hultman
Senior lecturer
Department of Social work
University of Gothenburg
elin.hultman@socwork.gu.se

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Appendix 2: Consent Form

EXAMINING THE TRANSNATIONAL LIFE EXPERIENCES OF UGANDAN STUDENTS IN GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN: CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

Dear respondent,

I am Suubi Catherine Kayonga, a Ugandan international student pursing a European Masters of Social work with children and families program at the University of Gothenburg.

Thank you for taking the time to read through the information guide of this study, and for considering participating in my research. To fulfill one of the research ethics, it is important to receive a formal consent from you as your agreement to participate in the research.

<u>Please, feel free to answer accordingly, and do not hesitate to inquire for any clarity.</u>

The consent form is filed by ticking in the box corresponding to the information provided and later by appending your signature.

I confirm that I have read and understood the information Guide provided ☐

I have been given opportunity to ask questions regarding the topic ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary, with freedom to withdraw at any time without giving reason ☐

I therefore agree to participate in the above study
     i.   Personal Interviews ☐
    ii.   Focused group discussion ☐

I understand that the information gathered will be used for academic purposes ☐
I agree with audio recording during the process of interview   yes ☐   No ☐

I agree to the use of pseudonyms (anonymous) quotes in the report yes ☐   No ☐

Participant's name …………………………………………………………………

Signature…………………………………date and place……………………………….

Researcher: Suubi Catherine Kayonga Signature and date …………………………….
Supervisor: Prof Elin Hultman, University of Gothenburg | Email: Elin.hultman@socwork.gu.se

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Personal Identification

1. Age _____
2. Sex
3. Country of birth_____
4. Educational Attainment:
5. Marital status
6. Do you have any children?
7. Past work experiences?

A. Information about entry to Sweden

1. How did you end up in Sweden?
2. Why did you choose Sweden the destination for your studies/ Reasons for coming to Sweden?
3. When did you come to Sweden?
4. What academic program are you undertaking and at what University?
5. For how long will your studies in Sweden be?
6. Did you come with anyone to Sweden? If yes who?
7. Where in Sweden do you stay?
8. With whom do you stay in Sweden?
9. What were you doing before you left Uganda for your studies in Sweden?
10. Apart from study, are you engaged in any other activities in Gothenburg?
11. Who are those living in your household in Uganda?

B. Cultural difference
1. Have you noticed any cultural difference or any other difference between Sweden and Uganda?
2. What are these differences and how have they affected your stay in Sweden? (What do you like about the Swedish Culture and what don't you like?
3. Do you think being in the Sweden culture has changed the way you interact with others/ Point of view in your social life and your performance in academic life

C. Adaptation
1. How easy was it for you to settle down in Sweden?
2. What helped you in your adaptation?
3. How long was it before you got any friends whether Swedish or from other nationalities
4. Have you tried to enroll for any Swedish class?
5. What challenges have you so far faced during your stay here?
6. How have you managed to overcome these problems?

D. Relationship with families
1. Who constitutes your family?
2. What kind of relationship do you have with your family back home?

3. How does it feel like to be away from family and friends in Uganda?
4. Does their absence influence the way you live and act here in Sweden?
5. Do you keep in touch with your family back home and if so, how often?
6. What do you think your family back home feels about your being and studying abroad?

E. Suggestions
1. What advice do you have for international students who hope to study in Sweden or in any other country that is not their home country?
2. Do you have suggestions for policy makers, the community or social work practitioners in Sweden? In regards to making changes to enhance the social functioning of students?

Thank you for accepting to participate in the study

Appendix 4: Focus group discussion questions

Cultural differences

1. How does cultural difference affect a student's academic and social life?
2. What are the challenges faced by students and how do they cope with them?

Adaptation

3. Are there somethings that you think are more important to adapt to than others?
4. Would you say that you have changed your behavior, values and attitudes? In what ways? What has not changed and why?
5. How easy has it been to adapt to cultural differences like the values, appropriate behavior and the language?
6. Do you think the society here has done enough to assist your adaptation process? I.e. the Swedish friends, lectures, university and general public? If so what have they done?
7. How have social networks helped you in your adaptation to this new society?

Family

8. How has your family either helped or hindered your adaptation to the social life and academic life in Sweden?

Thank you for accepting to participate in the study

Appendix 5: Illustration of the process of finding themes

QUOTES	SUBTHEMES	THEME
Here it is not what the teacher tells you, it is you, the teacher gives you a few concepts, and tells you to read a book. When you read the book, you start understanding what they are talking about unlike in Uganda, it is more of producing what the teacher has given you and in some cases if you don't produce exactly that, then you are wrong. (R4). *I think I like their education system, did I mention it, ooh my God I think they have the best education system these guys I have not failed an exam myself but people who fail can repeat 5 times and the repeating is not like next semester as it is in Makerere and Mbarara (Ugandan Universities) rather here the schedule for the redo will be in like three weeks (R1)*	Understand course content rather than just reproducing it	**Theme 1: I think they have the best education system**
I think it is also nice the way lecturers here interact with students… I like it, they kind of lower themselves to our level and so it doesn't cripple the discussion in class. (R1) **Counter arguments** *Even though, I've tried to become accustomed to the easy way of referring to professors without titles, I haven't stopped it. I'm always like, Hey, lärare* (Swedish word for teacher*) instead of saying their name so it's a bit difficult.* **(FGD- R4)**	Lecturer student relationships	
I*t has impacted on me positively. It has empowered me as a woman. But at the same time it can be a bit challenging when I go back home like for that one month. The way people look at you when you are speaking to your partner. So sometimes people might think I don't respect him when I critique his views. But it's not that I do not respect him. Because where we live (Sweden) we know that respect doesn't mean that a woman should not speak (**R4**).* *I can say, yes it has changed me especially my way of thinking, about women and gender. I can say Sweden is kind of extreme like when it comes to gender issues and women really have a very high position in society, which is the opposite to Africa which is like is more of predominantly patriarchy, so I think it has changed my way of thinking and especially how I think about women and the roles of women. (**R3**).*	Student empowerment	**Theme 2: Rewarding moments**

So, I think they've been helpful for me, especially in learning Swedish, but also being able to interface with institutions that are difficult. They could always advise me what websites to try incase I need to buy something. It's the basic support of course, but they shaped my way of thinking **(FGD-4)** ***More arguments about friendships*** *You have to be very patient to engage somebody to be able to get to know them better. I can say it is an initiative and an investment (participant laughs)* **(R9).**	Beneficial friendships	
If I am sitting with someone in a bus in Kampala, the first thing I do is to greet that person. If I don't do it people will frown at me. But then here, you come to a tram and if you greet them they will frown at you actually. They will respond certainly but, the response is not of the same quality as someone who is from Kampala. They are more skeptical than feeling it is normal to greet someone when you meet them in a public transport…. I think the power of community here is quite low, than in Kampala. **(R2)**	Feeling of Isolation	**Theme 3: Will I manage this life ?**
*One of the biggest problem was language barrier sometimes a tram could get a problem and they could say okay everyone get out because we cannot continue and for me I would remain seated because I don't know what they have said so you know. Another time I went to buy milk but I ended up buying something else, it was not milk nor yoghurt and it tasted funny so I had to throw it away all because I could not read what it said * **(R3).** ***Coping strategy*** *Swedish classes' level 1 and level 2 was very good. At least it is the basis of what I know now. I have some survival Swedish in just six months. I can understand, I can write Swedish, I can speak a little, I can try to read. * **(R1)**	Language barrier	
Oh my God,. I miss real food. Here the cheap ones are the unhealthy foods, the healthy foods are very expensive and then I will not afford to keep going for the healthy foods. We have to eat the kyckling (Swedish word for chicken) laughs. So you have to eat it all the time and then you grow fat" **(R1).** **Coping strategy** *About the nutrition I discovered cheaper markets where they sell products like vegetables fruits and other things, on Saturday and Sunday. Things are a bit cheap compared to other places. For example what you might find at Netto at 10 kroner. That side is a half.* **(R8).**	Unfamiliar and pricey food stuffs	

N.B-This process was done for the entire themes however it was not a one time procedure as it involves

the organizing, reorganizing, omitting and moving around of quotes where they made meaning.