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Exploring international students experiences of studying in UK universities: a narrative inquiry of Nigerian students

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Abstract

This thesis is a narrative inquiry of 10 international students from Nigeria studying in selected UK universities. The thesis draws from emerging discourse on international student's overseas experiences and extends this knowledge by analysing these experiences from the framework of trauma, individuation, spiritual emergency and the African initiation process, in an attempt to gain an in depth knowledge of Nigerian students' experiences of studying abroad in the current period.

The previous understanding of international students' experiences from culture shock framework does not account for how their difficult experiences affect their psychological, emotional, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing, so this thesis have reconceptualised these problems and explained them in more depth using the trauma framework and contributed to knowledge in this area.

It is an exploratory qualitative study and data for the study was gathered through narrative interviewing. The narrative or story telling method applied in this study enabled the researcher to capture how the participants construct meaning to their lived experiences. The narrative inquiry is chosen because it gives voice to silenced group of people like the Nigerian students whose experiences are not heard. Narratives gathered were textually analysed to evidence the narrators' unique individual experiences. Findings revealed that the participants had experiences that coincided with trauma experiences such as feeling of helplessness, disorganization, confusion, depression, sleeplessness and disorientation, lack of concentration and suppressed emotion as they lived and studied in UK.

The thesis concluded from the findings of the study that there is resemblance of trauma experiences in the participants' stories. The study recommends that support was necessary when they are in UK, while adequate information should be provided before the students sojourn to the UK since most of their difficulties were as a result of failed expectations from their preconceptions about studying in the UK before they arrived.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

The problem under investigation in this thesis is to explore the various experiences of Nigerian students studying in UK universities. As research has revealed (Amanda and Sung, 2011), the rapid increase in student mobility has seen many students studying in cultures different from their own, and the UK appears to be among Nigerian students' preferred destinations. This study looks beyond culture shock, which is what is currently assumed to be the experience of international students during their sojourns overseas. To achieve this, a different perspective is used to assess how the experiences of international students can be understood in depth by analysing their experiences from the framework of trauma. This aims to serve as a way of building on existing knowledge about the kind of experiences they have while studying abroad. Given the diversities in the kinds of experiences an individual international student might have, which may not be the same as those of another, it is important that they are given the opportunity to narrate their individual experiences and the meaning they make out of their various sojourn experiences.

This chapter begins by identifying the researcher's interest and the rationale for carrying out this study. It then goes on to discuss some of the reasons why international students generally experience challenges while studying abroad. The chapter further discusses the current knowledge of international students' experiences arising from previous studies. A new conceptualisation is given based on the identified challenges seen in previous studies, which are explored in depth later in the literature review chapter of this thesis. The research approach is also discussed in this chapter, with an explanation of the need to apply a narrative inquiry method. This is further followed by a statement of the research problem, research objectives and research questions, as well as the study's benefits and limitations.

1.2 The researcher's interest in the topic and rationale for carrying out the study

The researcher has been an international student studying in the UK since October 2009 and thus has first-hand experience of being an international student. From this came an interest in asking questions about other Nigerian students' experiences and how they are affected by their individual experiences. The aim is to enable educators in the UK to understand them and design the necessary approaches needed to make their experiences rewarding.

The massive movement of people around the world has impacted on education and students. Trilokekar and Rasmi (2011, p. 495) saw some reasons for this movement in terms of global education when they said: "international students' mobility has been identified as a key strategy for the internationalisation of higher education". The authors are of the opinion that such internationalisation, which has seen many students studying abroad, is aimed at enabling international students to learn and develop cross-cultural and intercultural competencies (Trilokekar and Rasmi, 2011). Intercultural competencies are here defined as comprising the ability of students to adapt and function effectively in cultures outside their own cultural background through their participation in overseas studies. This research is necessary to help with understanding the different kinds of experiences that international students have and which may affect their becoming interculturally competent. It also helps to show how UK education can be useful in developing international students towards achieving their goals. This is because, as Marginson (1999) noted, UK education is a medium of globalisation for her agents and, for this populous group of travellers (international students), it should also be an incubator for their development.

Understanding the development that occurs from studying abroad is crucial and, as Yokota (1997) has noted, studying abroad should be examined because it is important for understanding how international students obtain knowledge from such programmes, as well as what they obtain. Yokota argued that such examination will in addition help us to understand the comprehensive personal development of students, especially in adolescents and young adults, and their different ways of changing. This is important because, as Kegan (2001, p.22), noted:

“Adults are inevitably changed in idiosyncratic ways by the life experiences they encounter, including major life events, such as becoming a parent, or less dramatic but persistent experiences associated with, for example, the pursuit of a particular career and the consequent development of a particular type of expertise”.

This period in which many young adults and adolescents sojourn abroad to study is a very important time in their lives since their experiences overseas play a crucial role in their overall personal development and how their future is shaped. In effect, this study is interested in this area of knowledge because as human contact grows to deeper levels than ever before through international education attention should be paid to the developmental needs of international students.

A further rationale for this study is to enable an understanding of the conditions that might affect international students in relation to attaining their goals of sojourning abroad, since disconnection from their previous connections could be a challenging experience. Just as Furnham and Bochner (1986) have noted, migration could deprive an individual of specific relationships or significant objects in their life. Such relationships and significant objects, as the authors have noted, could include family, friends, their occupational status and physical variables such as food to weather patterns (Furnham and Bochner, 1986). The central point is that these deprivations could leave the individual with a deep feeling of loss which may degenerate into serious life difficulties if not explored and addressed.

Furthermore, students attending schools and crossing the borders to study in countries outside their home countries have encountered difficulties in dealing with the problems of adjustment (Zhou et al, 2008). The aim of thesis, as expanded below, is therefore to critically explore the nature of the experiences Nigerian students have while they are studying in the UK, and how these experiences can be understood in depth so that appropriate support can be given to make their experience one of personal development. Understanding how these experiences impact on students is crucial because it has been noted that studying in the Western countries where international students choose to go presents difficulties of adjustment and challenges of acculturative stress (Smith and Khawaja, 2011).

It is important to know the level of changes taking place now in the lives of these students because, as Herman and Dimaggio (2007) have noted, the current world is filled with uncertainties, tragic events, tensions, clashes, prejudices, and a growing level of misunderstanding between people of various different cultures which has never happened more in history than now owing to globalisation. This is an important period of change in the lives of the international students in general, as well, and the growing numbers of them crossing the corridors of Western campuses, as Tafarodi and Smith (2001) argue, means that they need to be properly understood and supported when they are confronted with problems.

It is noteworthy that the growth in the international student numbers worldwide has attracted a lot of research interest. However, as research by Cetinkaya-Yildiz, Cakir and Kondakci (2011) has noted, the number of studies on international students focusing on their wellbeing are limited. Some of these studies have centred on acculturation stress and adjustment difficulties among international students but little is known about how these experiences affect the psychological, social, physiological and spiritual wellbeing of these individuals.

Therefore, given that previous research on international students does not account for how the above human processes and functioning might be affected, it seems that global education, which has expanded very quickly in recent years, still sees little research on the impacts and effects of such global educational exposure on international students' experiences. In exploring such students' experiences, I attempt to explore in-depth the kind of problems of adjustment and acculturation that Nigerian students encounter in the UK, using a perspective that draws from psychological, physical, social and spiritual processes. The aim is to understand their experiences based on their own accounts, since Walsh (2010) has noted that little research exists on international students that captures their experiences from their own perspectives.

As Smith and Khawaja (2011, p. 702) noted, "It is reasonable to expect that an international student may encounter a range of life changes as a result of being in a new culture". However, how these changes affect international students is not clear in the literature, neither does it go into any depth in describing the impacts of these

experiences on the students' lives. This is why this study is being used as a means of exploring these changes more deeply. International students participating in international education at this time, their learning abroad and the training they get are very crucial in that they will be directed towards positive changes for their own benefit, for their various societies and for the world in general.

Research on international students' experiences (Hung and Hyun, 2010) has identified that higher education institutions aim to recruit them in large numbers but fall short in transforming the curriculum to support them cognitively, culturally and socially for meaningful academic learning. Similarly, research has shown that educators lack sophisticated intercultural pedagogical skills to support their aim of recruiting these students (Hyun, 2009). Meanwhile, giving them a meaningful experience, as the authors above have suggested, could be achieved by first understanding the conditions they face abroad that inhibit attaining the abovementioned meaningful experiences that benefit students. Understanding students' conditions and experiences in depth could be a benchmark for developing and transforming the educational curriculum.

Nigerian students have been chosen for this study because no research has been conducted on these students' experiences in the UK. Most research on international students focuses on those from China, India, Malaysia and other Asian and Middle Eastern countries, even though Nigerian students make up the third largest international student population in the UK after China and India (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2011). Research by the British Council also reported that the number of Nigerian students in UK universities grew by 115% from 2004-2010 (British Council, 2011). Therefore, because there is dearth of research on the problems and challenging experiences Nigerian students in UK universities have, this study explores them and contributes to knowledge of this group of international students and how they experience studying in the UK.

1.3 Some reasons why international students experience difficulties abroad

Large numbers of people travel around the world and they may encounter diversities and difficulties with negotiating among diverse others. Lewis-Fernandez and Klienman (1994, p.43) have argued that "interpersonal experiences are contested

and negotiated by real people who differ, often greatly so, in their trajectories and engagements in life". International students also face challenges as they negotiate boundaries with diverse others in the host country. However, the experience of moving from one culture to another at a critical age is often underestimated. Just as Montgomery (2010, p. 12) argued, "Encountering diversity can be threatening and unsettling and can pose a threat to international students' sense of who they are". This could be the condition of someone who is transported from a culture and conditioning he/she has enjoyed from childhood to a stage in their life when they sojourn to a strange land where almost everything is new and different. In this situation, the sense of belonging may be lost and having the status of a stranger could have an impact on international students.

These challenges are not just cultural in nature as some may arise as a result of different climatic conditions, social differences, financial challenges, academic and learning challenges, and other factors. Just as Simon (2010) argues, international students suffer hostility and prejudice that affect their daily lives, and these are also sources of negative experiences. An international student could also be faced with difficulties when moving from a hot climate to one with very cold and sometimes freezing weather. In another view, Ramachadran (2011) also notes that some may have language difficulties in terms of understanding accents, which sometimes makes conversation challenging. Friendships may be difficult to achieve for fear of social alienation. The love and care they have enjoyed from families will be missing, something supported in the work of Simon (2010). Also, the kind of food the individual has been conditioned to enjoy from birth may not be available. On top of this, students are faced with the task of being successful in their studies and meeting pressures from sponsors or parents.

For Nigerian students, because of differences in culture, learning, values and upbringing, conditioning and self-consciousness, moving to the UK brings about changes in their lives that they may find very difficult to surmount. Their conditioning and consciousness arise from experiences they have in their home country. This give them a sense of who they are, an awareness of their self and an awareness of reality (Graves, 2007) that have been culturally assimilated in them from childhood. The experience of diversity and other life challenges they encounter in the host

country may overwhelm their available resources and coping strength, and this may alter their state of self-awareness and life meaning. This is particularly so for Nigerians because of their collectivist culture and sense of self, which are different from the Western individualistic culture and conditioning, as Hofstede (2001) describes.

Nigerian students may undergo difficulties while studying abroad for other reasons. Nigeria, as a collectivist society (Hofstede, 2001), fosters relationships where loyalty to the family, village or ethnic group and respect for elders are valued more than societal rules/regulations and personal achievements (The African Guide, 2010). This is the understanding and consciousness held by people in that culture, which is also an aspect of their conditioning. In the collectivist cultures of Africa, norms, values, roles and familial authority directives predict behaviour (Dwairy, 2002). The collectivist self-image held by these students might be lost during the transition abroad and may pose a threat and challenge to their wellbeing when they encounter diversities, which may also intensify and lead to other cycles of further distress.

1.3.1 Current conceptualisations of international students' problems in general

The burgeoning literature shows that international students experience difficulties while they are studying abroad. Previous studies on international students describe these students' experiences as culture shock (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001), and their acculturation difficulties are commonly referred to as acculturative stresses (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). Based on this conceptualisation, early studies by Church (1982, p.31) on culture shock show that anxiety is experienced by international students and "manifest itself in such behaviour as excessive preoccupation with the drinking water, eating or avoiding food, minor pains, excessive fears of being cheated or robbed, fits of anger toward or avoidance of local people, and a longing to be with fellow nationals". The losing of familiarities, as Furnham (2001) added from a culture shock perspective, is a crucial aspect of sojourner difficulties that affect their wellbeing overseas.

However, Spencer-Oatley and Xiong (2006), cited in Jung et al (2007), have demonstrated that the difficulties of international students include interaction problems and daily life adjustments in the host culture, and these are additional

stressors that could leave them more vulnerable to depressive symptoms. When this is the case, as Davis et al (2010) have noted, it could create a perpetual atmosphere of grief and loss which can often lead to high levels of stress. The conditions and difficulties that international students face while studying abroad are likened to a pressure cooker by Hog and Vaughan (2011). The stresses experienced by these individuals affect their emotions and wellbeing (Matsumoto, Yoo and Nakagawa, 2008). Thus, since these difficult processes are interconnected, they could lead to a breakdown of normal human functioning and inhibit personal growth and wellbeing. Also, international students may suppress their emotions if their experiences are not heard by friends, families or others. As John and Gross (2004) argue, suppressing emotions is always associated with an individual having less social closeness and an avoidant attachment style. This is a condition of not being comfortable with being close to others that may arise when the voices of people in these situations are not heard.

As stated above, previous conceptualisations of international students' difficult experiences, like those of Furnham (2004), Oszlta (2010) and others, have used the culture shock model to explain the nature of experiences students have when they sojourn abroad. The term 'culture shock' was coined by Karlevo Oberg in 1960 to describe a reaction to an unfamiliar culture that leaves the individual with feelings of isolation and loss of familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). However, these studies recognise that these experiences leave students in a very difficult condition, which this study explores further. Thus, given that the culture shock model has been extensively used to analyse international students' difficult experiences, and yet what is happening to them is still unclear, the need for a reconceptualisation arises.

1.4 The need to reconceptualise the problems of international students

International students' experiences have been studied by scholars such as those mentioned above, and various unpleasant conditions have also been noted as characterising their experiences. Studies such as that of Cetinkaya-Yildiz, Cakir and Kondakci (2011) have found that psychological distress characterises the experiences of international students. Research by Pantelidou and Craig (2006) has also noted that the unfamiliarity experienced by international students as they study

abroad leads them to suffer psychological distress with mental health concerns. Anxiety, depression, loneliness, feelings of isolation and breakdown are among the difficulties faced by international students (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Others, such as UKCOSA (2007), identify worry, headaches, stomach aches, poor concentration and focus, tearfulness and changeable emotions which increase anxiety levels as problems associated with the culture shock international students may undergo abroad.

Although international students' experiences abroad have attracted researchers' attention and some attempts have been made to identify their difficulties, they do not integrate these conditions into one that might lead to a serious breakdown of the normal and integral functional aspects of these students. Conceptualising international students' problems based on a culture shock theoretical understanding, as previous research (Furnham, Ward and Bochner, 2001 and others) has done may reduce the depth and adequacy of concern given to these students' difficulties. Adding to this is the fact that these students have become a very important and substantial source of funds to their receiving universities abroad (Furnham, Ward and Bochner, 2001). Thus, a shallow understanding of their problems leaves their educators comfortable with not having clear knowledge of how stressful and uncomfortable some of the experiences of these students might be. Therefore, identifying these problems and transforming international students' experiences into meaningful units of narrative that can inform the audience on the nature of challenges facing Nigerian students is central to this study.

The understandings of international students' difficulties seen in previous research do not reveal a deeper knowledge of the difficulties experienced by these students. The identified difficulties in previous research could be very challenging for these students but the depth of these difficulties is not explained and that they can be self-debilitating. This makes reconceptualisation necessary. There has been little that connects to the possibility that the experiences of international students may have elements of trauma in them. Meanwhile, a disruption in the sense of self, a concept that has been commonly used in previous research to make sense of international students' experience of an overwhelming situation, is at the heart of trauma. As Stolorow (2007) argues, trauma alters the sense of self. Thus, this study explores

the current understanding of these students' experiences with the aim of analysing it from the point view of a trauma framework to see if it coincides with the extent of the conditions that these international students experience. 'Trauma framework' here means understanding the trauma process and the way trauma affect individuals. This is important because trauma affects both social and spiritual functioning (Eckenrod, 2008), leads to bodily responses and immune system failures, which are physiological effects (Cook, 2001), and causes emotional and psychological problems (Seides 2010; Corbett and Milton, 2011). This understanding, which attends to integral human functioning, helps to explain the conditions identified by previous researchers more deeply.

Straker, Watson and Robinson (2002) note that when an individual is exposed to trauma he/she experiences a fault-line in their psychic functioning that is further exploited by other contingent experiences. The experiences of intense anxiety, depression and other psychological distress that studies of international students have identified may create disconnections in the psychic functioning of the individuals involved. This is because, as Goldsmith, Freyd and DePrince (2012) have noted, trauma is associated with negative psychological and physical health outcomes. Also, just as van Deurzen (1997, p. 94) has claimed, "As human beings we are complex bio-socio-psycho-spiritual organisms, joined to the world around us in everything we are and do". The human functioning that is disrupted during contact with other cultures abroad may affect the totality of an individual's integral functioning and should be properly understood from within a framework that integrates these interconnected human conditions.

Human processes and functioning operate in a related manner, such that when there is a disruption in one it affects the other. Just as Kross and Ayduk (2011) have argued, the thoughts and feelings associated with negative experiences do not just affect the mind but the body as well because the body responds to those feelings and trauma is part of the body's response to negative experiences. What trauma does is disrupt bodily coordinated functions and cause a break in an individual's felt sense (Levine 1997). This may coincide with the opinion of Ryder, Alden and Paulhus (2000), who noted that international students' adjustment to a new culture alters their sense of self as the individual struggles to fit into an unfamiliar social-

cultural environment. Likewise, as Stolorow (2007, p.10) has noted, “trauma can enduringly affect one’s sense of being-in-the world by altering our preconceptions: the world is unpredictable and can offer no guarantee of security or consistency”. An international student, whose previous conditioning and identity developed from previously held preconceptions about the sense of self, might have this pre-formed consciousness altered while meeting a new culture and social order. This may create a crisis in terms of integrating their past experience and present condition. This is in line with Straker, Watson and Robinson (2002, p.147), who noted that when trauma sets in, “the individual is disconnected from past models of reality, which may nevertheless coexist with new ones, and there may be an oscillation between the two with a sense of disorientation and distress”.

In summary, the discussion so far has identified that the problems of international students found in previous research include feelings of helplessness, an altered sense of self and overwhelming emotions, among other difficulties. These understandings are grounded in the culture shock model of Karlevo Oberg (1960) and actually all of these problems and conditions appear in the trauma process. This is why this study approaches these experiences from the perspective of trauma. Also, looking at international students’ difficult experiences from a point of view different that differs from previous research will bring a new perspective on understanding their experiences and help to illuminate what might be left uncovered and unknown by previous understandings and conceptualisations. This is because trauma is damage to the psyche that impacts on the day-to-day functioning of a person (Lopez, 2011), occurring from events that are overwhelming and threatening.

1.4.1 The relationship between trauma, individuation, spiritual emergency and initiation

The physiological and emotional aspects of trauma also bear some relationship to processes of initiation, and this part of the study will begin to make this connection. Initiation is a process of conscious intent which may be traumatic but also involves human transformation. This is because it is constructed in a manner such that the individuals who pass through them experience change in a constructive manner. Thus, when experiences are not initiatory, constructive, it could become traumatic, growth could become inhibited, and there could be destruction and a separation of

the individual from his/her self, leading to a shutdown of physiological, psychological and spiritual functioning (Tedeschi and Calhoun, 1995). However, although trauma may be experienced as a disconnection of these functions, it could be an opportunity for self-realisation if support is provided.

If support is adequate, there is a possibility that negative experiences may lead to human transformation. In that regard, Corbett and Milton (2011, p.67) argued that “It may be that trauma can result in growth, inasmuch as adversity and distress can push someone to develop”. Similarly, the challenges and feeling of loss faced when an individual is exposed to trauma can be dealt with if a counsellor guides the individual to clarify their goals in these conditions, as Halstead (2000) noted. This is the same condition that applies to initiation. A counsellor’s conscious intent to support the individual in an initiatory manner leads to growth.

Given the arguments above, and because there may be hope in adversity, as the researchers above have shown, this study draws on various articulations of the human process of growth such as the Jungian individuation process, the African initiation process and the spiritual emergency framework. These will shed light on how difficult experiences could become a useful source of self-realisation in the development of individuals.

Trauma is noted to cause dissociation (Levine, 1997) and the latter is seen as disintegration in the elements of consciousness (Spiegel, 2012). When strong forces decrease an individual’s functioning and shatter the integrative consciousness of the self of that individual, the work of individuation is to integrate the disintegrated conscious and unconscious elements and bring about the wholeness of the self, as Jung and Kerenyi (1951) have suggested. Similarly, as Solomon and Heide (2005, p. 54) have argued, the alteration in human physiology caused by trauma “gives rise to images, feelings, sensations, and belief”. The images that may be seen during such an experience might be those described by Jung as the archetypes that provide safety and satisfy the needs of the individual (Hartman and Zimmeroff, 2012). The human archetypes identified by Jung are collective unconscious images the depiction of which is a source of spiritual transformation because they strive towards the wholeness and totality of a person (MaryAnn, 1998).

Achieving wholeness, connectedness and self-realisation is the purpose that individuation serves to maintain by integrating the conscious with the unconscious (Petridis, 2008). It is a drive towards perfection and has the benefit of expanding the consciousness of a person (MaryAnn, 1998). This integration involves both the collective unconscious and personal elements of the unconscious (Schmidt, 2005). Archetypes experienced during individuation are very strong when they are activated, as Lawson (2005) has noted. Individuation helps the individual to understand and overcome challenges in life more easily. In a situation when trauma shatters the coordinated self, the work of individuation will serve to unite the shattered sense of self and give the individual a sense of awareness. Based on the idea of Jung's archetypes, it is worth trying to understand whether archetypes might be useful in transforming traumatic experiences since the process of experiencing them is important in transforming people's lives. As Kaplinsky (2008) further noted, individuation processes are lived out and influenced by a culture. Therefore, international students, when they are faced with the difficulties of experiencing a new culture abroad, may engage in this process of striving for higher functioning and having an integrated sense of self, which is, of course, sometimes triggered by forces or conditions they find difficult to overcome.

In the same manner, the initiation process, in which difficulties are meant to be a source of growth and personal self-realisation, can be used as an analogy for understanding experiences like trauma. In some countries in Africa, the initiation process into manhood/adulthood involves a significant exposure to events that are overwhelming and life-threatening. However, as Vansina (1995) argues, the initiation is guided by an instructor who plays the role of explaining the pains and gains to the initiates. The experiences the initiates pass through are out of their everyday normal experience, full of mysteries and stress, something which Seides (2010) saw as precipitated by the demands of the environment surmounting one's resources. However, through adequate guidance, an individual can go through these difficulties and challenges in an initiatory manner to learn, grow and develop from them.

One may argue that the educational process can be related to initiation process. This is because Ntombana (2011) noted that, in African initiation, the instructor teaches, coaches and nurses the initiates to experience the initiation process more

constructively. In other words, both the initiation process and the education process involve a process of change which may be difficult but has the potential for self-realisation, growth and development, depending on how it is consciously constructed.

Another source of growth and human transformation is the experience of a spiritual emergency. When there is an ego-identity crisis that an individual is struggling to surmount, the individual becomes disoriented (Collins, 2007), which is part of the trauma reaction. However, in a spiritual emergency situation, if support is available that enables the individual to undergo a psychological transformation when the whole being is affected, then it becomes a time of spiritual growth (Holden et al, 1999). A spiritual emergency can be a time of spiritual growth and development that people sometimes experience when they go through a transformational crisis (Collins, 2007).

Therefore, when there is a lack of support to enhance a breakthrough in consciousness, there arises a shift in consciousness that has negative physiological, spiritual and psychological consequences. Collins (2007) has argued that this process can present a person with an opportunity for self-renewal. It only becomes a threatening condition if the individual is not supported and guided to experience the process in an initiatory manner. For instance, international students may have a well-developed ego and identity during their conditioning in their cultures but may experience an ego-identity crisis due to experiences that may disorient them in the new culture. Integrating and maintaining wholeness of psychic function may become chaotic to the individual in this situation but the experience of a spiritual emergency will bring back this wholeness, just as with individuation and initiation.

People's experiences of this time require an understanding that stressful experiences take place at all levels: physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual (Lucas, 2011). Thus, when trying to gain an in-depth knowledge of international students, an understanding that humans are also spiritual beings with potential for spiritual transformation and growth should not be left out.

1.5 Statement of the problem

The problem under study in this thesis is how undergoing education in a host country impacts on the lives of international students studying in UK universities. Nigerian students may experience psychological isolation, physical discomfort and spiritual disorientation during their sojourn to the UK, as previous studies have revealed, and this may impact on their studies and lives. This problem, which may affect the entire being of such students, is addressed in this thesis because by examining these problems educators can understand them better and do something to support these students. The thesis also evidences the issues surrounding overseas sojourns and the kinds of experiences that students may be exposed to as they pursue their studies abroad.

Trauma may arise when students experience difficulties as they sojourn to the UK. These experiences have been studied in the light of the culture shock framework and characterised in terms of feelings of loss, confusion and helplessness (Church, 1982). However, these feelings may have a great impact on students' overall wellbeing. Therefore, this thesis addresses problems that may resemble trauma and which might be experienced by Nigerian students. It does this by capturing their narratives of those experiences.

The problem of self-identity and the continuous doubting of who one is and how one can survive in a new situation, which previous studies have identified, may create a sense of confusion within international students. This problem may be connected with a more serious condition that students may not have had the opportunity to talk about in depth. Some of these problems may have occurred because of broken trust, negative social encounters, academic difficulties, psychological feelings of loss and isolation, and feelings of helplessness (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; UKCOSA, 2007). An articulation of these problems, how they impact students and how they may account for a breakdown that could hinder students from having an enriching experience in the UK is the problem that this thesis is exploring.

1.6 Research objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the experience of studying abroad through accounts of the lived experiences of Nigerian students studying at UK universities.
2. To examine the processes of trauma, initiation, individuation and spiritual emergency as a framework that will help understand students' experience in depth.
3. To explore how the experiences of Nigerian students may affect their sense of self.
4. To propose suggestions, based on the study's outcomes, for how to deal with challenges identified in the study.

1.7 Research questions

The central question for this study is: can the difficult experiences of Nigerian students in the UK be understood in depth so that educators can support the students in going through the process of studying with them in a constructive manner?

The answer to the above question is explored by investigating the following sub-questions:

1. Do Nigerian students' experiences in the UK give them a sense of being separated from their being rather than a sense of wholeness?
2. Can the elements of the trauma process be related to students' experiences?
3. How are trauma, initiation, individuation and spiritual emergency related and how can they be useful in understanding Nigerian students' experiences?
4. Are there elements of initiation that might be useful in supporting Nigerian students going through educational processes abroad?

1.8 Research approach

This study utilises the narrative method to capture the extent to which international students from Nigeria studying in the UK may experience changes that affect their lives. Adjusting to a new cultural environment may involve an alteration in an individual's sense of self, as Ryder, Alden and Paulhus (2005) have noted, and this

experience can be well understood from a narrative account by an individual in this situation.

As Crotty (1998) has further noted, knowledge and meaning-making are socially constructed by individuals in a social environment. On that note, this study uses a narrative inquiry method. This is an in-depth approach to exploring Nigerian students' stories, which are the evidence needed to answer the research questions that are addressed in this study. This approach helps with understanding how the students studied reconcile their inner world and the outer world when they encounter difficulties that may alter their sense of self. Experiences are full of narratives, which are told as stories. Marshall and Case (2010) argue that it is a fundamental human activity to tell stories as a means of representing ourselves to other people and making sense of our lives. The stories of the experiences of international students can be captured through this method because it is an in-depth approach.

As Conrad (1987) has further noted, stories are uncovered from an insider's perspective, and this is what this study aims to do. Again, the way people construct their sense of self, as Kranke, Wasanuka and Kilpatrick (2012) have noted, is significantly influenced by an individual's spirituality, cognitive processes and emotional experiences. These processes, which are related to the problem addressed in this study, are better understood through narratives which serve as windows into the inner life of a person (Denzin 2014).

Similarly, as Atkinson and Delamont, (2006), Denzin, (2003) and Loseke (2007) have argued, in the past two decades narrative analysis has become a common tool for listening to the silenced voices of groups that are underrepresented. Deyhle (2005) also adds that such groups may include racial and ethnic minorities. Therefore, since this study is interested in capturing and analysing the lived experiences of Nigerian students in UK universities, whose voices have been silenced and ignored by previous research, narrative inquiry appears the most suitable approach for this study.

1.9 Benefits of the study

International students, their educators overseas and researchers are the major beneficiaries of this study. The study, however, also benefits the general public as it evidences the conditions faced by some international students when they leave their home countries to study abroad.

Prospective international students who have access to this work will understand the challenges and difficulties experienced by other international students who have studied in the UK and will learn vicariously what to expect, how to survive and the potentials for growth in the process of studying abroad. Also, current international students will benefit from the study because their universities, through the findings of this research, will understand the depths of the experiences international students undergo while they are studying with them, which they may not have known before. The study is therefore significant as it captures the experiences of international students from their perspective and provides first-hand information about their survival experiences abroad. This study is also significant to this group because the findings can contribute to and help with the preparations made by parents, sponsors, guardians and students even before they journey abroad.

This study benefits institutions in the UK and the rest of the world that recruit international students by providing information on how foreign students may become good ambassadors for them after studying in their institutions if their difficulties are understood and reduced. Thus, the study provides knowledge of the most basic and threatening difficulties their international students face when they leave their home country to study with them, such that recruiters can work towards providing a facilitative environment in which such students can grow and realise their potential. The study, being the first to analyse the experiences of international students from the point of view that they may have an impact on all human processes and functioning, provides information that educators need to be aware of when planning for and attending to the needs of students. The study is significant because it deepens our understanding of students' experiences of studying abroad by developing a new framework, based on trauma, to help educators develop the context and types of curricula on offer for foreign students.

The study will also benefit future research on international students and contribute to emerging discourse on trauma and the difficulties of leaving comfort zones, especially for international students from strikingly different environments from those of their hosts. The study is therefore significant because findings from this study can help to develop a framework of understanding that articulates the experiences of international students in its totality, so that conscious practices can be developed to support them in every part of the world.

1.10 Limitations of the study

Given more time and resources, the researcher could have approached the study in a way that cut across a longer period of time, at least gathering narratives from the first period of the students' sojourns. Therefore, research that accommodates this time and resources factor, such as longitudinal studies and ethnography, may yield broader results because enough time and resources are allotted for such research. There could also be an argument that since the researcher is a Nigeria international students there may be some elements of bias. However, the researcher has put aside personal experiences in this study in order to examine only the experiences of the participants in this study by being reflexive and collaborating with them throughout the entire process.

A further limitation of the study lies in its theoretical approach because findings from this study cannot be generalised to the entire group of international students. However, this shortcoming was borne in mind because the narrative method, as explained earlier, is often applied to a unique and sometimes underrepresented group of people like Nigerian students in UK universities. Thus, this limitation is one that an exploratory study like this should accommodate to provide information that could be a basis for future studies.

In summary, this chapter has identified the problem under investigation, which is to bridge the knowledge gap in previous studies that assume the experiences of international students abroad to be culture shock. The chapter has also been used to evidence how the researcher intends to extend this knowledge through the use of narrative inquiry. This approach will allow the researcher to come close to Nigerian students in UK universities in an attempt to capture and examine their experiences

using the framework of trauma. The usefulness of this framework is also shown in that it explains how difficulties affect the entire process of human integrated functioning (psychological, social, physical and spiritual). This makes it richer than the culture shock framework when analysing difficulties of studying abroad, especially because these experiences resemble trauma.

Chapter Two

Contextual background to the study

2.1 Introduction

In this short contextual background chapter, the rationale behind international students from developing countries travelling overseas is discussed. This is followed by an examination of the various reasons why Nigerian students, who are the focus of this study, sojourn to study in UK universities.

2.2 Why students from developing countries travel abroad

Students travelling abroad to study have become more pronounced compared to other groups of travellers. This movement is equally seen as being encouraged by globalisation and the increase in the development of technology around the developed world, as Clarke (2007) has noted. Studying abroad has emerged as a national priority (Lewin, 2009 cited in Tarrant et al 2011), and countries around the world engage their students in various levels of study to acquire knowledge, skills and develop themselves overseas.

As Sandhu (1994) notes, the tradition of moving abroad to study and for knowledge acquisition is as old as learning itself. Thus, knowledge acquisition and education have long been seen as a reason why people move abroad and one that is required for national and international communities' growth (Sandhu, 1994). Historically, Ward et al (2001) note that there are early biblical references to travelling scholars with intercultural education which can be traced back to 272-22 BC (Ward et al, 2001). The migration of students overseas to different parts of the world has since increased significantly, and in the present century, when the world has become a global common place, the business of overseas education has flourished (Ward et al, 2001). Given such a long history of overseas studies, it is important to analyse how such travels contribute to developing students, and how the aims of such overseas travel by scholars have been met.

Developing countries who have low standards of education compared to their Western developed counterparts engage their students in study abroad through

various scholarship schemes and personal sponsorships. As Tarry (2011) noted in a recent study, countries like Thailand, in their efforts to increase their knowledge-based economy, engage in government policies and programmes which encourage students to travel abroad to study. One such strategy is their government scholarship, which has seen some of their students go to the United Kingdom (Tarry, 2011). Other researchers, such as Mehtap-Smadi and Hashemipour (2011), have noted that the movement of students from developing countries to developed countries, which has happened due to the internationalisation and trading of higher education, will benefit developing countries in the future by developing their human capital, their technology transfer and their knowledge accumulation.

Students from developing countries of the world travel abroad in great numbers annually to more developed Western countries in order to pursue their degrees in varying disciplines, mostly in the US, the UK, Australia, Switzerland, Canada and various European countries (Mehtap-Smadi and Hashemipour, 2011). As Harrison (2012) has noted, the notion of being tutored in English, the perception that such education offers high quality qualifications and the global recognition of such degrees in Anglophone countries account for the increase in international students' migration to these countries. Thus, the search for UK and other Western precious academic qualifications and degrees has been significant among the reasons why students from developing countries sojourn to study in the UK and other Western countries.

Furthermore, tertiary institutions abroad being the biggest receiver of foreign students, as Webb et al (2000) and Gray et al (2002), cited in Bakalis and Joiner (2004) have added, provides an avenue for training international students into openness to change. Thus, one of the perceived reasons why students travel abroad to study is to acquire this characteristic way of thinking, feeling and behaving, which also means a development in their psychological, social, spiritual and cognitive functions.

Sojourners who particularly travel to developed countries overseas to study have been recognised and documented as a career asset to their home countries (Hwang and Wang, 2008). The recognition of scholars who travel abroad for their studies as

career assets by developing communities may imply that more international students will be seen travelling abroad. In another contribution, Bash (2009) argues that scholars who travel abroad and acquire foreign degrees obviously constitute an item of currency which can be traded cross-nationally. The implication is that students are expected to make meaningful contributions to the development of their societies after their studies overseas and can become important human capital for their home countries after studying abroad.

Several other reasons exist for why students travel abroad, and such travels have been motivated by many factors. For instance, Maringe and Carter's research, cited in the works of Goel et al (2010), made some discoveries when looking at African students in two UK universities to discover their motivation for studying abroad. In that study, the authors found and concluded, based on a focus group of these students, that African students sojourn to study in England based on the promise of getting a truly international higher education experience (Goel et al, 2010). Thus, it is very important that UK educational processes should provide experiences that are considered truly international by foreign students.

The employability of students who have studied abroad is believed to increase, especially for students from developing countries who have studied in developed countries, as Bakalis and Joiner (2004) have noted. Citing China as an example, Coughlan (2011) adds that Rahul Choudaha, an associate director of the New York-based World Education Service, has argued that the pressure to get an overseas degree for chasing jobs accounts for the surge of international students in Western countries. These views suggest that international students will get training that will enhance their employability from their experiences of overseas study. It has been difficult to ascertain how many extra skills students who travel abroad have compared to those who study in their home countries but this is not the focus of this study. What is important here is to understand how these motivations for coming to study abroad may be unrealised because of difficulties and challenges in living and studying abroad.

Research on international students is also increasing. As Zhou et al (2008) have also noted, as these group of travellers are increasing, so is research on their experience.

For developing nations like those in Africa, the early conceptions of many pre-colonial and early colonial writers were that Africa was a dark continent devoid of advanced centres of learning worthy of emulation by others (Peter et al, 2003). This is another reason why students from this part of the world have been moving to developed Western countries in pursuit of quality education in places where the learning is believed to be more advanced.

Coughlan (2011) has quoted Thandika Mkandawire, professor of African Development at the London School of Economics, as saying that “African universities are still trying to recover from a loss of funding that began in the 1980s, when resources were switched to primary education”. This lack of attention to universities has contributed to the downfall of the education system in this part of the world. Mkandawire highlighted that African universities missed out on the entire circle of growth while other parts of the world invested hugely in higher education, and said that it was difficult to rebuild a university once it was destroyed (Coughlan, 2011). Based on the arguments made in this statement, the downfall of universities in most countries of Africa due to lack of funding has driven their students to overseas institutions in great numbers. Adding to this, Kitsantas (2004) states that the students will have an improved global understanding and world view after studying abroad which will be useful to their countries. Although, as Kitsantas noted, measuring these outcomes is very difficult.

2.3 Why Nigerian students are leaving their home universities for UK universities

The number of Nigerian students in UK universities is growing owing to globalisation and the internationalisation of higher education, which has seen many countries in the world sending their students to overseas programmes. Amanda (2011) has noted that the UK is one of the preferred destinations for students from Nigeria and available statistics show that large numbers of students from Nigeria criss-cross the border to study in the UK. Research such as that of Inegbenebor (2012, p.1) reveals that recently published research by the British Council “predicted that the number of Nigerian students in the UK would have risen from just 2,800 in 2007, to 30,000 by 2015, while it is on record that 246 billion Nigerian naira fuel the UK education sector”.

Nigerian students studying in the UK have come from a poor and lowly rated country in terms of educational standards (British Council, 2011). Owing to this situation, Nigerian students have continued to desire foreign education. Studies by Gill (2008) revealed that the British Council's new research predicts an increase of 30,000 Nigerian students in UK universities by 2015. Part of the findings presented in that research was that the number of Nigerian students in UK universities grew by 115% from 2004-2010 (British Council, 2011). The study further classified Nigerian degrees as likely to remain substandard, which further explains why Nigerian students have continued to sojourn to study in the UK. The growth in Nigerian students studying in the UK has also been attributed to a number of other causes such as the bilateral relationship between Nigeria and the UK (British Council, 2011) and, as Russell (2005, p.66) has noted, the UK is chosen primarily for its "educational standards and its recognized qualifications worldwide".

However, it suffices to point out that the major driving force behind the Nigerian students' influx to UK for their studies is the poor educational standards of their home country. In an attempt to tackle the poor standard of education in the country, the Nigerian state and federal governments, as well as individuals, engage in sending students abroad to acquire a Western education and return to change and improve the system. However, some oppose this measure and do not support it as a way of tackling the poor education system in Nigeria. They believe that improving the standard of Nigerian universities and encouraging moral, ethical and sustainable behaviours among her educational elites is far more beneficial (Ayedemi and Ademilua, 2012).

Nigeria is a country rich in natural and mineral resources, with crude oil as her major income driver. The proceeds from crude oil, as many Nigerians argue, are not used for the development of other sectors such as education. The Nigerian education system, as Oyedepi (2011) argues, has not been its best because of poor governance and generally unconducive learning environments, among other factors. Education in Nigeria has thus not been the best choice for students who have other choices, including studying overseas. Commenting on the poor education system in Nigeria, Deji-Folatile, (2012) quoted professor Tomori as describing the Nigerian education system as poor when he said:

“There is no way the current standard of education in Nigeria can deliver the quality education most Nigerians yearn for. But the point is most Nigerians yearn for quality education, but are not prepared to work for it, we are not ready to make the required sacrifice, or feed the education system with the necessary input – funding, high class teachers, committed and hardworking students, and parents who cherish honour, and live a life of integrity and uprightness. Therefore Nigeria is deservedly reaping the quality of education she deserves – a dysfunctional education for a dissolute society. We are reaping out of our education the corruption, dishonesty, exploitation, fraudulence, treachery, apathy, carelessness, and malpractices that we have entrenched in the system. And we are reaping with compound interest” (Deji-Folulile 2012, p.2).

Other reasons why Nigeria students sojourn to the UK to study exist. Academic activities in Nigeria have been affected by the conflicts which have characterized the Nigerian university system (Ayedemi and Ademilua, 2012). These authors state that these conflicts in Nigerian universities have gradually but steadily disrupted the academic activities of Nigeria. The conflicts differ in level: teachers and government, students and teachers, cultism and other student to students’ causes (Ayedemi and Ademilua, 2012). These uncertainties have been among the reasons why parents who can afford to send their children overseas do so without thinking twice. As the above authors note, these conflicts have contributed greatly to the gradual collapse of Nigerian university educational standards.

Academics in Nigerian universities has repeatedly embarked on indefinite strike actions when they disagree with university authorities or the federal government, leaving many students at home and causing them to have to take longer to complete their studies (Ayedemi and Ademilua, 2012). For this reason alone, some students have dropped out of their universities without completing their programmes and this has ultimately affected the rating of Nigerian universities across the world.

The educational system in Nigeria is seen as being of a low standard and, as USAID (2012, p.1) reported, “The quality of basic education in Nigeria is extremely poor, leading to low demand and unacceptably low academic performance in particular”. This poor rating by international organisations has been noted as being among the reasons why Nigerian students prefer to sojourn abroad, an idea which is supported in the words of USAID (2012). Furthermore, the poor quality of the education offered

in Nigerian universities, as Barbara (1999) has noted, also arises because of corrupt government practices and neglect of Nigerian universities. The author argues that the military government that brutally ruled Nigeria for 15 years had no major concern for the development of education in the country, which further eroded quality education in Nigeria (Barbara, 1999). The search for quality education since then has driven many Nigerians abroad to study, with the UK and America serving as their major hosts.

On the part of the students, there has been a long history of cultism in Nigerian universities, in which students belong to confraternities that fight each other and intimidate their lecturers. Barbara (1999) notes that the cult groups in Nigerian universities have been deadly in their operations and have been in existence in Nigerian universities for decades. Cultism is one among other uncontrollable vices in Nigerian universities and has claimed the lives of many innocent students and students who are members of the cult groups (Barbara, 1999). Such groups perpetrate violence and killings that sometimes result in government closure of the universities involved. As Aluede and Oniyama (2009) note, the cult group activities that have continuously claimed students' lives have also disrupted academic calendars and sometimes led to the closure of universities by authorities.

In summary, this chapter has identified some of the reasons why international students from developing countries including Nigeria sojourn to the UK. These reasons are related to poor academic standards in these countries. For Nigerian students, as research has shown, getting a UK degree will enable them to also acquire knowledge that they will need to develop themselves and their country when they return. The desire to get a truly international experience (Goel et al, 2010) has been seen as driving them to Western campuses, although crises and disruptions in the academic world in Nigeria also account for their sojourns to the UK.

Chapter Three

A review of previous studies and current understandings of international students' experiences abroad.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature of international students' experiences of studying abroad as expressed in previous research. Examining previous studies provides evidence of a gap in knowledge and supports the setting up of the framework for the narrative inquiry in the present study. First, the literature looks at previous research on international students to interrogate it and argue for how those studies might have missed out on capturing the depth of international students' experiences. Second, there is an examination of the nature of trauma, which brings in a new conceptual framework that is different from what is already known about international students' experiences. Examining the processes of trauma enables us to see if these are relevant to the experiences of the students in the study. The literature examines the various theoretical understandings of trauma and how the physiological, psychological, social and spiritual functioning of individuals may be shut down by difficult experiences.

Third, the literature examines and draws from studies on the frameworks of individuation, spiritual emergency and the nature of the African initiation process and their relationships with trauma. The idea is to critically examine if there are elements in these human processes that can be useful in understanding the experiences of international students, and how the idea of developing international students can be understood in the light of these human processes. Finally, a summary of the review is presented with findings from the review that echoes the processes of carrying out a narrative inquiry for this study. A diagram of the conceptual framework explains these processes in detail at the end of the review.

3.2 The difficult experiences of international students: current knowledge overview

The liberalisation of tertiary education, which has increased the mobility of students going to study in Western campuses for more than half a century (Tafarodi and Smith, 2001), has presented opportunities for both learning and challenge to foreign students. As Smith and Khawaja (2011) have argued, there are potential changes that occur in the lives of international students as they undergo the process of gaining higher education within a host culture. The current explosion in numbers travelling abroad means those British universities and other Western universities housing these students have more work to do now in supporting, educating and developing them. This view has been supported in the works of Ramachadran (2011). In effect, as Russell (2005, p. 67) has suggested, "Education can be classified as a marketable service in the same way as any other service". If this is the case, it suggests that the same strategy for maintaining and retaining customers should apply to the process of educating international students

The current globalisation era has increased connectivity between countries and people, and efforts in this period should be geared towards understanding how difficulties created by cross-cultural encounters should be addressed. Such an effort in the education business, as Abdollahi (2010) has argued, should have a focal point of educating students and improving the structure of education. However, it seems the effort is one-sided due to the fact that international students, who are major drivers of education institutions' funding, are not adequately understood and supported in terms of their experiences, as Simon (2010) has argued. These experiences may have serious effects and in worst-case scenarios could have mental health implications (Lee, Koeske and Sales, 2004).

International students who flow across borders to study abroad are an important part of internationalisation (Weirs-Jenson, 2003). However, the increase in their numbers has been seen by researchers (Hart and Coates, 2010), as leading to a reduction in the attention given by educators to this teeming number of people regarding how they survive while they are studying. Hart and Coates (2010) have further noted that the number of international students has increased drastically owing to the competition in recruiting them globally and has also made the handling of their

complaints a critical task for their educators. Similarly, as Andrade (2006) has noted, the aim of increasing higher education opportunities for students from abroad is most obviously motivated by economic or financial reasons. With these practices surrounding the current education of international students, one may argue that international students may be developing and experiencing changes in their life in a rather different direction that research so far has not been able to articulate and explain in depth.

Furthermore, as Peterson et al (1999, p. 69) warn: “Higher education institutions that take international students for granted, as “cash cows” do so at their peril”. Such practices are what researchers like Andrade (2006) consider inappropriate, and Andrade (2006) suggests that universities recruiting international students should consider giving them support and programming that will enable them have good experiences overseas and return home happy customers. Echoing this, Arshad and Lima (2012) state that any higher education internationalisation strategy should take into consideration the kinds of messages international students take home. Meanwhile, researchers as David, Nigel and Coates (2010) have noticed from the findings of their study that far less attention is paid to students’ complaints and how they react when they are dissatisfied with higher education practices abroad.

Given that the experience of studying in a different culture may be challenging, it is important that these experiences are clearly understood. These difficulties are generally known as acculturation difficulties since they occur as individuals engage with the host culture and pursue their sojourn goals. A review of the problems of acculturation is given below which will provide an opportunity to categorise international students’ acculturation problems into psychological/emotional and sociocultural dimensions for a clearer understanding of the various aspects of these difficulties.

3.2.1 Acculturation difficulties

Research that looks at how individuals and groups who travel from one culture to another engage with and adapt to the host country’s environment has constantly used the term acculturation to refer to a process of psychological change that takes place when there is contact between two or more cultural group and their individual

members (Berry, 2005). Psychological acculturation as defined by Al-Omari and Pallikkathayil (2008, p. 129) is “voluntary and comfortable modifications that occur in the individual’s lifestyle, behaviours, beliefs, values, and identity as a result of continuous first-hand contact with different cultural groups”. In contrast to this definition, however, modifications may not be comfortable. This is because acculturation presents psychological problems since there are alterations in the individual’s lifestyle, behaviours, beliefs, values and identity (Berry, 1980).

Acculturation involves the process of getting an individual to fit in into a particular culture that is different from their indigenous culture. It can be seen as a similar process to the natural process of adaptation via fitting in behaviourally to a new physical environment (Chirkov, 2009). Acculturation can also be seen as a process of cultural change, occurring because of contact between members of two or more cultural groups (Berry, 1980). Others view acculturation as a process of changing from one's original culture to a new culture with evidence of such changes being seen in their attitude and behaviour (Christenson et al, 2006).

A wider explanation of the concept of acculturation is given by Graves (1967), who argues that acculturation involves not only behavioural adjustments but also involves choices of language for communication, ethical affiliations, values and psychological adjustments, which can together be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept of identity. However, this does not happen without difficulties because, as Haasen and Reimer (2008) have noted, during acculturation people may experience the loss of their original society’s norms and values in favour of those of their new society.

In John Berry’s theory of two-dimensional acculturation, culture maintenance and culture contact (Ward and Kus, 2012), he conceptualises acculturation as a factor in either maintaining one’s own culture of origin values or coming into contact with another culture and thus developing a bicultural identity. Thus, an individual who has migrated to another culture can choose between four: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation, based on Berry’s two dimensions of acculturation (Berry, Kim, Minde and Mok, 1987). Berry and colleagues added marginalisation to describe individuals who have no interest in either adhering to the dominant host culture’s behaviours and attitudes or their native culture’s values (Berry, Kim, Minde

and Mok, 1987). The forms of acculturation identified by the researchers above are accompanied by difficulties since they involve changes in the lives of people that sojourn to other cultures, as Berry (2005) has also noted.

Familiarising oneself with the members of the host culture, the popular dominant culture and the language in the host culture comprise Birman's (1998) (cited in Jung et al (2007) idea of acculturation. Although language is part of the changes sought during acculturation, it is not the only change that occurs during acculturation. One thing is paramount during acculturation, which is the point that the host culture is dominant. It is considered the popular culture and its values and attributes will surely override those of foreigners visiting that culture. This is overriding in the sense that visitors, sojourners and migrants learn to adapt to the dominant host culture even at the expense of their own previously held behaviours or values, and this situation could lead to acculturative stress, as Constantine et al (2005) have noted.

Berry and colleagues have found that, during acculturation, integration is preferred over all of the other three styles of acculturation mentioned; assimilation, separation and marginalisation (Berry et al, 1989; Krishnan and Berry, 1992; Berry et al 2005, as cited in Ward and Kus, 2012). Integration, which leads to developing biculturalism as a new blended identity in the host culture, has therefore been considered to enhance adaptation into the new culture. However, problems associated with acculturation, like the choice of ethnic identity in the host culture when the individual tries to integrate, have been found to play a role in the development of depression (Abu-Rayya, 2006, cited in Jung et al, 2007). These problems can be exacerbated if the people involved are confused about which identity out of those of the dominant host and their ethnic origin they should maintain during such intercultural contact. This view is supported in the works of Berry et al (1987).

Researchers agree that acculturation is a critical life event (Berry, 1997). It is a period of both difficulty and survival for the individuals in these situations and the difficulties experienced during this period may affect their chances of having healthy lives. Thus, as Haasen and Reimer (2008) state, the problems individuals and families encounter during acculturation when they migrate to other cultures may lead to mental health problems. Acculturation therefore presents a complex problem

whose roots have been traced to the interactions between social, psychological and biological stressors (Haasen and Reimer, 2008). Also, Lee, Koeske and Sales (2004) argue that acculturative stress is induced by the challenges in the adaptation process. However, it is worth pointing out that the mental health implications of acculturative stress experienced by individuals who sojourn to other cultures need to be well articulated in the acculturation literature in terms of the impact that the degree of acculturative stress experienced may have on the people that experience it.

Meanwhile, the majority of studies in the acculturation literature are conducted with migrants and refugees and few with international students (Smith and Khawaja, 2011). It is important to understand, though, that the levels of stress experienced by different groups of people moving abroad may differ. International students may have a different kind of experience from other groups. This is of course because, as Fritz, Chin and DeMarinis (2008) found, the greater levels of stress and anxiety experienced by international students are generally influenced by their acculturation process.

The small amount of available research on international students' acculturation experiences has found it difficult to include the sources of their acculturation difficulties. These sources include: "academic challenges (e.g., the pressure to succeed in an unfamiliar educational environment, second language anxiety and the related concerns regarding English competency, etc.), personal and vocational challenges (e.g., maintaining self-esteem, homesickness, loneliness, housing issues, etc.), and sociocultural issues (e.g., understanding and accommodating host country social norms, lack of social support, stereotypes and discrimination" (Rice et al 2012, p.576). This list of sources may not be exhaustive but is very important for understanding the complexity of the difficulties that international students may be experiencing. Researchers in this field refer to these conditions collectively as acculturative stress (Constantine et al, 2005).

In the review of research conducted on international students, researchers were particular in identifying acculturative stress as that which could affect the mental health of international students (Furnham and Trezise, 1983). These difficulties are

capable of affecting the lives of people who experience them because, as the researchers argue, they can reduce people's abilities to connect and articulate their functional aspects. This is because the immune system experiences losses due to the stressful life events experienced during this period (Furnham and Trezise, 1983). These experiences could be one of those stronger forces leading an individual to search for the self, and possibly to a breakdown in continuity and awareness. Other researchers have also noted that depressive disorders may be experienced during acculturation (Haasen and Reimer, 2008). However, the depression experienced could be a symptom of other serious conditions they are experiencing.

Difficulties in acculturation, as seen above, have psychological, emotional and sociocultural aspects. It is therefore crucial that the various aspects of the difficulties experienced by international students be classified, as previous studies have done, so that we can understand how these individuals experience challenges that may affect their stability and personal development as they pursue their degrees in the host culture.

3.2.2 Psychological/emotional problems of international students

Researchers have identified some problems as characterising international students' experiences of studying abroad. These problems confront them as they acculturate into the host country's norms and ways of living, and pursue their studies. Some of these problems affect their psychological and emotional wellbeing and may give rise to further unpleasant and disturbing experiences.

During transition, as Davis et al (2010) note, depression, anxiety and stress may arise as common outcomes and by-products of people's experiences. These psychological problems could have negative impacts that will reduce an individual's functioning in the new environment. Thus, as research by Amy et al (2007) has revealed, youths face significant difficulties while adjusting to new settings or environments owing to separation from their prior social support networks (family members, peers and staff at earlier institutions). The loss of these significant networks accounts for unhealthy situations characterised by transition distress that have overwhelming emotional impacts on youths' wellbeing (Amy et al, 2007).

Furthermore, Jung, Hecht and Wadsworth (2007, p. 391) agree that international students are a “vulnerable group whose members are at risk of depressive symptoms and depression”. Being vulnerable to depression shows the degree of difficulties faced by these students that might affect their sense of being and psychological wellbeing in the host country. These conditions can lead to problems of identity confusion because, as Jung, Hecht and Wadsworth (2007) note, the effects of depression are reported to be related to self or identity crises. When depression characterises the experiences of international students, it may result in a shutdown of their engagement with both their inner and outer worlds, which may also lead to suppressing those depressive emotions. Similarly, Lee, Koeske and Sales (2004) add that because international students experience a loss of natural social support, which leads to excessive stress, they are more likely to develop psychological distress.

As research by Heppner et al (2007) revealed in their study of Chinese international students in US universities, the depression found among these students arose from the lack of an avenue for those emotional problems to be expressed and heard. The suppression of emotional feelings, as Pederson (1991) cited in Heppner et al (2007) has noted, is partly because of students being reluctant to discuss their personal problems due to cultural stigma and the possibility that they are not aware of the psychological services available. Either of these, though, means that their voices are silenced and their emotions suppressed, which could degenerate to other conditions.

An example of the above is given in research by Gill (2007) that revealed a number of the processes international students from China had to go through during their studies in a British university. The findings from Gill’s research showed that these international students studied suffered stress and anxiety arising from the fact that they were encountering strangeness for the first time. Their experiences were due to factors that included their lack of preparation and the fact that they had little practical knowledge and understanding of British cultural and learning contexts and norms (Gill, 2007). In as much as this is a condition that poses a serious threat to the existence and learning experiences of these students, understanding them in detail is a self-enhancing process. However, Gill’s (2007) research did not go into detail in

order to understand and explore the outcomes of the difficulties on the Chinese students' wellbeing.

The problems of international students that affect their emotional and psychological wellbeing have also been noted to have implications in terms of mental health issues (Furnham and Trezise, 1983). As the authors note, due to the high levels of psychological and emotional distress experienced by international students during the period of their migration to study abroad, such problems could have mental health implications. The mental health problems that may arise when depression and anxiety about survival occupy the lives of foreign students are serious issues of concern. Although one researcher (Weirs-Jenssen, 2003) sees others as drawing a somewhat gloomy picture of being a student abroad, the psychological and emotional problems involved may leave the individual shattered and may not be a normal or easy experience for him or her.

Research by Bradley (2000) reveals that the difficult experiences faced by international students range from academic pressure and economic problems to and social problems that could trigger mental health issues in extreme cases. Such problems, as the author notes based on the voices of the students investigated, appeared in different degrees with significant effects on their wellbeing (Bradley, 2000). These problems may be serious and should be seen as such rather than concerns being dismissed as a gloomy view, as Weirs-Jenssen have done. As Lazarus (1999) has argued, the fact that individuals now live closer together in a web of complex relationships obviously has the potential to generate emotions. Mental health problems which are personal psychological difficulties may create a fault line in overall integrated functioning if not addressed.

Church (1989) quotes researchers (Adler, 1975; Arensberg and Niehoff, 1964; Foster, 1962; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Lundstedt, 1963 and Oberg, 1960) as conceptualising the difficulties international students face as 'culture shock'. This is seen as a process of adaptation to cultural stress which may evidence symptoms such as anxiety, helplessness, irritability, insecurity and a longing for a more predictable and gratifying environment. Conditions like these create emotional

tensions arising from changes and unfamiliarity that lead to further psychological distress, something which is supported in the work of Pantelidou and Craig (2006).

The psychological difficulties facing international students also affect their physiological homeostasis. As Bovin and Marx (2011) have argued, emotional stressors can have physiological reactions such as increased heart rate, dizziness, shallow breath, hot flashes, nausea and sweating. In this condition, adrenalin is intermittently secreted into the system due to the high level of fear and uncertainty present during such emotional conditions (Charney, 2004). Thus, not only do these problems impact on the psychological wellbeing of the individual but physiological states are also altered since the bodily functions are interconnected. Connections are made regarding how the human being is affected in totality in a study by Jiang et al (2003). They found that there was a relationship between psychiatric symptoms, psychological fatigue and physical fatigue, all of which involved difficulty with concentrating the mind, being tired and feeling localised and physical discomfort.

Stress encountered by international students that leads to several psychological difficulties is very challenging and, as Hwang and Wang (2011) have noted, sometimes these experiences occur due to life-threatening events in the lives of international students that affect their individual functioning overseas. Findings from the authors' studies of Taiwanese international students' adjustment showed that stressors experienced by international students affected and reduced their adjustment abilities in the host sociocultural environments as well as their learning performances (Hwang and Wang, 2011). Thus, the psychological and stressful emotional problems experienced by these students, as shown in previous studies, may also impact on achieving their academic goals.

3.2.3 Sociocultural problems of international students

Social adjustment problems and difficulties experienced by international students, like psychological ones, affect their normal functioning, growth and social development. Researchers have attempted to differentiate between the psychological problems and sociocultural difficulties international students experience in the host culture. In the view of Wang and Mallinckrodt (2006), international students' sociocultural problems, in contrast to psychological ones,

affect their abilities to acquire social skills and behavioural competencies that will enable them fit in to the new culture. Other researchers note that international students can experience sociocultural difficulties that could lead to changes in their sense of self or identity because their identities have been previously and locally constructed in their own sociocultural environments (Zhou et al, 2008). However, attempts to classify what is psychological and what is sociocultural will be more appreciated if efforts are made to help reduce these problems rather than just classify them.

Differentiating between these problems and difficulties, if not directed towards providing appropriate support, will not help resolve the sometimes life-threatening situations that international students experience. A similar view is held by Centinkaya-Yaldiz, Cakir and Kondakci (2011), who argue that it is only the manner in which the difficult experiences of international students are dealt with that will influence the quality of this group's sojourning. International students are considered to be lacking sociocultural skills when they sojourn abroad, and this is felt to account for their experiences of sociocultural difficulties (Centinkaya-Yaldiz, Cakir and Kondakci, 2011). Managing this incompetence is far more important than identifying them, because of the effects it has on their wellbeing.

Sociocultural problems experienced by international students are sometimes attributed to poor social interactions. Studies conducted of international students by Zhang and Goodson (2011) found that the sociocultural difficulties they experienced were resulted from poor social interaction and social connectedness with host nationals. A similar study by Ramsay, Jones and Barker (2007) of some local and international first-year students in an Australian university found that poor contact with host national students was a source of worry and distress encountered by international students. However, the difficulties involved in maintaining these contacts due to differences in cultural awareness could equally be a source of worry on their own.

In another study, Schweisfurth and Gu, (2009) noted that the sociocultural difficulties that international students experienced arose because they could not change the social and cultural norms in the host culture. This was a problem due to the fact that

they had sociocultural norms in their home cultures which were different from those of the host culture. These authors' views contrast with previous submissions by Zhang and Goodson (2011) and Ramsay, Jones and Barker (2007). These authors argue that because international students lack social connections with host nationals they experience more sociocultural difficulties. The contrast is that since international students, as Schweisfurth and Gu (2009) argued, cannot amend the local social and cultural norms, it becomes difficult for some of them to connect with the host nationals. However, the experience of sociocultural difficulties and challenges may result from both conditions. Lacking the social skills to adapt might lead to experiencing sociocultural challenges abroad.

Achieving social interaction may be difficult for international students, and a study by Harrison (2012) has found that actual intercultural interaction is relatively rare in international students in New Zealand. Thus, maintaining friendships with home students, for instance, may not be easy and could be a challenge for international students. One of the reasons for this, as Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2001) argue in a US study, is that home students may be threatened by and anxious about the presence of international students. Likewise, Smith and Khawaja (2011, p. 703) argue that "cultural norms, language barriers, and the nature of friendships in the host country may also impede international students' ability to establish friendships, and thus contribute to their feelings of loneliness". With this being the case, there may be poor interaction owing to sociocultural differences, which may leave international students in a difficult situation.

As research has shown, international students reacting to sociocultural problems engage in social interactions with their fellow nationals and other international students (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Montgomery, 2010). Engaging in these social networks gives a sense of place and fosters a sense of being at home which has been taken from them by the current sociocultural norms in the host culture, as stated in the work of Duarte (2005). The same researcher further found that migrants consistently created spaces in the host culture to make them feel connected with their homeland (Duarte, 2005). This view in effect suggests that there is a longing for social gratification that is not achievable in the host culture due to factors such as indifference, aloofness and racism (Pai and Brown, 2009, cited in

Brown and Richards, 2012). These situations were noted by the above authors as being among the social barriers to international students having positive experiences abroad. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) add that cultural distance is among the reasons why the social interaction sought by international students in the host culture does not happen and poses potential difficulties for them during their stay abroad.

3.3 Contemporary perspectives on international student's problems

Researchers and scholars who have studied the acculturation and adjustment difficulties of migrants have theorised about the reasons why these travellers face the difficulties discussed above in the host culture. Most of these theories have an epistemological origin in social psychology, clinical psychology, psychoanalytic perspectives or socio-biology (Neo-Darwinism) (Zhou et al, 2008). However, for the purpose of this review, the focus will be on the explanations of those who have applied their efforts to understanding international students. Such students are the target of this study and their experiences are never the same as other group of travellers abroad owing to their different sojourning objectives and length of stay abroad.

The perspectives and models that researchers have extensively used and are considered and interrogated in this review are those associated with the culture shock model. This model has been applied in studies of international students by many researchers. Although this framework was not originated or developed for international students, many researchers have tried to understand the acculturation difficulties of international students using it. Other explanations for the adaptation problems international students experience under the culture shock perspective, as Zhou et al (2008) have noted, are the social skills and culture learning theories. However, since Argyle and Kendon (1967), who originated this theory, used it to explain the causes of culture shock, I shall look at culture shock and its understanding in general.

3.3.1 Culture shock

Historically, the culture shock theory was first used by Oberg to show the distress experienced by American expatriates when they migrated abroad (Pantelidou and Craig, 2006). Studies have used Oberg's culture shock model to study other group of

migrants, including international students (Furnham, Ward and Bochner, 2001). Thus, the concept of culture shock has become popular and researchers have used this framework exhaustively to describe the nature of the difficulties people face when they migrate to another culture.

Oberg (1960) said that when people move to a new culture they experience changes that involve psychological disorientation. This disorientation encompasses feelings of helplessness, irritability, fear of being cheated, disgraced or injured, and may also involve paranoid feelings in those who experience these changes in the new culture (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Ward, Bochner and Furnham went further, quoting Oberg as saying:

"When an individual enters a strange culture," Dr. Oberg says, "all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of good will he may be, a series of props has been knocked out from under him." Ward et al (2001, p.3).

The causes and outcomes of experiencing culture shock have also been noted by researchers using this framework as having negative consequences for the individual (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping and Todman, 2008). Xia (2009) mentioned that feelings of alienation due to poor adaption could be an outcome of culture shock. Giffene et al (2010) noted that discrimination was among the causes of culture shock. Pantelidou and Craig (2006), on the other hand, noted that during culture shock there is a sense of loss, along with confusion about role expectations and self-identity. The authors further said that there could be a feeling of being rejected by members of the new culture, and there may be anxiety and feelings of impotence as a result of not being able to cope with the new environment (Pantelidou and Craig, 2006). These experiences are said to be the outcomes of culture shock that international students experience.

This model, which is widely used to study people travelling abroad, was developed for business expatriates from the West going to the East. However, as noted earlier, other researchers have applied it to understanding international students' experiences in a new culture. Meanwhile, as Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001)

have argued, there are salient differences between expatriates or business people and international students, and the general flows of international students and business sojourners are typically in opposite directions. The authors state that one of the striking differences in these groups is that international students usually sojourn from a developing country to highly industrialised countries and societies, which is the opposite of what happens in the case of the business expatriates (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). This argument suggest that the use of the culture shock model by researchers to explain international students' problems and experiences in the host culture may not work as it is not rich enough to describe such students' experiences abroad. This is because the model was developed for business expatriates from the West going to the East, and their experiences are not always the same as those of international students.

International students may experience more intense conditions or conditions different from those described in the culture shock model, which may have misled many researchers using this framework. Studies like those of Xia (2009) which are conducted with international students use the culture shock model to explain that the nature of the increase in international students' mobility and globalisation has intensified the nature of the culture shock that international students experience. However, these experiences may be more serious than describing them as culture shock implies. Thus, seeing them as culture shock may limit and reduce our understanding of what these students undergo abroad. This is because, as Furnham and Trezise (1983) have noted, international students may experience loss of identity that could lead to more complicated and difficult life experiences than those suffered when experiencing culture shock.

3.3.2 Stages of culture shock in the culture shock model

Fig 3.1 below shows the famous U-curve model of culture shock. The U-curve was developed by Lysgaard from a culture shock perspective to demonstrate the pattern that adjusting to a new culture takes (Church, 1982). The U-curve suggests that, during transition, adjustment follows a U-curved manner wherein people come into the new culture, are excited about travelling abroad at the initial stage, which is at the top left-hand side of the U-curve, gradually proceed into experiencing culture

shock at the base of the U-curve, then move into recovery from the shock and adapting at the upper right-hand side of the U-curve (Tohyama, 2008). Based on the assumptions of this model, the last stage should be experienced within the first year of contact with the new culture, as Stewart and Leggat (2006) have noted. This model of adjustment has been criticised as having unclear empirical support and poor evidence to support the assumption that adjustment to a new culture follows a U-curve (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001).

Fig. 3.1 The U-curve model of culture shock



Source: (Uwaje, 2009).

The U-curve model follows the four stages of culture shock proposed by Oberg in 1960. These are the excitement stage, difficulty stage, stability stage and adjustment stage (Davy, 2008). The proponent of this model assumes that, during transition, people go through these four stages of culture shock, as seen in the studies of Petkova (2009) and The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) (2010). UKCISA (2010), in a study of international students, submitted that the honeymoon stage is exciting to international students because they still remember home and are protected by fresh memories of their home culture. However, this condition may not apply to all international students. This is because the memories of the home culture mentioned here are the same memories that touch the emotions

and feelings of international students, which is sometimes referred to as feeling home sick. So, there may be little excitement but instead unfamiliarity and novelty leading to difficulties and frustration. This is also the case because, as researchers have revealed, students are like fish out of water at this stage (Chen, 2010). In addition, a study by Gonzales (2003) observed that stress is more prevalent at the beginning of the sojourn than later.

Broadly speaking, the model of culture shock which most researchers apply in studying international students is contradictory in its postulations. The originator, Oberg, claimed that when people move from their home culture to a strange culture where all the familiar cues are removed, irrespective of how broadminded they are, a series of props has been knocked out from under them (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). However, Oberg contradicted this assertion by noting that there is a honeymoon stage in which everything becomes fascinating. The props that are knocked out from under the individual are not fascinating to them and the familiar cues that have been removed also present difficulties. The isolation, feelings of discrimination and psychological stress due to the new life they encounter which are noted by Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) as characterizing international students' experiences during this period may not be fascinating or a honeymoon experience.

As studies by Brown and Holloway (2008) have noted, there is a high level of stress at the initial stage of sojourn because sojourners have to struggle to adjust to the new, uncomfortable and sometimes very pressing difficulties they experience as they arrive in the new culture. Some of the challenges that cause the stress international students experience, as shown in Brown and Holloway's study, are the use of a foreign language and an unfamiliar academic and sociocultural environment at the same time as being beset with homesickness and loneliness (Brown and Holloway, 2008). Walsh (2010) has also noted that the initial stage of international students' experience is characterised not by excitement but by difficulties and stress. It therefore follows that the honeymoon stage in the culture shock model which researchers of international students have applied to understand their subjects' difficulties and adjustment contains a knowledge gap or might have been used for the wrong group of travellers. Thus, the first stage of sojourning for international

students may not be associated with euphoria and excitement contained in the propositions of Oberg and Lysgaard (1955) or the U-curve provided in the work of Church (1982).

The second stage in the U-curve of the culture shock model is a time for confusion, rejection, isolation and other difficulties that international students will begin to experience (Uwaje, 2009). Research on international students like that of UKCISA (2010) echoes the idea that international students face the abovementioned difficulties and conditions during their second stage of experiencing culture shock. The study suggests that this is the period when international students need support in order to reach a less difficult phase (UKCISA, 2010). The explanation provided by that study is that these experiences are normal reactions to culture shock but the researchers did not consider the possibility that these experiences may impede the entire normal functioning of the individuals involved or may have severe consequences for their wellbeing.

Furthermore, from on the culture shock perspective and based on the U-curve of adjustment during transition, the third and last stage is considered by researchers to be a time when the international students must have mastered the new culture and adjusted adequately (Gonzales, 2003). This idea is debatable because, as Brown and Holloway (2008) have noted, the journey towards adjustment is unpredictable and dynamic. The argument that adjustment follows a U-curve pattern of culture shock implies that with time international students, for example, will master their new environment and become stable without experiencing the difficulties they had when they arrived. This research does not share this view because difficulties may not lessen. As Holloway (2008) has argued, adjustment may be difficult to predict.

Ward and Kennedy (1999) found in their study that a longer period of time predicted a decrease in sociocultural adjustment difficulties in the new culture. It is argued here that this is a generalised statement and not always the case because the status of being a stranger in the host culture means that things can never be like home. Thomas (1993), cited in Feichtinger and Fink (1998) also had a contrasting view from that of Ward and Kennedy, arguing that continuing to stay in the host culture does not either increase or decrease acculturation problems. It was also noted that

continuing longer term stay does not lead to a positive attitude towards the host culture either. Therefore, the originators of this model used by researchers to understand international students' experiences abroad may have used observation without well-designed empirical research. This creates a knowledge gap and further calls for a re-examination of this area.

In contemporary knowledge of the problems international students face while studying abroad, as seen above in the culture shock model, research shows that the experiences these students have may affect their psychological and emotional wellbeing. The effects range from helplessness to feelings of depression and anxiety (Church, 1989; Heppner et al, 2007; Jung, Hecht and Wadsworth, 2007). Stress, feelings of loss and identity confusion have also been revealed by previous research to be among the experiences of international students studying abroad (Davis et al, 2010; Furnham and Trezise, 1983). Further findings from these studies also highlight physiological problems such as increased heart rate, headache, stomach ache and dizziness (Bovin and Marx, 2011) as part of students' experiences. Other functional and wellbeing aspects of the students, like spiritual concentration, are also affected, including sociocultural problems of perception of the self in the host culture (Zhou et al, 2008).

The description of these difficulties as normal reactions to changes of environment, as argued in the culture shock model, does not give a detailed account of the degree of effect these difficulties may have on the functioning and wellbeing of these students. In the culture shock literature, some of these experiences are noted to be life threatening (Hwang and Wang, 2011). Thus, it is worth taking this into account and describing how human processes (psychological, emotional, social, physiological and spiritual) are disrupted during the life-threatening experiences of international students that previous studies have noted. International students have been described as being vulnerable to depression and anxiety, having feelings of loss of identity, and experiencing helplessness when they are studying abroad (Furnham and Trezise, 1983; Pantelidou and Craig, 2006; Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). These are also symptoms of trauma and could be explored as conditions that affect the totality of the individual in a way which can be understood in terms of the trauma process.

Life-threatening events create tension that affects the physiological activities of the nervous system because energy is held that is not discharged. This condition affects the mind as well because mind and body work in tandem with each other (Levine, 1997). This is the process of trauma and it is characterised by emotional and startle responses of feelings of helplessness, anxieties and dissociations (Levine, 1997). The functions of the human mind and body are connected. Thus a person's psychological life can be completely altered because of undischarged energy being held in the body. This idea is supported by the work of Stolorow (2007). Disruptions ranging from anxiety, depression and helplessness to identity confusion are faced by international students and these also affect the continuity in their overall functioning. As Graves (2011) notes, bodily systems depend on each other for their existence. Graves argues that physical, biological, psychological, cultural and transcendent systems cannot cohere if there is disruption in any aspects of their existence (Graves, 2011).

The experiences that threaten the lives and physical integrity of people and make them vulnerable to becoming victims, as O'Donovan, Neylan, Metzler and Cohen (2012) have identified, can be seen as being caused by traumatic psychological stressors. The problems of acculturative stress and exposure to psychological stress mediate the trauma experience, the authors argue. The process of trauma, in the trauma framework, is thus richer than the culture shock model when it comes to understanding how human systems are affected by difficulties that international students encounter abroad. This is because it explains these problems in their totality since the situations involve a shift in functioning from normal experience. Also, this shift is between their previous experiences and the present difficulties, which trauma can break into their consciousness in the forms of flashbacks, nightmares and intrusive thoughts (Brewin and Holmes, 2003), even as the individual psychologically tries to reconcile these experiences.

Furthermore, reactions such as dizziness, headaches, palpitations and mental disorientation, which have been identified as characterising culture shock, are also argued by Jones and Wessely (2007) to be some of the reactions seen in trauma. These conditions, as Brewin and Holmes (2003) have noted, are trauma conditions that can cause a breakdown in an individual's perception of the world around them.

Therefore, understanding that the conditions international students face resemble those in the trauma process creates new conceptualisations that differ from previous models in understanding the degree of difficulty these students experience. This will also ensure that the kind of support provided is sufficient to attend to the nature of the problematic experiences of this group of students.

3.4 Creating the conceptual framework: a re-conceptualisation of international students' problems

The previous research reviewed above has drawbacks in the approach used to understand and explain the nature of difficulties international students face when they are studying abroad. The explanations and understandings given revealed that international students encounter life-threatening experiences that affect their wellbeing. However, they do not explain these problems as ones that may disrupt and affect the international students' physiological, psychological, social and spiritual function systems. Therefore this study uses an understanding of trauma to explain how these human processes and function systems are affected by the difficulties people undergo. These effects occur because trauma affects and disrupts the body's homeostasis (Solomon and Heide, 2005) and influences physiological wellbeing, leading to a shutdown in other human functions (Levine, 1997; Stolorow, 2007; Eckenrod, 2008).

3.4.1 Trauma: nature and reactions

"People don't need a definition of trauma; we need an experiential sense of how it feels" (Levine 1997, p. 24).

Trauma is a category of inquiry that has come to our attention and which most people use to make sense of their experiences. It can also be used to understand international students' difficulties. This shift in perception for understanding these problems is in line with Bloom and Sarah's (2008) argument that the way in which human problematic situations are perceived requires that we have a knowledge shift because a trauma experience focus has become prevalent. Likewise, epidemiological studies, as Lancaster, Rodriguez and Weston (2011) have noted, have shown that experiencing events that are traumatic is currently relatively common. Such studies have also revealed that trauma effects vary across individuals (Lancaster, Rodriguez and Weston, 2011). The trauma framework is thus

richer for exploring diverse difficulties that people may be experiencing, including those of international students.

It is important that people are informed about trauma and educated on how it can affect individuals in varying ways. As Bloom and Sarah (2008, p. 51) have noted, “being trauma-informed means being sensitive to the reality of traumatic experiences in the lives of most people, children, their parents, staff, administrators, state officials, police, courts, schools, and everyone else”. Due to old notions of trauma, people tend not to be aware that experiences of trauma can occur in everyday situations, and that being sensitive to this is currently very important. Nevertheless, the traumatic experiences of different groups of individuals and research on the different forms of trauma are surfacing in our understanding. Also, as Levine (1997) has noted, trauma has become a commonplace concept and no longer solely has connotations of war veterans or people who were severely abused as children.

Trauma is now being recognised as part of human experience and is no longer a specialised area (Gold, 2008). The current global chaos experienced around the world makes the experience of trauma quite common and may also complicate our understanding of what is traumatic and what is not. This is because it has been found that traumatic events have become very common in most societies (Kolk, 2000). Similarly, as Naso (2008, p. 68) has noted, “Global distress leads inevitably to the pervasive sense of helplessness”. A sense of helplessness is found with trauma, and Freud (1926/1959) saw global distress as an essential traumatic feature (Naso, 2008). Further, even difficulties with doing mathematics homework were found to cause emotional trauma for students in research by Lang and Meaney (2011). The implication is that people can experience trauma in their daily life endeavours that might not be known about if appropriate research is not carried out within those contexts, just as in the case of international students. These experiences might be subtle but if the conditions that create them are not removed or reconstructed, this could create a feeling that a particular environment is one that is traumatic and difficult to inhabit.

Kolk (2000) argued that trauma prevalence may be high because of the current global chaos and distressing life pressures that affect people more than ever before.

This could be the reason why Butt and Parton (2005) argue that people very often refer to being traumatised in their everyday lives, making psychological trauma something that people now draw to make sense of their experiences. Meanwhile, Stolorow (2011, p. 220), argues that “trauma as a possibility and as an eventuality is in part what it means to be human and the possibility of emotional trauma is inherent to the basic constitution of human existence”. Thus, international students may experience these conditions because they are human and encounter changes in their lives that sometimes leave them with feelings of loss and impotence due to difficulties with coping in the new environment, as shown in the work of Pantelidou and Craig (2006). This is a condition that may affect their concept of life meaning and, as Solomon (2004) has argued, the most insidious psychological consequence of trauma is the erosion of an individual’s sense of purpose and life meaning.

In recent research by Schapiro et al (2012), the researchers found that many young migrants experienced traumas due to separation from their families shortly after their arrival in the US. This finding provides evidence that trauma may characterise transition experiences owing to the feeling of losing loved ones, caregivers and family members. It also provides evidence that the experience of trauma and current knowledge about it are beginning to change previous restricted notions about trauma. The literature has noted that international students’ separation from their families and loved ones in an unfamiliar environment leads them to have feelings of helplessness (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). In a similar way, trauma may set in as they experiences the loss of loved ones during transition, as Shapiro and colleague discovered in their study. It is also the case that moving to a new location has been seen as potentially traumatic (Kaneshiro, 2010). These studies show that psychological distress is becoming more common, and this may lead to trauma. The difficulties in moving to unfamiliar locations, and the argument that such movement is capable of initiating experiences that affect people’s wellbeing, suggest that trauma may be the outcome of international students’ experiences and one that researchers should be aware of.

The DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual) definition of trauma is that it connotes those experiences that threaten the physical integrity of self of the individual or others (Seides, 2010). However, as Seides notes, reviewed literature on traumatic

experiences shows that “multiple non-life-threatening emotional traumas occur more frequently and are often more psychologically harmful than a single catastrophic event” (Seides, 2010, p. 725). Meanwhile, the DSM classifications are based on a diagnostic symptomatology of traumatic events and people’s reactions to them. In contrast, Seides argues that trauma can even develop “from a series of relatively minor emotional insults over time that can result from a stressful life or poor coping skills” (Seides, 2010, p.725), and this may not be diagnosed or even known about. Kim (2003) further argues that the DSM definition of trauma has the limitation of not recognising the idea that the impact of the trauma felt by an individual is dependent on the individual’s perception and history. Lending reason to this argument, it has been noted by Russell (2005) that international students suffer discrimination that could lead to serious mental health concerns. This situation may trigger emotions that could develop into further stressful conditions that can be understood in terms of the processes of trauma.

Furthermore, as Rachman (2010) has suggested, we need to broaden the range of events that are seen as potentially traumatic as a way of enhancing the prevailing construal of reactions to trauma. In effect, complete reliance on the DSM definitions of traumatic events could limit knowledge since daily experiences show that the symptoms identified as those belonging to trauma characterise our experiences but may not be philosophically grouped among potentially traumatic experiences in the mental health system. Thus, people could actually be traumatised by their everyday experiences despite not being diagnosed by mental health professionals. A similar view is held by Strong, Bean and Feinauer (2010), who argue that the DSM criteria seem ambiguous because an event that is distressing and traumatic to one individual may not be to another, implying that there is no single typical reaction to situations people find themselves in as they live their everyday lives.

Defining what constitutes traumatic experiences is often very difficult because the severity and impacts of events or occurrences appear to be subjective to individuals. Stolorow (2007, p. 10) explains what is traumatic by saying that “trauma is constituted in an intersubjective context in which severe emotional pain cannot find a relational home in which it can be held” and, in such a context, “painful affect becomes unendurable”. Based on the work of Stolorow, experiencing traumatic

events causes a disorientation of the integrated human homeostasis that an individual find difficult to cohere.

Other researchers in the field of trauma, such as Bromberg (2000, p. 689), have explained trauma as the "...precipitous disruption of self-continuity through the invalidation of the patterns of meaning that define the experience of 'who one is' ". This explanation suggests a loss of the sense of self caused by jarring experiences that disrupt the coherence of the connected consciousness of an individual. A similar view held by Naso (2008) explains trauma as reflecting the moment when one's consciousness is occupied by the awareness of personal identity because it cannot be integrated and reconciled at that moment. In effect, meaning-making becomes elusive and the individual in this condition may find anger, frustrations and other emotions surfacing as a coping mechanism for this condition, as explained in the work of Eckenrod (2008). Likewise, Rees and Smith (2007) have noted that a person's life is under threat in traumatic conditions, and this is characterised by a feeling of helplessness. The authors noted that human beings do all they can to avoid such situations. However, people never manage to avoid all these situations because they may arise from natural occurrences or from situations and experiences that the individual cannot control.

Furthermore, based on the arguments of Kolk (2000) and Terr (1990), trauma is not what causes the damage but the way the mind and the body react to the event. Corbett and Milton (2011, p. 62) also state that a traumatic experience is a "shocking and emotionally overwhelming situation in which an individual experiences or perceives a threat to the physical and/or psychological integrity of self or others, resulting in a reaction of intense fear, helplessness or horror". Similarly, Kolk (2000) argues that events that are traumatic are those in which people experience situations that threaten their ability to cope with such horrors. These alter their coping mechanisms, either permanently or temporarily, and affect their self-concept or sense of self. These experiences, as Corbett and Milton (2011) have noted, have long been apparent as possible causes of psychological problems. Meanwhile, not only may there be psychological problems but also physiological, social, and spiritual malfunction could occur since the human body operates in a collective and interconnected manner.

Levine (1997) integrated these ideas by noting that it is difficult to understand the nature of trauma and heal traumatised people without understanding their mind and body together as one unit. Kolk (2000) further expanded this by arguing that people who experience conditions that are traumatic or life threatening focus on survival and self-protection. The author noted that people in this condition experience withdrawal, confusion, shock, numbness and speechless terror (Kolk, 2000). When this is the case, people who experience traumatic events often have profound feelings of helplessness, continue to dissociate in the face of threats and have difficulties with planning effective actions (Kolk, 2000). The nature of trauma, broadly speaking, is that it affects people negatively in various ways and, as Levine (1997) has said, sometimes in mysterious ways. Supporting this view, Kaneshiro (2010) notes that there are varying ways in which people respond to traumatic experiences arising from events in their lives that leave them with physical, psychological and emotional distress or harm. This implies that different people experience difficulties differently but generally the experience of trauma does not leave the individual unchanged because, as Eckenrod (2008) notes, trauma alters people's lives and reshapes their worlds.

Trauma is thus important at this stage of understanding international students' difficulties and experiences because every day people experience psychological and emotional stress and conditions that they cannot surmount. This experience could disconnect the individual from their relationship with others and their sense of place in the world. Therefore, as studies by Roberts (2000) report, people experience traumatic events and may react in the following ways: recognising that there is a threat, recognising that the stress and trauma cannot be handled with their existing coping skills, experiencing fear, confusion and stress, possibly beginning to show some symptoms of distress and discomfort. Robert (2000) states that people finally enter the imbalance stage, where they believe that the problem situation is becoming more than they can surmount. Although this sounds somewhat more like psychological implications of traumatic experiences, Kolk (2000) contributes to our understanding that trauma does not only affect psychological functioning. It also affects the general existence of the individual by shutting down the routes to their normal functioning and opening the door to continuous distress and sadness (Kolk, 2000). Due to these diverse individual reactions to trauma, a condition of threat to

the existence of an individual, noted as characterising international students' experiences of difficulties abroad, can be explored from the trauma perspective.

Other researchers have examined the nature of trauma. For example, Bonomi (2004) notes that trauma occurs when people are unable to adapt to an unbearable situation which goes beyond their coping capacity in a new situation. Quoting Ferenczi, Bonomi (2004, p.47) recalls that Ferenczi "wrote that the attempt to resist the traumatic force 'is given up as hopeless, and the function of self-preservation declares itself bankrupt'". Similarly, in the works of Freud (1926), as Stolorow (2007) points out, the most immediate impact of trauma is that the individual feels powerless and overwhelmed. A common theme in the arguments about the nature of trauma is therefore that it overpowers the individual's coping skills, causing them to give up. This condition can happen in varying contexts, as Seides (2010) notes in explaining that experiences of emotionally traumatic events can happen in a variety of settings. It can also happen to an individual who sojourns to a new culture where familiar signs and cues are missing and replaced with unfamiliarity.

Researchers have tried to differentiate emotional or psychological trauma from other forms of trauma. Terr (1990) argues that emotional or psychic trauma occurs when there is an intense emotional blow to psychological functioning from outside that is unexpected and overwhelming. However, these articulations are not separate in their effects on the general functioning of the individual. Thus, as Terr (1990) further notes, even though traumatic events are external, they are quickly incorporated into the mind. When the mind is affected, the body, which functions in connection with the mind, is also affected.

Trauma manifests itself in the form of physiological alterations. Eckenrod (2008) argues that, from the outset, trauma short-circuits the normal cerebral and hippocampal/amygdala processes. This further leads to a disorientation that may be linked to such trauma experiences since physiological, psychological and spiritual functioning are collectively wounded by these situations. These situations propel conflict within human functioning. Cook (2001) argues that these conflicting stimuli could lead to the immune system being amplified, thus resulting in pathology mediated by immune system failure. The author further notes that the loss of normal

immune system functioning and homeostasis are caused by traumatic experiences that disorganise the human body (Cook, 2001).

Trauma manifests itself in various forms. Eckenrod (2008) argues that its manifestations can take the form of emotional outbursts or bodily aches, indicating that the body is trying to cope with the condition as it sends signals to the brain in its attempts to integrate the trauma experience. Going beyond this effect, spiritual functioning is also affected by trauma experience, as Eckenrod argues, saying that “trauma has more than the physical aspect and includes the psychological, emotional, and spiritual” (Eckenrod 2008, p. 1062). As trauma affects the general functioning of the human being, it is worth drawing on trauma processes to see how all human processes and function systems are affected when they are exposed to certain challenges in life.

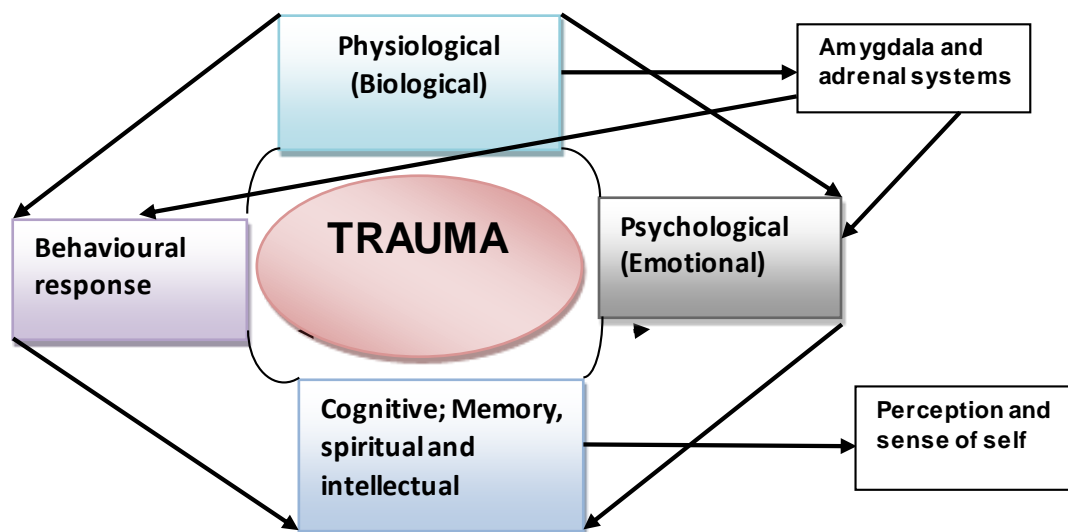
3.4.2 Theoretical perspectives on understanding trauma

As a recent study by Benight (2012) notes, the medical or disease-oriented approach to understanding trauma arguably dominates the current primary focus on traumatic stress. As the author argues, the literature on trauma today focuses on identifying the risk factors for psychopathological outcomes that are related to trauma exposure (Benight, 2012). This argument does not mean that there are no other explanations for trauma but this understanding has become dominant and at the forefront of trauma studies. Trauma, of course, affects both body and mind in challenging ways as it initiates both psychological and physiological changes to the human body that threaten individuals’ wellbeing and stability in their world. So, both biological and psychological understandings are very important in integrating and balancing the understanding of trauma.

Trauma has varying degrees of effect on an individual. It affects people in varying ways and people respond to traumatic experiences in a variety of ways, as shown in the works of Wilson, Hansen and Li (2011). These authors also note that trauma has been seen as affecting people cognitively, emotionally, physically and behaviourally. This echoes the need to explore the diverse nature of the effects trauma has on a person. This knowledge is beneficial for gaining a deeper knowledge of how difficult

and stressful life encounters like those of international students can be understood in their totality.

Fig. 3.2 Trauma effect links



Trauma affects the interactive functioning of human beings, as can be seen in Fig 3.2 above. Biological effects also affect the psychological and of course the cognitive. Behavioural effects are also present and can be seen in individuals accepting the experience, blaming themselves or actively fighting with others, as the case may be (Wilson, Hansen and Li, 2011). A critical look at these effects points to the fact that the internal and external integrity of an individual is at stake during an encounter with a traumatic experience. As shown in the diagram, the cognitive processes that integrate the memory and intellectual functioning can be altered, which could affect the perception and sense of self of the individual. Likewise, the amygdala, which gives a physiological response to trauma, affects the behavioural components of a person, which may lead to fight/flight or freeze behaviour.

3.4.3 Biological/neurological effects and understanding trauma processes

The human body is affected to varying degrees by traumatic stress. Solomon and Heide (2005) argue that traumatic stress affects the bodily functions through a physiological demo effect process. As the authors argue, the changes to the body initiated by trauma affect other body systems such the cardiovascular system, respiratory system and muscular system (Solomon and Heide, 2005). Research on these processes has been based on biological and neurological assumptions and

understandings. Suvak and Barrett (2011) note that the biological or neuroscience model of trauma has a common hypothesis about traumatic and posttraumatic stress disorders (PTSD). This is that the amygdala, a key brain structure in fear circuitry, is always hyper-reactive to incoming stimuli. As the authors argue, there is a contact disruption to homeostasis associated with fearful responses caused by the hyper-reactivity of the amygdala (Suvak and Barrett, 2011). This disruption in homeostasis is in part due to the amygdala being insufficiently inhibited by the cortex of the brain (Suvak and Barrett, 2011). However, the authors state that the shortcoming of presenting the amygdala as specifically involved in fear during trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder is that it overlooks the role other intrinsic networks of the brain during trauma.

As Thomas and Maggie (2002) note, there are other changes in the physiological functioning caused by traumatic stressors, including the triggering of the body's stress-related systems. These system changes occur at the hypothalamus–pituitary–adrenal cortex axis and may involve changes that affect the functioning of the medial temporal lobe and connected limbic networks of the brain (Thomas and Maggie, 2002). Therefore, the brain, through interconnected functions, serves to provide neural activities that attempt to keep an individual safe, just as in the case of the amygdala during fearful and dangerous situations.

Outlining the above brain functions, Solomon and Heide (2005) also suggest that the hypothalamic-pituitary adrenal system is activated during stress and leads to cortisol levels being increased. International students' academic abilities may be limited if they are exposed to experiences like those of trauma because, as Wilson, Hansen and Li (2011) note, traumatic stress has a neurobiological effect that is likely to affect cognitive capacities. The authors further argue that emotional numbing and hyper-arousal experienced during trauma have the ability to disintegrate the memory functions of the individual. This will mean a deficiency in articulation and poor learning for individuals who experience these conditions because lacks of concentration and general disorientation have bedevilled their lives.

3.4.4 The fight or flight response mechanism in trauma

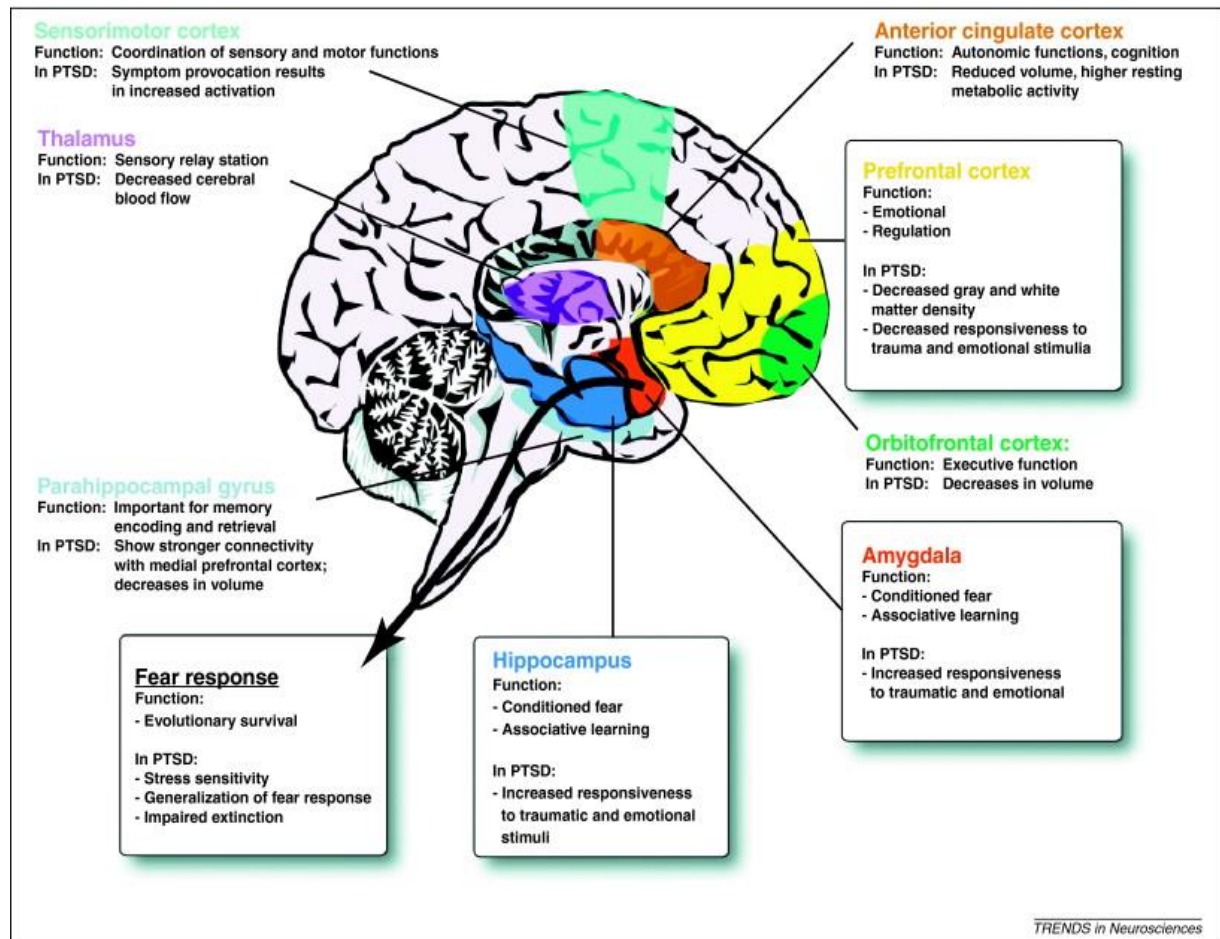
The fight or flight response of the body during trauma explains the processes by which the amygdala part of the hippocampus in the brain controls fear and reactions to danger and threats to the body. This process can be used to understand how international students experience and react to events and experiences that are threatening to their functioning abroad. As Rees and Smith (2007) noted earlier, the mechanism is an involuntary response of the body to fearful situations which can also be seen as part of the body's unified defence system (Levine, 1997). International students may experience difficulties that involve threats and overwhelming situations. They may react to those stressful experiences in the form of the fight, flight or freeze response process. During this process, the amygdala is activated when the person is faced with a fearful or threatening situation (Suvak and Barrett, 2011).

During the fight/flight response process, the individual experiences automatic arousal (Wilson, Hansen and Li, 2011) of the sympathetic system, which is controlled by the autonomic nervous system. As Solomon and Heide (2005) note, this autonomic activation then sends signals to the adrenal medulla to increase the output of hormones called epinephrine and norepinephrine, which are discharged in the fight or flight response. When this process is thwarted the individual freezes, leading to trauma (Levine, 1997). It is thus undischarged energy that causes feelings of helplessness when coping mechanisms have been exhausted, and this may further lead to suppressing emotions.

Rees and Smith (2007) note that the fight or flight mechanism is shared by animals and human beings as a natural physiological response to life-threatening events and experiences. The authors argue that the fight or flight mechanism is not a planned action but an automatic bodily response that is considered a life-saving mechanism (Rees and Smith, 2007). In the case of international students, the feelings of anxiety, depression, loss and helplessness identified by Church (1982) may imply that their existing coping skills have been surpassed by the threats and difficulties they experience. In this condition, there may be undischarged energy held in the body which manifests itself in previously identified symptoms that may signal other conditions. Just as Thomas and Maggie (2002) describe, it takes the process of the

leaving the trauma individual or organism in startling freeze when the organism is being driven down the defence cascade where flight and fight becomes impossible. The startled freeze becomes what is left in the evolutionary repertoire (Thomas and Maggie, 2002). The amygdala is implicated during the process of fight or flight and a diagram of the brain showing the location of the amygdala is shown below.

Fig.3.3 Layout diagram showing the position of the amygdala in the brain.



Source: Mahan and Ressler (2012)

Key to the flight or fight response is the amygdala, which is anatomically connected to the hippocampus (Hatfield and McGaugh, 1999). This part of the brain, represented in red in the above diagram, has exaggerated activities and responses during traumatic stress because of abnormal cortical modulating effects which depress the immune system and increase hyper-reactivity and physiological hyper-arousal (Solomon and Heide, 2005). As seen Fig 3.3 above, the amygdala is thought to increase responsiveness during traumas and emotional events (Mahan and

Ressler, 2012). Although these activities are also influenced by cognitive brain functions that perceive and interpret stressful bodily experiences, the amygdala plays a special role in assigning emotional valence when it receives sensory input from stimuli and engages the body in a behavioural response to the threat during traumatic events (Wilson, Hansen and Li 2011). These changes affect both the emotions and cognitive activities. The amygdala is also implicated in memory and cognition (William et al, 2006).

Cognitive effects interact with memory activities involved during coding of traumatic experiences. Thus, as McNally (2003) argues, how the traumatic experience is coded in the memory determines whether an individual will recover from the trauma. This occurs through an interactive and interwoven process and the amygdala also mediates memory consolidation during this process (McAllister and Stein, 2010). The memory consolidating role played by the amygdala involves “consolidation of emotional events and spatial learning (hippocampus), memory of emotional events and choice behaviours (orbital frontal cortex), autonomic and fear reactions (locus coeruleus, thalamus, and hypothalamus), and instrumental approach or avoidance behaviour (dorsal and ventral striatum)” (McAllister and Stein, 2010, p.49). This could apply to international students as they may have inhibited learning as well as information processing difficulties occurring due to the consolidation of difficult emotional experiences that may affect the modulation of the hippocampal memory process influenced by the amygdala, as explained in the work of Hatfield and McGaugh (2012). The resultant effect of this distorted process may be a disruption in the continuity of positive memory and high responsiveness to threatening and challenging situations, as William et al (2006) note.

3.4.5 Psychological effects and understanding trauma

Just as with the biological effects, trauma also affects people's psychological functions in variety of ways. Hermann (1992) identifies, among other effects and pathological symptoms, the psychological outcomes of trauma as being emotional numbing, sadness, shame, helplessness, panic, anger, shame, aggression, depression and acute symptoms of anxiety. The author argues that experiencing a traumatic event alters an individual's perceptions of life (Herman, 1992). This alteration may take the form of intrusion into the connected sense of being and

create an unintegrated effect. Stolorow (2007) describes this as threatening the individual's psychological organisation, something that maintains vitally needed ties in the life of an individual. Emotionally, a traumatic event shatters absolutism and creates a catastrophic loss which alters an individual's sense of being in the world (Stolorow, 2011). The psychological effects of trauma noted by the above authors are also among those noted by researchers (Adler, 1975; Arensberg and Niehoff, 1964; Foster, 1962; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Lundstedt, 1963 and Oberg, 1960) looking at international students, who have identified anxiety, depression, helplessness and sadness as characterising such students' experiences overseas.

The psychological assumptions of the aetiology and understandings of trauma see the individual in the situation as important as well as the event. Stressful events as defined by an individual's interaction with the environment could lead an individual to be traumatised, as shown in the works of Seides (2010). Similarly, Seides (2010) further argues that an individual's appraisal and interpretation of stressful events determine how to handle psychologically stressful situations. This view, however, has been argued against. For example, Sydney Philips rejected the idea that what made an event traumatic was determined by the meaning or appraisal the individual gave to such event (Bonomi, 2004). Although an individual's interpretation of an event is important, sometimes the situation may just be so overwhelming that meaning-making and appraisal of the situation become very difficult.

Trauma exposure creates a fault-line in the psychic functioning of an individual (Straker, Watson and Robinson, 2002). It is believed to shut down the normal functioning of the individual's psyche and this, as Straker and colleague have noted, is exploited by other contingencies. Thus, the other functioning aspects of the individual are also affected by traumatic experiences. Brewin and Holmes (2002) refer to this psychic dysfunction as a mental defeat situation where an individual experiences helplessness in a profound state that makes categorisation of either their emotions or their beliefs difficult. This situation, as supported in the above authors' work, could lead to an individual experiencing life through an irrational lens since their psychological well-being is altered by traumatic experiences.

Psychological effects of trauma and reactions to traumatic experiences may differ across individuals because, as Levine (1997) notes, trauma affects people in different ways. What happens during a period of intense emotional disruption is that people experiencing trauma tend to bring in different defence mechanisms to avoid traumatic memories. However, as Brewin and Holmes (2003) argue, a traumatic memory breaks into consciousness and intrudes in different forms, such as flashbacks and nightmares. Thus, avoiding trauma traumatic memory may not help the trauma victim since these experiences keep surfacing into awareness. Avoidance can be a worthwhile memory defence mechanism but when the experience becomes self-defeating repressed memories will be forced into consciousness.

Furthermore, psychological and mental functioning is disorganised during trauma as the situation makes connections between the inner world and the person's outer world difficult (Naso, 2008). Levine (1997) also notes that articulation and having a felt sense of self become disconnected. The disconnected sense of self in trauma, constituted in an intersubjective context, as Stolorow (2011) notes, causes effects and pains because it cannot find a relational home in which to be held. Again, this coincides with the inability of victims of trauma to articulate and integrate their sense of cohesion because both their inner worlds and their relationships with the outer environment are affected. This may also explain the inability of international students to maintain good relationships with others and articulate their understanding of their place in the new environment.

3.4.6 Attachment, separation and trauma

Trauma can occur due to disconnection from attachment figures and can be understood in terms of the articulations of attachment theory. Strong, Bean and Feinauer (2010) argue that attachment theory focuses not on one domain but on many among behavioural, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and social-contextual dynamics in relationships, and the seeming interactions of all these domains. Therefore, because trauma affects all the domains of human functioning, attachment theory, which focuses on the interactions within these domains, can help us understand why people may experience trauma.

Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby (1969) to show the importance of early interactional relationships between a child and his/her caregivers. The theory also provides an understanding of the outcomes when separation, loss, deprivation or bereavements breaks the bond (Bowlby, 1977). When these bonds are broken, an individual may experience stressful and psychological difficulties and the onset of trauma could become imminent. Benight (2012) argues that traumatic events and experiences could have a considerable effect on the interpersonal relationship pattern of an individual in a way which interrelates with the individual's existing attachment capabilities. International students who leave their families and loved ones experience unfamiliarity characterised by loss, depression and a feeling of helplessness (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Church, 1989; Heppner et al, 2007) as a result of losing their attachment figures, which could lead to experiencing further terrible situations.

When there is separation from care givers, an individual's sense of security may be threatened and this may affect their personal identity, possibly resulting feelings of "self-devaluation, failure, shame, and self-blame that undoubtedly affect interpersonal functioning" (Benight 2012, p. 5). Likewise, separations from parental bonds and cultural familial attachments have been seen to play a significant role in the prediction of later pathology (Main et al, 2011). Trauma may become the outcome of these conditions owing to the level of the bond formed with the caregivers that is disrupted by separation.

A longitudinal study by Liotti (1997), as Main et al (2011) note, found early disorganized attachment when separation occurs and that this strongly predicts a dissociative disorder between infancy and adolescence. What Bowlby, the originator of attachment theory, posited was that natural processes of survival are ingrained in the perceived loss of parental care and love (Bowlby, 1973). In effect, attachment closely predicts mental health, such that separation from bonds can have implications for psychological discomfort and problems (Bowlby, 1997). Mental health problems may arise from an individual's self-appraisal due to their thought processes about formed relationship in the past (Lamagna, 2011). As the author argues, the appraisal of the present, which otherwise occupies the intra-psychic

mind in guiding, regulating and organising thoughts, affects, perceptions and the general behaviour of the individual, may lead to a personal crisis (Lamagna, 2011).

In a study, Bowlby (1973) noted that from time to time students struck with anxiety problems associate the source of their fear and anxiety with separation from loved figures. Separation from loved figures creates a feeling of loss and disconnection, which also happen during trauma. Although this situation differs between individuals, Surcinelli et al (2010) argue that differences arise because of variations in people's attachment histories. However, individuals may feel insecure when a bond they formed in the past is broken. This is because security is what their care givers provide for them and, as recent research by Selcuk et al (2012) notes, the role of care givers is to instil a sense of security and safety. Therefore, separation from these attachment figures predicts various psychological problems. Coming from far distant countries where they have enjoyed these securities, the separation of international students from their previous comfort zones may trigger conditions related to trauma.

Attachment theory states that humans in anthropological studies, just like animals, show that formed bonds and attachment between parents and their offspring have remarkable importance (Bowlby, 1997). In an attachment situation, love and affection have been confirmed to be very important tools in maintaining a healthy life (Harlow, 1958). In a study by Harlow (1958), findings revealed that rhesus monkeys which were given care and love when they ran to their clothed and warm mother developed less fear than those who did not get warmth and affection during such situations. The central idea here is that when there is a broken relationship with care givers, the love and affection that maintain trust and security will be lost, and the resultant effect could be a pathology or mental health conditions and experiences that may be traumatic.

Furthermore, as Doucet and Rovers (2010) argue, there is a form of trauma known as generational trauma, which is transmitted from parents to their offspring. These individuals may be traumatised and may hold on to their coherence and functioning through their attachment to their care givers and families. Therefore, separation may lead to re-traumatisation. Attachment and separation can thus be seen as highly

implicated in the causes of traumatic experiences. Thus, international students in a new environment may expect and trust that their separation from their care givers will be compensated for by the love and care they expect from the new environment. When this is not the case, trauma may occur due to a feeling of betrayed trust or re-traumatisation from traumas experienced before sojourning abroad to study.

3.4.7 The betrayal theory of trauma

The betrayal theory of trauma, introduced by Freyd (1996), explains that betrayal trauma involves any trauma that arises as a result of violation of the trust placed in a person that one is socially dependent upon (Lindblom and Gray, 2010). The basic tenets of the betrayal theory are based on the fact that people suffer serious distress when their trust in others is betrayed. Freyd, DePrince and Gleaves (2007) note that the term 'betrayal trauma theory' (BTT) has been used often by researchers to describe the psychological reactions of individuals to betrayal traumas. The rationale for considering this theory of trauma is that it is analogous to what international students may experience when their expectations and trust that their educators and new environment will support them are not met. Part of their experience may be great disappointment arising from unmet expectations, and therefore a betrayal of their hopes. However, it is not only people being dependant on other people that leads to the experience of betrayal trauma. As Freyd, DePrince and Gleaves (2007) note, betrayal trauma can occur when either people or institutions violate a person's dependence on them for survival. In this regard, international students depend on their host institutions to understand their educational, social and psychological needs. When these expectations are not met, the chances are that the students may experience a loss of the care and trust they enjoyed in their homes. For those who have had previous traumatic experiences, the present experience may exacerbate their previous condition.

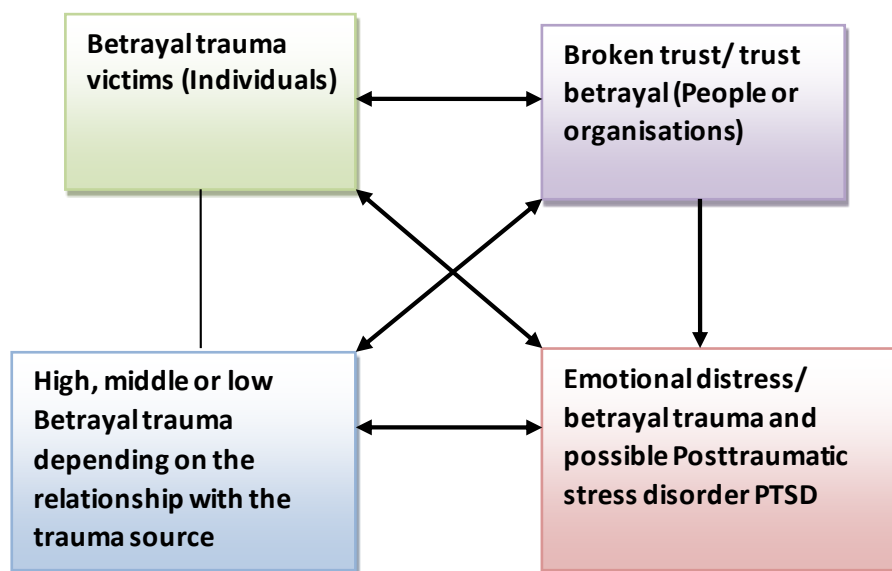
Therefore, the students may depend on their host institutions for support in various ways. Just as Lindblom and Gray (2010) note, the experience of betrayal trauma can originate from the individual's dependency on others for social, physical psychological and other support if their needs are not met. The trust that these expectations will be met can result in trauma if they are not met and, as Kaneshiro (2010) notes, it is evident that trauma can occur as a result of lack of trust or failed

trust. In effect, trust is a very important part of human functioning and relationships with others, and betrayal of trust can lead to a series of health problems if the individual is not well supported.

Recent studies conducted by Goldsmith, Freyd and DePrince (2011) revealed that individuals who suffered betrayal trauma suffered varying degrees of anxiety, depression and dissociation as common symptoms. The findings of the study of Goldsmith, Freyd and DePrince (2011), showed that young adults demonstrated the abovementioned traumatic stress symptoms, which were related to high levels of betrayal and physical health problems. The authors also identified that the problem with young adults under these circumstances is that they may find it difficult to “notice, and report their own emotional states, which may impede health assessment” (Goldsmith, Freyd and DePrince 2011, p. 559). The problem of reporting trauma of any kind, as studies have revealed, is one which may help to account for why people’s traumatic experiences are not largely known.

A view held by Allard (2009) is that there are various degrees of betrayal trauma in betrayal trauma theory. As Allard (2009) argues, there is high betrayal trauma, which is perpetrated by, or arises as a result of betrayal from, a person very close to the victim. Allard then puts forward the idea of there being medium and low betrayal traumas. The former is associated with someone who is not close to the trauma victim and the latter involves an unidentifiable source of betrayal causing trauma (Allard, 2009). The author is also of the opinion that the degree of association with the trauma source increases the level of distress experienced. Further, as studies by Goldsmith, Freyd and DePrince (2011, p.584) on university undergraduate students revealed, high betrayal trauma “predicted alexithymia, anxiety, depression, dissociation, physical health complaints, and the number of days students reported being sick during the past month, whereas other traumas did not”. The links that betrayal trauma may cause, as discussed above, are diagrammatically illustrated below.

Fig.3.4 Matrix of betrayal trauma



The diagram above describes the forms that betrayal trauma may take. The consequences of these negative life experiences for victims of betrayal trauma have been argued by Freyd, DePrince and Gleaves (2007) as possibly including posttraumatic stress disorder, in which individuals may be traumatised because of previous exposure to traumatic experiences. In this case, when a new situation cannot provide succour and trust it leaves the previously affected individual with a feeling of being betrayed which further exacerbates into circles of distress.

The reason why there seem to be different levels of betrayal trauma is, according Koehler and Gershoff (2003), because in some relationships trust may be asymmetric such that dependency, vulnerability and confident expectations may loom larger for one side or to one party. In the relationship between international students and their host institutions, for example, students' expectations are that education abroad will provide professional skills, knowledge, training, transformation, growth and overall development of their person. This, in a sense, makes them more dependent on their educators and the host country. However, when the process of attaining these expectations becomes difficult and stressful, and a feeling of trust in the educational process abroad being broken sets in, there may be negative outcomes like those of betrayal trauma.

On the betrayal theory of trauma, Rachman (2010) argues that betrayal that leads to psychological disturbances and trauma could arise when an expectation of help during significant times of need is not met. This is why it is sometimes the victim who defines when they are being betrayed and the degree of felt betrayal that causes trauma, rather than other people.

It is clear according to the betrayal theory of trauma that assisting people in significant times of need is important for reducing the onset of betrayal trauma. Thus, while international students are studying with their host institutions, support is very important so that they can go through their experiences in a positive manner. Experience becomes trauma if challenging life events do not find a relational home, as stated in the work of Stolorow (2007). When people successfully negotiate trauma a transformation happens in their lives, notes Levine (1997). Levine (1997) argues that this transformation occurs as a fundamental shift in the being whereby a disrupted nervous system regains its self-regulatory functions.

Studies by Jaffe (1985) have argued that experiences of trauma and other difficult or challenging experiences can lead to self-renewal. However, as the author argues, this has to be encouraged and facilitated for positive change and growth to occur in the life of the individual. In the same manner, if international students have the proper facilities and encouragement, they can experience personal higher growth and development in their adversities and difficulties. The overwhelming physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual responses that they may experience could be a source of transformation and a time for them to become more aware of their selves in the world. Just as Decker (1993) argues, trauma can help to increase the spiritual development of the individual and increase their search for meaning and purpose. If adequate encouragement and trust are restored, international students may experience this growth in a constructive manner that it will add value and meaning to their lives. It is also noted that people may experience higher levels of functioning than they did before their experience of trauma and lead fulfilling lives (Carver, 2010). This indicates that difficulties and life experiences that may appear self-defeating can also be self-rewarding if the situation is managed adequately and if individuals are supported to realise their selves out of those adversities.

3.4.8 Trauma: moving towards an initiatory process of change for personal growth and development

Research has shown (Frazier et al, 2012) that experiences of trauma can be periods of self-growth for people who experience them. This personal growth, as the authors note, is often known as posttraumatic growth and involves positive changes in one's sense of self, such as increased maturity after the experience of trauma. Frazier et al (2012, p. 1) further note that other changes may take the form of "increased positive relationships and closeness with others, and also increased positive changes in spirituality or life philosophy (e.g., greater life meaning)". However, these changes do not just happen automatically to traumatised individuals because they need to be supported during the trauma period if they are to experience personal growth and development.

In a study on how the experience of trauma can lead to people developing positive behaviours that benefit both themselves (egoistic) and others (altruistic), Frazier et al (2012) looked at how experiences of trauma increased prosocial behaviours. The findings from that study suggested that "individuals who reported more lifetime traumatic events reported engaging in more prosocial behaviours including helping behaviour" (Frazier et al, 2012, p. 5). The results of this study do not, of course, suggest in any way that exposing people to traumatic events is one way of increasing personal growth and development, since it would be unethical and inhumane to do so. However, since trauma is part of the human experience (Stolorow, 2007), supporting people through the process in a manner that will increase their consciousness, spirituality and personal growth becomes humane and beneficial.

Other researchers (Stolorow, 2011) argue that, in the experience of trauma, if the trauma finds a relational home then this will unfreeze time and result in relative integration. In contrast, things become very difficult if trauma does not find a relational home, in which case it freezes and leads to fragmentations and dissociation (Stolorow, 2011). Here, it is pertinent to note that finding this relational home is not always easy because of dissociation and disintegration that has already been caused by the traumatic experiences. However, since these experiences can

bring about personal growth and greater life meaning, we can suggest that there is hope.

Further research by Splevins et al (2010) also contributes to our understanding of the positive aspects of post-trauma experience. In their study, the findings revealed that positive emotions were preeminent in trauma survivors' lives. This, as the authors noted, shows that human beings not only survive trauma but also flourish after trauma experiences (Splevins et al, 2010). These research findings are similar to those of Frazier et al (2012), in which trauma survivors had increased personal growth and maturity. Therefore, the problem is how to help people who are having difficult experiences to come out of them with positive personal benefits because not all trauma survivors or people in such situations benefit from their experiences. Among the kinds of psychological growth that may be experienced after trauma is individuation, as examined below.

3.5 Individuation

Individuation is a psychological process of growth developed by Carl Jung (Fordham, 1969). The purpose individuation serves, as Jung described it, is to enable an individual to realise their self through integrating their consciousness and unconscious self (Fordham, 1969). However, people do not experience individuation automatically because, as Fordham (1969) has noted, strong forces are needed to lead the individual into experiencing individuation. One force that might lead an individual to experience individuation could be trauma. The reason for this is that trauma decreases the coping skills of individuals and leaves them feeling that their current coping skills cannot surmount their situations (Robert 2000). At this point, individuation will serve to correct, synthesise and bring about wholeness of the self. This involves an integration of the unconscious and conscious elements of the individual's personality to restore psychic functioning and develop them, as argued in the works of Jung and Kerenyi (1951). Therefore, it is felt that individuation serves to move the centre of consciousness of the individual from the ego to the self (Mills, 2006).

Individuation is a process of human development as Jung described it, and it has the strength of integrating complexes or sub-personalities and bringing them into

awareness (Young-Eisendrath, 1985). Describing individuation as defining the essence of the human desire to seek inner growth, Stein (2005) noted that is not subject to the vagaries of cultural differences but is essential for human growth and the development of complex functioning and personal distinctiveness. Thus, humans are always searching for what makes them unique and how they can be differentiated from others. This process is seen as the act of holding and raising the paradoxes of the psyche firmly before the mirror of consciousness. This, as Stein (2005) noted, is the inner work that Jung concerned himself with in his work on individuation. Individuation leads a person towards reconciling their personal unconscious, which is inborn and not dependent on personal experience, with consciousness, which can be acquired from experience and awareness of his or her place in the world (Jung, 1972). It is a psychic process of change, development and growth and, as Jung and Kerenyi (1951, p. 117) put it, it is a way of “approaching wholeness”.

Jung explained that individuation was a lifelong process of becoming more fully and wholly oneself (Hall and Nordby, 1973). The self-awareness of oneself that trauma shatters by disconnecting and altering the individual's sense of being in the world (Stolorow, 2007) is what individuation tries to amend by giving the individual a sense of consciousness and connectedness. Pennachio (1992) described this process as a journey towards the self. It is thus a holistic process, as Lori and Christopher (1996) point out, because it enables the individual to become unified and realize his or her self so that the opposing aspects of the individual's personality become fully integrated. In another view, Stain (2005, p. 5) also noted Jung's definition of individuation as “a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual's personality”. Individuation is thus a process of increasing maturity and realisation of the self which adds meaning to how the individual lives and experiences his or her world. Thus, if support is available for international students when they go through difficulties, they may experience psychological growth in the form of individuation.

Further, Fordham (1996) argues that individuation leads to personality development because of integrated psychic functioning and that it is not always a choice but can be something that an individual is dragged into. When the individual is dragged into

this process by strong forces they are expected to integrate their collective and personal elements (Schmidt, 2005). In this condition, if the collective and personal elements are not integrated this can cause psychotic conditions where the personal is denied, or neurotic ones where the collective is denied. Also, the ego can be overwhelmed by archetypal inflation (Jung, 1935). However, people need support during trauma to experience self-growth in the form of individuation. Individuation being a kind of personal growth, as MaryAnn (1998) has noted, it has the benefit of leading a person towards a state of being with a deep integration of their life that leads to greater meaning.

Depending on the degree of the challenging situation, as Hartman and Zimberoff (2012) argue, the ego will choose a defence by attempting to collaborate with other aspects of its psychic structures. This is what Hartman and Zimberoff (2012) referred to as the 'ego's bodyguard'. It is sought due to the ego's recognition of its own limitations during challenging circumstances. In this condition, it is forced to seek collaboration with one of the shadow archetypes identified by Jung in order to provide safety and satisfy the needs of the individual (Hartman and Zimberoff, 2012). Through this integration, as Jung stated, there will be discovery and self-realisation, greater meaning and purpose in life, which also comprise an avenue for discovering who one really is (Schmidt, 2005).

During individuation, the self, shapes the collective psyche by giving it the outline of a systematic structure which functions to organise and integrate those other structures, as stated in the works of Gullas (2010). This is similar to the submission of Hartman and Zimberoff (2012) that when the ego experiences an overwhelmingly devastating situation like trauma which fragments the personality, it initiates the response of aligning itself with other functions, like the self. This is to ensure the pursuance of their mutual goal of providing safety and satisfying the needs of the person. However, this is a lifelong journey that is necessary for attaining an essential and unique personal identity (MaryAnn, 1998), especially during trauma.

Lori and Christopher (1996) further identify individuation as something that benefits the individual because the opposing parts of their personality are dialectically integrated, making the individual function fully in his or herself and in a

complementary manner. Jung also identified the collective unconscious, which he believed was a part of the unconscious that was not individual but universal. As the collective unconscious is everywhere and in all individuals, its contents are what Jung referred to as “archetypes” (Jung, 1972, p.4). These archetypes have been identified as directing the flow of energy during the individuation process, although they do not create or cause the flow (Lori and Christopher, 1996). Similarly, the unification of the individual’s self, which is sought during individuation, is achieved by getting in conscious touch with the archetypes of the unconscious, as argued in the work of Roberts (2012). Thus, the role of archetypes during individuation has implications for the development of complex human functioning.

3.5.1 Archetypes

The archetype is a construct introduced by Carl Jung in 1919 to explain experiences of great intensity (Fordham, 1996). Jung described archetypes as having patterns that are passed on from generation to another. They contain a part of humanity that is held together and known as the collective unconscious. This differs from Freud’s unconscious, which refers to repressed once-conscious material (Samuels, 1985). Historically, Jung (1968) noted that the phenomenon of archetype was not a modern idea but one that existed and was in use before the time of St. Augustine. It can even be considered to have been used when the Corpus Hermeticum described God as the archetypal light in the third century. The experience of the archetype, as Jung noted, leads us into discovering the unknown world of the psyche (Jung and Kerenyi, 1951). The authors further argue that this knowledge helps us to describe how the psyche of an individual experiences physical fact.

The idea of archetypes as Jung conceived it involves memories of specific prehistoric experiences that are biological norms of psychic activities (Samuels, 1985). Likewise, Jung and Kerenyi (1951) argued that archetypes are present in the unconscious psyche in forms referred to as motifs and primordial images that manifest themselves in dreams and in the products of psychotic fantasies. However, it is worth noting that an archetype as it occurs in an individual is an involuntary process of manifestation of unconscious motifs and primordial images whose existences are only inferred, and so are their meanings (Jung and Kerenyi, 1951). These images are not ordinary images of signs or other representations per se but

are part of our psychic reality, as Samuels (1985) argues. They are thus to be considered as abstract manifestations and expressions of the self and human psychic embodiment.

The archetype images seen could include God, dragons, witches, devils and the like (Leader, 2009). The archetypes are psychosomatic entities expressed mentally in the form of images and physically expressed as instinctual actions, reactions and behaviours (John, 1999). Stevens (2002) adds that archetypes represent active living dispositions in all human that are not just determined by personal history but also by the collective history of humans as a species and are biologically encoded in the collective unconscious. In another view, Young-Eisendrath (1997, p.159) sees archetypes as an “innate disposition to develop emotionally charged images in particular situational states”. Archetypes strive towards totality and wholeness (MaryAnn, 1998). This explains Jung’s interest in human universals and particular tendencies that enabled him to understand and explain varying complex human behaviours in his work.

In describing the functions of human archetypes in the individuation process, John (1999, p. 20) said that:

“The collective unconscious is described as comprising the archetypes and individuation process helps an individual to resolve conflict that occurs from ordinary life experience. Such process is mediated by a centre that has access to the collective unconscious, the personal unconscious and the conscious and this centre is definitive of the self which in itself is an archetype”.

Based on the above assertion, it could be argued that human archetypes as identified by Jung have a role to play in mediating and supporting individuals’ integration of their unconscious and conscious, as well as mediating the activities of the inner and outer worlds. In this regard, Jung (1952) argued that archetypes are patterns of behaviours that have a specific charge and expresses themselves as effects because of the numerous effects they develop while organising the conscious and unconscious psychic processes. Similarly, when discussing the role archetypes play, other authors have identified that they play a major role in fitting us into an environment (John, 1999) and are directly implicated in how we see the human

environment (Hogenson, 2009). Therefore, archetypes occur through the symbolic process of dreaming and are fundamental to the development of the mind (Leader, 2009). This is of course psychological and spiritual development of a person which may serve to move an individual onto a higher level of functioning.

Archetypes as Jung (1972, p. 5) described them are “essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and being perceived, and take its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear”. As Carl Jung, the originator of the archetype construct, explained, they form that part of us that is collectively unconscious but can be brought to consciousness through the process of individuation. Lori and Christopher (1996) add that archetypes influence and direct human experiences and their forms and contents are completed by our conscious experience. The archetype, as Jung said, is the whole man and this, as Fordham (1996) noted, corresponds with the God-image or self. Meanwhile, the overriding argument in the archetypes construct as expressed by Jung is its role in connecting the various functional aspects of human beings. Thus, as Jung conceived of it, “the body and its physical functions have a psychological and spiritual component: movements and chemical changes at the cellular level are experienced as archetypal emotions in the body” (Leader 2009, p.507). Going back to trauma, the overwhelming emotions that freeze the individual during an experience of trauma can be overturned such that those emotions can be experienced as a source of growth and greater functioning.

Furthermore, as Rowley (1993) has noted, archetypes are the content of our collective unconscious that consists of motifs and factors which arrange psychic elements into certain images. These, although they are characterised as archetypal, can only be recognised by the effect they produce as they form the dominant structure of an individual’s general psyche. Similarly, John (1999) argues that archetypes fit us into our environment and make us ready for action, something which happens during the process of individuation as people become more conscious. This is a process of finding solutions to conflicts in the individual’s psychic functioning as regulated by the self (John, 1999). Joseph Campbell refers to archetypes simply as those things which are biologically grounded in humans and sees them as different from the unconscious of Freud, which embodies repressed

traumatic experiences encountered in people's lifetimes (Flowers, 1988). Therefore, archetypes are said to pre-exist, and eternally repeat themselves in the lives of humans and they may determine perceptions and behaviour (Nemko, 2006). Archetypes help to shape the personal search for meaning because, as Hunt (2012) has noted, one archetypal characteristic, which is thinking about meaning, brings transformative power to those who identify with it. Some of the archetypes in Jung's work are self, ego, persona, shadow, anima and animus (Lori and Christopher, 1996).

Concluding this part of the review, previous research has arguably indicated the importance of individuation as a positive process in the development of the complex psychic functioning of an individual. As seen in the work of Fordham (1996), individuation plays the role of integrating the conscious and unconscious aspects of a person's existence, with such integration leading to transformation and a sense of wholeness. The literature shows that international students experience difficulties that lead to feelings of loss, separation, helplessness, anxiety and depression. These experiences shatter the sense of self and do not allow continuity in psychic functioning. However, if individuation happens in their lives by bringing archetypes into consciousness as they pass through these experiences, then they will grow, develop and function better in society, as stated in the work of Young-Eisendrath (1985). This is a natural process of development (Leader, 2009) and a means of becoming whole (Ulanov, 1997). Achieving this goal of wholeness, as has been reviewed in this literature, is beneficial.

There are other forms of spiritual growth that international students may experience while they are studying abroad. Development that is natural and constructive can occur in an initiatory manner where difficulties move a person to a higher and better life. One of these transformational experiences arises through the experience of a spiritual emergency.

3.6 Spiritual emergency: a self-realisation process

The difficult experiences that people have are sometimes a source of growth and development. In the trauma literature, trauma is seen as something that alters the state of consciousness of an individual (Naso, 2008). It has been argued that such

an altered state of consciousness sometimes leads to a realisation of a person's full potential and a breakthrough in the lives of those affected. Thus, Holden et al (2007) argue that there is evidence in the professional literature showing that an altered state of consciousness may signal a breakthrough rather than a breakdown. However, suffice is to note that a breakdown may occur before the breakthrough. Breakdowns are common in the current era and, as Collins (2008) has argued, the emerging global crisis will undoubtedly continue to disturb the one-dimensional consciousness of modern people. Thus, seeking unification of all the dimensions of a person's consciousness and making sense of their journey of being will continue to be sought after by modern humans.

Among the breakthroughs that may arise during emotional stress that may alter a person's state of consciousness is a state of spiritual emergency (Lu, Lukoff and Turner, 1998). This may involve episodes when people feel that their sense of identity is breaking down (Grof and Grof, 1989). A spiritual emergency, as Lucas (2011) argued, can thus be a way of healing past trauma and wounds. However, it is important that people in crisis are given a positive context for their experiences and sufficient information about the process they are going through in their life (Grof and Grof, 1989). Sharing this viewpoint, and giving people information, support and guidance, will not only reduce the crisis experience but will also enable them to take advantage of the positive side of such a situation.

Grof and Grof articulate the dilemma of distinguishing between trauma and spiritual emergency and explain this which is why it is important. In 1980, Stanislav Grof and his wife Christina Grof founded the Spiritual Emergency Network (SEN) to identify psychological difficulties with people's spiritual connections (Lu, Lukoff and Turner, 1998). Awareness of the concept of a spiritual emergency is gaining impetus because we need to evolve along our spiritual path. As Lucas (2008) has argued, this will give us the sense of global consciousness we need. This is because the challenges in the current world demand a spiritual awakening in order to deal with them successfully as, the author has suggested. Further, Assagioli (1989) noted that self-realisation may be affected by both spiritual and psychological problems, and in this case spiritual awakening becomes a resolution that will help greatly. Also, it is noted that attending to only physical sources of illness has occupied Western

medicine while some illnesses, as narratives from a study by Rocha (2009) have revealed, have emotional and spiritual origins. It is therefore important that human beings be understood as having a dynamic nature.

Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof describe a spiritual emergency as a state of psychological and spiritual development and transformation that arises as a result of the complications inherent in our natural development as spiritual beings (Grof and Grof, 1989; Lucas, 2011). As Grof and Grof note, a spiritual emergency can be seen as an evolutionary crisis rather than a mental disorder because, although it may have severe crisis, it has a potential to integrate the individual's functioning into a more developed and evolved being (Watson, 1994). In addition, as Lucas (2011) argues, people experience such a situation as their psyche tries to integrate and achieve wholeness, which is why this experience is potentially spiritually and psychologically transformative.

Just as with individuation as Jung described it, where the psyche attempts to integrate and achieve connectedness between the unconscious self and consciousness and self-transformation (Schmidt, 2005), spiritual emergencies also seek this greater wholeness (Lucas, 2011). Spiritual emergency does not just happen. Rather, trauma may catalyse it just as people are driven into individuation by strong forces and experiences like those of trauma. In effect, these are complex processes of human functioning that can be put into effect if life-threatening events and negative experiences are experienced in an initiatory manner.

In a situation of hopelessness with feelings of isolation and translocation as experienced by international students (Church, 1982), an evolutionary crisis or spiritual emergency may be experienced. In this condition, people usually think that their old values no longer hold true and that their personal reality is radically shifting (Lu, Lukoff and Turner, 1998). However, Lu, Lukoff and Turner (1998) admitted in their research that the experience of a spiritual emergency, although it could be very distressing, has the distinguishing characteristic of having very beneficial transformative effects for the people that experience them. A similar view held by Watson (1994) argues that experiencing a spiritual emergency has a positive

potential, which is why it is differentiated from other, biologically mediated, mental disorders.

Grof and Grof differentiate between spiritual emergence and a spiritual emergency. The former represents the gradual movement of an individual to a higher level of functioning characterised by intense and enhanced emotional and psychosomatic health. This tends to grow an individual's personal connectedness and relationships with others and the cosmos (Watson, 1994). In contrast, Watson argues, in the case of a spiritual emergency there is usually a dramatic change in the experience of those described above. The difference between the two situations is that spiritual emergence often appears to happen as a gradual process, whereas if it happens suddenly, with overwhelming feelings of helplessness and an upsurge of spiritual energies, then it becomes a spiritual emergency (Lucas, 2011). Thus, it is pertinent to understand the various aspects of human beings experiencing challenges in life because there may be opportunities within those situations.

Furthermore, Bray (2008) notes that Grof and Grof, the originators of the spiritual emergency concept, describe the process as one in which the individual may experience changes that will affect their ability to function in a normal way within the period. Similarly, the individual may experience a great deal of disorientation with a non-ordinary state that may affect the relationship between their inner world and the outer world (Bray, 2008). Likewise, research by Ankrah (2002) revealed that people who experienced a spiritual emergency reported having non-ordinary experiences, a feeling of being at one with the universe and remembering past experiences, all of which pointed to integration and psycho-spiritual growth.

As the proponents of the spiritual emergency concept note, it is a transpersonal experience because it can be likened to the collective unconscious part of us described by Carl Jung as archetypes. The transpersonal crisis and transformation which are at the forefront of a spiritual emergency are described as comprising a situation that goes far beyond the limits of an individual's ego and personality and which is meaningful in terms of repairing their altered state of consciousness (Collins, 2007). In effect, growth occurs from the experience of a spiritual emergency because the psychological and spiritual transformations benefit and integrate the

total being of an individual (Holden et al, 1999). Also, the onset of a process of psycho-spiritual transformation may begin when growth processes and change in a person's life become chaotic and overwhelming (Lu, Lukoff and Turner, 1998). In the trauma experience there is disorientation and chaotic overwhelming emotion in the nervous system (Levine, 1997) but, with the experience of personal transformation that occurs through the experience of a spiritual emergency, growth and emotional balance can be restored.

Furthermore, Grof and Grof (1989) identify several forms that experiences of spiritual emergencies, or evolutionary crises as they also referred to them, may take. These include "shamanic crisis, the awakening of Kundalini, episodes of unitive consciousness, psychological renewal through return to the centre. Others forms are: "the crisis of psychological opening, past life experiences, communication with spirit guides and "channelling near death experiences, experiences of close encounters with UFOs and possession states" (Grof and Grof 1989, p. 14).

Spiritual emergency experiences, which may take any of the form above, according to Grof and Grof (1989), are completely personal experiences because people do not all experience the same kinds of evolutionary crises. The personal nature of the spiritual emergency experience and the fact that it goes beyond the limits of personal identity and consciousness make this deep change process rich, which is why Watson (1994, p. 24) has referred to it as a "transpersonal crisis". However, Lucas (2011) notes that if people are supported in the right way, the potential for healing and growth, as transpersonal thinkers believe, will make such an experience a positive one. This experience of spiritual growth can be evidenced through the narratives individuals construct because the experience of integrative wholeness is one that gives the individual joy and peace, as seen in the review above

Another source of human processes of growth and development to be considered in this review is African initiation into manhood and adulthood. A review of this process is important because it informs the various challenges that people face, and these are also a form of personal growth, development and transformation. Also, Nigerian students, as studied in this thesis, can be guided or supported when going through

difficult educational experiences abroad in an initiatory manner that allows growth and increased self-awareness.

3.7 African initiation: a process of personal growth and development

Initiation into manhood and adulthood in Africa is a long historical practice that is still upheld in some African communities. However, the initiation process in Africa is sacred and not always made public because of a belief in the connection between initiation and the spirits of their gods. It is believed that the ancestral spirits which guide initiation will be upset if initiation experiences are shared by initiates with women, younger boys or people outside the community (Mavundla et al, 2009). It is also believed that initiates may die or that a calamity will befall them and the community if their story of initiation is told. Thus, a researcher named Welbourn (1996), who published his experience of Keyo initiation in East Africa, feared the wrath of the ancestors for exposing their initiation secrets, as he said:

“In offering it for publication I am incurring the great curse of the rite itself on any who reveal its details to the uninitiate. Nevertheless, I have tried to write as a participant, for the social rite itself is incomplete without the subjective experience of those who undergo it” (Welbourn, 1996, p. 214).

However, one may argue that, as Westernisation and civilisation change the pattern of living in Africa, some of the untold stories of initiation rites are beginning to be told, like that of Welbourn. African culture and tradition is very binding on its members and is arguably different from those of Western countries (Ntombana, 2011). The manner in which initiation is valued in African cultures and the meaning of such practices to the people of Africa signify a sense of connection to their consciousness and living on the Earth.

In African culture and communities, as Ampim (2003) has noted, youths who are initiated into adulthood are separated from their parents to engage in this tough guided process that helps in clarifying their calling or mission on Earth. As the author argues, such initiations often include both boys and girls and they are meant to learn to understand morality and their social responsibility towards the community (Ampim, 2003). Initiation plays a vital role in the lives of African people and takes various forms from birth through adulthood to aging and beyond. As boys grow in these

cultures, they anticipate initiation as the thing that will make them men. In a study on *Bushong* initiation, Vansina (1995) noted a convincing truth among boys that they could not enter manhood without initiation.

The process is usually to engage the initiates in a well-guided manner such that as they enter a new phase and beginning in their lives they will have fundamental knowledge about how to manage the challenges in the next phase of their lives, as described in the work of Ampim (2003). These practices are gradually being modified or abolished in some communities but there are still some African communities and cultures where initiation is upheld with respect. As Ntombana (2011) notes, initiation in Africa is considered a rite of passage which has been practised for generations and is still being practised. It is considered a cultural transformation into the symbolic values of African culture that gives the partakers their identity. For boys, who mainly look forward to this self-realisation institution, Vansina (1995) argues that initiation trains them for symbolic thinking and gives them a cosmological view of the society in which they live as they make meanings out of these symbolic experiences.

The *Nama* and *Xhosa* initiation ceremonies and rituals in South Africa for both boys and girls are examples of initiation processes into higher lives that concentrate on imparting the appropriate conduct for boys in taking up their roles as adult men (Carstens, 1982). For girls, it is considered a process of entry into mature life to face the challenges of marriage (Carstens, 1982). The *Xhosa* initiation, as Mavundla et al (2009) note, represents the three phases or stages of rituals that are identified in anthropological literature. The three stages are the separation stage, the transition stage and the reintegration stage (Mavundla et al, 2009). The separation is designed to aid the psychological and physical welfare, growth and development of the initiates. In the separation stage, as the authors argue, there is a symbolic withdrawal of individuals from their previous identities. The transition stage, as the authors note, happens between the time when individuals are separated from their identities to the time when a new identity is assumed that can only be formally granted after the reintegration stage is completed (Mavundla et al, 2009). This process is constructive and initiatory because the individual partaking of this process expects psychological, social, spiritual and even physical growth after experiencing the overwhelming difficulties in the process. They also expect to gain a rich sense of

identity from this practice, although this comes with challenges and emotional devastations that are finally unlocked in a transformative manner.

During the initiation process there is significant presence of the traditional guardians, whose duty is to constructively guide, direct and support the initiates. As Ntombana (2011) has noted, that their duty is to teach, coach and nurse the initiates to realise their sense of self. The idea is to support initiates in going through the hard and difficult initiation process to the end, at which point they are transformed into responsible members of the community and attain consciousness of their self, as shown in Ntombana's work. This process can be likened to the 'individuation' process of Jung in the West that enables an individual to become unified and gain an integrated self and personality (Lori and Christopher, 1996). However, initiation depicts a collective consciousness in the African culture as the initiates are meant to believe that the consequences of their actions will impact others. Thus, as Moore (1976, p. 362) has identified, when the initiation is over, the boys who have become men are told the following: "Today I am giving you manhood, see to it that you do not betray it and if you sacrifice manhood, you betray the entire age grade, not only yourself". Support is therefore the key concept in initiation in Africa because the painful effects have a holding context in which they become integrated, thereby increasing a sense of personal identity and collective awareness among these people.

In the ethnographic works of Camara Laye and Dominique Zahan, the researchers found that initiation in Africa is a way in which initiates recognise and realise their full humanity (Bertrand, 1994). As the author noted, Zahan identified six initiation practices that were believed to lead an individual into an integral knowledge of the self. The six initiations identified by Zahan, according to Bertrand (1994, p. 469), are: "*n'domo, komo, Nama, kono, tyiwara and kore*". Knowledge of the self (*n'dono*) leads a man to pursue what is social (*nama*), from where knowledge of consciousness is born (*kono*) that owes to the knowledge that approaches the cosmos (*tyiwara*) to be able to terminate the divinity (*kore*) (Bertrand, 1994). The attainment of these significant goals of self-knowledge, consciousness, relationship with the cosmos and divine-being underline the reasons for these initiatory practices as perpetrated in African cultures. Again, the experience of going through this process is one of

terrifying pain, with a possible resemblance to traumatic experiences, but also one of change, growth and personal development.

Welbourn (1996, p. 213) highlighted the importance of 'Keyo' initiation of young ones to attain the status of adulthood in terms of it having integral significance in the lives of the "Nandi, Kipsigis, Tugen, Marakwet of Kenya and the Sebei of Uganda". Just as the *Nama* and *Xhosa* rites are practised in South Africa, East African cultures also uphold initiation as a significant process of developing their children so that they can discover and fulfil their missions on earth. The initiates pass through a symbolic death and rebirth process to a higher consciousness which is akin to the Shamanic form of spiritual emergency. In that process, shamans engage in an initiatory journey of separation from one's communal group to descend to the underworld where there is symbolic death and rebirth or resurrection to a new relationship with the *axis mundi* or "world tree" (Watson, 1994, p. 34).

Initiation into adulthood and manhood signify almost the same thing in southern, western and African cultures. In Nigeria, which is part of West Africa, the Kwottos in the Northern Nigeria, as Wilson-Haffenden (1930) noted, engage in *Ori* initiation of boys into manhood. As the author noted, the initiation is interpreted as killing the boys and bringing them back with new souls (Wilson-Haffenden, 1930). They believe that this situation takes a person through death and rebirth and gives them inspiration to communicate with the spirits of their ancestors, giving them a transformed life so that they can deal with the challenges in their lives. Likewise, the Ibo tribe in the Eastern Nigeria has a long history of initiating young boys into adulthood and transforming them into psychological and physical maturity. There are also the *evo and ogo* initiations in Akpoha, Afikpo, north and south, where young boys are said to be transformed into adult men through initiation. These are religious and spiritual practices that connect African people to their gods and ancestors and which define their place in the world (Ntombana, 2011).

Non-Western countries have engaged in initiation for several decades as a formal means of socialisation, education and training young ones to become adults as an alternative to schooling (Herzog, 1973). It is believed in those cultures that these experiences are terrifying, full of horror and anguish, but that one that is supported

adequately for the individual to attain greater self-consciousness and growth. It can be likened to the alchemical process, in which, as Stephen, Narvaez and Bebeau (1997, p. 498) note, "The goal of the alchemist was to transmute base metals into gold". The pressurising and heating of base metals is analogous to the suffering, pains and horror of initiation rites, which aim at achieving transformation for initiates. The entire process is also similar to the hero's journey of Joseph Campbell in terms of the passage of rituals, rites and celebrations, and the beauty of inner transformation, as shown in the work of Lucas (2011).

Although this process of initiation into personal growth and spiritual awakening in Africa differs from what happens in the West, the fact that enormous change is taking place through a student's journey from East to West requires a critical understanding of these diverse individuals. This may help reduce traumatic experiences or the re-traumatisation that some people may be vulnerable to owing to their past experiences. It will also serve to widen our knowledge of the expectations of international students, including the idea that their experiences should be initiatory rather than traumatic. If these expectations are betrayed then trauma may result. However, if trauma does result, individuals can grow from such adversity with support and benefit from their experiences, and may experience individuation and a spiritual emergency.

3.8 Summary of the review

This review has analysed various studies of international students' difficult experiences abroad. It has identified a knowledge gap in these studies, which is the fact that previous studies of the difficult experiences of international students do not take into account the fact that these problems could have serious mental health implications or potential for higher human growth and personal development. There is a dearth of research which examines these experiences in depth, and thus there is none accounting for these difficulties as ones that may be traumatic. Meanwhile, previous studies have seen that the experiences of international students are full of difficulties (physiological, psychological, spiritual and social) but the major assumption is that they are culture shock experiences which should not exceed one year of foreign students being in a host culture (Stewart and Leggat, 2006). There has been little that examines these experiences from the point of view of the

transformative effects of these experiences on the individual. This study thus chooses to use this knowledge gap in the literature as a basis for examining and outlining the basic processes of trauma.

Further, Lancaster, Rodriguez and Weston (2011) note that epidemiological studies have shown that experiencing events that are traumatic is currently relatively common, which means that international students may also experience traumatic situations during their sojourns abroad. Also, the literature reveals that when people are diagnosed with trauma or posttraumatic stress disorder, they are given treatment but people who are not diagnosed are not considered to be traumatised (Butt and Parton, 2005). This means that only those whose traumatic experiences are diagnosed are considered to be suffering trauma. This view is challenged by researchers like Bloom and Sarah (2008), who argue that there should be a knowledge shift among professionals in the perception of human problematic events. This means that there is currently a gap in the conceptualisation of human problematic experiences as seen in the literature because some of these experiences may be traumatic. As such experiences are not considered in terms of trauma, there is a gap that this study fills by looking for elements of trauma in participants' narratives.

This review has analysed the framework of trauma, how it affects people and how it may be a source of development with beneficial and transformative tendencies for the people who experience them. Attachment and separation from caregivers and loved ones were seen in the literature as mediators of trauma, as was betrayal of trust. Similarly, since the experience of trauma is common and since trauma affects the whole functioning of an individual, there was an examination of how people may experience individuation as a constructive and integrative growth process. In this process, individuation is seen as an integrative process in relation to the shattered shift in consciousness caused by strong forces like trauma (Jung and Kerenyi, 1951).

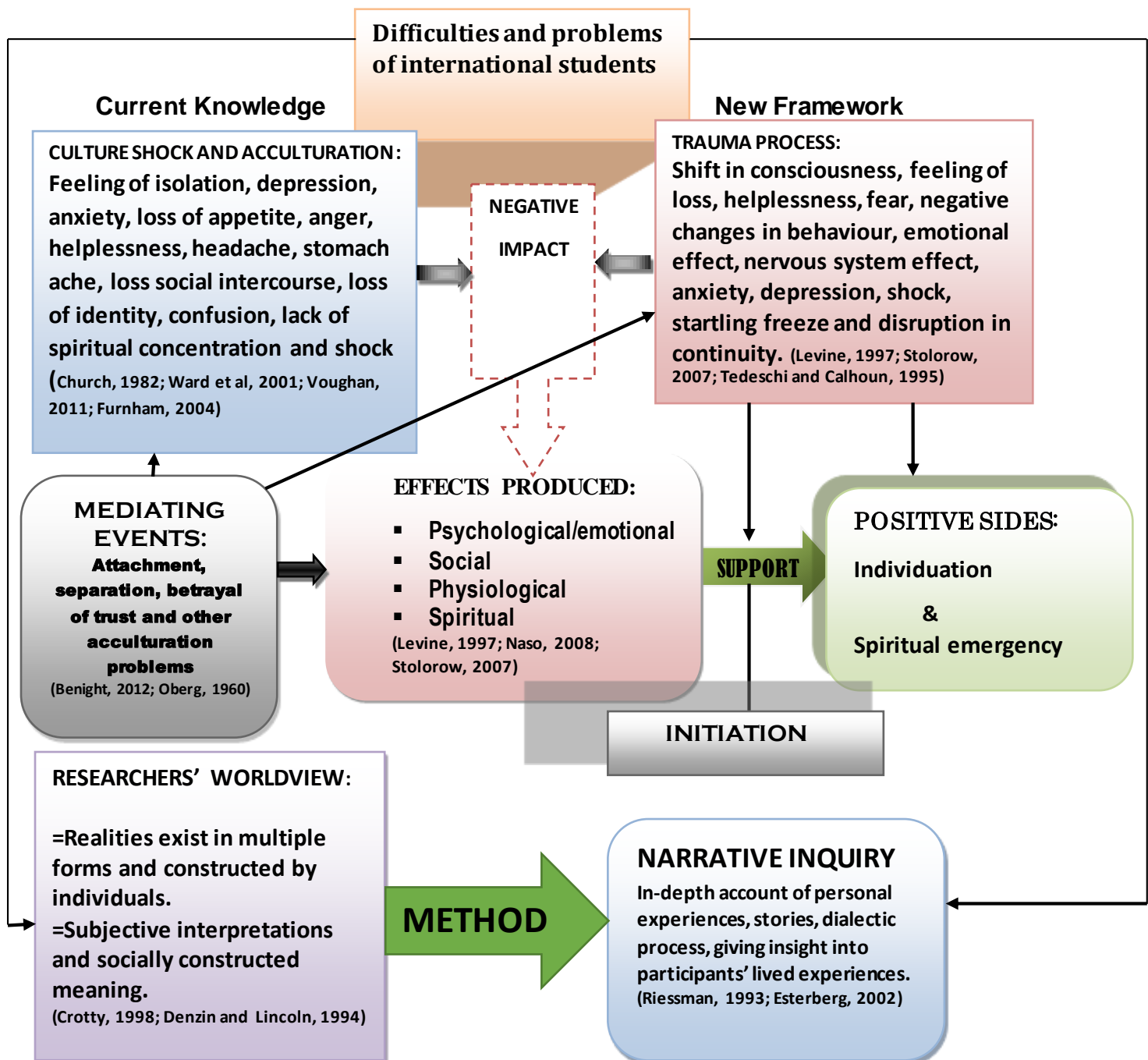
The review also suggested that the work done on spiritual emergencies exemplifies this dilemma and could be another useful tool for analysing people's experience. The concept was developed by Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof as an experience of spiritual growth and development that may arise from experiences that are traumatic

(Naso, 2008). Similarly, a successful resolution of the evolutionary crisis or spiritual emergency, as Armstrong (1989) has shown, is associated with the emergence of new capacities. This can only be understood if researchers begin to examine human beings holistically across their entire existence, rather than taking the one-sided approach often seen in the literature.

The literature review also examined the framework of the African initiation process, which is also a constructive and initiatory process for personal development. The review of this process revealed that it is a transpersonal journey towards attaining a sense of self (Bertrand, 1994). This process is akin to the Western individuation concept and the alchemical process but, in the case of initiation, support, mentorship and guidance are paramount in attaining self-realisation.

Given the interpretivist approach to reality which underpins this study and the narrative accounts of how events were experienced by individuals, the true position of international students' experiences can be understood in terms of trauma. In this worldview, the experiences people have could be traumatic to them and their perceptions of those events should also be accepted such that adequate support can be given when appropriate. This is because experiences are personal and, from the constructivist point of view, reality is constructed by individuals from their experiences and meaning is made from those experiences. Personal constructs are thus very important in understanding and studying human beings.

Fig 3.5 Conceptual framework diagram



The conceptual framework above represents the entire direction of this study because it highlights current knowledge about the experiences of international students and the new conceptualisation that this study has brought in. Therefore, key to the framework is the new conceptualisation of international students' experiences as ones that affect their entire integrated human functioning, explored using the framework of trauma that narrative inquiry surfaces. Given that the effects produced

by culture shock are akin to those of trauma, and because the literature review has shown a gap in culture shock conceptualisations, the trauma framework articulates the difficulties of these students better, and these can be captured in the everyday stories of life experiences that people tell.

Chapter Four

Study methodology

4.1 Introduction

As outlined in previous chapters, the purpose of doing this study is to explore the various experiences of international students from Nigeria studying in UK universities. This chapter details the approach used in this research to gather the narratives of the participants in this study. The philosophical and theoretical perspectives underpinning this study are constructivism and interpretivism and are discussed in this chapter. The study adopts the narrative method as its research approach and this is also discussed in this chapter. The chapter further discusses the qualitative methodological approach and the justification for choosing to approach this study through a narrative approach is discussed. Issues relating to access, sampling, participants and conducting the interviews are also part of the focus of this chapter. The chapter concludes by looking at issues of ethics, trustworthiness and the authenticity of the research data.

4.2 Research philosophy: issues of ontology and epistemology

The approach to a particular study depends on the nature of the problem it intends to explore. As Patterson, Markey and Somers (2012) note, a specific research method and its practical activities stem from epistemological and methodological choices. In effect, the choice of a particular method may be rooted in a philosophy of reality, knowledge and belief. It may also be due to the way in which knowledge is organised and presented in one's study. Similarly, as Walker (2000) argue, what people are sometimes interested in is the outcome of a research and not the process. Yet it is important to understand that the process used to achieve an outcome is as important as the result achieved.

Research on human beings needs to be planned and presented in a manner that will evidence the worldview of the researcher and the researched, as well as how data on the particular phenomenon under investigation is assembled, analysed and used. This could be said to be the philosophy of that particular research and there are different ways in which researchers study a particular phenomenon under different

paradigms (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006). In a similar view, Esterberg (2002, p.54) notes that the “different ways of thinking about the research process involve different paradigms or world views”. This implies that no one way may be considered a universally true way. However, the researcher needs to be sure about which paradigm informs their study of a phenomenon and be sure of what their beliefs about the social world are in making a decision about what to base their work on (Esterberg, 2002).

Ontology concerns itself with the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of the objects, properties and relationships in every area of reality (Floridi, 2003). The nature of reality, therefore, is what ontology seeks to know at any level of enquiry, what we believe to exist and what can be studied. Epistemology, on the other hand, as Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) argue, considers the most appropriate way of enquiring into the nature of the world. Moving towards epistemology therefore involves searching for a way in which knowledge of reality can be gained. Meanwhile, it is important to point out that the arguments about what epistemological position to take when doing a piece of research is growing but human beings are different in their views of reality, so varying interpretations will continue to exist.

Devers (1999) argues that researchers should choose how their work should be judged. Likewise, Salmon (1999) has noted that judgement should be for its own sake and research should be judged in its own terms. Reality or truth may exist subjectively owing to the differences and dynamism of human beings. Therefore, doing research in a particular way could be seen as just fitting the phenomenon studied and in terms of the nature of the knowledge it seeks.

Meanwhile, just as judgement that a particular knowledge should be focused on what it represents, it is also important that epistemology shows interconnections between the sources of that knowledge and how they are grounded (Dancy, Sosa and Steup, 2010). Given this argument, there is a continuous debate over whether the reality of events should be examined and measured in terms quantity, frequency intensity and their causal relationships, or whether reality is socially constructed and

accommodates other situational constraints and relationships (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). However, the debate cannot end today, so the argument continues to be part of research activities and process. For the purpose of this research, and given my worldview about the social actors in it, reality is seen as existing in a possibly rather subjective manner.

Furthermore, as Proctor (1998) has noted, there is an interconnection between ontological, epistemological and methodological levels of inquiry. Thus, the process of discovering what a researcher believes can be known is related to what is known and the nature of such knowledge. Internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity are traditional major criteria for evaluating the quantitative nature of a piece of research which has its philosophical origin in “positivism” (Devers 1999, p. 1157). However, just as positivists have their theoretical assumptions and a worldview about the nature of knowledge, others, such as constructivists, have their own views of reality. This is the case in terms of beliefs in relation to the theory and philosophy of the nature of reality (ontology), what can be known about the world and how it is known (epistemology), and how knowledge about the world can be gained (methodology) (Guba and Lincoln, 1990).

4.2.1 Interpretivism/constructivism

Interpretivism is among the traditions which believe that reality is not out there to be discovered and that it cannot be fully apprehended (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The philosophy of interpretivists is that the world is made up of multiple subjective realities, as opposed to the single objectivity in positivist philosophy. The interpretivist, or constructivist (Ponterotto, 2005), primarily views the world as co-constructed by the investigator and the object of investigation. Thus, they are said to be interested in understanding the subjective views of reality held by their participants in a way that it is meaningful to them. Similarly, interpretivists assume that the meanings of reality are created through interpretation (Esterberg, 2002).

The ontological basis of the constructivist paradigm, as Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue, is that multiple realities exist. Researchers and participants together bring into being an understanding of those realities. This is known as subjectivist epistemology. Thus, the interpretation of findings from this point of view is based on the fact that

interpretations are constructed, not empirically harnessed by the researcher in a static manner. Citing major interpretivist scholars like Clifford Geertz, Esterberg (2002) notes that it is important in the world view of these scholars that researchers are human and that the process of doing research can in itself be seen as a social production.

Drawing its origin from the ontological and epistemological philosophy of phenomenology, hermeneutics, symbolic interactionism, pragmatism and ethnomethodology (Crotty, 1998), interpretivism is sometimes seen as an alternative to positivism (Denscombe, 2007). As an alternative to positivism, the interest of the interpretivist is on subjectivity rather than objectivity, description more than analysis, interpretation rather than measurement, agency instead of structure (Denscombe, 2007). In effect, for the interpretivist the nature of reality and how it can be known come through the act of seeing through the eyes of others in the construction of such reality.

As Ponterotto (2005) further argues, the constructivist position is supported by a hermeneutical approach with an understanding that meaning is hidden and needs to be brought to the surface through deep reflection. However, Gergen (1985) argues that although constructionists do not offer any foundational rules of warrant, it is their understanding that normative scientific rules exist and underlie most scientific investigations. In addition, in the constructivist view it is argued that these rules should be viewed as historically and culturally situated, making them subject to transformation and critique (Gergen, 1985). Thus, interpretivists are concerned with human experience as it is experienced directly and not with the conception of it in the mind as an abstract thing which can be theorised, conceptualised and analysed under basic normative rules (Denscombe, 2007).

Broadly speaking, constructivists argue that even the traditional positivist approach is humanly constructed and therefore not devoid of human error (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In that regard, objectivity and reliability in positivist philosophies are also constructed in some way by their researchers. In contrast to the positivist tradition, interpretivists view such constructions as things which can be understood in terms of their utility and descriptive potency in the context of what is being studied

(Denscombe, 2007). Therefore, given this point of view and belief, interpretivists argue that phenomena should be studied in their natural environment. It is also their view that the scientists studying these phenomena cannot be free from influencing the investigation (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

In interpretivism, the assumption is that meaning and truth are constructed and interpreted rather than residing in objects objectively and independently of consciousness and experience, as outlined in the work of Matusitz and Kramer (2011). In a similar contribution, the work of Ponterotto (2005) has noted that the joint interactive dialogue and interpretation between the participants and the researcher has both idiographic and emic goals. This is contrary to the view found in the positivist world view that the researcher is in control of all investigation conditions in discovering the truth which is presupposed to be residing in the objects or phenomena of study (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). The point clearly made in the interpretivist philosophy is that human beings socially construct reality based on the experience of their own being and world (Crotty, 1998). Although the interpretivist philosophy is of the opinion that there may exist many interpretations of reality, however, they also believe that those interpretations form part of the scientific knowledge they seek to understand.

4.2.2 The philosophical worldview informing the study

This study is informed by constructivist and interpretivist philosophy in terms of its ontological and epistemological position. The study sets out to explore the nature of participants' experiences through individual accounts of their lived experiences, constructed and interpreted in ways that are meaningful to them. The life experiences of the students under investigation are subjective to them as individuals and they exclusively view their world through their personal and individual minds and lenses. As Goles and Hirschhein (2000) have noted in view of the position of the anti-positivist, the observer's mind is where what is subjectively experienced as an objective reality exists. Likewise, as this study explores the experiences of students, the meanings and significance of their experiences are subjectively construed in their minds because they are different individuals. This is about meaning generation from diverse contextual experiences brought to consciousness by the social actors experiencing them. These narratives about the meaning of life and students'

experience of it in the UK, which are differently experienced by each student, are grounded in interpretivist and constructivist assumptions.

As human beings are being studied here, with their diverse personal and lived experiences in the UK which are not objectified but constructed over time to make meaning out of them, it is logical that the interpretivism worldview should underpin this study. As an interpretivist, the researcher is interested in looking at individual experiences and the meanings attached to them by those individuals. The role of the researcher is to inductively interpret the meanings made from the data collected from the participants in the field in a way that answers the research questions, as described in the works of Bloomberg and Volpe (2008).

Also, it is the researcher's subjective world view that human beings are not immutable like objects; rather, social meaning is created by us as individuals. As Crotty (1998) notes, in natural sciences where nature is involved, scientists look for consistencies and regularities and laws (nomos), while in human affairs the concern is with the individual (idios). The point here is that formative rules as assumed by positivists may apply to physics, mathematics and other natural science phenomena. These rules may not be plausible for understanding human beings and human experiences and the complex social and dynamic world we live in, however. Constructivist and interpretivist theoretical perspectives ground this assumption and stand as my ontological and epistemological stance.

4.3 Methodological approach

Presented above is the underpinning ontology and epistemology of the study. It is important to stress that, while the goals of research involve explaining the nature of reality and how it can be known, it is also important that the process of making these assumptions and knowledge evident be explained. This lends credence to the issues of methodology as discussed in this part of the thesis.

Methodology, as Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 1) have noted, is "a way of thinking about and studying a social phenomenon". Therefore, as a way of thinking, the researcher uses this practice to explain the rationale for applying the chosen method in studying Nigerian international students' experiences in the UK. The study is

informed by the ontology and epistemology of interpretivism and constructivism, and the methodology for the study is informed by this worldview. The study aims to describe the nature of the experiences of 10 international students from Nigeria studying in five selected UK universities in order to understand how their experiences impact on their functioning and personal wellbeing. Therefore, because the questions this thesis is addressing naturally take a qualitative in-depth textual form, the study is qualitatively designed so as to enable qualitative answers to be found.

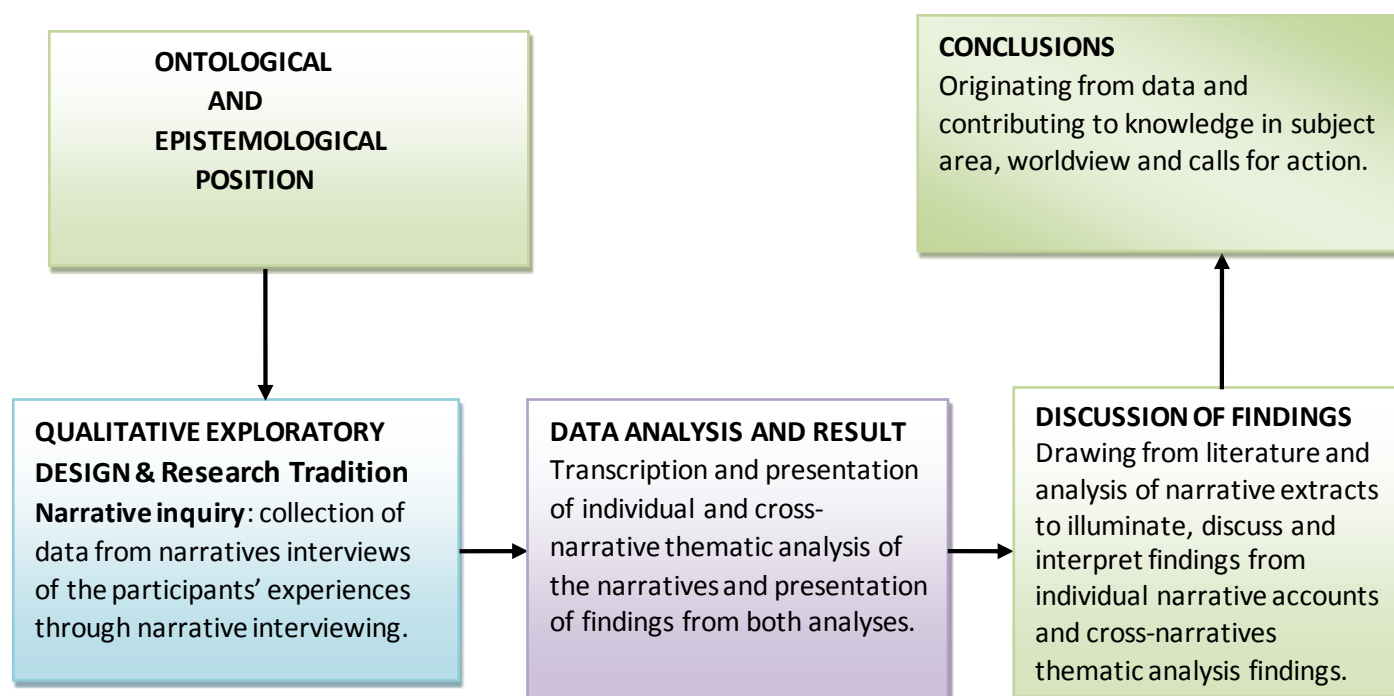
Qualitative research methods, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have noted, often involve applying empirical procedures to enable the researcher to describe and interpret participants' experiences in context-specific settings. Therefore, as the topic of this study is international students' experiences and how those subjective experiences can be brought to the knowledge of a wider audience, it was decided to approach it using a qualitative method. This is to enable an interpretation of these experiences with regard to the meanings participants give particular experiences and phenomena, something which is also supported in the work of Denzin and Lincoln (1994).

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) highlight the importance of the fact that researchers using qualitative methods often incorporate and describe the participants' own words when describing their psychological events, experiences or phenomena. Thus, just as the events sought in the lives of the international students may involve physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual difficulties, as revealed by previous literature, the study is qualitatively designed to capture those experiences. Approaching the experiences qualitatively will also help with understanding how some of the processes and experiences of the participants may relate to those described in the trauma literature in a manner that it will retain their richness.

Following the choice of a qualitative method for this project, the framework below explains the various stages in the methodological pathways of action that the researcher takes in bringing out the experiences of Nigerian international students in UK universities. The design explains the worldview grounding the study, and relates this to the choice of methodology and the kind of analysis undertaken. This is

followed by a discussion of the findings arising from the narrative analysis undertaken in the study. Finally, in the design conclusions are drawn from the research findings and the contributions made to knowledge are presented alongside some recommendations for action.

Fig.4.1 Research methodology framework



Conforming to qualitative guidance and principles, the study is designed to communicate the meaning the participants make of their world through their experiences in a qualitative manner by getting closer to them as opposed to being detached. In the view of Denzin and Lincoln (2008), such a qualitative method is useful in describing sometimes routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. Therefore, given of the nature of the problem, which previous literature has identified as being emotionally overwhelming (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001), practices are used that explore and describe how problematic the experiences of the Nigerian students studied are and how they have affected them. International students experience psychological/emotional and sociocultural problems when they sojourn abroad which, as Giffene et al (2010) have argued, creates a sense of loss and identity confusion. Using the qualitative method, these problems are explored in detail in the light of the process of trauma in order to understand how these students are affected during their sojourn to the UK.

Furthermore, the qualitative method, through intensive study of a particular case, as Polit and Beck (2010) argue, provides a rich understanding of human experience in a rich contextualised form. Similarly, Janesick (2003, p. 51) notes that qualitative research is designed with individuals in mind. The author argues that such research aims to study individuals' lives and to describe them in the individuals' own terms in a social setting. This is how this particular study is designed because the researcher gets alongside the participants in this study as they describe their life experiences while studying in UK universities. Previous quantitative studies that have formulaised human experiences out of their natural settings may not have helped us understand them in detail, and the need for more natural and interpretive explanations of these problems accounts for why they are approached qualitatively here.

4.3.1 Research design and approach

This is an exploratory qualitative design study used to examine the lived experiences of 10 Nigerian international students in UK universities. As Robson (2002, p.59) notes, exploratory design has three major aspects: "seeking to find out what is happening, seeking new knowledge and asking questions to assess a phenomenon in a new light". This study, following this kind of design, explores what happens to international students when they sojourn abroad, from their own point of view. The study also aims to produce new knowledge of the current experiences of these students, and finally explores this phenomenon in a new light through the use of a trauma framework, which has never before been used to study international students' experiences in UK universities.

The research approach, on the other hand, stems from the assumptions that a researcher has about how to study a particular phenomenon. As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) note, qualitative research has a variety of approaches that are all distinguished by their forms, terms, focus and assumptions in relation to what constitutes inquiry within this paradigm. In this study, a narrative inquiry is used because of the nature and focus of the study, which involves capturing in depth the stories of participants' lived experiences as they sojourn to study in UK universities.

4.3.2 The narrative inquiry used in the study

Overview of the narrative method

A number of methods fall under the interpretivist philosophy and the qualitative methodology respectively. The aim, however, is to build theories that emanate from the data (findings) of a study that can represent the dialectic relationships between a researcher and the participants studied. Thus, as Silverman (2004) has noted, researchers with this worldview focus on generating data that represents and gives authentic insight into people's experiences. The narrative method of research is one of the qualitative means of discovering and describing the rich experiences of people and the meanings they attach to those experiences. It has the advantage of focusing more on individuals than institutions (Greenhalgh, Russell and Swinglehurst, 2005).

Nayak and Venkatraman (2010) also argue that narrative research keeps company with qualitative studies through its use of stories to describe human actions. In narrative research, the 'narrative' is very important because it is the data that narrative inquirers seek. The use of the narrative method and its influence in qualitative research over the past twenty years is rapidly apparent (Elliot, 2005). Thus, narrative inquiry has been seen as a qualitative method that has grown in social science research since its inception in the 1980s (Smith and Sparkes, 2009). It is an approach that gives voices and the power of conversation to narrators.

Although it has been difficult to give narrative a definite definition, the strength and credibility of the narrative method is established here through conducting social research with human participants in this study. This will help us to understand how the narrative method can be used as a good way of knowing what is unknown in a deeper and more interpretive manner. Narratives represent storied ways of knowing and communicating (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997). The narrative researcher is therefore faced with understanding a particular people through their stories and communicating to a particular audience what those stories mean to the tellers.

At the same time, there is a common understanding of narratives as a means or way of explaining how an event happened (Elliot, 2005; Smith and Sparkes, 2009 and Greenhalgh et al, 2005). The use of the narrative method enables qualitative

researchers to communicate the events and experiences people have in meaningful units of narratives. The narratives are meant to show people's views of the world they live and their experience of it. As opposed to logico-scientific reasoning, which focuses on looking for concrete knowledge of particular phenomena in terms of general laws, narrative tries to understand phenomena in terms of human experiences and purposes (Greenhalgh, Russell and Swinglehurst, 2005). Using the narrative method can help to illuminate the way researchers in education, psychology, sociology and other social sciences might make meaning of people's lived stories (Elliot, 2005). Therefore, it is against the backdrop of the meaningful units of stories and significance which people attach to their experiences that this thesis aims to use this method in collecting and analysing data that satisfies the objectives set out in this study.

4.3.3 The choice of narrative method for the study

Human beings and their experiences in life are full of narratives. As Polkinghorne (1988) has noted, it is difficult to find human beings without narratives because they do not exist. The way people view the world can be organised to evidence their experiences in the natural social environment in a meaningful way (narratives). Narratives are life stories and each of us has a life story arising from our different experiences in the world which we tell others such as children, family members, friends, colleagues and so on. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have noted, people lead a life full of stories and narratives, and the study of narratives is primarily the study of how people experience their world. This is important for this study because it aims to understand the human side of Nigerian students' experiences in the UK and how these experiences, sought through narratives, have influenced their lives during the period of their sojourn abroad. Similarly, it has been noted (Flick, 2014, p.41) that "narrative is a way of knowing and remembering events and processes...as well as a way of communicating about issues". Therefore, this method is suitable for this study, which focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the ways Nigerian students remember and tell or communicate about the various issues they have encountered which form their experiences of studying in the UK.

A further justification for the use of narrative inquiry in this study is that the narrative accounts of the participants in this study are given in a manner that shows how they define themselves through stories based on their individual experiences. As De Haene, Grietens and Verschueren (2010) have noted, narrative inquiry relieves participants from their suffering during conversations with the power to repair. This is beneficial to the participants in this study because the articulation of their stories and ability to tell them may contribute to their recovery from the difficulties they experience. Just as Manning and Cullum-Swan (1994) have argued, lived experiences are reflected in stories and healing necessarily involves telling them. Thus, it is against the backdrop of these benefits of the narrative method that this research is designed to adopt this method for collecting data on the lived experiences of Nigerian students in UK universities.

Furthermore, it is the perspectives and interpretations of those who have had these experiences that really matter. This is because, as Walsh (2010) has noted, little research exists on international students that captures their experiences from their own perspectives. The method of inquiry in this research will help to bridge this gap as it centres on the students' perspectives on their own experiences. Not providing this kind of opportunity by subjecting them to a question and answer approach could limit their perception of the process to seeing it as one that does not give them the power to say how they have experienced things. Another way that their point of view might be omitted would be to use observation because this may not reveal what is happening inside as difficult experiences are sometimes suppressed by human beings.

The challenges facing international students as revealed in the literature are enormous, and they faced this situation because of their participation in studying abroad. This follows from the assertion of Moen (2006, p. 2) that "how people become what they are depends on what they have experienced in the social contexts in which they have participated". The choice of a narrative method for this study is again rooted in the interpretivist worldview of reality and the knowledge we seek, which has an interpretation based on the perceptions and experiences of people in different social contexts. Just as Mishler (1986) has argued, narratives accommodate emotions, life experiences, ambiguity and dilemmas, organising data

into patterns that specially represent and explain an individual's or a people's experiences. This also accounts for why this study, which is seeking a deeper understanding of how these kinds of experiences shape the worlds of international students, uses the narrative approach.

In this study, narrative has the strength to reveal either a disconnection within the self or a united and integrated self. This is important because in the literature international students were said to have experiences that might affect their sense of self-construction (Ryder, Alden and Paulhus, 2000). Since a narrative account is noted to be one way of achieving self-identity construction (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997) there is an advantage in using the narrative method to understand human processes. The narrative approach can also be useful for understanding any archetypal experiences that may be reflected in the stories of the participants. These elements in their narratives will also help in understanding whether their experiences have connections with their separation from their attachment figures and familiarity, based on the idea, which Stolorow (2007) has noted, that trauma can arise when there is a breakdown in the child-caregiver mutual relationship.

Using the narrative method is very important when we seek to understand human experiences and purposes (Greenhalgh, Russell and Swinglehurst, 2005). In narrative inquiry, emphasis is placed on making it more productive by beginning with an exploration of the phenomenon of experience, which, as Clandinin and Connelly have argued, is more important than a comparative analysis of the various theoretical methodological frames (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Thus, the experiences are what matters here since they have not been heard owing to previous methodological and theoretical approaches and the dearth of empirical research.

De Haene, Grietens and Verschueren (2010) add that using narrative inquiry to emphasise storytelling promotes social justice because it gives a voice to silenced individuals. The dearth of research on Nigerian students' experiences of studying abroad may suggest that their voices are silenced, and this study, using the narrative method, aims to make these voices heard. Similarly, due to the unique nature of storytelling, it allows the participants the opportunity of expressing and recounting

their ordeals in life (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The stories the participants in this study tell about their experiences and how they impact on their wellbeing enable the researcher to interpret them as the participants describe them to see if there are elements of trauma in their experiences. These elements will include remembering overwhelming emotions, intrusive and disturbing thoughts which might make them become more vigilant, feelings of anxiety and fear, withdrawal from others, increased aggressive behaviour, physical problems such as increased heart rate and loss of appetite, and if they think they had no control over those events, as Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) describe when talking about the trauma process.

The narrative accounts will equally show whether participants have experienced situations that resulted in their having non-ordinary feelings and dramatic changes in their consciousness such as those referred to as spiritual emergencies in Watson (1994). The use of narrative is suitable for revealing these personal experiences since it is a personal journey that is narrated by the individual who experienced it. Also, through these stories it is possible to distinguish between trauma and the experience of a spiritual emergency. This is because trauma alters states of consciousness. An individual may be able to understand when these altered states are being rebuilt because trauma cannot give peace and growth in the intra-inter personal horizon but spiritual emergency can do this. This can be interpreted because, as Van (1990) has noted, the narrative approach is an interpretive methodology.

The work of Polkinghorne (1988) explains that narrative research represents a break in the positivist's mould of modernist research in its naturalistic, ethnographic, phenomenological and subjective approaches. Therefore, the importance of the use of narrative in the study is that it comes close to the meanings of subjective experiences through understanding the different lived experiences of individuals rather than variables. Very importantly, the use of the narrative method of inquiry has been noted by Chase (2005) as possibly leading to personal emancipation and growth for participants because they construct their stories in a way that makes it possible for them to live through and manage life's difficulties. Since the experiences of these students might be challenging, as previous studies have shown, using the narrative method to explore them in more depth could be therapeutic in itself.

The meaningfulness of the narrative is more important than what might be considered its truthfulness. In support of this, Doan and Parry (1994) argue that the efficacies of using the narrative method are rooted in the meaningfulness of narratives rather than the truthfulness of their nature. Experiences of archetypal images can be seen as meaningful to individuals that experience them rather than focusing on whether such accounts are true. This is because the people who experience these situations and narrate them attach meaning to them because they are symbolic and significant in their lives and wellbeing. Narratives also have a healing power through re-establishing meaning and integration (De Haene, Grietens and Verschueren, 2010). These benefits inherent in story telling are further reasons why the narrative method of inquiry is adopted for this study.

4.3.4 Narrative interviewing approach for the study

Narrative methods of research, being qualitative, use a form of interviewing known as narrative interviewing. The aim here, however, is to be less structural and allow the participants tell their stories in their own ways because we make meaning out of our life experiences through stories (Kings, 2003 cited in Guenette and Marshall, 2009). This allows the participants and the researcher to engage in an evolving conversation that permits both parties to collaborate, produce and make meanings out of the experiences and events reported by the participants, as described in the work of Mishler (1995). The collaboration between the interviewer and the interviewee is less structured as they jointly construct narratives (Patterson, Markey and Somers, 2012). In this study the researcher and the participants entered into a collaboration whereby the participants gave accounts of their lived experiences in the UK and it was entirely their voices that were heard during the narrative interviewing process. This is detailed in the generating field text section.

The narrative interviews in this study are based on the participants' points of view. This echoes Gibbs' (2002) statement that the use of narrative interviews involves personal dimensions which are usually related from the individual point of view. A narrative researcher using the narrative interview method tries to allow participants to tell their stories as they come (speak for themselves) or attends to how things come because they are already meaningfully experienced (Van, 1990). Thus, the researcher's role in the narrative interviews carried out for this study was to allow

participants to tell their stories the way they experienced them without adding to or imposing any order on them.

Further, in narrative interviewing the relationship forms a vital instrument for the researcher and participants (De Haene, Grietens and Verschueren, 2010). Such a relationship, as the authors argue, has the strength to bring back broken trust. In this study, relationships and trust were seen to be very important because the participants felt that they could confide in the researcher as they had come from the same background. This is also how a therapist works in reconstructing traumatic incidents so that a client is able to tell his or her story confidently without fears and mistrust.

4.4 Conducting the field work and the narrative interview participants

The study is conducted within five selected UK universities. The universities were located in the East Midlands, North West England and East England. The rationale behind this purposive setting selection was to ensure that the universities were in a range of regions in the UK where international students from Nigeria were studying. These universities were hosting international students from Nigeria who were participants in this study.

4.4.1 Access

Access to research on a particular phenomenon or people, as Spencer (1982), cited in Burgess (1992), has pointed out, entails finding a way of negotiating access to a research location, to individuals and to documents. Thus, a request for permission to conduct research with their Nigerian students was sent to the universities concerned. Securing access may sometimes be difficult and can delay a research process, so the access request was sent well ahead of the time set aside for data collection. After securing access from the selected universities participants were selected in the field and these are described below in the next section. The universities from which the participants came are not mentioned for confidentiality reasons, as outlined in the access request letter.

4.4.2 Participants

The participants were ten Nigerian students studying in five universities in the UK. The students who formed the participants for this study had studied in the UK for more than one year. Thus, the participants had studied full-time for more than one year in the UK and had accumulated a great deal of experiences with which to form their narrative accounts. These were the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to select appropriate and suitable participants for the study.

4.4.3 Sample size

This is an exploratory piece of research and a narrative inquiry into the personal lived lives of the participants. Therefore, a total sample of 10 Nigerian students comprising two students from each of the five selected universities across three regions in England participated in the study. As Riessman (1993) has noted, the sample sizes in narrative studies are small and often drawn from an unrepresentative pool. However, although it is true that the narrative method uses small samples, there would be no harm in collecting a large number of narrative accounts except for the complexity and time factors in the data analysis.

4.4.4 Sampling

The participants were chosen using a purposive sampling method, which is also known as theoretical sampling (Denzin, 1994). Purposive sampling, as Denscombe (2007) argues, is a method of 'hand picking' participants in which the researcher already knows something about them and has chosen them because they are of particular interest and are likely to produce more valuable data. In effect, the description of the participants above as students from Nigeria who have studied full-time for more than one year in the selected UK universities justifies choosing them through a purposive sampling method. Prior to the selection of these participants, a pilot study of people's experiences was conducted with some other students, and this was very useful for determining who would be most suitable for inclusion in the study. This was because the participants in the pilot study were able to recommend others who were in similar situations as them, and these formed the participants for the current study.

Purposive sampling, as Denzin in Denzin and Lincoln (1994) has argued, rests on constructivist interpretation in order to gain trustworthiness. Purposive sampling is thus a non-probability sampling process where not every member of the population is given an equal chance of being selected rather participants are being selected because they have different characteristics from others in the group. Thus, not every Nigerian international student is selected but only those with the characteristics mentioned, above and they are not randomly selected. Selecting a sample for a study using purposive sampling is also known as selecting a judgement sample (Marshall, 1996). It is referred to as judgement sampling because of the role of the researcher in actively selecting the sample that will be most productive in answering the research question (Marshall, 1996). The pilot study conducted by the researcher also informed the judgement of the sample to be included in this study.

Furthermore, using purposive sampling in this study enabled a snowball technique to be applied. This technique involves selecting participants through references from one participant to another. As Denscombe (2007) states, the snowball technique is compatible with purposive sampling. Similarly, Marshall (1996) also explains that subjects found through purposive sampling may be able to recommend useful candidates for the study. Broadly speaking, the snowball technique was useful for selecting the participants because the participants themselves were able to recommend fellow Nigerian students who had the same characteristics. This was very useful for saving the researcher's time and resources

Tab.4.1 Details of the participants selected in five universities in three regions in England.

2 Universities in the East Midlands
Participants
1. Nnanna. A 2 nd year PhD student.
2. Ekene. A 2 nd year undergraduate student.
3. Oyagiri. A 2 nd year PhD student.
4. Ahmedu. A 3 rd year PhD student.
2 Universities in the North West of England
Participants

5. James: A 3 rd year PhD student.
6. Amadi. A 2 nd year undergraduate student.
7. Kate. A 2 nd year undergraduate student.
8. Onyinye. A 2 nd year undergraduate student.
1 University in the East of England
Participants
9. Onyeowo. A 3 rd year undergraduate student.
10. Amina. A 2 nd year undergraduate student.

Note: The names used above are pseudonyms and do not represent the real names of the participants in this study.

4.5 Generating field data

As contained in the participants' consent forms, stories were recorded with an audio tape recorder. There was an introductory session lasting 10-15 minutes in which the researcher talked to the participants as a fellow student. This was followed by explaining the aims of the study to the participants and outlining their roles in the research. This was a refresher because they had already received a consent form and information form which contained information about the research before the narrative interview sessions. This was a way of preparing participants for the narrative interviews and an opportunity to reassure participants that their identities would remain confidential, as they had requested. It was also a way of establishing rapport, trust and a friendship-like scenario for the study. They had the space to relax and feel comfortable in recounting and narrating their experiences. Some of the narrative interviews were conducted in their rooms, which were seen by some of the participants as their comfort zones. However, for the 3 participants who chose to be interviewed in their accommodation, others had to be told the addresses and times of the narrative interviews for health and safety reasons. The others were interviewed in their university study rooms.

When the interviews began the participants were again reassured of the researcher's promise to keep their identity confidential and were asked if they were comfortable with the audio recording of their voices for transcription purposes only. In order not to suppress the participants' stories, as question-and-answer interviews do (Mishler,

1986), the researcher's role during the narrative interviewing was to introduce myself to the participants, and explain what the research was about. Then, because it was not a question-and-answer session, the researcher invited the narrators to tell their experiences in these words: "As you know, I am doing a narrative study on Nigerian students' experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me the story of your experience of studying in the UK". In exceptional cases where individual narrators had not said enough, the researcher used an additional invitation such as "So can you tell me how the experiences made you feel?" On one occasion in which a narrator had already confirmed that he had gone through an African initiation process, the researcher invited the participant to describe his experience of that process by saying "You told me you had an initiation in Nigeria, before this interview, can you relate this to your experience here in the UK?".

The communications and conversations were in English because it was the narrators' lingua franca in Nigeria and they were already competent in the use of English language. Also, the use of "pidgin English", which is commonly used in Nigeria, was allowed by the researcher to ensure that the participants had the right words to use in making sense of their experiences. This was because, as Bates (2004, p. 16) has said, during the narrative process, interviewees or narrators are encouraged to "describe an event(s) as they saw it, in their own language, using their own terms of reference, and emphasizing actions or participants which they regard as being significant". One of the reasons for allowing these opportunities is to stimulate story telling (Bates, 2004). Therefore the narrators were encouraged to describe their experiences using any terms they thought were right to use to represent their experiences. This gave greater understanding of the feelings attached to those stories, as such feelings were very important in describing the meanings the participants drew from their experiences.

Furthermore, the interviewees' knowledge that I was a student researcher interestingly became an advantage as power relationship issues were addressed such that they were very free to narrate their experiences. The narrative interviews used in the study lasted 30-55 minutes for each individual narrator. As the works of Holloway and Jefferson (2000) clearly point out, a narrative researcher has to be a good listener as participants tell their stories as this is a different process from a

question-and-answer interview. Participants in this study narrated their individual accounts and told their stories of what had happened to their lives since they sojourned to the UK uninterruptedly and ended their stories themselves. The participants were also allowed to bring in whatever they considered relevant to their experience.

The recorded narratives from each participant were transcribed into Microsoft Word documents. Each transcription took 4 to 5 hours as it involved listening, writing and repeating the same process until every word from the participants had been fully transcribed. This activity made the researcher very familiar with the narratives collected in this study. Although it was time consuming to transcribe 10 narrative interviews of nearly an hour each it was worthwhile because it increased the connection to the stories. Each narrative interview was transcribed immediately after the interview to avoid data loss of any kind and to enable the researcher to think about the narrated issues immediately after the narrative session.

4.5.1 Narrative analysis of field text (from field text to research text)

Narrative analysis, as Riessman (1993, p. 70) notes, “allows for a systematic study of personal experience and meaning: how events have been constructed by active subjects”. In this study, individually transcribed narratives are analysed textually. The process is displayed in detail in the data analysis chapter (see 5.1).

4.6 Ethical issues

Protecting the researched, be they institutions, individuals, groups or even a community, is vital and should be considered in any study. For various research purposes, the issue of ethics comes to the fore and these must obviously be adhered to by researchers. Punch (1994) argues that ethical issues cut across methods. It is the author’s view that adequate training on ethics should be given to qualitative researchers, especially those he referred to as ‘neophyte researchers’. In this study, the anonymity of the participants is preserved because they would not want to be identified through their stories about their experiences of studying in the UK. This also applies to the universities where they are studying. The universities are not named so that the participants cannot be linked with them or recognised based on the kinds of experiences they narrate while studying in those universities.

Furthermore, as Walker (2000) notes, it is important that researchers work within the ethical principles that underpin the relationship between the participant and the researcher. Bearing this in mind, ethical training on conducting research with human participants has been undertaken and an ethics approval certificate has been obtained from the Anglia Ruskin University Research Ethics Committee.

The consent letter given to the participants in this study was explicit about how their information would be protected, processed and used in the study. It was also clear that their anonymity was assured and that they had a right to withdraw at any point if they did not wish to continue with the narrative interview (see Appendix). As Punch (1994) has noted, a young student may be perceived as non-threatening and may elicit a considerable measure of sympathy from respondents. In terms of addressing power relationships with the participants, this was an advantage as the researcher was perceived to be a student. This reduced the tension that could have arisen from being interviewed by a higher authority, and which could have influenced their narrative accounts.

Being ethical also should extend to gathering data, processing and analysing the data and even to the interpretation and dissemination of research findings (Denscombe, 2007). The data collected from the participants in this study is stored on protected password-protected personal computer used for analysis and interpretation, and the data will be destroyed when the thesis is completed.

4.6.1 Issues of trustworthiness and authenticity in the study

The research community expects that researchers should be able to establish the truthfulness and credibility of the information they provide. Thus, William and Morrow (2009) note that researchers have an obligation to justify to the research community that they have carried out a process of due diligence. However, the criteria for judging such information have created arguments across research methods and philosophies.

In the positivist view, four criteria for judgement apply: internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). As the authors note, the issue of internal validity represents the extent to which the findings map the studied

phenomenon correctly. Issues of external validity, on the other hand, refer to the degree to which the findings can be generalised within a similar setting. The issue of reliability has to do with the extent to which the findings can be replicated by another inquirer with the same result, and finally objectivity asks how the findings are made bias-free (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). These are shorthand ways of communicating to other researchers, as William and Morrow (2009) have argued. It could be argued that these criteria are already biased in terms of their inclusion criteria, however, since human beings may not have been considered when these principles were enacted.

In a study that involves human beings, a particular behaviour that is observed by researcher "A" might have changed when researcher "B" wants to replicate the findings. This is because human beings are dynamic in nature and the world, which includes the sociocultural environment we live in, is full of changes and not static. Owing to this difference in knowledge and views about the world and human beings, other theoretical and philosophical perspectives, for example constructivism, have replaced words such as internal and external validity with trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research deals more with trustworthiness and authenticity because its findings are sometimes not considered to have been objectively achieved. Qualitative narrative researchers are of the opinion that it is democratic to believe what participants tell us because these stories are experienced by them, and not the researchers (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000). We cannot spend all the time we have establishing whether they have lived or experienced these lives since this would mean expressing a power we think we have over the researched. However, the participants in this study were encouraged to tell stories that mapped their true experiences correctly as it was important that the true nature of their experiences was heard.

Furthermore, as William and Morrow (2009) have argued, in qualitative research, just like in others, writing meaningfully about trustworthiness will be impossible if one does not understand and acknowledge the premises and world views that underpin the studied phenomenon. Similarly, because there exist multiple perceptions of reality and no two individuals understand social reality in exactly the same way, as Esterberg (2002) argues, the idea of presenting findings that will be the same

everywhere may not be possible. This is because the social actors who study these events have their own individual understandings and perceptions which cannot be the same. In short, different people will have different perspectives on a phenomenon (Porters, 2007).

It is believed in this research that there exist multiple perspectives on reality. Therefore the trustworthiness and authenticity of the information is established in a way which will beneficially inform practice, rather than focusing on the validity, reliability and objectivity of the information. As Crotty (1998) notes, people taking this view are concerned with uniqueness, the individual and qualitative information rather than seeing the world more as an abstract phenomenon with a tendency towards exhibiting empirical and quantifiable regularities. Similarly, as William and Morrow (2009) state, one can achieve trustworthiness through a detailed presentation which shows the connection between the unique contributions of the individual participants and the interpretation of the data. Thus, in a narrative inquiry where participants are allowed to construct their stories in a coherent fashion, as Lang and Meaney (2011) argue, such a practice serves as an internal validity of its own because without such coherence a story cannot be a story. Also, as Marta (1997) notes, using narratives is important because all narratives have a cache of truth in which the essence of people's experiences is laid.

Through self-reflection, or reflexivity, narrative or qualitative researchers can generally know what comes from them and what comes from the participants. One way of achieving self-reflexivity, as William and Morrow (2009) have noted, is to bracket the researcher's own experiences from the stories of the participants. Thus, as a researcher with this knowledge, personal perspectives have been put aside and the experiences of the participants are presented as they describe them and from their point of view. This has also been achieved through continuous member checking and collaboration with the participants throughout the study. It is recognised that bias cannot be completely eliminated in this kind of study, or any other kind conducted by a human being, but an effort is made to present and report what is said by the participants and the meaning in those narratives in a faithful manner. Although bias is considered important, taking the example of Porter (2007), if a researcher presents a report of his findings he does so under his own active

interpretation, and so does the reader who reads the report. There is therefore a dynamic mediation between these two (Porter, 2007). In this regard, bias is a part of the research process that may arise from either the researcher or the reader of the research findings. However, reducing bias from both ends should be encouraged in the research process.

Another way of achieving trustworthiness, as William and Morrow (2009) also note, is that the researcher can establish the trustworthiness of the data by asking the participants to give feedback at multiple points along the research process. This makes the processes a collaborative one. This process is what Guba and Lincoln (1985) have referred to as 'member checking'. The member checking approach has been used by sending the transcripts back to each of the participants for validation. This process continued as participants also received a report which presented the findings so that they could ensure that what was presented represented their individual narrative accounts. The researcher is aware that using this method means that the participants' views are represented by themselves. This is important because limited studies exist that consider issues from the points of view of international students (Walsh, 2010).

Findings from qualitative research underpinned by a constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemology use terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, as Bustin et al (1998) have noted, transferability replaces the generalisability of findings because the qualitative researcher assumes that an in-depth examination of small numbers is far more valuable than a limited examination of larger numbers and generalising beyond what is studied. In this study, a small sample has been used because of the valuable nature of the information needed. However, the findings made in this study are important for future large studies as they reveal a basis for future conceptualisations. Also, as Wiklund-Gustin (2010) argues, it appears to be an impossible mission to give everyone a voice. Rather, it is the unique cases that are included in a narrative inquiry that make a difference.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) also argue that the trustworthiness of data parallels internal validity. The former establishes the nature of what is going on from the perspectives

of the participants rather than mapping the findings correctly with the phenomenon. Thus, it is the participants studied whose narratives are interpreted based on their own meanings and views that show and justify how trustworthy the findings are. Therefore, as Polit and Beck (2010) argue, what is important here is that the findings of the study provide a rich understanding of human experience that is contextualised in a particular manner such that the findings are embedded in the context. In effect, the researcher shares the views of Holloway and Jefferson (2000) that the situations we as qualitative researchers analyse are never replicable because they have been experienced around a context and time in a world where situations constantly change. This is further so because the stories told by the participants in this study are specific to each person and not every student will tell the same story because individual circumstances differ.

In summary, this chapter has shown that the interpretive worldview, with the belief that human beings interact with the environment actively (Remenyi et al, 1998) rather than being passive objects, is one way of understanding human experiences. The narrative method, with its strength in evidencing how humans make sense of their experiences in the environment, has also been justified as useful for exploring the experiences of international students in the current period. The storytelling process in the data gathering also shows how the participants represent themselves, and these stories are analysed in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Narrative analysis and findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first is an analysis of the individual narrative interviews conducted with 10 Nigerian international students in selected UK universities. The main aim of doing the individual narrative analysis is to address the central research questions stated in chapter One of this study (see Chapter One, 1.7), which attempt to discover whether Nigerian students' experiences of studying in UK universities can be understood in depth. The second part is a cross-narrative thematic analysis of the 10 participants' narratives that draws on the various emerging themes that weave through the narrative interviews and addresses the rest of the research questions. The cross-narrative evidence serves as the findings because it represents the findings from the individual narratives.

5.2 Narrative analysis of individual accounts of life in the UK

Narrative analysis, which is at an embryonic stage compared to other defined methods, primarily aims to interpret the different ways in which people perceive reality, make sense of the world they live in and perform social actions, as Smith and Sparkes (2009) have noted. This technique of interpretation, as the authors have argued, attempts to attend to the messiness of human actions and responses that clean methods suppress. As narrative experts have noted, narrative is a way of making sense of our lived experiences and the lives we lead through telling stories (Riessman, 1993). This shift in ways of understanding human experience has the strength to attend to events from the perspectives of the persons who experienced those events, rather than imposing order in attempt to understand them.

The grounding assumptions of narratives that have occupied the discussions in this study imply that narrative researchers do not conform to the standardised analytical practices seen in other methods. Just as Mishler (1986) has noted, there are different ways in which narrative researchers can attend to the data collected in their narrative interviews. The different ways of doing narrative analysis are not like mainstream methods such as surveys, which have standardised procedures.

Narrative researchers cannot rely on these standardised procedures as the procedures do not attend to the diversities in what the participants say, how they say it and what it means to them (Mishler, 1986). Thus, different ways of analysing narrative data exist and narrative researchers, based on what their aim is in collecting people's narratives are, decide which analytical approach is appropriate for presenting the stories they gathered. However, it is worth noting here that the object of analysis in this research is the story told by each participant, which is analysed without altering the meaning of the narrator or the story's content.

This study focuses on a conversational analysis of the narratives in this study, the uniqueness of the stories told by the narrators and how meaningful their stories are to them. The narrative interviewing conducted in this research is a form of discourse whose interpretation is a joint production of meaning by the researched and the researcher. However, the role of the researcher is to retell these stories and analyse them as a way of making the narratives of the narrators meaningful to the reading audience. This is grounded in the theoretical assumption that the researcher cannot be separated or distanced from the interpretation of what is studied. The narrative analysis is therefore presented using the narrator's actual words in depth so as to avoid the imposition of personal meaning by the researcher in the interpretation of the narratives constructed by the participants.

The analyses of the individual narratives are given separately as this illuminates the unique ways in which experiencing the UK has impacted on their individual personal lives. The rationale behind doing a further cross-narrative thematic analysis is not to compare the experiences of these students but to evidence some possible commonalities and themes that run through their stories, and these serve as the findings. The decision to carry out a cross-narrative thematic analysis only arose when the researcher had collected and transcribed all the narrative data and discovered that there were common themes running through the narratives of the participants. As an interpretive researcher, the aim was to accommodate the messiness of the data and the subjective positions that the narratives gathered in this study represented regarding the lived experiences of those studied.

As Elliot (2005) argues, a story told by the narrators is said to have a beginning, middle and an end, told in different forms. Meanwhile, in real life it is sometimes difficult to have narrators give their experiences chronologically as they sometimes go forth and back depending on the significance of their experiences and those they choose to tell. This is because, as Labov and Fanshel (1977) note, respondents during a narrative interview appear to be partially relieving themselves of their experiences when telling their stories about stressful and dramatic events in their lives. They tend to say what is important to them in their experience. Thus, these respondents sometimes do not monitor their talking in ways that fit in with our general understanding of discourse and the process of an interview (Labov and Fanshel, 1977). In this study, the stories were ideally meaningful to the narrators and they decided when to say what. These stories are textually analysed in the section below.

5.2.1 Narrator 1 Nnanna (pseudonym) “My experience here in the UK is very painful”

BACKGROUND: Nnanna is a 32-year-old Nigerian male student from a family of 4 and the first child of the family who has sojourned to UK, arriving in 2011 for a PhD programme. He is studying in the UK under Nigerian state government sponsorship.

Researcher: As you know, I am doing a narrative study of Nigerian students’ experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me your experiences of studying here in the UK.

Nnanna: *“Hmm, life in the UK is not easy my dear. For the past two years it has been from one thinking to another and I must say that my experience here in the UK is very painful. Like we know back home and even true there is good education here but the suffering of getting it is more than the degree to be honest. I have experienced a great loss of love from my family and my friends back in Nigeria since I came to study here in the UK and this has ultimately deprived me of the happiness I enjoyed back home in Nigeria. There is nobody to run to, nobody to help me, the whole thing is just confusing. So I think that this environment is a place where international students like me cannot be happy until they go back because life is so difficult and miserable. My condition here gives me sleepless nights and I don’t know how I am going to survive it because so many things I experience here gives me the conviction that I was wrong leaving Nigeria for this place”* [In extract 1 from Nnanna’s story]

The above extract from the story of Nnanna was told with many grudges and much anger, and he felt a great deal of emotion as his narrative unfolded. This student felt

betrayed by his expectations prior to coming to the UK because he thought that life in the UK was perfect. There are also feelings of helplessness and confusion, as well as a recurring thought that the environment he lives in has deprived him of his happiness. He portrayed a life of sleepless nights and continuous worry about how he will survive and get the degree that brought him to the UK. Giving a balance of probability, Nnanna appraises the difficulties of getting the degree he sojourned for as not worth the degree itself and has regrets too. In the extracts below, Nnanna continues his story and further narrates how he has experienced life in the UK.

Nnanna: *“When I arrived the UK, I found out that everything is so expensive, even making friends here and “you” just feel terrible by these things. Someone is just being treated like he has made a mistake by coming here. Sometimes to be honest I can’t sleep, because I am thinking of what the next day brings. I think I got it wrong before coming to the UK. If I knew it was going to be like this I will remain in my country. I have never been unnoticed like this in my life, because I am somebody that likes to make friends but I can’t even talk to these people in this country because they don’t care. I can’t wait to finish and go home. Even the studies are very difficult, the supervisor’s expectations and the standard they set here for doctorate is just horrible. So my dear I think it is just a difficult experience. There is hardship, no love just deceptive smile from them that is not implying anything. Education here is more difficult”* [In extract 2 from Nnanna’s story].

The story continued to unfold as seen in the above extract from Nnanna’s story. It is clear that he has not lived a fulfilled life in the UK. He expresses a sense of disconnection between his past and present experiences as he projects regrets, worry and mistrust about the environment he has sojourned to. His story reveals the negative feelings he has about himself as he narrates that people do not seem to notice him, which is contrary to what he had expected from the people he was to meet in the UK. In Nnanna’s narrative, he regrets accepting the scholarship for coming to study in the UK because of the challenges he is facing. The extract below signals how the student has experienced interacting with others and what he makes out of the situation he finds himself in.

Nnanna: *“Even to express yourself is difficult because the English people always say they don’t understand your accent, I don’t understand their own too which makes the matter worst. My friend left the UK because he can’t cope, he did not complete his studies. He said that this was not what he expected. Seriously I am always afraid of how my stay here will end and this whole thing and sometimes I will just be annoyed about it. How can I be happy, it is difficult to understand these situation and I think you should do because you are an international student too although human beings are different. But I think that most people who come from Nigeria to study here are undergoing this difficult hard life here”* [In extract 3 from Nnanna’s story].

In the above extract, Nnanna narrates with a deep feeling of uncertainty that his stay in the UK is threatening because of his fear about the conditions he finds himself in. He also recounts that his friend left without completing his programme in the UK because of the challenges and difficulties the friend experienced. Narrating the difficulties he's had interacting with the English people, Nnanna mentioned the challenges of communication. Due to his friend's experience and his own experience, he believes that most international students from Nigeria experience these difficulties, including the researcher. He referred to this when he said that *"it is difficult to understand this situation and I think you should do because you are an international student too"*. Although he made some points about people seeing things differently, he thinks that Nigerian international students in the UK are generally not happy with their experiences.

Nnanna: *"Sometimes I feel confused too because I don't know what I am doing again. When will it finish I keep asking myself....I mean the program. It is God that is keeping me here because for me life is too hard and not interesting but I need to complete my studies which is what is keeping me here. I always have this feeling that we are not wanted here because of my experience here because you don't know who you are really unless you travel to Nigeria then you will understand and enjoy your life. I only come to school and go home, even to read sometimes is difficult because when my mind is scattered how can I read or do my very demanding research?"* [In extract 4 from Nnanna's story].

Nnanna's narrative above is a continuation of his lamentation over the situation he finds himself in as a Nigerian international student in the UK. He narrates how disconnected he sometimes feels because he cannot concentrate owing to the difficulties he is experiencing. Although he wishes to complete his studies and get his degree, he continuously doubts the possibility of achieving this because of his feelings of loneliness, confusion and helplessness. This student has not been given the opportunity to have a rich intercultural experience and instead feels discriminated against. Repeatedly, Nnanna narrates of his feeling of lost self-worth in the UK and has a feeling that he is not wanted in the UK. His narratives also expressed a sense of not knowing who he is in the UK. He lacks interest in activities, as shown when he talked about coming to school and then going back to his room, which sometimes does not help him because his mind is not organised.

Nnanna: *"When I travel home, I eat good food, meet with my friends, be with my family and be happy which is what life is all about. My story here is that it is not a pleasant experience my dear brother for me. I don't know about others but for me as a person life here is not*

interesting. You are on your own here, so it is really a difficult life and life is not worth it here, I don't know how people that are not from here are managing to be happy because there is nothing to be happy here about. Some of my friends here are from Nigeria but I don't always spend more time talking with them because our friendship is not deep. After all they cannot help me either because some of them have the same problems or are facing the same problem like me"[In extract 5 from Nnanna's narratives]"

The desire to go home because of his experiences in the UK constantly occupies Nnanna's thoughts. As he narrated, life in the UK does not interest him and the people around are not making him feel any better. For him, the earlier he gets his studies done and goes back home the better his life will become. Still with a feeling of helplessness, Nnanna does not believe that his Nigerian friends can be of any help in his situation because he believes they are all facing the same situation. Narrating more deeply on the consequences of the experiences he is having, in the extract below, Nnanna reveals how past negative experiences are recurring in his mind and how he feels about this.

Nnanna: *"Because of this sad situation I find myself in, I remember my late elder brother when I am sad and for some time now that memory keep coming and I feel so gripped when I remember that. Now with so many conditions to face and deal with, such memory makes me cry in my room and where no one can help me and as an adult people may be laughing at me when they hear that I am crying so I keep these things personal. But I do my best here because here I can't run away from it. It will be big shames for me if I don't get my degrees and go home. I need to get this degree because that is what I owe the government and my family"*[In extract 6 from Nnanna's narratives].

The above extract reveals the moments Nnanna has grieved in the past that are coming into his present. His personal analysis of his experience is that they keeps ruminating because he has so much going on in his mind and because he is not happy most of the time in the UK. Meanwhile, as he told his story, he pointed out that he faces the pressure of getting the degree he has sojourned to the UK for, to avoid disgrace to his family and his sponsors. So, although he faces difficulties, he is determined to carry on and do his best to get his degree.

Researcher: You told me you had initiation in Nigeria before this interview, can you relate this to your experience here in the UK?

Nnanna: *"Initiation in Nigeria is very easy my dear, I have passed through it and it is just for two or three days and you will be free to enjoy your manhood and cultural rights. This one is worst because we don't have anybody to assist us, no father, no mother, no sister, and no brother. When I passed through the initiation into manhood in my village, it was painful but it*

was worth it but this one is like a forever pain which I will bear for three years or more without assistance” [In extract 7 from Nnanna’s narratives].

Relating his experience of initiation in Nigeria to his experience in the UK, Nnanna narrated his experience of initiation back in Nigeria. Although he acknowledges that there is pain during the initiation process that he has been through, his experience of being an international student in the UK is a worse experience for him than what he has been through before. His evaluation of both processes is that they are both painful but he detests his experiences in the UK because he does not get any assistance from anywhere or from anybody. Concluding his story, Nnanna narrates what he thinks about his life in the UK and some of the things that have made life difficult for him as an international student.

Nnanna: *“So it better to bear my cross alone and spend time alone thinking about myself. So that is why I always keep to myself and don’t like to discuss my problems. Anyway that is my experience here and I hope it help you with your research. For the university authorities, I don’t trust their promises, so let everybody carry their cross for me I think this people cannot change their attitude towards us and unless that changes then we cannot be happy studying here. We meet other students who can behave in a way that will make us feel bad, and when we leave the school, we can meet the same kind of people” [In extract 8 from Nnanna’s narratives].*

In the above, because of his belief that help or assistance is not going to come from anybody, he decides not to discuss his conditions with anyone. Like he said, he would rather be on his own and suffer his difficulties alone. This narrator also revealed that he did not think the university authorities could be of any help with some of his experiences.

5.2.2 Narrator 2 Ekene (Pseudonym) “My experience here in the UK has some good side and bad sides too”

BACKGROUND: Ekene is a 2nd year undergraduate student from Nigeria studying in a UK university. He is the last son of his parents in a family of five. His parents are sponsoring his education in the UK.

Researcher: As you know, I am doing a narrative study of Nigerian students’ experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me about your experience of studying here in the UK.

Ekene: *“My experience here in the UK has some good side and bad sides too. I can say that the quality of learning here in the UK is standard compared to our country Nigeria. I have experienced some good things like gestures, especially the word “please” and “thank you” from people which is something I really appreciate. Haven said that, since I commenced my studies in my university here in the UK I have also experienced sometimes very distressing encounters with the white people. They always think that we are not the same human being. When I entered a bus to my first accommodation, there is always just me in the seat where I am sitting. Unless the bus is full before you see a white man or woman sitting next to me. I feel bad with this kind of treatment because we are all human beings. Sometimes when I get home and I am alone I will be thinking of what is the meaning of this kind of treatment and discrimination”* [In extract 1 from Ekene’s narratives].

In the extract above, Ekene started his story by expressing a great deal of disappointment over the way he has been treated in public places, although he appreciated a few things in the UK. His story reveals his feeling of being discriminated against which he described through his experience of public transport. This student appreciates the fact that the standard of education in the UK is very rich and he feels good when he receives positive gestures. However, Ekene’s feeling of discrimination has also altered his perception of the UK’s environment. He feels sad when he encounters situations like the one above and they make him wonder if human beings are not all the same as he is being treated like an outcast. He continues his story by narrating other experiences and feelings he has had while studying in the UK.

Ekene: *“I agree that UK is well developed compared to Nigeria but that is not all that human beings need to survive. I think it is unfair because I know personally that people want to associate with me in my country maybe because of the kind of family I come from and I earn respect. I feel bad and I am not being proud but sometimes I just think of getting my degree and going back to my home because I don’t know who I am here or I might not be somebody here but when I am in Nigeria, I am somebody. I think we are better off at home than here. In the school, we are not engaging and mingling as we are expected to do because the English students want to be with themselves or fellow English. These are the things that make me worry because it just keeps occurring and one keep experiencing them”* [In extract 2 from Ekene’s narratives].

As he says, he sees life as more than just having the best system. He feels that life is about mingling and interacting with different people of different races. As he states, in his country his personality and ego is boosted by the way people want to interact with him but he seems to have lost that identity and source of personal gratification. His experiences, as narrated, have affected his feelings and sense of who he really is. Relating how making contact with English people is not easy for

him, he also said that he worries about this because of his unfulfilled need for friendship from host nationals.

Researcher: Tell me how these experiences make you feel.

Ekene: *“These experiences I told you make me have sleepless nights and off course when someone is being treated like an outcast how can the person sleep? In fact since I came to this country, I always find it difficult to sleep because there is a lot to think and worry about. Education here is very difficult, the classes are not interesting because the lecturer just come in and read their slides. I want more of the explanations but sometimes we don’t get it. Life here is kind of mechanical. There are strict rules and procedures for everything, I just go from school to house from house to school and I never use to live this kind of life. I just don’t know but I know that this experience surely make me think too much. Imagine when you are playing music in your house, your neighbour will report you to council or police, what kind of people is this”* [In extract 3 from Ekene’s narratives].

Ekene’s worries and feelings of not being noticed and being discriminated against, as told in his story, give him sleepless nights. He also shows a great deal of concern about the manner in which lectures are delivered, which he is also finding difficult to cope with. Although stories about university life and experiences occupy Ekene’s narrative, he dislikes the mechanical life, as he refers to it, that he lives in the UK. These experiences threw up his emotions as he narrated how he is afraid of his neighbours reporting him to the police or council for making noise. There are some concerns that this student has about the UK and where he lives which increase his worries, as illustrated in the extract from his story below.

Ekene: *“I feel helpless and sometimes afraid though because I don’t have anybody here, my family is in Nigeria and I am here alone. Sometimes when I am walking on the road in the night or even in the day I will be thinking that someone may just come and stab me or even shoot at me because I am black. This is true because the kind of news we hear about racial attacks in this country can make someone to be afraid. Seriously I always go home on every school holiday because I can’t even imagine myself living in a place where the host people will be looking at you with a bad eye and every little thing you do can be escalated. The problem is that there is nobody that will help you when you are in emotional suffering. And because I keep hearing news of the way people are being stabbed in the street and shot I am afraid sometimes. But I will use the word worry to explain my experience here in the UK. The people here even use to tell me that “I can’t help you I am afraid”... “I can’t help you I am sorry”. So this is a real explanation of the kind of helpless situation that one can be in this country”* [In extract 4 from Ekene’s narrative].

In the above extract, Ekene expresses a great deal of concern about security and the fear of being attacked because of the experiences he has had with people and the news he has heard about racial attacks. These feelings as narrated by this

student illustrate distrust of the people around him, something which, according him is among the reasons why he goes home for every holiday. Narrating more about his fears and helplessness, the student feels that his parents are not in the UK to protect him and support him as he goes through what he describes as emotional suffering. This has left him with a fear of the unknown alongside his experience of felt discrimination.

Ekene: *“Well, I just did not expect that I will be treated the way I have been here before coming. How can I ever think that people will be sitting away from me in the bus, I am not a human being? I get annoyed and yes I do because you can imagine how my emotions are tortured by that behaviour. I expect more from the university also in helping the students from various cultural backgrounds to interact but I can't find that so I feel betrayed by the jingles the post on their website about how students mix up and interact in a friendly manner. I think that it is not what I expected so I feel betrayed and it is not good enough It's the thoughts about life here that disorganises me sometimes, because when I think of the personal emotion that these life here gives me, then I can be confused on what to do next. Remembering the good times I use to have in Nigeria, all the things that makes me laugh, those things are no more here with me so it can disorganise someone's interest and thinking”*
[In extract 5 from Ekene's narrative]

The above extract evidences Ekene's feeling of his trust being betrayed by the people he had expected to meet in the UK prior to his sojourn. It also illustrates the manner in which he had expected that the environment he was coming to would treat him, something which affects him emotionally. This student's expectations of and trust in his university of study, as he states, has been betrayed because the role he expects them to play in ensuring that he has a good experience in the UK as he studies has not materialised. For Ekene, the university he is studying in while in the UK is not giving what was promised in the information they gave him before he decided to study with them. He concluded his narrative by reminiscing about the happy moments he enjoyed back in Nigeria which have disappeared since he sojourned to study in the UK.

5.2.3 Narrator 3 Oyagiri (Pseudonym) “It is such an experience of hardship and unsettled mind”

BACKGROUND: Oyagiri is from a family of 2 and the first son of his parents. He graduated from a Nigerian university in a science discipline. He is being sponsored by the Nigerian state government for his masters and PhD degrees.

Researcher: As you know, I am researching Nigerian students' experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me the story of your experience of studying here in the UK.

Oyagiri: *"First, I am impressed that your research is centred on understanding our experiences here as international students. I have suffered so many hardship and emotional problems. Academic is tough, I am a PhD student and doing a PhD here is hell for those of us in science areas I don't know of those in other areas. I sometimes think that my supervisors do not want me to be a Dr like them. Because they always do not agree with whatever I write. This is a source of my emotional crisis and only God knows if they will agree that I have done anything right. I have concerns for this experience and they make me feel sad. The government expect me to bring nothing less than the PhD for them. They don't care what I am passing through here so I don't blame them either"* [In extract 1 from Oyagiri's narrative].

In the above extract from the story of Oyagiri's experiences in the UK, he starts his narratives with a sense of dislike towards the attitudes of his supervisors to his research. As he narrates, he has done his best but this has not been acknowledged by his supervisor, which to him is a great source of worry and emotional pain. This student is battling with satisfying his supervisors and being able to get the PhD degree which his sponsors expect from him. He narrates how his feelings have been affected by the academic difficulties and challenges he is facing. In the extract below he continues his story by talking more about other experiences he has had while studying in the UK.

Oyagiri: *"For the past two years life has not been easy as I have also experienced challenges because of difference in culture of Nigeria and the West. We sometimes clash and to be honest I don't like the way the Western people always treat me in some circumstances. I feel sometimes inferior and angry because I think they are feeling more superior than I do. You can see this with the way my supervisors treat me in my work. So I don't have much to do with them like I do with my fellow Nigerians and Black or Asian people. I will say that discrimination or racism to be very assertive is sometimes the way I feel that I am being treated. So, it is such an experience of hardship and unsettled mind"* [In extract 2 from Oyagiri's narrative].

Narrating how he has experienced life in the UK, Oyagiri identifies difficulties as a major part of his experience. As he explains, the differences between the culture of Nigeria and that of the UK, where he is studying, pose a challenge to him which makes him feel that he is not being fairly treated in the UK. Evidencing how his personality has been affected by the experiences he has had in the UK, Oyagiri states that the way he is being treated sometimes makes him feel he is inferior, using his experience with his supervisors as an example. He engages in fellowship

with his fellow Nigerians and people from Asia. He uses the words “racism” and “discrimination” to express how he feels he is being treated. As he continues he describes his experience of sleeplessness, as shown in the extract below.

Oyagiri: *“Sleepless nights upon sleepless nights are my experience here because of the thinking about the challenges facing me as a person. Do you know that I can’t even support my younger brother to pay his school fees which has made him drop out of school while the brother is abroad? How then can I get to sleep well under that kind of situation? The government that sponsors me do not know that I have other problems. I have a family whom I am their bread winner. They managed to train me in the university and expect that I should be supporting the family now but I can’t because it is not possible to do so with the little income I get from my sponsors. It is not even enough to support me here alone let alone to send money home for my family. I go to school to study, when I return home to rest, I cannot rest because my mind is somewhere wondering when I can finish this study, get a job and start a life to help my poor family”* [In extract 3 from Oyagiri’s narrative]

Oyagiri expands his story by narrating the conditions that have taken sleep away from him. As told in his story, he has challenges both in the UK and at home which do not allow him to have a settled mind. He uses the example of his younger brother who is back in Nigeria and who is not able to continue his education due to lack of funding. Oyagiri is worried about all these things, and the fact that he cannot support his family back home while he is abroad is a very disturbing feeling that means sleep eludes him. Recounting how his parents managed to train him in his undergraduate education back in Nigeria, he feels very disappointed that he cannot support them yet because the funding he gets from his sponsors cannot cover their welfare. He continues his story by narrating how he feels because of the above.

Oyagiri: *“I am very much worried of my PhD because I don’t know when I will finish it or whether I will finish it within the time the government have to sponsor me. If I do not that is suicide because I cannot raise money to complete it on my own. So I am very very afraid but I am just looking at each day and believing that I will finish in the good time. But if I don’t get this degree then I am finished because I don’t know how I will cope with the shame in my life and in that of my entire family”* [In extract 4 from Oyagiri’s narratives].

In the extract above, Oyagiri continues and clearly points out that he is not the only one having these experiences as he knows others facing the same situations. His story also shows some feelings of fear about what will happen if he does not complete his programme within the period of his scholarship. His feeling is that he could not cope, as he used the word “suicide” to express the enormity of what would happen to him should he be unable to complete his programme.

5.2.4 Narrator 4 Ahmedu (Pseudonym) “Personally many of these experiences give me sleepless night”

BACKGROUND: Ahmedu is a 3rd year PhD student from Nigeria studying in a UK university. He is studying for his PhD in a science discipline and has studied in the UK for more than 3 years. He is sponsored by the Nigerian state government.

Researcher: As you know, I am researching Nigerian students’ experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me the story of your experience of studying here in the UK.

Ahmedu: *“First on arrival I was welcomed by the weather which I thought was going to be clement but it was not. The event turned out that I was shocked and cold. I didn’t know how to locate the university because everywhere was new to me, I felt I am lost in a big ocean that I don’t know how I will swim out, in fact I was devastated. The system of communication was difficult and I dint know how to contact my university. But the airport officials called my university and they came and took me. I even attended lecture the same day because I was one month short of time. I was a novice because I am coming from Nigeria where the learning culture is different and it was very difficult to cope”* [In extract 1 from Ahmedu’s narrative].

In the extract above, Ahmedu narrates how he has experienced life from the time he arrived in the UK from Nigeria for his studies. This student started finding life very difficult from the airport because he had a different expectation and was struggling to fit in with the system that is in place in the UK, which is strikingly different from that of Nigeria. Difficulties ranging from the cold weather to communication problems occupied his early experiences in UK. He felt lost in the system as he was not familiar with the environment and the way things were done. The student continued his story and narrated his ordeal and experience in the UK.

Ahmedu: *“The experience continued and I came with a friend that has never touched computer before in his life and it became necessary that we must do everything by ourselves because there is nobody to help you type your work or do the computers things for you, so you do it yourself. We expected that the university will give us training on the use of computers but they did not so we had to suffer it and learn it on our own. So it’s not easy at all but here also I have all the equipment to do my practical work because I am pure science student and I had to do laboratory base assignments but it took me time to use the equipment. They got me going and again since my PhD, the interaction between me and my supervisor, there is no power distance just that help will not always be given appropriately because I am not sure that I trust them because I don’t understood them properly since they are very individualistic. The learning we receive here may be considered as technologically ok but the suffering of getting this learning is too much my brother”* [In extract 2 from Ahmedu’s narrative].

In the above extract from the story of Ahmedu, he consistently laments how uneasy and difficult life has been for him but also mentions the things he appreciates in the UK. He narrates not being able to get a help with using computers. The learning method was difficult for him because of the sophisticated equipment he needed to use in the laboratory as a science student. Ahmedu enjoyed the low power distance between him and his supervisors as he started his PhD but complains about not understanding and trusting his supervisors as he feels they are individualistic. Appraising the experience of learning in the UK, Ahmedu feels that the use of technology for learning in the UK is good but also he acknowledges that there is suffering as part of his experience. He further narrates how these experiences have affected him in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *“Coming from Nigeria where discipline is a watch word, respect, and all is upheld, it is a crime not to greet your elders but here I felt that everybody was on their own and to me I was saying what?, this is really a taboo and should not be happening. Here everybody just mind their business and there is no much interaction and even though we live in the same house with some of them, they are not interested in us at all and I feel so uncomfortable with them. You walk on the street and you don’t greet people and sometimes when you do they ignore you and that has been very emotionally challenging”* [In extract 3 from Ahmedu’s narrative].

Ahmedu’s story continues to unfold as seen above. Respect is among the lenses that Ahmedu uses to evaluate and reflect on how his experiences in the UK have affected him. He sees the manner in which greetings are not used to be wrong. He also does not see as much interaction as he expected, which affects the judgements he makes about people in the host country. He feels emotionally challenged when his gestures are not returned and these experiences give him longing thoughts about his home country. His story continues as presented below.

Ahmedu: *“Yea, as an international student I have experiences that I feel is not good, like in my department, when I present seminar, some people will clap and some will say he has accent. They see things from where you are coming from and this makes me to think if it is still me that is being messed around just because I have come to study here. Here they tend to judge the book by the cover without waiting to see what you can offer and again as an international student, I have observed that every international student is being looked at from a different angle. This has impacted on my personal life and wellbeing because I continue to imagine what I am doing here, going through all this experiences and feeling so neglected and under looked like I have experienced is certainly something my spirit does not accept and I am worried and disturbed”* [In extract 4 from Ahmedu’s narrative]

Ahmedu’s experience of life in the UK has been impacted by the way he feels he has been treated, which he appraises as unfair. He narrates feeling sad because of how

he is considered to have an accent when he speaks in seminars. He relates this treatment to his skin colour and feels that he is being discriminated against. He also feels that he is being judged based on where he comes from as opposed to what he can offer. He believes that international students are treated this way because host nationals feel superior to them. He also has regrets about being in the UK to study and keeps asking himself what he is doing “here” since he is not accepted for who he is. He feels he is being neglected and this has affected his sense of self and his spirit which, as he explains, worries him. Reflecting on his experiences, Ahmedu narrates how he feels in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *“Personally many of these experiences give me sleepless night. Some of my experiences especially funding because of the nature of my financial status, sometimes before my money comes many things might have gone wrong. Before I get money I normally run into a terrible off balance from my studies that get me to lose concentration, I am always very much down in spirit as well because this is a dry land for me. But unfortunately there is nobody to run to because you are a foreigner and this experience is very bad and very distressing. I feel sometimes is it not because I came here to study? Normally I will not be insulted that way if I was back home”* [In extract 5 from Ahmedu’s narrative].

Describing his feelings, Ahmedu states that his experiences give him sleepless nights. He also makes reference to how difficult life is for him because when he is out of money in the UK his life crumbles. He feels he is being thrown off balance and he also lacks concentration because of the conditions he is facing, and these things also affect his studies. His appraisal is that there is no one to help him out of the situation when his funding runs out, which is a state of feeling helpless. Reflecting on his journey to study in the UK, Ahmedu feels that he is not getting the best out of it because he would not be insulted in the way he has been in certain situations if he was back in his own country. He continues to lament about how he feels regarding his situation and experiences in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *“My experiences affect me emotionally, and it affects me psychologically and my academic is affected because I do not move forward and I keep asking when it will end. I am helpless of myself here especially when I am financially incapacitated. I do feel and ask myself why did I come here, if I had known I will not come because coming here has re-written my story and it has because when I was back home I was feeding fine and all but here I am very poor and there is nothing to do. I have also had a very terrible experience that I had to go for a job interview, I did so well that it was obvious that I got the job but when I looked around and found that there was no black skin person there, I doubted my getting the job regardless of the fact that I did so well. They in the end gave me a letter that in fact made me to feel so angry and confused without any reason so I found it racial and that will never leave my mind. It was traumatising because I had hope that I will get that job because I did well and they even said it there”* [In extract 6 from Ahmedu’s narrative].

Viewing his experience from the lens of helplessness, Ahmedu tells of how his emotional wellbeing is affected by the things that happen in the UK. His psychological state is affected, as he explains, and his academic work is also affected, but he feels that he cannot help the situation. The extent to which this student regrets his sojourn to the UK is evident in the way he feels that his life story has been re-written with suffering and poverty and that he cannot do anything about it. His feeling of being discriminated against also manifests as he describes an interview that he attended without success. This feeling confuses him and makes him sad because he had expected to support himself with the job he applied for, which he did not get. The feeling Ahmedu has is that he was feeling well while he was in his country, was happy and lived better. He also feels that he would not be in the current state he finds himself living in since beginning to study in the UK. He expands on other significant conditions he has been through in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *“There are times you know especially when I don’t have money like I always say in this country when you don’t have money you are almost dead and you have to pay your bills and eat and I get psychologically disturbed when I don’t have it. I have to abandon my work and stay at home and just think, in most cases I just try to avoid going to the laboratory where there is chemical danger. I remember one day I was thinking and I had to mix a wrong drug and add to a wrong cell flask, so from then, I took the decision that I will not do it at that period and I tried to avoid the laboratory with the works I need to do there for my study. I avoided going there because there may be a possibility of spilling chemical or even poisoning myself and I have to leave my work, and go home to think and continue thinking. And that is very bad because my studies are affected, my life is not worth living and I am making no progress”* [In extract 7 from Ahmedu’s narrative].

With a deep sense of concern, Ahmedu reiterates that not having money in the UK, as always happens to him, is as good as being dead. This feeling comes from the fact that he does not think anyone else can be of help to him in his situation. As he explains, he resorts to staying alone in his room and thinking about his life when he has no money. His psychological wellbeing is affected when this is the case and it affects his academic work in the laboratory. Ahmedu reveals how dangerous his lack of concentration due to worries and a disturbed state of mind can be when he describes making a dangerous mistake in the laboratory. He then decided to stay at home rather than endanger his life with poisonous chemicals in the laboratory where his research is based. The implication is that his research is affected and he feels that life has become worthless to him. Ahmedu compares the life he is living now and the life he lived in his home country, as shown in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *"I can't even think of any rigorous situation that resemble what we experience here as foreigners. Because they are seriously distressing essentially. When I have these experiences back home, I could remember that I had to do things to survive then but here I cannot do those things because I experience them without help. I cast my mind back to the experiences I have had back home, I have had experiences that are analogous to what I have here but the difference is that here there is nobody to console you or nobody to help you. Back home you can go to the bush to get some fruit, some kernel and you will be fine but here there is so much trouble and you don't enjoy these things we used to enjoy back home"* [In extract 8 from Ahmedu's narrative].

As Ahmedu continues his story, he equates the experiences he has with previous difficulties because they were distressing to him as well. 'Help' is what makes the difference between his previous challenges back home and the current experience he is having in the UK. Reflecting on his life prior to his sojourn to the UK, he speaks about some of the survival strategies he adopted which helped him to overcome situations in the past. However, as far as his present environment is concerned, he cannot find a relational or survival track out of his situation. He goes further to tell a story of specific circumstances that he has faced in the past and how his present experiences in the UK make him feel in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *"My life experiences begin to express and remind me of the things I have witnessed from primary school to now, like my father died when I was 12 and there was no help and I have struggled in life and these experiences makes me to begin to think and ask is God actually there? Here there are many times that I have had course to reflect on past events in my life that have made me feel so incomplete because when I remember all that I have been through growing up as a child and the fact that I am still not happy with myself they make me feel so sad and frustrated. Back home we eat as a family but here I eat in isolation, and I don't enjoy my food here. If I was back I will be free knowing the fact that I am son of the soil but here even the law that you know you are also afraid of the ones you don't know. Each time you are always conscious and there is to me no freedom of a person and that is impacting negatively on my personality and my development. Back home I feel liberated and in fact here I sometimes think I am a slave while back home like I am like a king and I always say that nothing will make me stay here after my graduations"* [In extract 9 from Ahmedu's narrative].

Here, Ahmedu reflects on his life back in Nigeria. Speaking about the suffering he went through growing up when his father died, he felt he should not be suffering again at this age but his life seems to have worsened because of leaving Nigeria and coming to study in the UK. He is spiritually troubled and he is battling with his faith in God because he cannot understand why his God is not there and letting him go through all these difficulties. His frustration, as he narrates, also comes from the feelings he has because he had expected his life to be better than what he is experiencing now after all that he went through growing up without a father to

support him. His story also shows how much he misses his home in Nigeria because of his attachment to his home food and the culture of eating in a group, which he has lost since he came to study in the UK.

The status of being a stranger also creates tension and frustration in the life of this student because he feels he does not have as much freedom as he did when he was back in his home country. Narrating how his experiences make him feel, Ahmedu states that he feels like a slave here in the UK and a king back in Nigeria. The contrast in the feelings of self-worth and the negative sense of self constructed by this student are all related to the negative experiences he has had while studying in the UK. Ahmedu's narrative continues as he speaks about significant events in his life in the UK, as can be seen in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *"There are some points when I am thinking, why it is that I am suffering, if God could just make life easy, so I keep asking why me and how I am going to get out of this thing I have engaged myself with by leaving my home country. I feel bad about my life but essentially there are stiffer sufferings that I have witnessed like when I lost my money in this country, it could happen to anybody and in this time I said ok this is the end of the road for me. I just contemplated and said ok, I can't kill myself but I just have to lie down here and die. I can't brush my teeth, I can't take my bath but I as was experiencing these things, I had voices saying this experiences is not worth your life which is why I am alive and living today. When I lost my money, I had a challenge to get help and when there was none coming from anywhere at a point I said there is no God. I could not know myself anymore because I was completely scattered. I spent about three months without going to church, I was running away from people, I switched off my phone for more than a month or so, I could not talk to anybody, my friends and family were calling people to known about me. I felt I just have to leave people out of my life, in fact I closed down my social networking site Facebook for more than 7 or 8 months and people could not contact me. I remember one day when I opened my phone recently, a friend just called from America and asked me to stop this way of life that it will not solve my problems and he told me that isolation will not help me. I took time to come out of that which is why you have even seen me"* [In extract 10 from Ahmedu's narrative]

In the above extract, Ahmedu keeps asking his God of why he should have to go through the challenges he is experiencing. He speaks about losing his money, although he does not expand on how he lost it, but he feels that life ended for him in that period. This situation isolated him from others as he remained in his room and waited for death to take him. Although he never thought of killing himself, he felt that since there was nobody to help him in the UK he might as well die. That experience took away his interest in life as he could not take care of himself. As he explained, he was able to survive the situation because of a voice telling him that his life was worth more than that situation. This is a kind of transcendental experience although he speaks about losing his faith in God. Ahmedu describes his feelings and life at that

period as he talks about avoiding everybody and living an isolated life for several months. His feelings and his entire being were shattered, as explained in his narration about the reasons why he did not want to be in contact with anyone in the extract below.

Ahmedu: *"I felt there is no help coming forth so I said why worry about seeking help from people when I know I will not get it and why talking to people. In fact, I detested myself if I could use that. I said I was not worth living anymore and that is it to be honest. When I have tried and things are not working out I needed to be on my own and carry my cross alone because I do not trust that anybody could help me neither did I get help from anybody anyway. I feel that I have a story to tell because what I have just said here is just like a tip of an iceberg of how much I feel in this condition and in every man's life there is a story to tell. I have stories and series of stories to tell and some of these things I have shared with you are part of the stories I will be telling people that will be coming to seek advice from me. I have to tell them that there is a price to pay for coming to get what may be considered good"* [In extract 11 from Ahmedu's narrative].

The feeling of helplessness as experienced and told by Ahmedu is linked to his initial conception that no-one in the UK can help him. These feelings kept him away from others and he also felt that his life was not worth living and that he could not cope with life anymore. He does not trust that anyone could help him out of challenging situations. However, he felt stronger after experiencing that significant event although he said that the story he had told was just one piece of the depth of experience he has had. Advising other international students, Ahmedu in the extract below says that future international students should be aware of the conditions of study in UK before coming.

Ahmedu: *"I will say to international students that although there is good equipment to study here especially those from developing country like Nigeria, they should know that life is not as planned sometimes. They have to be ready to overcome, it is more difficult here than back home because here there is no support. Here you do no planting of yam, maize, groundnut, cassava or other things like we do at home to survive. They need to be prepared for the challenges of being a Nigerian abroad"* [In extract 12 from Ahmedu's narrative].

As an individual who has experienced life differently in the UK, Ahmedu considers education in the UK to be rich in his narrative but is also succinct in highlighting the difficulties therein. This student has experienced conditions that have shattered his sense of being. This cuts across his entire story and he advises future students to learn vicariously from his story when planning to come and study in the UK.

5.2.5 Narrator 5 James (Pseudonym) “The totality of the whole story is that I am disappointed”

BACKGROUND: James is a 50-year-old male Nigerian who came to the UK in 2009 to study for master’s and PhD degrees. He is currently in the 3rd year of his PhD and he has been a student in the UK for more than three years. James has family in Nigeria, including children. He was sponsored to come and study in the UK by the Nigerian state government.

Researcher: As you know, I am researching Nigerian students’ experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me the story of your experience of studying here in the UK.

James: *“My experiences are so much varied because there are different areas I have encountered one issue or the other or one problem or the other precisely in terms of learning in the UK. My first challenge was actually how to cope with the accent, the accent issue in terms of understanding exactly how the people, the way the language is spoken here. Really I am from English speaking country Nigeria. But when I came here I found out that not all the lecturers use clear accent, or are from Britain, and most of them don’t speak British English. That threw me off, many of the lecturers, I came across, I didn’t understand them, and it affected me in my performances at that level in that my master’s degree. It although seems that was getting clearer but that was not all. With the thought that coming here will change my life and knowledge which is what we use to think back home, It came to be that I came to experience so many challenges in terms of learning which are also very concerning to me”* [extract 1 from James’s narrative]

In the above narrative extract from James, he starts his story by recounting the difficulties he has had coping with the accents of the lecturers teaching him in the UK. As he narrates, that experience has not been a pleasant one for him because it seriously affected his learning and academic performance in his master’s degree programme. Although he thought that the experience would improve as he continued, he is still not able to conquer understanding the lecturers’ accents. He describes experiencing one problem after another, which is of concern to his wellbeing as an individual. His story continues to unfold in the extract below.

James: *“The learning style, the writing style, the PhD in particular is a very traumatic one. There is nothing that I have done so far that seem to be what is expected, the method of argument is challenged, the writing style is challenged, the connections is challenged, the orderliness is challenged, yet these are things I do in Nigeria that go perfectly well. So this kind of situation is giving me a very serious psychological or call it trauma which causes me sleepless nights, and restless days and I keep thinking. That is in terms of learning, and then in terms of relationship with people in university, the whole place looks like an Island where one is isolated yet surrounded by large body of water. So, under that condition, I seem to get*

lost. I expected to make friends here but now I have friends from Nigeria primarily and getting close to others seems difficult because they do not seem to appreciate this closeness, they kind of claim a kind of what I don't know, from my own interpretation, there is what I may call, I mean, superiority polarity" [In extract 2 from James's narrative].

Narrating his experiences in his current studies, James speaks of how the PhD programme has become very difficult and, quoting his word, a "traumatic" experience. His story carries a feeling of frustration because what he does is not considered right. He basically expresses a great deal of worry about the way his work and efforts have been considered unacceptable when such efforts were appreciated in Nigeria, where he previously studied. He speaks of the psychological impact of this on his wellbeing, and as he says, he feels traumatised because he has sleepless nights and restless days as he is occupied with thinking about how he can get through the educational process in the midst of these challenges. Narrating how he feels, his feeling is that people are everywhere and yet he seems to be alone as he is not able to build relationships with these people. Due to his experience, James only has a few fellow-Nigerian friends and he also feels that people in the host country believe they are superior to him. His story continues to in the extract below.

James: *"So all this things when you think about it you feel that you are not accepted making me question the essence of my coming to study in this country and it does not seem to me as if the university is even doing anything. Because when they say you should form study group, even in the study group you discover that some people don't even talk the rest will remain quiet, in their mind you don't know what they want to say. You still look like an Island and when you talk most of the time, you are seen as it does not count. So this and many other stories that are very distressing give me a serious concern in terms of integration with people from other cultures"* [In extract 3 from James's narrative].

Making friends and integrating with people in the host culture has been a challenge for James. The disappointment he gets from not being able to achieve or build a relationship with people from the host country has made him feel very regretful as he questions the essence of his sojourning to the UK. James does not trust that the university where he is studying is being helpful in terms of giving him the kind of experience he desires in terms of relating with others. This is shown in his description of his experience of a study group, where he felt disappointed that he was still not able to become integrated with others. His feeling about this experience is that it is distressing to him and he does not feel that he is being accepted in the host country. James' account continues in the extract below.

James: *"In terms of financial situation and challenges, that one is a big quagmire indeed and it is a difficult situation. You don't have anybody to help, if I run out of money it is like a dead end, because, nobody will help me. Everybody is in control of every penny in his hand, I don't even think of going to ask for the help because it does seem as if it will never come. This is quite different from the culture I come from where you get help from all nooks and crannies, people can give me money. Nobody have ever given me a pound since I came here, when I run out, and my Nigerian friends cannot help the rest is to go back to my room and lament in my calamities and continue to worry. The worst is when I even went to the University for Financial Support as they wrote in their website that they can support. In fact it was a nightmare which I never expected when I was in real trouble, and only to hear that I can only be given 20 pound and I was looking for 200 or 500 pound. The university only said they can give me 20 pounds, I said this is nonsense, it was provocative, I said ooh so this university is not interested whether I die or not, I pay them 9600 pounds every year and pay house rent to the UK landlords and they don't even care about me. I went to suffer my problems and agony alone, surrounded by all this kind of problem then you can imagine how difficult it is to read, to understand and to concentrate. Everything is the opposite of my expectations I can say"* [Extract 4 from James's narrative].

James talks with a great deal of emotion about his experience of not having money to sustain himself in the UK. James feels that his life ended when he ran out of money in the UK. His feelings are linked to his belief that there is usually nobody to help him out of such situations. He says he feels helpless and does not attempt to ask for financial help from anyone because it does not seem to him like anyone is ready to help him out. Comparing his experience of this kind of situation in Nigeria, James feels that people in the UK are not ready to give out a penny to anyone. James is usually emotionally affected in this situation, shown in his statement that he always goes back to his room to continue his thinking and worrying about his condition.

James describes a significant experience he had when he could not get financial help from the university. His feeling about this experience is that the university is not concerned about his wellbeing but just interested in his financial contribution to its economic growth. He feels he is not able to concentrate during this period of hardship and that this is affecting his academic work as well. As he narrates, he feels that his expectations are not being met. His story continues in the extract below.

James: *"I will call my experience a mismatch of expectations, because it is the case, I expected this and it is the other so what I am seeing is not what I expected. And I thought I would be making money to help my children in school in Nigeria. I was more comfortable in my own society and this gives me the opportunity to ask which country is actually civilised. Because in the so called civilised country of the west, you have more problems, more terrible situation but in my own country where I come from there are people who are ready to help, I was focused in what I am doing but here that focus is gone, only worries so the totality of the whole story is that I am disappointed"* [Extract 5 from James's narrative]

In the above, James describes his experiences as a mismatch between his expectations before he sojourned to the UK and the reality of life in the UK. His initial conceptions have been betrayed by his experiences. The feelings arising from these experiences make him lose focus on what he has come to do in the UK. He feels he was more focused in Nigeria and this helps inform his judgment of the whole UK experience as a disappointment to him. James continues by describing impact of the negative experiences he has had in the UK.

Researcher: Tell me how you feel about these experiences

James: *"like I have told you earlier that sleepless nights and restless days are my own world, the whole 365 days of the year is 365 days of trauma, so for me here, there is no hope. There seem to be no change coming forth and there seem to be no help coming forth and I am already a confused man because my name has become confused.com, everything I am doing, I don't know what I am doing again. I have been made more confused by the PhD which I have labelled a useless effort to make. Although my supervisor has sacrificed so much to put me on track, but the problems remains that to adapt to this academic culture is very traumatic because it is very difficult. I lose concentrations because these things are very uneasy for me, at a point I am still questioning myself whether I am the same person or is it a different person. The problem is the system because it does not provide for enough orientation to prepare visitors on these expectations so the preparation they give on arrival are simply inadequate to prepare one's mind on the true situation in the journey in the UK. So the orientation is useless, the truth is not revealed, they allow it to unfold so that you see it and suffer it and they park themselves somewhere and watch you fail and they say you have failed"* [In extract 6 from James's narrative].

James spoke about his experiences of sleepless nights, which according to him are what occupy his own world in the UK. He feels that he is a confused person who does not know what he is doing anymore. The experience of studying for his PhD has also worsened the experiences he is having because he is finding it difficult to get it right. This student feels he is unable to cope with the academic culture of the UK, which he terms "traumatic". The difficulties that James is undergoing give him a feeling of losing concentration in life and not being sure who he really is. His sense of self is disconnected, as he describes, because he is not sure if he is still the same person he used to be. James considers the orientation he was given inadequate because his feelings are that the challenges he was going to face were not explained in any depth. James' opinion on the orientation is that it is evasive and does not reveal the true nature of what will be experienced by students. His narrative about his experience of the university and his feelings about their activities can be seen in the extract below.

James: *"The fact is that there was no ground work to make you successful and they just leave someone with the supervisors to suffer, I pity the supervisors because people who are not refined to the UK culture are pushed to them and they begin to suffer, some of them sense the trauma in some of the students and they will be asking "are you ok" which means they know you are not ok. I always say that I am ok when I am not ok. How is it going? I will say all is very well and what do you expect me to say although it is not well with me at all. In the real sense I am dying. What are they even asking me when they have not done anything to help. They didn't prepare me, all this things are just official window dressing, they are traumatic simple"* [In extract 7 from James's narrative].

James feels that the university is not doing much to help students have a successful stay because, in his opinion, students suffer at the hands of their supervisors, who he considers scapegoats for the university. He feels that foreign students are abandoned to their supervisors to suffer and he also believes that these supervisors are aware of what he calls "trauma" among the students. As he explains, the real true nature of his condition is that he is dying while smiling. James speaks about experiencing a condition that is terrible and causing him not to progress because of all his struggles. In his own words, James feels that his experiences here in the UK are simply "traumatic". He further explains the way he feels in the extract below.

James: *"The thing that comes to my mind is to go back and take care of my family. They remind me that I have made the wrong choice and I have missed the pathway to my development by coming here. The situation remind me of my family that I am missing and this condition keep reminding me that I am not worth my salt when I know that I am worth more than what this situation is presenting me as. In the face of all this challenges, I always think instead of dying here let me go home and take care of my family because I keep telling myself that this system cannot kill me. In fact I call it nothing if I abandon this program and go because this is very distressing"* [In extract 8 from James's narrative].

James' thought about his experiences, as he narrates above, is that he should abandon his studies and go back to Nigeria to take care of his family. He feels that he was wrong to accept the scholarship to come and study in the UK. He states that his development as an individual has been halted by the kind of experience he is having in the UK. The conditions he is in, as he explains, make him doubt his self-worth. James tells of experiencing a very distressing state of being and feels he would not regret abandoning the PhD or going back to Nigeria. His appraisal of UK education is that it is not commensurate with the amount of suffering he is experiencing. He concludes his story by re-examining his current position and who he was in Nigeria in the extract below.

James: *"This condition is serious because it make me uncomfortable, unsettled, it disorganises my comportment so all this things are not supposed to happen to somebody*

who has reached my level. I came here with a very good degree, I went through all level of my academic, pursuing my academics and getting them at a sitting. Doing my first degree and getting a very nice grade, I know that I was academically balanced so all this challenges are manmade here, and I know that the system is designed to put trauma on people whether they know it or not. It is designed that way and they need to modify it because there is no gain in it, that is all I have to tell" [In extract 9 from James's narrative].

James' story of his experience of life in the UK in terms of academic progress makes him reflect on his previous academic performance in Nigeria. James' conclusion about the condition of learning in the UK is that it is designed to foster trauma in foreign students. He says this because he believes he was a successful scholar in Nigeria but his current place of study has made him doubt his abilities. His opinion as he concludes his story is that the education system in the UK should be modified because he feels that foreigners are finding it difficult to cope with the system.

5.2.6 Narrator 6 Amadi (pseudonym) "Loneliness becomes a key issue like I have experienced"

BACKGROUND: Amadi is currently in the 2nd year of his PhD studies and he also studied for his masters in the UK. Amadi is a 40-year-old man who is married and has children. He left them in Nigeria as he was offered a scholarship to study in the UK by the Nigerian state government.

Researcher: As you know, I am researching Nigerian students' experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me the story of your experience of studying here in the UK.

Amadi: *"I have a lot to tell about my experience but I think it is more useful for me to focus on what have been the problems and most specifically, I will focus on one which is the problem of social integration of Nigerian students in the UK. Social integration is a very important issue for anybody who is moving from environment A to environment B and the ability of such a person to settle comfortably depends on how easily the person can integrate with the people he met in the new environment. For people who moved from later years in their lives, for example if you have married in your country and have wife and children, you don't have the freedom the teens have to really integrate and socialise and so it becomes a problem for somebody like me who came in my early 40s to the UK to study"* [In extract 1 from Amadi's narrative].

In the above extract from Amadi's narrative, he starts his story by recounting that he has had a great deal of experience but has chosen to begin his narrative by

speaking about the problems and difficulties in the life he has lived in the UK. The first problem that Amadi describes as part of his experience is the issue of isolation and lack of social integration. His analysis of the reason why he is experiencing these difficulties is that it is because of his age and marital status. Amadi's inability to settle in as he should is related to his feeling of being lonely due to his age and the fact that he is being reserved due to his consciousness of his marital status back in Nigeria. His narrative continues to unfold as he narrates more of this experience below.

Amadi: *"I don't have all the liberties to make friends even with people of the opposite sex and this is because I am not free to explore life. Friendship has a way of making it very easy to settle down in an environment and get started. The fact that you came to a country at a certain stage of your life where you are so to say restricted in your relationship, so you find that you have to endure a periods of imposed loneliness. Simply because as a Christian and as a married person you are not expected to go having dates and to go having intimate relationship with people or to opposite sex, loneliness becomes a key issue like I have experienced"* [In extract 2 from Amadi's narrative].

Amadi's story continues to unfold in relation to the experience of loneliness which, according to him, is self-imposed because his religion and self-control deprive him of building a relationship with the opposite sex. Amadi feels that he is not free to mingle with the opposite sex and feels restricted from building any relationship with these people. He feels he is not settled because of the friendship he is lacking in his experience in UK, something which he expands on in the extract below.

Amadi: *"I know that there is no easy way out of loneliness if it becomes a problem in a foreign land like this, simply because to be less lonely you need to develop relationships where you have a heart to heart relationship with people of same sex or opposite sex. It is through heart to heart discussions that you get to relieve some of the pressures of study. Having being removed from the success of such interactions in my home country from where I am coming from. In my home country if I get tired of either studying, I know who to go to and have some relief even if it is with my wife, I can play with my kid which will relieve me. Going out to meet friends relieves me of the stress of work. But here there are no channels of relief of tension, so you find that one is bottled in emotions that has no channels of relief most of the time and so it is a major problem that I have experienced here as a person"* [In extract 3 from Amadi's narrative].

Amadi describes living a life in the UK that is devoid of what he calls "heart to heart discussion", according to him this is one way of getting relief from stress. He feels that the pressure of studying, which would be reduced if he had the opportunity to make friends, is affecting him. Amadi describes the relief he got from visiting friends

and spending time with his family when under stress back in Nigeria, but this is something which has been lost because he is away from home. These experiences that Amadi has had while studying in the UK have made him believe that there are no channels for relieving his stress and tension. He also feels that his emotions are suppressed because they are not released as there are no opportunities for him to do so. He continues his story by talking about other experiences he has had in the UK and how he feels about them.

Amadi: *"You know they are cultural differences from Nigeria where I am coming from and the UK here where I live but I don't know whether it is important to mention them. But yea, you leave Nigeria where basically we are religious people and you come to a place where people are happy to say that they do not do religion. You find it quite unsettling and you begin to wonder, if a society does not hold religion seriously what then holds the fabric of the society together. So, it is a major concern and differences because relating with these kinds of people is very difficult. Secondly, family life is serious issue in Nigeria, here it is also played down seriously, marriages, families and in-laws, such issues are not taken with the kind of sense of responsibility we take them in Nigeria. So it is also a point of difference which always leave me wondering and thinking of coping with this kind of society"* [In extract 4 from Amadi's narrative].

Amadi has also experienced the UK in other ways that he is not comfortable with. He narrates how uneasy he is when relating to people in the UK, especially because there are differences in the ways people live their lives in the UK and Nigeria. He finds it difficult to mingle with people in the UK because, according to him, people boldly say that they do not have a religion and he feels that relating to such people is difficult for him. Amadi also speaks about how family, which he upholds as very important, is not the same in the UK. His experiences of this also give him a sense of concern about how to cope with all the differences he has noticed. He also describes other experiences below.

Amadi: *"I have also experienced differences in life styles associated with individuality as opposed to the communal life style we have in Africa and I tend to be affected by this because we don't live like this. Here people are very individualistic and on their own so you find some element of some coldness and tendency to be reserved among people here that is different from our own culture of being warm, being expressive and being open and accommodating of other people. Visitors are not really or are seen as breaking into ones' privacy. So these aspects of differences have affected and impacted on my life in a negative way. But then, different as they are I arrived at a period when the differences I see here cannot change my orientation. Perhaps it's because of my age by the time I came. So I have been able to keep to my beliefs and to keep to my life style even though I have had to adjust to accommodate the people I met here but it is a difficult thing to do to be honest. Although I have not felt comfortable with these issues as they are affecting my life but I just have to live and finish my study. I am not finding it funny but what choice do I have so I just say what they want to hear and avoid what they don't want to hear. But this is not always easy because you have to compromise a lot to be able to stay here"* [In extract 5 from Amadi's narrative].

In his story, Amadi says that people in the UK are reserved and on their own, which he considers an individuality factor. He feels that the communal life he lived in his home country of Nigeria is missing in the UK and that he is affected by the lifestyle he has experienced. Amadi narrates that strangers or foreigners of his kind are seen as intruding into the privacy of people when he attempt to get close to them. He feels that the experiences he has had in the UK cannot change the way he behaves and what he believes in. However, he does do his best to accommodate others even though it is difficult for him. As he explains, he has no option left other than to behave in the manner the UK system and culture wants, even at the expense of his own personal happiness. Amadi continues his story below.

Amadi: *“People who do not welcome people in their life like I have experienced here are difficult to interact with. Yes it not always easy fitting in because in the course of managing these differences I have been through a lot of emotions as I have lived here for nearly two years. You still feel like going home because that is where you find that you feel more comfortable because likes attracts like you know. So the mere fact that this is a place where you have friendship, you have family, you have similarities of lifestyle with more people, you find that you enjoy staying in that environment more than here where you are an alien. The feeling is always there that you don’t belong here and you are living among people who don’t think, behave, interact the way you will normally want them to do. You feel more uncomfortable here because there is this adage that east, west, north, south, home is the best. I feel the urge to go back home from time to time. In a foreign country you are simply struggling to fit into situations that are strange to you and it is a problem, a struggle that there is no choice but to cope because it is a problem”* [In extract 6 from Amadi’s narrative].

In the above, he narrates that he feels that the status of being a stranger, or an “alien” to use his own word, has dominated his experience of being in the UK. As Amadi relates, he places a lot of significance on the conditions of life he enjoyed in his hometown, which have been lacking in his life while studying in the UK. His narrative exposes his feeling of being incompatible with the people he has met in the UK, which has also left him with heightened emotions. Although it is known to him that he does not belong in the UK, as he says, he explains that such feelings do not give him joy. His sense of self, as his narrative reveals, is affected because what defines him is not in the UK but in Nigeria, where he has come from. His story continues below.

Amadi: *“Moving beyond some of these things I have told you, I think psychologically the effects of being here is painful. These differences can affect the productivity of my academics because the feeling of loneliness, being in a strange environment and nostalgia alone can affect the time one gives to his study. Although for some people it could lead to some antisocial behaviour. Some people who feel they have lost the content they had back home could lead them to some anti-social behaviours like violence, joining the bad kinds of people,*

getting drunk and getting into trouble because people manage these problems differently. Some end up in jail, because these conditions push them into troubles. So I am making a lot of sacrifices to avoid all these ugly things” [In extract 7 from Amadi’s narrative].

Amadi explains that he is experiencing some psychological discomfort within himself owing to the fact that his learning is also affected because of the thoughts he has about being in a strange environment where he finds life very challenging. He also refers of a possible outcome of the kind of experience he has had in the UK by saying that it could lead an individual to behave in a manner that is not accepted by society. Although he has not allowed his experiences to push him into this kind of situation, he feels that experiences like the ones he has had could lead an individual into behaviour with negative consequences. He feels that is important for him to return to his good life and to the place where he belongs. His story continues in the extract below.

Amadi: *“My expectations are not met seriously and I feel some sort of a disappointment. They are surprises and before I came here I thought that here is a place where everything is perfect. But I have just been made to belief that there is no perfect place. The experiences I met on ground was the opposite of my expectations and it is not always easy trying to adjust and face something different from what you expected” [In extract 8 from Amadi’s narrative].*

Amadi’s story reveals a sense of betrayal of what he expected to experience before he came to the UK. He recounts having felt that coming to live and study in the UK would be a perfect life, whereas he has found the opposite to be true. This experience of failed expectations causes him difficulties as he struggles to live the real life he is faced with. Concluding his story, Amadi leaves some words for prospective students coming to the UK to study in the extract below.

Amadi: *“Thank you I hope my story helps you but I had to tell all that because I will say that I came here with a different expectations and I hope that people coming after me will be open minded because our expectations are not always the things we experience” [In extract 9 from Amadi’s narrative].*

As seen in the extract above, Amadi explains that, as his personal experience has taught him, expectations are sometimes not met and people may be affected negatively when this happens.

5.2.7 Narrator 7 Kate (Pseudonym) “As a woman I have a soft mind so I always cry every time”

BACKGROUND: Kate is a third year undergraduate student studying in a UK university. She is 26 years old, from a family of 2 and the second daughter of her parents. She is an orphan who was sponsored by Nigerian government to study for her undergraduate degree.

Researcher: As you know, I am doing a narrative study on Nigerian students' experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me the story of your experience of studying here in the UK.

Kate: *“Ok, my coming here is a great experience for me and the reason why I am here is because of their educational system which I thought was very good but the disadvantage here is too big. I thought my coming to the UK is like going to heaven but reaching to the place different things are the things I saw. I have lived in this country for two years and I have been working for like a year and in my working place I saw different kind of things even in where I study. In the school, I mean I don't really know why the white guys treat the black ones like they do. Even when you go to work you will also see how they do things that will show you that they are showing you some marginalisation and I don't like this. There was a day a black guy in my same work place was terribly marginalised and I saw it happen in my presence which made me feel so sad”* [In extract 1 from Kate's Narrative].

Kate starts her narrative with a display of her feeling of betrayal regarding her expectations prior to her sojourn to the United Kingdom. Her experience of the UK was different from her preconceptions about the UK, as shown in her use of the metaphor “heaven” to describe what she thought life would be like when in the UK. Connecting to her disappointment with her experience in the UK, Kate starts her story with her experience at work, where she feels she is being treated unfairly because she is different in terms of ethnic background. She feels she is being marginalised and she also speaks of a significant experience that happened in her work place which emotionally affected her. The feeling of being discriminated against in her work place makes her judge the UK negatively. She continues to tell her story in the extract below.

Kate: *“I keep asking why are they segregating themselves from us, in the office where I work, the white guys will always segregate themselves whenever the black guys come inside the office, it is racist and it is not good. In my class, like when we want to do group work for example if the lecturer did not put us together, the white guys will select themselves and separate themselves from the black guys, they will never ask a black guy if they are interested in their group and for we black guys, we just have to go together. Even when the lecturer put us together in the group, like I experienced last semester, I was crying because they dint treat me well. I don't find it funny, and this is one question I*

want to ask everyone that will hear this story, why are they doing these things? Are we smelling? Are we that bad? In my own country, we love whites, when we see them, we embrace them. why are they treating us separate? Why? This is something I did not experience when I was in my own country” [In extract 2 from Kate’s narrative].

Kate continues to emphasise the level of marginalization and discrimination she is undergoing as she lives her life in the UK. She speaks of feeling like racism is being directed against her and others like her. Her experience of discrimination is linked to the behaviours of the “white students”, as she calls them, who are not always ready to accommodate her in class group work. She feels unhappy that she is not able to achieve the level of interaction she expected. Meanwhile, she narrated that the black students don’t have a choice but to stick together. She describes feeling neglected, insulted and humiliated, and continues by asking “are we smelling?” with much anger and sadness. She feels that she should be treated fairly as, she explains, in her country people attend to visitors with fairness and warmth. She continues her story with her feelings about her experience in the extract below.

Kate: *“So my coming here I think that everything is like butterfly and so colourful. I thought that they will love me like I love them but I am sorry to say this it is a very bad experience which I will not want anyone coming here to experience. I regret coming to this country as a student, I don’t enjoy any bit of it. Imagine when we are working, they will not expect you to just sit down, we are not machines or computers, we are human being, we get tired. I am not a computer which is another big experience that I have had here that makes me feel so bad here in this country” [In extract 3 from Kate’s narrative].*

Kate points out bluntly that she has had a bad experience and has not received the love she would want and expect to be given in the UK. Expanding on how much she is affected by her experiences, she says she does not want people coming to the UK from Nigeria to experience the same kind of experience she has had.

Narrating her experience of work in the UK, Kate explains that she is treated like a machine, which she feels is a bad experience. This has also affected her perceptions and overall experience in the UK. In her opinion, human beings are not machines but she does not get enough rest as she would like while at work. Kate, in the extract below, speaks about how she feels and how she is affected by her experiences.

Researcher: Please can you tell me how you feel about these experiences.

Kate: *"It gives me a lot of concern, because my plan was that I was going to stay here and study, get experience and become who I want to be then I can be in a position to bring others by telling them how good this place is, but I will never advise anybody to come and suffer all these kind of things I suffer here. Because my own experience has not being a good one so I will never ever tell anybody to come here. Ok look at last December which is the only one I have spent here, it is horrible, I was crying, I will peep from the window and will not see anybody and wonder what kind of life is this. In my country when it is Christmas, people come together to cook, and enjoy their lives but here I suffered a lot of loneliness because I don't have people to visit and no one to visit me. Another thing, you hardly get friends, everyone is on his own even when you are trying to find someone to talk to you will see no one. You go to work, come straight to house, from house to school, and study and that is a very boring life, it borders me so much, it is giving me hypertension, I don't like this country. It borders me a lot honestly and as a woman I have a soft mind and I am always crying because I don't have a strong heart and nobody to help me"* [In extract 4 from Kate's narrative].

In the above extract, Kate feels she is suffering and she is concerned about others who are yet to come. Speaking about an experience which she considers horrible, Kate tells a revealing story of her feelings of loneliness, wanting friends and helplessness in the UK. She feels she lacked the companionship she wants and describes how rigid and structured life is for her, and lacking in options. She also feels bored with the experiences she is having and, in her own words, she expresses a deep feeling of sadness when she says "it is giving me hypertension". She also speaks about how she cries because of her experiences and continues her story in the extract below.

Kate: *"Another thing there are times when they call me from work, I will be feeling bad, my heart will begin to cut, I will be like oh my God, I am afraid of this people because they are not treating me well. It makes me lose my concentration because my body will be there and my heart will not be there. So it is not a good feeling for me. I will also talk about the way our lecturers behave, they will always tell me I can't do this for you, but they do the same thing to others of their same colour, so I keep worrying why and why are they doing this when we are all the same people. My first semester, I was not making the progress I needed because they were not helping me find the answers to my questions like I expected before coming here. So because they are not helping us, we feel so bad to even go to them, I feel afraid of going to them"* [In extract 5 from Kate's narrative].

In the above extract, Kate continues her story by expressing a feeling of fear and agitation whenever she receives a phone call from her work place. Her feeling about the way she is being treated comes into consciousness whenever she receives a phone call from her place of work because she is afraid of what she may be told. She also speaks about her experience of loss of concentration, which she says is connected with her experience in her work place. She feels that the lecturers are not giving her equal treatment as they do not help her in the same way they will help others. These experiences, as she states, make her feel uncomfortable and

unhappy. The feeling of helplessness in the story told by Kate is also connected to how she feels she is being perceived by her lecturers, as she narrates in the extract below.

Kate: *“The lecturers think that we are illiterates who don’t know anything and they treat us like that. In my place I don’t know computer or anything like that in my country and when I came here, I am managing to learn them. If we had computers in my schools back in my country I will learn it before coming. Because of these facilities that is why we are here but they are not seeing it from that point of view and I am not finding it funny. So my dear, I feel like I am betrayed, because I never expected this. This is something I never expected, for goodness sake I thought I am coming to make good friends, they will love me, I will love them. I was like I am going to get 10-15 white friends and they will tell me their experience and I will tell them mine and we will be happy like heaven but for me it turns out to be that this place is hell. To end the story, there is money problem, there is friendship problem. There is even happiness problem. It is not easy to get a good trusted friend here because I am not married, so I was thinking that I was going to get my own husband in this place but with the experience I had here I am not interested in them. In short the place is not an easy place for anyone coming from outside to study”*[In extract 6 from Kate’s narrative].

Kate feels that she is seen as worthless, which is also affecting her judgment of her situations and her experiences. She feels that the lecturers do not see her worth. Her feeling is that, although she has come from a background that is not highly developed like the UK, she expects that it should not be used against her. She expresses her disappointment that she is not seen and perceived as a learner who has sojourned to learn what she could not learn in her own country. However, she feels that she is disappointed in that expectation, using “hell” instead of “heaven” to qualify how intense her experiences in the UK are. Kate had also expected that she might get a husband in the UK within her period of study but all that has changed as she does not feel that she can find a trusted friendship that will lead to marriage. She ends her story by summing up her experience as one that is very difficult for her in terms of finance, friendship and her overall happiness.

5.2.8 Narrator 8 Onyinye (Pseudonym) “You have no one to console you when you are dying here and one can fall into great danger because of that”

BACKGROUND: Onyinye is a 27-year-old 2nd year undergraduate student. She is the youngest daughter of her parents in a family of 4 and she is sponsored to study in the UK by her parents.

Researcher: As you know, I am doing a narrative study on the experiences of Nigerian students in UK universities. Please tell me your experiences of living and studying here in the UK.

Onyinye: *"I am from a low background family in Nigeria and my parents who sent me here are not rich so to say. I have been living here in UK since last 2 years so I am doing my second year now. Firstly I will like to tell you about the things that have made me happy if I will use that word before I tell you the real business of living here. My experience of studying here is that the people here really welcomed me when I came in last two years, I mean the university. They picked me up from the airport and I was like so this is how nice they are. But that was just for that period or that day in fact because since that time they don't care how I manage to survive here where there is no father, no mother or brother or sister or even any relation. This is really bad because I thought they will care and be finding out how I am surviving but I did not know that they are only interested in my school fees and it is very bad. So unless they hear that I am dead, they will not send even a letter to my address to ask if I am doing fine or not and I hate them because of this single behaviour. Money money money in every university that is what their concern is about, not human being"* [In extract 1 from Onyinye's narrative].

In the above extract from Onyinye's narrative, she expresses a great feeling of disappointment about the way the university she is studying with has abandoned her without caring about her welfare while she is studying with them. Expressing a feeling of missing the love and care she left back home, she feels very unhappy that she does not have people of her own around her. She also says that the university she thought she could rely on has left her with the feeling that their interest is only in the money she pays them. This feeling of abandonment, as she explains, influences her negative view of universities in the UK. She continues her story by talking about other experiences that have affected her life in the UK in the extract below.

Onyinye: *"I feel like I lost everything within these two years. I have only one friend in this whole country who I am always together with always. She is not from here because I don't have any white friend but this is not what I expected at all. They are not friendly so I don't want to bug them. Friendship is not by force so if people don't want you all you do is to stay away from them. But in this country is worst because you cannot stay away from them because they are everywhere and this is their country. In the school, there is separation because we are not always together with them since we are considered strangers. In the town too, it is the same thing"* [In extract 2 from Onyinye's narrative].

Onyinye speaks about her experience of people in the UK and feels that they are not friendly as she does not see many opportunities to make friends. Although she is ready to avoid being friends with the "whites", she cannot manage without interacting with them because she lives in their land and will always encounter them. Her experience of friendship in the UK is that it is difficult. A feeling of loneliness also characterises her experience because she speaks of just having one friend and no

one really caring about her like they did in Nigeria. Onyinye continues her story in the extract below.

Onyinye: *"Another experience is financial problem and I am very worried about it because I don't know my fate now. I am in a serious financial problem because my father who sent me here is having financial problems so it is not easy now for me to pay my school fees, my feeding and accommodation money anymore. Life is very stressful now because I cannot afford to live here anymore. I have been working and you know I can only work 20 hours a week and that cannot pay for everything. I was expecting that I will get a good job when I come here so that I can get money to help myself. It is really a challenging time for me in my life. In fact I am depressed and afraid right now. I am so confused of what to do whether to abandon the study and go back to Nigeria but that will be very shameful to my family. I will die if that happens because I cannot stand people pointing at my family and saying look her she went abroad and could not graduate, so it is a thing of shame" [In extract 3 from Onyinye's narrative].*

In the above extract Onyinye speaks about her financial situation and how it has affected her state of mind. She narrates that her financial condition is very bad and that it is becoming difficult for her to continue her education in the UK. She expresses a great deal of concern about her inability to cope with the financial demands facing her because of her father's financial difficulties. She is worried about her stay in the UK since she cannot afford to pay for it with the small amount of money she earns from the work she does. Expressing apprehension, she is worried about her financial difficulties as they may mean that she will have to go back to Nigeria.

The option of going back to Nigeria if she can no longer stay in the UK gives her a lot of worry and concern because of the shame she will face if she does not finish her studies before going home. She has sojourned from a country where people will talk about her negatively if she drops out from university, and she is worried that she may not be able to endure such shame, saying "I will die if that happens". She continues her narrative in the extract below.

Onyinye: *"Sometimes I don't even brush my teeth because I am just scattered, I don't think about myself or food, I am not comfortable, I am stressed out since I came to this country. I don't sleep at night. My work is very early in the morning, I am thinking about my studies and my work because I need to survive, I suffer a lot as a woman. If it is you tell me, will you be comfortable? I can't even smile. Sometimes I see people smiling who are not smiling from their heart because the smile I know back home is different from what is happening here. You have no one to console you when you are dying here and one can fall into great danger because of that. The problem we have is that when people who have studied here come back home they will not tell us the extent of suffering they encountered. They don't say the truth but for me I don't think I will hide anything for anyone because I will tell everyone, that there is no love here, there is no happiness here, you will not be treated well here" [In extract 4 from Onyinye's narrative].*

The experiences Onyinye has had, affect her concern and care for herself. She speaks about neglecting personal care because of her circumstances and about having difficulty sleeping as she worries about balancing work and school activities. She feels that she is suffering too much in her experiences and condition as a woman. Onyinye is emphatically worried about the danger of falling into trouble in the UK because she feels that there will be no one to comfort her. Onyinye has concerns that some of the problems she is going through in the UK have arisen because she was not aware of the potential for them before her sojourn to the UK for her studies. This is because she had never heard of the truth about studying in the UK. She concludes her narrative in the extract below.

Onyinye: *“My academic work is affected now because I cannot concentrate as well at least not with all these problems I am passing through which is also worrying me. Finally now from my experience I will always tell people in details about what I experienced here in school, in work and at home. How I suffered, how I felt lonely, how I cannot take care of myself. If people are very honest with the experience they have when they come here to study, or to do anything else then I tell you people will not come here. I tell you again if I am leaving the UK today and someone ask me at home about my stay here, I will tell them everything I have experienced and how difficult it is for me to survive if I will survive”* [In extract 5 from Onyinye’s narrative].

Concluding her story, Onyinye expresses concern about her studies, which have been affected by the fact that she is not in a good state of mind because of the problems surrounding her that divide her thoughts and attention. However, having experienced many situations that have impacted on her life, she is interested in opening out her world to people so they can learn from her experience, especially those who are yet to come to the UK to study. Meanwhile, she is clearly not completely confident about her survival in the UK as she said “if I will survive”.

5.2.9 Narrator 9 Onyeowo (pseudonym) “I longed for a company but I did not get any”

BACKGROUND: Onyeowo is a 28-year-old final year undergraduate student. She is from a family of 4 and she is self-funding her education in the UK.

Researcher: As you know, I am doing a narrative study of the experiences of Nigerian students studying in UK universities. Please tell me about your experience of studying here in the UK.

Onyeowo: *“Thank you, my experience of studying in the UK has been somehow eventful which I will start from my experience of the university services that are provided by my university. I will say that their student services sometimes provide prompt response to our students needs but although this may not be the same everywhere but my school is certainly trying on that one. I have also received good teaching but there are problems that have also affected me which has first to do with my supervisors and how they attend to our work and the way they give feedback as well. Most supervisors are not sincere with their students and I have encountered it and as students we don’t really have much power to challenge them. Especially for students coming from Nigeria our way of learning is different from the way learning is planned here so we need more attention which we don’t get it and I was thinking that the university will focus more on international student considering our different background”* [In extract 1 from Onyeowo’s narrative].

In the above extract, Onyeowo starts her narrative by praising the university where she is studying for how it has attended to some of her needs. However, as her story continues to unfold, she seems to leave the praise behind immediately in order to recount a sad personal experience with her supervisor which gives her concern about the power relationship between students and their lecturers. As her story continues to develop, she challenges the practices that universities put in place, which do not favour international students like her, as seen in the extract below.

Onyeowo *“International students like us coming from Nigeria meet a lot of problems here in the UK because of the way and condition we manage to come here. I came here on a February and I was late and I had to be assessed by May which is less than three months. How do they expect me to cope when I am still struggling with the weather, the food, the people and the entire new environment and still be expected to perform well within that short period of time? I have not adapted to the method of teaching here and yet I am already facing assessment. This not right and it is very worrisome for some of us. It is not a true test of our academic ability”* [In extract 2 from Onyeowo’s narrative].

As an international student who faced challenges in acclimatizing to her environment when she arrived, Onyeowo is not happy that she was not settled before her first assessment. Being assessed less than three months after her arrival in her university does not seem right to her as she feels that it is an improper way of testing her academic ability. Sounding deeply disappointed, she says *“This is not right and it very worrisome for some of us”*. She continues her story by identifying the possible consequences of not allowing students who have come from abroad to settle in before being assessed.

Onyeowo: *“Struggling to do our assignments and cope with everything within that short period affect our performance. It is a confusing situation because when you fail they will say that you are not working hard when you have not actually being given the opportunity and space of time to prepare. Coming from Nigeria, the system here is strange, the learning is different because some of them are technical and involve the use of facilities that we never used back in Nigeria. The worst thing is that when the provide feedback, they will give you a feedback that looks good even when your score*

shows that you have not done well. It gives me concern because I feel that it is not proper. When you appeal, you will not win the case because they cannot allow the lecturer to be defeated” [In extract 3 from Onyeowo’s narrative].

In the above extract, she explains that the conditions of study in the UK are different from those in her home country, and she feels that some students’ failures when they arrive are not actually due their own weaknesses but a factor that is contingent on the timing of their assessment. She also describes the complexity of studying in the UK compared to in the home country and justifies the need to allow international students the opportunity of gaining proper knowledge of how to use some of the learning facilities before they are evaluated or assessed. Her story further touches on the manner in which students who appeal do not win and she feels that this is not a good practice. Onyeowo is also concerned and worried that her feedback and scores are not commensurate. Her narrative continues as she speaks about her experience outside the university in the extract below.

Onyeowo: *“Apart from school experience, there is the weather which is a bad experience for me as person I don’t know about others. It gives me concern because I have to work and earn money to pay my bills but sometimes with the weather I will not just feel like going out. But I don’t have any choice but to do the work otherwise I can’t survive. Also I don’t have reservation in my life, I love communal life and I am a social person but coming here has changed everything about me. It is affecting me because people in this country are very reserved and there is a limitation to whom you can interact with which I find very difficult to cope with. The system of knowing people here is so enclosed and considering that I have lived an open life all my life, it has an impact on me negatively. It is also going to have an impact on me when I go back because it will be very difficult for me to fit in back again as normal” [In extract 4 from Onyeowo’s narrative]*

Expanding on her experiences outside the university setting, Onyeowo narrates being affected by the UK weather and how she does not have any choice but to survive the weather, especially when she has to work. She speaks about social life in the UK and how it contrasts with her life style. She feels that UK social interaction is closed while she is an open person with a desire to interact freely. These norms, which she cannot change, are negatively affecting her as an individual, as she explains. Her narrative also expresses her concern that her social identity may be affected by the system in the UK. This is because she is concerned that she might not live her normal open and unreserved life when she returns to Nigeria because she is adapting to the UK life style. As her story continues to develop, she talks about some other situations she has encountered, as seen in the extract below.

Onyeowo: *“I am forced to live a lonely life that is affecting my studies because only a happy person will perform better. The life we live here is very difficult because I have to be very sceptical with people and living without trusting anybody and relating with them is very sad. My coping mechanism is to stay at home, sing, go to church, and watch something on YouTube. Sometimes I cannot sleep and I will start crying because I will be like I have left my good world to come and start experiencing these situations and it is impacting on me. I am just on my own, my openness has worsened because this environment does give me the opportunity of talking to many people”* [In extract 5 from Onyeowo’s narrative].

Continuing her story, Onyeowo expresses deep concern about her life in the UK and her feeling of loneliness. This, as she notes, does not make her feel any better. She feels that performing better and happiness are related, which is also affecting her academic performance. Living a life of trust in the UK is difficult for her because of the way she feels about the people around her. However, as she describes, she resorts to different means of trying to make herself happy to enable her carry on with her stay in the UK. Her experience of loneliness sometimes makes her worry and cry. Some of her worries are that her identity and openness to people are deserting her because she feels that the environment does not give her the opportunity to develop in that line. She speaks about a specific personal experience she had that affected her emotions in the extract below.

Onyeowo: *“The worst moment I have also experienced as a result of being here in the UK was about something that affected me very much when I heard that my grandmother has died in 2012. I could not go home because of my studies and because I did not have the resources to travel for her burial. I am very close to my grandmother and her death was a real pain to me. I felt so lonely, life was so miserable and there was no one to comfort me. I longed for a company but I did not get any, I was so depressed, distressed because I needed relief but I did not get it. It was a very painful experience, very very I mean”* [In extract 6 from Onyeowo’s narrative].

In the above extract, Onyeowo tells the story of a personal experience of loneliness and a significant event in her life that affected her deeply. The death of her grandmother and Onyeowo’s inability to travel back to her country for the burial impacted on her emotions as she experienced emotional weakness and pain. Although she could not manage to go home because of her poor financial state, she also could not be comforted by anyone. Stressing the enormity of her experience of that situation, Onyeowo emphasises that she passed through a difficult time by using the phrase *“very painful, very very I mean”*. She continues her narration of her experience of life in the UK in the extract below.

Onyeowo: *“So my dear, lack of money, stress, loneliness, the weather of UK, poor social life, sleepless nights and many other experiences I have encountered here in this country I will practically say that they are not pleasing to anyone. Although I can’t help these conditions, I still have to manage and finish my programme. Again I am not buoyant even to be travelling around because I have always faced financial challenges from the first day it makes me to forgo a lot of things to satisfy others. It is my duty to pay my tuition fees, pay for my house rent, feed myself and take care of my other needs. I deny myself a lot of things sometimes leaving the social to satisfy the physiological and this is not the right way to live. I am hoping that when I finish, with my certificate I will have a better life again”* [In extract 7 from Onyeowo’s narrative].

In her narrative above, Onyeowo sums up her experiences and how she feels about them. Her experiences range from not having enough money to meet her personal needs to feeling stressed, feeling lonely and being affected by weather conditions. More hopefully, she is confident that her adversities will prove worthwhile when she gets her certificate from the UK, which she primarily believes will return her to a better life. She has to prioritise her needs by forgoing some of them, which does not seem a good life to her but one that she cannot help but accept. She feels that she is denying herself the good life she desires by forgoing a social life to satisfy physiological needs. She also talks about her plans after studying in the UK and how she feels that being a woman is affecting her experiences in the UK in the extract below.

Onyeowo: *“But I am going home immediately I finish my studies because I don’t think I will be beneficial here. I love my communal life style so much that I can’t wait to go back to it. I remembered the day I woke up and walked pass one man, when I greeted him ‘good morning’, he ignored me, and I felt so humiliated because in my country people don’t ignore someone who greets them. So it is a very sad experience for people to ignore me when I greet them but I have no choice but to accept and bury myself in my emotions”* [In extract 8 from Onyeowo’s narrative].

Emphasising her intention to leave the UK immediately after her studies, Onyeowo also feels that she will not be useful in the UK if she remains after her studies. Linking events that have happened to her with her experience of people in the UK, Onyeowo speaks about a significant experience that affected her deeply when she was ignored by someone she greeted. This experience, she says, emotionally affected her, making her long to go home to embrace the communal life which she felt she was missing in her life. She ends her narrative in the extract below.

Onyeowo: *“I think that the universities can help reduce our suffering in some ways because as an international student, I face a lot of things that can actually be reduced. First of all the issue of the universities not caring about the international students most is bad. They should always do this kind of study you are doing to know what we are passing through with them. They can develop a strategy to*

monitor how we are surviving. So we cannot learn much with all the conditions that surround us. I spend a lot of money schooling here, I mean money that will do so many things for my family back home. We are intelligent but because we are not getting the help we need it is making us to be seen as not achieving. International students like us are the people sustaining these institutions and they should in turn help us achieve our aims. If English becomes a compulsory course of module, students can gain good communication skills and be able to perform better. The drop in sessions are not the best because international students don't use them but if any other means of knowing what can be done to help us is in place then they can actually do better. This is my experiences here in the UK it is not the right way to live but like I said I can't help it"[In extract 9 from Onyeowo's narrative].

As Onyeowo concludes, she explains that she feels that universities can be of help to international students like her in some areas. Her opinion is that universities in the UK should pay more attention to students from international backgrounds because of the differences between where they come from and the situations they will face in the UK. One of the issues she has experienced which she feels can be managed by universities is communication difficulties. She believes this need to be addressed by making English language a compulsory course for international students. Onyeowo feels that the difficulties facing international students reduce what they can achieve.

As Onyeowo expresses in her story, international students like her expend a huge number of resources on living and studying in the UK, so they should be adequately taken care of to enable them achieve their aims. She also argues that the drop-in sessions that universities have for international students are ineffective because, in her experience, international students do not use these services as they should. She suggests that universities should undertake the kind of study in this thesis to enable them know what their international students face. She reiterates that her experiences in the UK are not the best but that there is little or nothing she can do about this.

5.2.10 Narrator 10 Amina (Pseudonym) "Seriously I can't wait to leave this place indeed"

BACKGROUND: Amina is a 2nd year undergraduate student. She is 24-years-old, from a family of 4 and the oldest daughter of her parents. She is sponsored to study in the UK by her father.

Researcher: As you know Amina, I am doing a narrative study of Nigerian students' experiences of studying in the UK. Please tell me about your experiences of studying here in the UK and how they have impacted on you.

Amina: *“Thank you very much for helping the world know about what it really is to be an international student because some people don’t know that all that is glittering is no gold. Let me start with how I came here. I have always told my parents that I wanted to go abroad and study where everything is sweet and lovely. I did not know that it is not the way this place is. My father is sponsoring me here. He did it because we want our family name to be among the families that have someone abroad. So when I arrived two years ago surprisingly I saw the real UK. The weather is so cold, the white people were all indoors, there was no body to chat with, and that was when I realised that it was not the way I thought when I was in Nigeria. It was strange and distressing and the story of my live in the UK is big”* [In extract 1 from Amina’s narrative].

Amina starts her narrative by recounting her false impression of the UK before she sojourned. This, according to her, taught her a lesson about how things may appear different from a distance. She explains that she has not come to the UK to study because her family is rich but because of societal recognition in her home country, which has led her father to make the sacrifice of sending her to study in the UK. As she narrates, she has fully come to terms with the true nature of the UK, which is different from what she thought it would be. She speaks about experiencing cold weather and not finding someone to interact with, which were both uncomfortable for her. She continues her story in the extract below by describing the experiences she has had and how she feels about them.

Amina: *“So, I will say it has not been easy studying here in this country. I know Nigeria has its own aspect when it comes to education by not providing facilities and all that. But things are much easier in Nigeria than here. Fine we have all the facilities and all the equipment here, but their way of doing things is not good. Imagine a ,lecturer will come into the class and all he is doing is just slide, slides, slide for some hours and everybody go his on her own and you go into the text book to read, text book that you are not the one that wrote it . How are you going to understand it? Everything is difficult, and when you fail they will say that they will send you back to Nigeria”* [In extract 2 from Amina’s narrative].

Amina talks about her dilemmas and her feelings about how coming the UK has affected her. She complains about the teaching method used in the UK and she does not feel that the method of teaching is enabling her to learn. Although Amina agrees that there are learning facilities in the UK which are not available in Nigeria, she is not satisfied with the method of teaching by using slides, which she feels does not explain things in depth. Lamenting on the consequences of failing due to students’ inability to understand properly what they are taught, Amina complains about universities threatening to send international students home when they fail. She continues her story by talking about other experiences she has had in the UK in the extract below.

Amina: *“Every little thing, visa, they will start threatening us with visa that they will send us back to Nigeria as if we don’t have a home, or we don’t like where we are coming from. Honestly I don’t like the way that the UK people threat the international student here. Imagine an incident that happened to me now, I am currently passing through. A lecturer gave us an assignment without asking us not to submit it on turnitin, the work she gave to us is something that every student is supposed to write a similar thing about, but few people are being picked on that particular module for collusion. And this is a module that if they are to be sincere about collusion, the whole class room will be involved and they picked only us. And looking from the students SID numbers and people that we did the study, all of us are all Nigerian and all of us are all black. I think they are just, how I am going to put it, this word like, they are being racist”* [In extract 3 from Amina’s narrative]

Amina talks about the situations that international students face with their universities, which she feels threatens them because they have the power to send them back to Nigeria. She feels that it is an irrational threat. She further speaks about an experience she had in her class where she was alleged to have been involved in ‘collusion’. Amina’s feeling about this experience is that it was targeted at punishing the black students in the class, stating that all the students who were picked up for the offence were black. She feels that the entire class should have been implicated in the offence because of the nature of the assignment. She sees this experience as an example of discrimination against black students and expresses the depth of her feelings about it when she says *“they are being racist”*. She continues her story in the extract below.

Amina: *“Though they will not show it to you but they are being racist, you go to the lecturer that you don’t understand something, yet they criticise you in front of the student. In fact they stress us a lot, there are a lot of things going on in our lives here. They make students go through hell. You have to pay money to re-sit, they don’t care how we get the money, how our parents are struggling and suffering to get that money and all they want is money, money money. They will threaten you that whenever you don’t pay they will report you to the embassy, that they will send you back to Nigeria, making us to be very afraid of everything”* [In extract 4 from Amina’s narrative].

Amina emphasises her dislike of the manner in which lecturers threat students like her in class. She talks about lecturers criticising them in public. She feels that this is not a good practice because such actions leave the international students devastated. She feels that UK universities are very conscious about the money international students pay them without considering how difficult it is for their parents in Nigeria to sponsor them to study abroad. She reiterates that universities inject fear into them by threatening to send them back to Nigeria, which she feels is a strategy designed to take advantage of the Nigerian students studying with them. In the extract below she makes the statement *“they are really making us live in hell”* to emphasise the degree of pain and difficulty she is experiencing.

Amina: *“They always threaten that they will report us to the embassy, they are really making us live in hell. Ever since this issue of mine with collusion came out, I have not had a rest of mind, they also confuse us and they don’t place us on how to go about things. My friend missed her course, they didn’t put the course on her own time table, and she missed the course. She is supposed to be in her year 2 by this January but she is doing that course that she fails to do and the girl was confused because nobody put her through. She is going through hell. She is going to pay for that module, but because she is naive the school took advantage of her”* [In extract 5 from Amina’s narrative].

Amina expresses how much discomfort she has been through since she was alleged to have committed the offence of collusion. She talks about how she has had no peace of mind and she uses the example of her friend to help explain why she feels that her university is not guiding international students appropriately. She says her friend went through ‘hell’ because of her experience because there was no one to guide her. As Amina’s story deepens, she describes her continuous worry about her stay in the UK in the extract below.

Amina: *“These are the things that we international students are passing through here. They are taking advantage of us here in this country because they will not try it with the UK students. We are afraid of what they can do that is why they are taking us for granted and doing all that they want to satisfy their profit interest. If I had my way I would have gone to one private school in Nigeria and stayed in my country, rather than coming here and feeling insecure. Because right now this country is so insecure for me because of the way they handle things in this country. I have had so many encounters that have affected me”* [In extract 6 from Amina’s narrative].

Amina continues her story by talking about her belief that UK universities take advantage of international students and do not treat UK home students in the same way. Justifying her opinion on this, Amina believes that international students are afraid of being sent back to Nigeria and that universities take advantage of their vulnerability. Amina sees UK universities as pursuing only financial interests without taking good care of their international students. She explains that she would go back to Nigeria to study with a private university if that was possible for her because she feels very insecure about living and studying in the UK. Amina continues her story in the extract below.

Amina: *“Another experience that I have here since I came here and right now is that I am passing through financial difficulties because things are very hard for my people back home. I have to move out to go and squat with a friend because I cannot pay my rent and my school fees. I was expecting to be working and making money to help my parents because that is what people used to say in Nigeria that we will be working and schooling. There is this experience I have, when I went to look after a 9 years old girl as a child minder for a girl that her mother travelled and I caught her watching pornography. I punished her for watching that pornography by asking her to kneel down. Now I am being chased by police and social workers for punishing a child who has committed an offense. I*

know if it was back in my country, I know that that thing I asked her to kneel down is nothing because we know how we train our own child. To find job is very difficult in this country, you can't find a good job, no professional job, they only give us care job and even when we go to care for these people they end up putting us in trouble saying we have done this, we have done that. Right now, my life is so unstable because, I am having issue with school with collusion, I am having case with police, I am having financial problem, this country have made my life so so unbearable because I came to study in their country" [In extract 7 from Amina's narrative].

In the above extract, Amina narrates her experience of facing financial difficulties since coming to the UK for her studies. These have made it difficult for her to pay her house rent and she now squats with a friend. Relating her poor financial situation to an experience she had when she did child minding for someone, Amina talks punishing a 9-year-old girl for watching pornography. She felt it was good to punish the little girl so that she would learn but to her disappointment she is now being followed by the police and social workers for doing what she felt was right. She compares the laws in the UK with those in Nigeria and justifies her action of making the 9-year-old kneel down as a way of correcting her bad attitude. Amina's feeling about the UK is that there are no decent jobs for black people, and when they eventually find a job there will be a concerted effort to get them in trouble. In all these challenges, Amina feels unsettled, saying "*Right now, my life is so unstable*". She also feels that she is having a lot of negative experiences as a person, ranging from her alleged involvement in a collusion offence at university to her involvement with the police with regard to the 9-year-old and to her financial difficulties. Narrating with a deep sense of worry, she relates her experiences to the fact that she is alone in the UK and the fears that surround her life in the extract below.

Amina: "*A country that I don't have a mother, I don't have a father or anybody to help me, and they are making life so unbearable and yet they will say that they are taking care of international students when the truth is that we are going through hell studying with them. It is we that are here that knows what we are passing through every day and I cannot sleep in this country because of one problem or the other. They make you have fear and tension in every little thing you do. I am praying that God will help me to stay here and graduate and I will never come back to this country. Because it is our school fees that are developing their own country yet they are making life unbearable for us*" [In extract 8 from Amina's narrative].

It is clear that Amina expects more from the university she is studying with because she feels that she has no family to take care of her in the UK. Amina expresses a feeling of being disappointed because she talks about universities priding themselves on taking care of their international students when they are not. Fear

and deep insecurity occupy Amina's life in the UK because she is always afraid and tense. Meanwhile, Amina cannot wait to finish her programme and go back to Nigeria. She expresses dislike for the UK, saying that she will not come back to the UK for anything. The expression "*I will never come back to this country*" shows how much the experiences Amina has had in the UK have affected her perceptions. She is very sure that the fees she is paying to the university are being used to develop the country while the goose that lays the golden eggs is suffering. She continues her story in the extract below.

Amina: *"Ok look at finding friends, it is not easy but thank God we have Nigerian students as well, so it is easier to associate with my fellow Nigerian because I don't have any white friends, because they are all racist. They have problem so we avoid them as much as we can, so we just stick to our Nigerian friends. Right now, I am confused about this whole thing, I am not myself, I have lost weight because of thinking about all that is troubling me. I came here to study but now look at the mess that I have found myself into for something that mere hearing alone would irritate your ears like what are the police wasting their time for a spoilt child. It has really weighed me down and now I don't even know where I stand in my academic anymore because I have not even started classes. Because I don't know where to start from, my mind is so divided from myself. My dear, this country I am really tired of this country and I am really tired to my honest truth. This country has made my life so unbearable since the day I stepped into this country. I have never being myself since then, scared of police, scared of this and every little thing you do, every small thing, police will knock at your door, this country is not safe for anybody at all. In fact it is better that I face armed robbers in Nigeria than to face criminal record here and go to jail, because arm robbers might come and take my money but they will not kill me. But here you will have a criminal record and they will still bundle you back to Nigeria making it the same thing. So my life is so turn apart right now, I am not myself"* [In extract 9 from Amina's narrative]

In the above extract, Amina talks about how difficult it is for her to make friends with people in the host country. This difficulty means she only has Nigerian students as her friends because she feels that there is discrimination when it comes to relating to people in the host country. Amina's situation in the UK is affecting her concentration on her studies. She talks about r feeling confused and separated from herself, which has also made her lose weight. She regrets every bit of her experience. Emphasising again her involvement with the police concerning the 9-year-old girl she punished, Amina has not come to terms with the reason why she is being punished for doing what she feels was the right thing.

Amina states that she does not know herself anymore, which is really an expression of a deep feeling of self-disruption and confusion. She is tired of living in the UK and would prefer to be robbed in Nigeria by armed robbers than continue facing the conditions that face her in the UK, which may end up tarnishing her image. She feels

that her life has crashed and she is not in touch with herself anymore. She also feels disoriented and disorganised and talks about other significant events she has experienced in the extract below.

Amina: *“Like when I first came to UK when I was doing my foundation, an incident happened, I failed two of my modules, so the college said you have to redo all the modules including the ones you passed, I said ok, I did it and then I passed it. So for me to move into the second semester they said they don’t have enough student to do the semester with me so because of that I am going to do it in January when I am supposed to do it in December. Those people frustrated my life, they did frustrate my life and if I do it in January I would have to go back to Nigeria and wait for like 5 months before coming back to do my main course. I have to fight and battle with them, then finally I have to apply to another college to finish the remaining semester that I have. Ok, to pay me the money since I dint do the module with them, this people refused to pay me until my parent threatened to take them to court before they even paid that money it was like six months after”*[In extract 10 from Amina’s narrative].

She narrates an experience while she was doing her foundation course before her main course in which she felt that she had been cheated. She feels her life was frustrated and expresses this very succinctly: *“Those people frustrated my life, they did frustrate my life”*. Amina believes that she was intentionally maltreated and talks about the university wanting to take her money until her parents took the step of going to court, when her money was reimbursed. Speaking about teaching and learning in the UK, Amina, in the extract below, expresses her belief that she is not learning as she should do.

Amina: *“I was thinking that coming here will make me learn more but in fact their way of teaching has even reduced my way of understanding and my way of putting interest in studies. In Nigeria we study very hard to pass and we know what we are doing but here, slide, slide, slide and we too, we just follow with the laziness and everything we just go and read slide, we don’t care anymore. So their way of teaching is bringing down our way and effort in reading and this is very bad. Honestly it has made us to be not as active as we use to be in Nigeria. So these are my experiences in the UK as a student and I don’t think that anything can be done because this people think they know too much and it is their land we cannot come to their land and tell them what to do. It is just that me I have already put my two legs inside it so I cannot come out otherwise my parents money will waste that is why me I am just following them until when I am done, then I am out for good”* [In extract 11 from Amina’s narrative].

In the above extract, Amina concludes that the UK has not helped her learn much because the method of teaching makes her lazy. She feels that she is not motivated to read, which is contrary to her expectation before coming to the UK. She compares learning in the UK with learning in Nigeria, and she is of the opinion that she was better motivated and taught in Nigeria than she is in the UK. Her experiences in the UK have impacted on her life and she does not think that there is anything

international students can do since they cannot change the system in the UK. Although she is not comfortable, she narrates that the fact that she is in the UK already and the money her parents have spent is the only reason why she has not gone back to Nigeria. She concludes her story in the extract below.

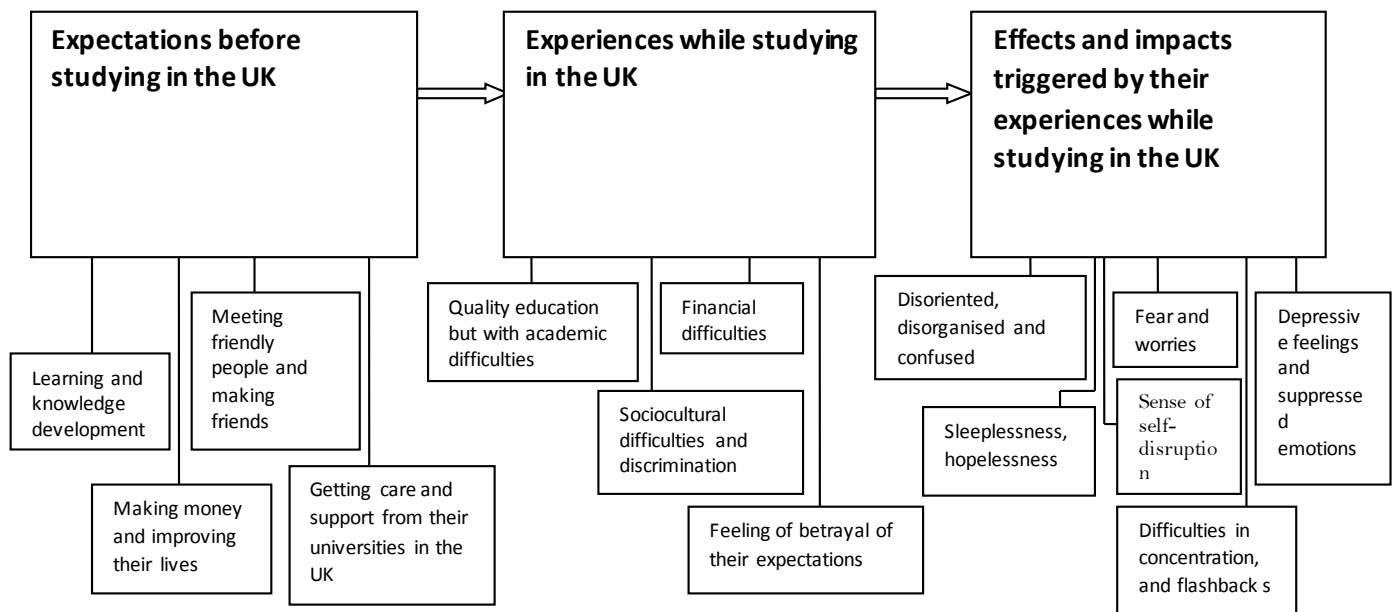
Amina: *“So it is now for people that are listening to what we are saying to take our advice or they will come and join us and experience what we are experiencing now. We that are here is saying it is not rosy here, cold will finish you, money will finish you everything here is money, if you don’t have one penny you will die of hunger, your friend will not help you. Your neighbour will not help you nobody will help you. There is nobody to visit you and you are on your own. So from my experience if people can listen to this advice, they should go and try other countries and see so that we can know about their own experience. I know it will not be as worse as this country because what we have seen is not worth bringing others to come and see. That has been my experience in the UK, thank you”* [In extract 12 from Amina’s narrative].

Having experienced a great number of pains and difficulties by coming to study in the UK, Amina emphatically states that she would not want other students from Nigeria to experience the same events, and she wants them to know that living and studying in the UK is not so good. Amina’s advice is that prospective students should not come to the UK because she is not sure that they will not face the kinds of experiences that she has suffered. She mentions some of the challenges that will face them, such as not finding help from anyone and living a lonely life without others caring about their existence. She also advises that they should sojourn to other countries so that she can also hear about their experiences, which she feels will be much better than those in the UK.

5.3 Cross-narrative thematic analysis and result of the interviews with the 10 narrators in the study

In this section, the main themes which have emerged from the individual narrative analyses of the 10 narrators’ stories are presented. The purpose is to enable a presentation of findings based on the common themes in the life experiences of the participants in this study. The cross-narrative is specifically located based on participants’ expectations before coming to the UK, their experiences while studying in the UK and the impacts or effects triggered by their experiences while studying in the UK. These are represented in the diagram below.

Fig.5.1 Cross-narrative evidence



5.3.1 Expectations before coming to study in the UK

Many of the respondents narrated their expectations about how life would be in the UK before they finally sojourned to study in the UK. These expectations impacted on most of the experiences they had and told in their stories. The major themes that ran across the individual narratives about their expectations before coming to study in the UK were as follows:

- Learning and developing their knowledge
- Meeting friendly people and making friends
- Making money and improving their lives
- Getting care and support from the recruiting universities

5.3.2 Learning and developing their knowledge

As revealed in the individual narratives, it was discovered that most of the respondents had expected that their knowledge would grow and that they would develop their academic skills by coming to study in the UK. One of the respondents, Amina, made this expectation clear in her story when she said: *"I was thinking that coming here will make me learn more"* [In extract 11 from Amina's narrative]. Amina had expected that coming to the UK would increase her knowledge base. This was also

clear in James' story when he said: *"With the thought that coming here will change my life and knowledge which is what we use to think back home"* [In extract 1 from James's narrative]. The expectation that the narrators had was that their participation in UK education would be a medium for personal knowledge development and positive life changes. This is particularly the case because UK education is more valued across the world than the Nigerian education system, which is rated at a low level.

One of the respondents, Nnanna, confirmed this and said: *"Like we know back home and even true there is good education here"* [In extract 1 from Nnanna's narrative]. He acknowledged that the education system in the UK is good, as he had expected prior to his coming to the UK. Others, like Ekene and Kate, also narrated their expectations of education in the UK before they arrived, as seen in the extracts below.

Ekene: *"you know we always think that the quality of learning here in the UK is standard compared to our country Nigeria..."* [In extract 2 from Ekene's narrative] Kate: *"Ok, my coming here is a great experience for me and the reason why I am here is because of their educational system which I thought was very good"* [In extract 1 from Kate's narrative]. These participants made specific references to their expectations of coming to acquire good education in the UK and it was clear that knowledge development was among their major expectations before their arrival.

5.3.3 Meeting friendly people and making friends

In relation to their expectation of meeting friendly people and having the opportunity to make friends in the UK, many of the respondents made reference to the fact that they had expected to interact freely with people in the host country and to make friends, as seen below.

Kate: *"I was like I am going to get 10-15 white friends and they will tell me their experience and I will tell them mine and we will be happy"* [In extract 6 from Kate's narrative]. Expecting to get more than one friend was among Kate's initial perception of the social environment in the UK. A similar expectation was held by Onyinye before her arrival in the UK, as shown in her statement that: *"I have only one friend and she is not from here because I don't*

have any white friend but this is not what I expected at all" [In extract 2 from Onyinye's narrative].

Other narrators also expected to meet many people and make friends in the UK. Ekene's expectation about friendship before he came to study in the UK was that he would have good friendships and interaction with people in the host country. He stated: *"we need the human contact and interaction with the English people but they don't seem to me to be interested in us like I was thinking...."* [In extract 2 from Ekene's narrative]. Similarly, another narrator, Nnanna, expected to make friends in the UK and said: *"I cannot make friends easily which I never expected and at this time I am not even interested in making friends with them again"* [In extract 5 from Ekene's narrative]. Another narrator, James, expected to make friends in the UK and said: *"I expected to make friends here but now I have friends from Nigeria primarily and getting close to others seems difficult"* [In extract 2 from James's narrative].

5.3.4 Making money and improving their lives

Among the expectations of the respondents were that they would make money when they come to study in the UK to help improve their livelihoods. Drawing from the stories they told, some of them had expected to make some money and send it to their parents and siblings back home who were struggling to survive. Some of the respondents were financially responsible for their education in the UK and explained that they had expected to get a job and make money to support themselves. Onyinye, one of the respondents, described how difficult it had become for her to sustain herself in the UK because she had expected that she would get a good job that would earn her money to support herself in the UK. She said: *"I was expecting that I will get a good job when I come here so that I can get money to help myself"* [In extract 3 from Onyinye's narrative]. Another respondent, Amina, also stated that she had expected to get a job in the UK that would earn her some money to help her parents and sustain herself in the UK. Her expectations were also based on what she had heard about students working and earning money while studying in the UK, as she said: *"....I was expecting to be working and making money to help my parents because that is what people used to say in Nigeria that we will be working and schooling"* [In extract 7 from Amina's narrative].

Kate, another respondent, also made it clear in her story that her people back home in Nigeria were expecting her to send them money because of their economic situation. She is being sponsored by the Nigerian government but she has to contribute to towards sustaining her family back home. She: *“Although the government is sponsoring me but you know my people expect me to be sending some money to them because things are not easy for them”* [In extract 1 from Kate’s narrative]. Just like Kate, James also expected to make money to help him with training his children in school, saying: *“I thought I would be making money to help my children in school in Nigeria”* [In extract 5 from James’s narrative]. Oyagiri, who is also sponsored by the government of Nigeria, expressed his sadness that he could not support his family and made reference to the significant example of his inability to pay his younger brothers’ school fees even though he is expected to pay them as someone who is living abroad. He said: *“Do you know that I can’t even support my younger brother to pay his school fees which has made him drop out of school while the brother is abroad and people are expecting me to be helping them financially as someone in the UK?”* [In extract 3 from Oyagiri’s narrative]. In another story, Nnanna also narrated his expectations of making money by getting a job to enable him to sustain himself in the UK when he said: *“I was expecting to get a job to sustain myself but I did not because they don’t want me”* [In extract 3 from Nnanna’s narrative].

5.3.5 Getting care and support from the recruiting universities

In the individual narrative analyses presented earlier in this chapter, it was discovered that some narrators had expected that their universities would support them and care about their welfare while they were. Although these expectations differed in terms of what each respondent wanted from his or her university, it was in general an expectation that their wellbeing would be of importance to their respective recruiting universities. As James stated, *“when I even went to the University for Financial Support as they wrote in their website that they can support, in fact it was a nightmare which I never expected...”* [In extract 4 from James’s narrative]. Although this expectation was not met, as he described, James had believed that what he saw in the university website about getting financial aid before he sojourned to study with them in the UK was going to be helpful for him. In a similar example, another respondent, Onyinye, also spoke about her expectations that her university would be interested in her wellbeing and survival in the UK, stating that: *“This is really bad because I thought they will care and be finding out how I am surviving”* [In extract 1 from Onyinye’s narrative].

The narrators' expectations in the above about their universities supporting them in various ways were also confirmed by other respondents who had held some expectations before they arrived to study in the UK. Ahmedu explained that his expectations were not about receiving financial support, like James expected, but rather his expectations were that the university in which he was studying would provide technical support on the use of computers. He said: *"We expected that the university will give us training on the use of computers"* [In extract 2 from Ahmedu's narrative]. It was also the expectations of other respondents, including Onyeowo, that UK universities would pay more attention to the welfare and learning of international students because, as Onyeowo said, they come from a different learning background and so require more attention. She said: *"I was thinking that the university will focus more on international student considering our different background"* [In extract 1 from Onyeowo's narrative].

Onyeowo also had similar expectations to Ahmedu, who expected that students coming from Nigeria would be given technical support to aid their learning with computers. She thought that international students would be given special attention such as support for their learning. Another respondent, Kate, told the story of her personal experience with the lecturers in her UK University. She said that her expectations were that the lecturers in the UK would help her find answers to her questions, stating: *"...my first semester, I was not making the progress I needed because they were not helping me find the answers to my questions like I expected before coming here"* [In extract 5 from Kate's narrative]. From the stories of the narrators as seen above, it seems that they expected their UK universities to look after them and be there for them. This was ubiquitous in their narratives but they experienced something different from what they expected when they finally arrived and started studying in the UK.

5.4 Experiences based on their participation in studying in the UK

Themes emerged from the individual narrative analyses about the participants' experiences as they studied in UK universities. The majority of these stories concentrated on and revolved around the following experiences.

- Quality education but with academic difficulties

- Sociocultural difficulties and discrimination
- Financial difficulties
- Feeling that their expectations had been betrayed

5.4.1 Quality education but with academic difficulties

Many, if not all, of the respondents attested that education in the UK is of a good quality, although they had experienced many learning difficulties as they studied in the UK. As the majority of them said in their stories, the UK learning environment is more complex but rich in learning facilities. However, the complexity and facilities were difficult for some of them as they had no experience of how to use such facilities before coming to the UK. This impacted on their learning in the UK. One of the respondents, Nnanna, who is a doctorate degree student in a UK university, narrated his difficulties when he said: *“Like we know back home and even true there is good education here... ..studies are very difficult, the supervisor’s expectations and the standard they set here for doctorate is just horrible”* [In extract 1&2 from Nnanna’s narrative]. As Nnanna narrates, there is good education in the UK but he also finds it difficult to cope with the academic demands in his studies. Similar to that experience is the story of Ekene, an undergraduate student who does not find the teaching style in his university interesting but is still of the view that UK education is of a good standard. He expresses this by saying: *“I can say that the quality of learning here in the UK is standard compared to our country Nigeria.... education here is very difficult, the classes are not interesting because the lecturer just come in and read their slides”* [In extract 3 from Ekene’s narrative].

Other respondents with similar experiences as Amina said that there were adequate learning facilities in UK universities. Amina also poured out her feelings and difficulties regarding academics and education in the UK when she said: *“...fine we have all the facilities and all the equipment here, but their way of doing things is not good. Imagine a, lecturer will come into the class and all he is doing is just slide, slides, slide for some hours and everybody go his on her own and you go into the text book”* [In extract 2 from Amina’s narrative]. There is a common theme about the teaching method used in UK universities in the narratives of the respondents. The respondents are finding it difficult to cope with teaching using slides, which most of them feel is not enabling them to learn to the required depth. Amina’s experience is similar to that of Ekene,

who has also found it difficult to learn because of the method of teaching using slides.

Onyeowo also referred to difficulties with the learning practices in place in her university, especially the complexities in the feedback system, saying: *"I have also received good teaching...Coming from Nigeria, the system here is strange, the learning is different because some of them are technical and involved the use of facilities that we never used back in Nigeria"* [In extract 1&3 from Onyeowo's narrative]. Onyeowo is appreciative of the teaching she has received in the UK but she is concerned about difficulties in using facilities. A similar experience of facing academic challenges is evident from the story of James. James is experiencing a great deal of trouble in his academic work as a PhD student in the UK and said: *"I have been made more confused by the PhD which I have labelled a useless effort to make. Although my supervisor has sacrificed so much to put me on track, but the problems remains that to adapt to this academic culture is very traumatic because it is very difficult for me to cope with"* [In extract 6 from James's narrative]. James' experience of education in the UK is very distressing because he feels that the academic culture and his experience in his UK University are difficult for him to cope with.

Another narrator, Oyagiri, also told of his difficulties as a PhD student and the painful experience he is having as he tries to satisfy the demands of his supervisors, who he thinks do not want him to get the doctorate degree he is studying for. He said: *"Academic is tough, I am a PhD student and doing a PhD here is hell for those of us in science areas I don't know of those in other areas. I sometimes think that my supervisors do not want me to be a Dr like them. Because they always do not agree with whatever I write"* [In extract 1 from Oyagiri's narrative]. Another respondent, Ahmedu, further echoed that UK education provided him with the equipment he required for his studies as a science student. Ahmedu also considered the differences between the academic cultures of Nigeria and the UK a major reason why he has experienced some difficulties, saying: *"....but here also I have all the equipment to do my practical work because I am pure science student and I had to do laboratory base assignment...coming from Nigeria where the learning culture is different and it was very difficult to cope"* [In extract 1&2 from Ahmedu's narrative].

There has been evidence of good and high quality education in the respondents' narrations. However, coping with the academic style of the UK has also been among the narrators' difficult experiences. Meanwhile, as one of the respondents explained,

sometimes the method and timing of assessment also contributes to the challenges Nigerian students face as they study in the UK. Onyeowo stated that she was not given adequate time to prepare after she arrived before she was assessed, saying: *“I have not yet fully comprehended the new knowledge before I was tested and that is very incorrect because it is affecting student's performance”* [In extract 2 from Onyeowo's narrative].

5.4.2 Sociocultural difficulties and discrimination

Apart from the academic difficulties seen above, respondents in this study narrated experiences of feeling discriminated against and facing problems with finding friends. Many of them were also not having a good sociocultural experience as they lived and studied in the UK. Some of the experiences that caused these feelings were associated with how they felt they were being treated in their classes and in the universities where they were studying. Others had negative experiences in their various work places and other places where they were in contact with people in the UK. James, in his story, speaks about his experience of finding it impossible to make friends with people from the host country because, he felt, they did not like his closeness. He said: *“I expected to make friends here but now I have friends from Nigeria primarily and getting close to others seems difficult because they do not seem to appreciate this closeness...”* [In extract 2, from James's narrative]. In a similar experience, Onyinye also cannot find friends and has problems with social integration. As she explains: *“They are not friendly so I don't want to bug them. Friendship is not by force so if people don't want you all you do is to stay away from them”* [In extract 2 from Onyinye's narrative]. Just like James felt that his closeness was not appreciated, Onyinye also concluded from her experience that the people of the host country were not friendly.

Ahmedu, in his own personal experiences, has encountered situations where he felt that he was not accepted because of his ethnic background. He explained: *“....they in the end gave me a latter that in fact made me to feel so angry and confused without any reason so I found it racial and that will never leave my mind and it was traumatising”* [In extract 6 from Ahmedu's narrative]. Ahmedu and others have been in situations that left them with the conclusion that they were being racially discriminated against. Another respondent, Kate, also described her experience in her work place, where she feels that she is being discriminated against, saying: *“Even when you go to work you will also see how they do things that will show you that they are showing you some marginalisation and I don't like*

this" [In extract 1 from Kate's narrative]. Recounting her difficulties and challenges in the UK in relation to social life, another respondent, Onyeowo, spoke about her unpleasant social life in the UK, saying: *"social life and many other experiences I have encountered here in this country I will practically say that they are not pleasing to anyone"* [In extract 7 from Onyeowo's narrative].

The degree of difficulty that Kate, another respondent, encountered as she tried to make friends in the UK also led her to conclude that the UK is not a place where friendship is built. She: *"I think even people that are coming from our side should know that this place is not a place of friendship"* [In extract 3 from Kate's narrative]. Kate felt she was being segregated by people in the host country and this influenced her perception of the country. She also described feeling discriminated against in class group work, saying: *"I don't find it funny, and this is one question I want to ask everyone that will hear this story, why are they doing these things? Are we smelling? Are we that bad? In my own country, we love whites, when we see them, we embrace them, we like visitors and take them as our own, why are they treating us separate?"* [In extract 2 from Kate's narrative].

There were other respondents who narrated challenges in finding friends and feeling unaccepted in the host country. Amina's experience is similar to that of Kate in terms of difficulties with friendships and social interaction. She: *"I don't have any white friends, because they are all racist, they have problem so we avoid them mas much as we can, so we just stick to our Nigerian friends"* [In extract 9 from Amina's narrative]. There was also the same feeling of not being welcome in the UK for Amadi, another respondent, who had experiences that were challenging in relation to making friends. He explained that *"People who do not welcome people in their life like I have experienced here are difficult to interact with"* [In extract 6 from Amadi's narrative].

Some of the narrators in their story pointed out that they experienced discrimination because there was no opportunity for them to socially integrate as students from various backgrounds tend to flock together. Nnanna, another narrator, expressed his dissatisfaction with his experience of this and categorically said that this segregation does not allow them to have intercultural interactions, stating: *"Take for example, in the school the English people will always want to be with their fellow English, this not making us to learn from their culture because it is like discrimination and it is an unpleasant experience"* [In extract 4

from Nnanna's narrative]. There were still others who openly described their experiences as racial discrimination. Just as Kate, James, Amina and others felt they had been discriminated against, Oyagiri also had experiences that made him feel inferior. He described this, saying: *"I feel sometimes inferior and angry because I think they are feeling more superior than I do. You can see this with the way my supervisors treat me in my work. I will say that discrimination or racism to be very assertive is sometimes the way I feel that I am being treated"* [In extract 2 from Oyagiri's narrative]. All the narrators experienced friendship and sociocultural interaction difficulties, and one of the narrators explained in his story that he had experienced an event that had made him to wonder if he was not a human being like everyone else. Ekene experienced a situation whereby people from the host country did not sit next to him when he boarded public transport, which made him ask: *"How can I ever think that people will be sitting away from me in the bus, I am not a human being?"* [In extract 5 from Ekene's narrative].

5.4.3 Financial difficulties

The experience of financial difficulties was also central in the majority of the respondents' narratives. Financial difficulties ranged from not being able to provide their everyday needs to not being able to pay their house rents and tuition fees. Nnanna said that he had financial problems in the UK that have even made it difficult for him to be happy. He considers living in the UK very expensive, saying: *"I mean house rent is expensive, and now to even be happy is not possible. How can I be happy, it is difficult to understand these situations..."* [In extract 3 from Nnanna's narrative]. Another respondent, Onyinye, described having same financial problems that have made things very difficult for her as she can no longer pay her fees, house rent or bills. She explained: *"I am in a serious financial problem because my father who sent me here is having financial problems so it is not easy now for me to pay my school fees, my feeding and accommodation money anymore"* [In extract 3 from Onyinye's narrative]. Unlike Nnanna, who is financially sponsored by the Nigerian government, Onyinye's condition gives her a lot of worry because she cannot find help from anywhere to finance her stay in the UK. Meanwhile, some of the narrators who were sponsored by the Nigerian government found that they tended to get their government money very late. Ahmedu confirmed this when he said that his financial difficulties usually throw him off balance because he sometimes receives money after suffering in terms of coping financially. He explained: *"...sometimes before my money comes many things might have gone*

wrong and before I get money I normally run into a terrible off balance" [In extract 5 from Ahmedu's narrative].

James, who is sponsored by the Nigerian government, still finds it very difficult to survive in the UK financially because he has family and children to take care of. He has to pay his children's school fees and take care of their other needs, leading to him facing a lot of financial challenges. He explained: *"In terms of financial situation and challenges, that one is a big quagmire indeed it is a difficult situation, you don't have anybody to help, if I run out of money, I have run out of money, it is like a dead end"* [In extract 4 from James's narrative]. As James narrated, his financial difficulties are a big issue and worry him. Meanwhile, there are others such as Onyeowo, who also commented on her poor financial state because she is financially responsible for her stay in the UK. Onyeowo received no financial aid from her parents or government. In her experience, she has to deny herself some basic life needs just to manage and pay her bills in the UK. She said: *"It is my duty to pay my tuition fees, pay for my house rent, feed myself and take care of my other needs, I deny myself a lot of things"* [In extract 7 from Onyeowo's narrative].

Amina could not pay her rent anymore because of financial problems that her parents, who are sponsoring her education in the UK, are facing back home. This has led to her being ejected from her accommodation and she is now squatting with her friend, as she explained: *"I am passing through financial difficulties because things are very hard for my people back home and I am having to move out to go and squat with a friend because I cannot pay my rent and my school fees"* [In extract from Amina's narrative]. Like Onyeowo, Amina can no longer afford to pay her house rent and has moved to stay with her friend because she cannot find a job that can earn her enough money to offset her bills and take care of herself in the UK. The narrators who are sponsored by the Nigerian government have problems at home that require them to make financial contributions. Oyagiri is among those who are facing financial challenges in the UK because he is the breadwinner in his family and has to contribute by sending money home. He explains that: *"The government that sponsors me do not know that I have other problems. They think that it is only to eat and go to school as an individual but I am not just an individual that has no family. I have a family whom I am their bread winner"* [In extract 3 from Oyagiri's narrative].

5.4.4 Betrayal of their expectations

Many of the participants spoke about their expectations before coming to study in the UK, and these were presented and analysed earlier. Meanwhile, it was evident from their stories that most of their expectations were not met when they finally arrived in the UK, which also impacted on their experiences. Amina, who expressed her feelings about her unmet expectations, felt that the university had betrayed her by not taking care of her as she had expected because the university always prides itself to be taking care of international students. She: *“yet they will say that they are taking care of international students when they truth is that we are going through hell studying with them”* [In extract 8 from Amina’s narrative]. Just like Amina, Onyinye also felt that her experience was not what she expected before she came to the UK. Her own feeling about this was that people who have studied in the UK do not tell prospective students their difficult experiences, explaining that: *“The problem we have is that when people who have studied here come back home they will not tell us the extent of suffering they encountered”* [In extract 4 from Onyinye’s narrative]. Onyinye’s expectations were betrayed because she met a different kind of situation from what she had heard about from people who had studied in the UK before.

Amina’s description of feeling betrayed by the university was also similar to James’ story of not getting the financial help he needed from his university, which he said gave him a different experience from what he understood from their website. He explained: *“the worst is when I even went to the university for financial support as they wrote in their website that they can support, in fact it was a nightmare”* [In extract 4 from James’s narrative]. Some expected even more because as Kate, another respondent, stated, her expectations were that she would make many friends that she could trust and that one of these might eventually lead to marriage. However her experience of friendship when she came to the UK contrasted with her expectations about friendship. She explained: *“It is not easy to get a good trusted friend here because I am not married, so I was thinking that I was going to get my own husband in this place but with the experience I had here I am not interested in them”* [In extract 6 from Kate’s narrative]. Kate’s feeling of betrayal of her hope of finding a husband while studying in the UK has also impacted on her interest in making more efforts to find friends.

The same kind of experience was also seen in the story told by James, who categorically stated that his experience did not match the expectations he had before coming to study in the UK. He said: *"I will call my experience a mismatch of expectations, because it is the case, I expected this and it is the other so what I am seeing is not what I expected"* [In extract from James's narrative]. This is just as it is with Amina, Kate and Onyinye, whose hopes and expectations have been betrayed by their real experiences. Ekene, however, felt he was betrayed because he could not find the social interaction he wanted from students in the host country, saying: *"In the school, we are not engaging and mingling as we expected to do"* [In extract 2 from Ekene's narrative]. One respondent, Amadi, made it clear that he had experienced the opposite of what he had expected before coming to the UK. He also pointed out that it was not always an easy thing to cope when one's expectations were not met, saying: *"The experiences I met on ground was the opposite of my expectations and it is not always easy trying to adjust and face something different from what you expected"* [In extract 8 from Amadi's narrative].

For Onyinye, the university where she is studying has failed to meet her expectations. This makes her hate it as she sees it as only interested in the money she pays. She also feels that they do not care about her, saying: *"This is really bad because I thought they will care and be finding out how I am surviving but I did not know that they are only interested in my school fees and it is very bad"* [In extract 1 from Onyinye's narrative]. The feeling that their expectations were betrayed by what they actually experienced was among the emerging themes in all the stories told by the narrators.

5.5 Effects and impacts triggered by studying in the UK

The narrators in this study explained their expectations prior to studying in the UK. They also narrated how they have experienced life in the UK differently from what they had expected. This has impacted on their lives in various ways. In this portion of the study, the impacts of their experiences as they have emerged from their individual narratives are presented. The themes below emerged from the narratives of many of the respondents in the study.

- Disorientation, disorganisation and confusion
- Sleeplessness and helplessness

- Fear and worries
- Sense of self-disruption
- Depressive feelings and suppressed emotions
- Concentration difficulties and flashbacks

5.5.1 Disorientation, disorganisation and confusion

Based on the analysis of the individual stories earlier in this chapter, it has been discovered that the majority of the narrators have experienced events that have left them feeling disoriented, disorganised and confused. James narrated that his experiences have made him feel like he is losing his bearings, saying: *“The whole place looks like an Ireland where one is isolated yet surrounded by large body of water, so, under that condition, I seem to get lost”* [In extract 2 from James’s narrative]. James expressed a feeling of loss in his story because he could not find a companion even amongst so many people. James continued to express a feeling of being disorganised and disoriented because of his experiences, saying: *“This condition is serious because it make me uncomfortable, unsettled, it disorganises my comportment...”* [In extract 9 from James’s narrative]. James saw his condition as something that has led to a lot of confusion, explaining that: *“....I am already a confused man because my name has become confused.com”* [In extract 6 from James’s narrative].

A similar feeling was expressed in the story told by Amina, who also described feeling disorganised because of events she has experienced while studying in the UK. She said: *“Right now, my life is so unstable because, I am having issue with school with collusion, I am having case with police, I am having financial problem, this country have made my life so so unbearable”* [In extract 7 from Amina’s narrative]. The experiences of James and Amina as seen above express their personal reflections on encounters in their lives that have made their stay in the UK uncomfortable. Several others have also experienced conditions similar to those of these two narrators. For example, Onyinye spoke about her experience of life in the UK disorganising her life, making her feel scattered and disorientated. She explained: *“Sometimes I don’t even brush my teeth because I am just scattered, I don’t think about myself or my room or food, I am not comfortable, I am stressed out since I came to this country”* [In extract 4 from Onyinye’s narrative]. Onyinye’s experiences have disorganised her life to the extent that she even finds personal

care difficult as she is not together and feels she is stressed out. This was also similar to James' feeling of being unsettled and disoriented.

Similarly, Oyagiri spoke about not being organised because his mind is always wandering, saying: *"I go to school to study, when I return home to rest, I cannot rest because my mind is somewhere wondering"* [In extract 3 from Oyagiri's narrative]. Ahmedu also described his experience of being disoriented, disorganised and confused when he used an event that happened while he was doing research in the laboratory to express his experiences of being disorganised. He said: *"I remember one day I was thinking and I had to mix a wrong drug and add to a wrong cell flask, so from then, I took the decision that I will not do it at that period and I tried to avoid the laboratory with the works I need to do there for my study. I avoided going there because there may be a possibility of spilling chemical or even poisoning myself and I have to leave my work, and go home"* [In extract 7 from Ahmedu's narrative]. Ahmedu's experience was a major event that shows how disorganised and confused he has been because of the situations he has been undergoing while studying in the UK.

Nnanna also described his own feeling of being disorganised when he said: *"even to read sometimes is difficult because when my mind is scattered how can I read or do my very demanding research?"* [In extract 4 from Nnanna's narrative]. Expressing that his mind is scattered, just as Onyinye also described earlier, this respondent feels that his comportment and organised state of mind have eluded him. Amina also felt that she was disoriented and disorganised, saying: *"So my life is so turn apart right now, I am not myself"* [In extract 9 from Amina's narrative]. The expression used by Amina in her story spoke of a life in the UK that lacks coherence.

Another experience of this was seen as Ekene told in his story when he specifically pointed out that his thoughts about his experiences in the UK disorient him and leave him confused. He explained: *"It's the thoughts about life here that disorganises me sometimes, because when I think of the personal emotion that these life here gives me, then I can be confused on what to do next"* [In extract 5 from Ekene's narrative]. Similarly, Amina also specifically said that she was feeling confused because she felt she was losing her connectedness as a person, stating: *"Right now, I am confused about this whole thing, I am not myself..."* [In extract 9 from Amina's narrative]. Evidence of feeling of confused and

disorganised was also clear in Nnanna's story when he spoke about forgetting his keys because he is always thinking about his situation in the UK: *"Sometimes I feel confused too because I don't know what I am doing again, I may even forget my key or important things because of thinking and thinking"* [In extract 2 from Nnanna's narrative].

5.5.2 Sleeplessness and helplessness

Experiencing sleepless nights and feeling of helpless were among the major themes that were common to the narratives of the respondents in this study. These experiences result from the events that have happened to them while studying in the UK. On his experience of sleeplessness, Nnanna narrated that his feeling of being unfairly treated in the UK gives him sleepless nights, saying: *"Sometimes to be honest I can't sleep, because I am thinking of what the next day brings"* [In extract 2 from Nnanna's narrative]. He also spoke about feeling helpless, explaining: *"Sometimes I don't want to talk my experience to people because they will not help me neither will it change anything"* [In extract 4 from Nnanna's narrative]. Nnanna's experiences have made him feel helpless and he does not even talk about his experience as he feels that he will not get help from people.

Several other narrators had experienced the same kind of feeling. For example, Kate explained that her experiences in the UK make her cry and helpless because, she feels, she is a woman with a soft heart: *"as a woman I have a soft mind and I am always crying because I don't have a strong heart and nobody to help me"* [In extract 4 from Kate's narrative]. Kate is not alone in her feeling of not having anyone to help her because Amina also said in her story that she finds things very difficult and does not have anyone to help her: *"A country that I don't have a mother, I don't have a father or anybody to help me, and they are making life so unbearable"* [In extract 8 from Amina's narrative]. Her experiences also cause her to have sleepless nights, as she explained: *"I cannot sleep in this country because of one problem or the other"* [In extract 8 from Amina's narrative].

Not being able to sleep and not being able to get any form of help were found in most of the participants' narratives. One of the narrators also said that her feelings and experience of not being able to get help from anywhere give her concern, stating that: *"lack of money, stress, loneliness, the weather of UK, poor social life, sleepless nights and many other experiences I have encountered here in this country I will practically say that they are not pleasing to anyone... I cannot get help from anywhere"* [In extract 7 from Onyeowo's

narrative]. A similar story was told by James who had experienced conditions that made life so difficult for him that he experienced sleeplessness: *"So this kind of situation is giving me a very serious psychological or call it trauma which causes me sleepless nights"* [In extract 2 from James's narrative]. James emphasised his sleeplessness and helplessness when he said: *"like I have told you earlier that sleepless nights and restless days are my own world, the whole 365 days of the year is 365 days of trauma so for me here, there is no hope"* [In extract 6 from James's narrative]. James' encounters have already affected his hope because he does not see any help coming from anywhere.

Ahmedu, another narrator, told of his experience of a similar difficult situation while he was in Nigeria but made it clear that he cannot get help in the UK, which to him is the difference between the experiences he is having in the UK and the one he had in Nigeria. He stated: *"I cast my mind back to the experiences I have had back home and I have had experiences that are analogous to what I have here but the difference is that here there is nobody to console you or nobody to help you"* [In extract 8 from Ahmedu's narrative]. Ahmedu had experiences that made him feel as if no one could help him unless the help was divine: *"I have been feeling helpless that no man can help me that my help could only be divine if there is anything like that"* [In extract 11 from Ahmedu's narrative].

The feeling of helplessness that Ahmedu described affected his perceptions, making him think that seeking help was not important. This was also the case with Nnanna when he said that he has not talked to people about his situation because he feels that they will not help him. Ekene, another respondent, had experiences that made him experience sleeplessness, and said: *"These are the things that make me worry and sleepless thoughts"* [In extract 2 from Ekene's narratives]. Ekene had experiences where he felt he was treated like an outcast. These were reflected in his story and contributed to his sleeplessness: *"These experiences I told you make me have sleepless nights and off course when someone is being treated like an outcast how can the person sleep?"* [In extract 3 from Ekene's narrative]. Ekene also used certain phrases to emphasize the condition of helplessness he is experiencing in the UK, such as: *"The people here even use to tell me that 'I can't help you I am afraid'...'I can't help you I am sorry'."* [In extract 4 from Ekene's narrative].

5.5.3 Fear and worries

Being afraid and worrying a lot were among the experiences of some of the narrators in their stories. Some of them have encountered situations that have made them live in fear and with constant worry. As one of the narrators, Amina, explained, she feels insecure because of her experiences and she is afraid because, she says, the police are always invited into every little situation. She stated that: *"This country is not secured at all, every little thing they will call the police for you"* [In extract 8 from Amina's narrative]. Amina's experience of life in the UK has caused her to live a life of fear. She also feels that the university where she is studying threatens to report students like her to the embassy and send them back to Nigeria, which has made them afraid of everything. Thus, she said: *"They will threaten you that whenever you don't pay they will report you to the embassy that they will send you back to Nigeria, making us to be very afraid of everything"* [In extract 4 from Amina's narrative].

Just like Amina, Kate has also experienced situations in the UK that have led to her living in fear. This came out in her experience in her workplace, where she felt she was being treated wrongly: *"Another thing there are times when they call me from work, I will be feeling bad, my heart will begin to cut, I will be like oh my God, I am afraid of this people because they are not treating me well..."* [In extract 5 from Kate's narrative]. Feeling worried was also part of the experiences of another narrator, Onyeowo, who experienced her university assessment as unfair. As she explained: *"I have not adapted to the method of teaching here and yet I am already facing assessment. This not right so, it very worrisome for some of us"* [In extract 2 from Onyeowo's narrative]. The feelings of worry as experienced and told by the narrators have come from various sources as they have lived their lives in the UK. In another story, Ahmedu spoke about fear arising from always being conscious of the fact that he is a stranger and not being sure about UK laws: *"but here even the law that you know you are also afraid of the ones you don't know. Each time you are always conscious and there is to me no freedom"* [In extract 9 from Ahmedu's narrative].

In the same way as Ahmedu spoke about feelings of worry, James also told of his own experience of worry when he compared his life in Nigeria and in the UK: *"I was focused in what I am doing but here that focus is gone, only worries so the totality of the whole story is that I am disappointed"* [Extract 5 from James's narrative]. Another experience of fear was expressed by Ekene who talked about his fear of being racially attacked

because of the news he reads every day in the UK: *"This is true because the kind of news we hear about racial attacks in this country can make someone to be afraid"* [In extract 4 from Ekene's narrative].

Nnanna was another who expressed fears in his stories as he spoke about being afraid of how his journey will end: *"Seriously I am always afraid of how my stay here will end and this whole thing and sometimes I will just be annoyed about it"* [In extract 3 from Nnanna's narrative]. Further, Oyagiri mentioned his fears and worries when he said that his experiences in the UK do not allow him to have a settled mind but lead to worry and unhappiness: *"My fears and worries about this whole experience here in the UK does not make me feel great, rather it makes me feel completely unhappy and unsettled"* [In extract 4 from Oyagiri's narrative].

5.5.4 Sense of self-disruption

Some of the narrators experienced situations that caused disruptions in their sense of self. In their stories, they talked about experiences in the UK that have left them not knowing who they are any more. Nnanna explained that his experiences in the UK meant he did not know himself anymore, which is an expression of disruption in his sense of self. He described the fact that: *"I don't understand myself anymore at my age and my level of education..."* [In extract 5 from Nnanna's narrative]. Nnanna's experience was similar to Onyeowo's experience in that the latter talked about the manner in which her experiences in the UK have negatively affected her life. Onyeowo said that she is forced to live in a new self, and she is worried that it will conflict and affect her when she returns to Nigeria, saying: *"The system of knowing people here is so enclosed....It is also going to have an impact on me when I go back because it will be very difficult for me to fit in back again as normal"* [In extract 4 from Onyeowo's narrative]. As Onyeowo's sense of self and who she is are not shifting positively according to her, she feels that it will be difficult for her to get her original self back in her own society, and this concerns her. Ekene, another narrator, feels his status in Nigeria is being lost and he believes that his self-worth is disrupted: *"I might not be somebody here but when I am in Nigeria, I am somebody"* [In extract 2 from Ekene's narrative].

Another narrator whose experience impacted on his sense of self was James. James doubts that he is still the same person because of the things happening in his life, saying: *"...at a point I am still questioning myself whether I am the same person or is it a different person"* [In extract 6 from James's narrative]. This same sort of experience was narrated by Amina whose diverse difficult experiences in the UK have disrupted her understanding of herself, leading to her not knowing herself anymore and saying: *"So my life is so turn apart right now, I am not myself"* [In extract 9 from Amina's narrative]. Amina's feelings are similar to those of James and the others above, who have lost their self-understanding self-coherence, as revealed in their stories.

Ahmedu was another narrator who spoke about an event that has happened in his life while studying in the UK that has made him lose a sense of who he is. He lost his money and life became very difficult for him because he had no one to help him out of the situation. This experience, as he explained, affected his sense of self and disorganised him. He stated: *"When I lost my money, I had a challenge to get help and when there was none coming from anywhere at a point I said there is no God, I could not know myself anymore because I was completely scattered"* [In extract 10 from Ahmedu's narrative].

5.5.5 Depressive feelings and suppressed emotions

Feelings of depression and suppressed emotions were also among the themes that emerged from the individual narratives of the participants in this study. In her story, Onyeowo talked about experiencing events that left her feeling depressed because she could not help herself or get comfort from anyone else: *"I longed for a company but I did not get any, I was so depressed, distressed and lonely because I needed relief but I did not get it"* [In extract from Onyeowo's narrative]. Onyeowo's emotional difficulties were suppressed as she longed for a companion in her time of sorrow but could not find one. Onyeowo also had other experiences where she had to suppress her emotions because she was helpless in the situation, and explained: *"..I have no choice but to accept and bury myself in my emotions"* [In extract 8 from Onyeowo's narrative]. Her experience above, as she outlined, was a sad experience which she could not help but hold to herself.

A similar experience was also narrated by Ahmedu who told a story of how he cut off communication with everybody because he was helpless and could not believe that

anybody would help him. Ahmedu spoke about how he has experienced conditions that threatened his life and forced him to live in isolation, and said: *“Because of these challenges, I lived in isolation and keep asking myself if not that I came to UK will I be suffering like this, I felt I just have to leave people out of my life, in fact I closed down my social networking site Facebook for more than 7 months or 8 months and people could not contact me”* [In extract 10 from Ahmedu’s narrative]. Ahmedu narrated an experience that made life so difficult that he had to avoid meeting people and talking about his experiences, thereby suppressing them and dealing with them alone. Another narrator, James, also spoke about a feeling of isolation and the life he lived in a way which suggested that he longed for company but could not get any and so led a life of loneliness: *“The whole place looks like an Ireland where one is isolated yet surrounded by large body of water, so, under that condition, I seem to get lost”* [In extract 2 from James’s narrative]. James’ experiences, similarly to those of Onyeowo and even Ahmedu, were expressive of depression and suppressed emotions.

Amina, another narrator, also experienced situations she described as making life meaningless, saying: *“I am not myself, I have lost weight because of thinking about all that is troubling me.....”* [In extract 9 from Amina’s narrative]. Amina experienced situations that made her lose weight and confused her sense of who she is. Onyinye had a similar experience to Amina, as shown as she talked about a situation she has found herself in that makes her live in fear. She categorically said that she is depressed because of her experience and talked about not having anybody by her side during her ordeal: *“In fact I am depressed and afraid right now”* [In extract 1 from Onyinye’s narrative]. Not finding help and comfort from anybody, as Onyinye has described, has affected her life in terms of the situation she is facing. In addition, Oyagiri explained that he has lost happiness in his life and that this has made life worthless for him, saying: *“Life without happiness is worthless and my brother, I must say that I lack that happiness in my life here as an individual”* [In extract 4 from Oyagiri’s narrative].

One participant, Ahmedu, who commented that his life was not worth living because of his experiences and the situations he found himself in the UK, said: *“In fact it was mainly, I detested myself if I could use that, I said I was not worth living anymore and that is it to be honest”* [In extract 11 from Ahmedu’s narrative]. Ahmedu felt terrible, which also led him to see his life as worthless and he avoided contact with people. Amadi, another

narrator, also felt that he could not get his emotions relieved because there was no means of doing, saying: *"so you find that one is bottled in emotions that has no channels of relief most of the time and so it is a major problem that I have experienced as a person"* [In extract 3 from Amadi's narrative]. Amadi had suppressed his emotions and was not able to get them relieved because he could not find a relief channel.

5.5.6 Concentration difficulties and flashbacks

Further themes were lack of concentration and some flashback memories in the narratives of the respondents in this study. The majority experienced situations that led to an inability to maintain concentration while a few had flashback memories because of their experiences.

Nnanna spoke about not being able to concentrate because he felt his mind was scattered, saying: *"...when my mind is scattered how can I read or do my very demanding research?"* [In extract 4 from Nnanna's narrative]. Nnanna's experience has impacted on his studies because he cannot read due to his state of mind. He also talked about having some flashback memories of events that happened in his life while he was in Nigeria which he said were triggered into consciousness by the difficulties he is experiencing in the UK. On this point, he said: *"Because of this sad situation I find myself in, I remember my late elder brother when I am sad and for some time now that memory keep coming and I feel so gripped when I remember that"* [In extract 6 from Nnanna's narrative]. Nnanna's experience of having difficulty concentrating is similar to Onyinye's experience and she also spoke about her inability to concentrate, saying: *"My academic work is affected now because I cannot concentrate as well at least not with all these problems I am passing through which is also worrying me"* [In extract 5 from Onyinye's narrative]. Onyinye's experience of diverse difficulties has affected her state of mind and led to an inability to focus and do her academic work.

Kate also had issues with concentration, as she said in her story when talking about an experience in her workplace that disrupts her concentration: *"....it makes me lose my concentration because my body will be there and my heart will not be there"* [In extract 5 from Kate's narrative]. Kate's situation, which is similar to those of the others above, leaves her physically present but mentally somewhere else because of her fears and the way she is being treated in the place she is working. James also had

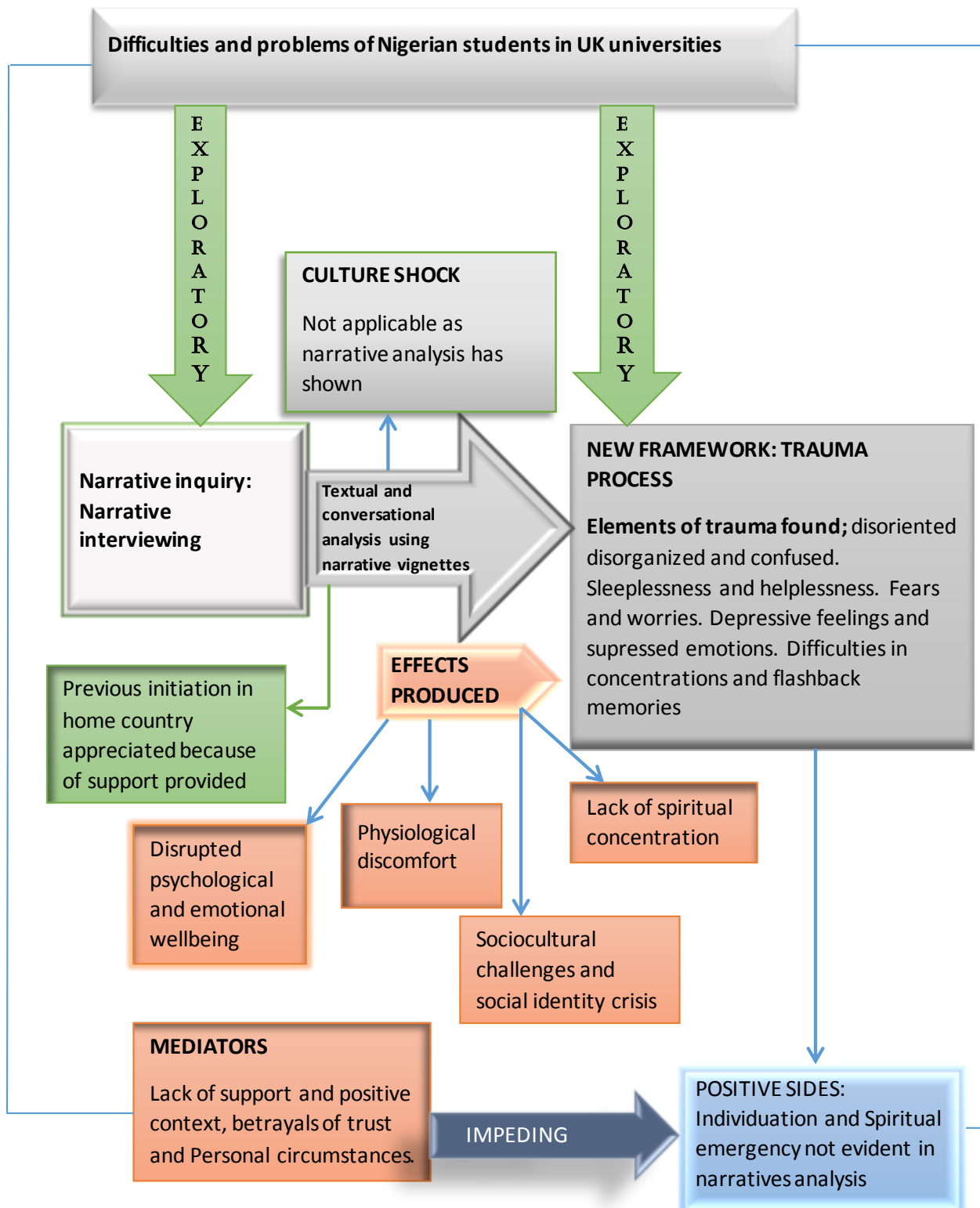
experiences that made him lose concentration, saying: *“I lose concentrations because these things are very uneasy for me”* [In extract 6 from James’s narrative]. Another narrator, Ahmedu, told a heart-wrenching story of his experience of having difficulty with concentrating on what he was doing. As he explained, he is a science student and while working in the laboratory he encountered a situation that made him understand that he lost his concentration. He stated: *“I remember one day I was thinking and I had to mix a wrong drug and add to a wrong cell flask ...I avoided going there because there may be a possibility of spilling chemical or even poisoning myself and I have to leave my work, and go home....”* [Extract 7 from Ahmedu’s narrative].

Ahmedu’s situation has impacted on his studies because he has lost concentration on what he is doing. Another narrator who spoke about not being able to concentrate on one thing or the other was Oyagiri, who said: *“I also feel that it is big issue and one to worry about because I can’t concentrate on one thing or the other”* [In extract 4 from Oyagiri’s narrative]. Just like the others, Oyagiri has narrated his experience and the consequences of those experiences, which include his inability to concentrate on attending to the things that brought him to the UK. The respondents’ experiences have also led to flashback memories. For example, Ekene, one of the narrators, said: *“remembering the good times I use to have in Nigeria, all the things that makes me laugh, those things are no more here with me so it can disorganise someone’s interest and thinking”* [In extract 5 from Ekene’s narrative].

Several others also had memories of their past life coming into awareness because of the difficulties they faced while studying in the UK. Amadi spoke of having had good times with his children, which of course he was reminded of by the challenges and stresses he was passing through without any way of getting relief from them. He explained: *“In my home country if I get tired of either studying, I know who to go to, to have some relief even if is with my wife, I can play with my kid which will relief me, going out to meet friends reliefs me of the stress of work. But here there are no channels of relief of tension, so you find that one is bottled in emotions that has no channels of relief most of the time and so it is a major problem that I have experienced as a person”* [In extract 3 from Amadi’s narrative]. Just like Amadi said in the above, Ahmedu talked about how the experiences he has had in the UK remind him of his past, saying: *“My life experiences begin to express and remind me of the things I have witnessed from primary school to now, like my father died when I was 12 and there was*

no help and I have struggled in life...” [In extract 8 from Ahmedu’s narrative]. Ahmedu’s experiences have led to flashback memories of significant events from his past.

Fig. 5.2 Re-visiting the conceptual framework



The above diagram illustrates the re-visiting of the initial conceptual framework. The diagram evidences and provides more conceptual clarity for how the framework has driven the analysis of the narrative accounts above and the emerging evidence that has contributed to our knowledge in this research area. As the framework shows, the initial understanding of the experiences of international students was seen in the literature as having setbacks but was widely used. This led to a reconceptualisation in this study using a trauma framework. The previous model for analysing international students' experiences, known as culture shock, has been excluded from the re-visited framework because it does not apply to the experiences of the participants in this study, as the narrative analysis has shown. This is because evidence from the narrative analysis shows that all of the psychological, physiological, social and spiritual functioning of the participants has been integrally affected by their individual experiences in the UK. This is clearly articulated in the trauma process used in this study and further supported by Levine (1997), who has noted that all human functioning is affected by traumatic conditions.

The new framework and conceptualisation that have been used to analyse the experiences of Nigerian international students has indicated that the trauma framework applies more strongly to the experiences of the participants than the culture shock model. This is because their stories have meaningfully affected their individual lives. The mediating effects of these students' experiences, as the narrative analysis has shown, are related to lack of support, lack of a positive context for understanding the process they are going through and, of course, the personal circumstances of their time in the UK. As the narrative analysis also has shown, any positive effects which might have been experienced were impeded by the above mediating factors. An experience of an African initiation process, as the narrative analysis of one participant's story has shown, was appreciated because it was constructed in such a manner that the participant was supported in experiencing the pains and gains in the process. The findings from the individual narrative analyses and the cross-narrative thematic analysis are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Discussion and interpretation of findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and interprets the analyses and findings presented in Chapter Five of this thesis. The purpose is to consider the meanings of these findings in relation to gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of Nigerian students studying in UK universities. The discussion undertaken in this chapter is primarily organised around the research questions in Chapter One of this study. The first part of the discussion will consider the results in relation to gaining a deep understanding of how the experiences of international students from Nigeria have been captured. This part of the discussion will also look at whether their experiences give them a sense of being separated from their selves rather than having a sense of wholeness (focusing on the central research question and research question one). This is followed by a consideration of the results of their experiences and how any elements of trauma may be related to the students' experiences with a view to extending existing knowledge of their experiences of culture shock, as identified in Chapter Three (the literature review) (focusing on research question 2).

The discussion of the above will be followed by a further consideration of the results of this study in relation to the relationship between trauma, initiation and the concept of a spiritual emergency, and how these might be useful in understanding Nigerian international students' experiences of studying in the UK (focusing on research question 3). A further discussion and consideration of the results relates to how elements of African initiation processes may be useful for supporting Nigerian students through the education process abroad (focusing on research question 4). The theoretical implications of the findings for theory and practice are also considered in this chapter.

6.1.1 An in-depth understanding of the students' experiences: a sense of separation or a sense of wholeness

The participants in this study have recounted in depth the nature of their experiences as international students studying in the UK. These experiences are eclectic and

have been experienced uniquely, with each participant's story conveying and revealing a deeper knowledge of the conditions they have faced since sojourning to study in the UK. Their individual experiences, as they related, have impacted mostly negatively on their wellbeing, which further suggests that they are undergoing situations that require attention. Meanwhile, at face level people do not really know what international students are going through just by looking at them unless the students allow someone into their world of experience, an opportunity I was granted in this research.

With regard to their sense of separation or wholeness, the former was predominantly evident in the narrative accounts of the participants. As they went through situations that some of them found difficult to come to terms with, many of the participants experienced a separated and shattered self. This was evident in the comments they made in their stories. For example, Nnanna said he could not understand himself anymore. Onyeowo said she was afraid of not becoming 'normal' when she returns to Nigeria. Ekene said his perception of himself was that he was nobody in the UK but somebody in Nigeria. James said he did not know himself and did not know if he was still the same person. Furthermore, Amina said her life had been torn apart and she was not herself anymore. Finally, Ahmedu said he did not know himself anymore and felt scattered (see 5.5.4). These personal stories, some of which appear similar in terms of the effects that experiencing diverse challenging events has had on the participants as they study in the UK, suggest a disruption of the sense of self and sense of wholeness.

A study by Montgomery (2010), discussed in Chapter One of this study, found that encountering diversity can be threatening and unsettling and can pose a threat to international students' sense of who they are. This was similar to the findings of this study in relation to the experiences of the participants but their sense of self separation was also linked with other circles of experiences in their lives. Experiencing diversity was part of the situations they encountered but there were also significant individual encounters such as discrimination, financial difficulties, betrayed expectations and academic dilemmas, which left them in a state that some of them could not explain. This result adds to the findings of Montgomery (2010) as it shows that disruptions in the sense of self among international students do not just

arise from experiencing diversity but also come from eclectic challenging situations. The sense of self disruption which has been seen to characterise the experiences of most of the participants in this study has implications for their entire integrated functioning. This takes this discussion to the second research question, which seeks to know whether any of the elements of trauma can be linked to the students' experiences.

6.1.2 An in-depth understanding of the students' experiences: any elements of trauma that can be linked to the students' experiences

As the findings from the individual and cross-narrative thematic analyses have shown, there are many experiences that the students have undergone that can be related to experiencing trauma. This echoes research findings that moving to a new location can initiate traumatic experiences (Kaneshiro, 2010). In the narrative accounts analysed in Chapter Five of this study, the participants told stories of experiencing overwhelming situations which had some elements similar to those of trauma. These are discussed below in terms of elements that emerged from their narrative accounts in order to enable a consideration of the various aspects of this experiences and how they may parallel elements of trauma.

6.1.2.1 Disorientation, disorganised and confused

As the results on the participants' experiences have shown, there were elements of disorientation, disorganisation and confusion in their narratives. For example, James spoke about how unsettled and disorganised his life has become because of all the difficulties he has encountered while studying in the UK. Amina's life has been grossly affected by the difficulties and challenges she is going through, which she said had made life unbearable for her. Onyinye feels that her life has become scattered as she can no longer focus on whatever she is doing. Oyagiri has also experienced a difficult life in the UK which has unsettled his mind. Ahmedu had a challenging experience that left him confused and even endangered his life because of mixing the wrong chemicals in the laboratory. This behaviour was triggered by his experience of difficulties while studying in the UK. Nnanna has also experienced confusion and a scattered mind, which has affected his studies. There was also evidence of feeling disorganised in Amina's experience as she said that her life had

been torn apart, while Ekene's experiences in the UK have disorganised and confused him so that he does not know what to do next (see 5.5.1).

In the above, there are experiences that resemble those of trauma. Disorganisation of the self, disorientation and confusion are among the elements of trauma that were discussed in the introductory chapter (Chapter One) and literature review (Chapter 3) of this study. As Naso's (2008) study revealed, people undergoing trauma seem to have disorganised psychological and mental functioning, making a connection between their inner and outer worlds difficult. The narratives of the participants, as the results reveal, suggest that there is a disintegration of the self which primarily manifests itself through a feeling of not being whole and coordinated, leading to confusion, disorientation and disorganisation. These participants' experiences also parallel researchers' findings about some of the different ways that people experiencing traumatic events react. These include recognising that there is a threat, recognising that the stress and trauma cannot be handled with their existing coping skills, experiencing fear, confusion and stress and possibly beginning to show some symptoms of distress and discomfort (Robert, 2000).

In the same manner, the work of Stolorow (2007) has shown that trauma disorients a person's functioning such that the individual finds it difficult to cohere. The confusion experienced by the participants and revealed in their stories made it difficult for them to understand themselves, which could be a sign of psychological and emotional trauma. Likewise, the findings of this study resonate with the findings from the study of Pantelidou and Craig (2006) on international students. They found that international students experience a sense of loss and confusion about role expectations as part of an experience of culture shock. However, the findings from this study show that there is more than culture shock involved because culture shock is a temporary stage that is completed within a few months of being in the host culture (Oberg, 1960). The participants in this study have all lived for more than one year in the host country as they were at the end of their second and third years, so their experiences cannot be seen as culture shock. Therefore, owing to the experiences' resemblances to those described in the trauma literature, it seems that students' experiences of disorientation, disorganisation and confusion could indicate psychological trauma.

6.1.2.2 Sleeplessness and helplessness

In this study, it was discovered that majority of the participants had experiences that removed sleep from their lives and made them feel that no one could help them. Their stories showed a clear sense of not finding solace and comfort in their individual encounters because they could not find someone to trust and share things with. As the results revealed, Nnanna felt that he was being treated like he should not have come to the UK, which left him with worries and sleepless nights. He also felt he could not get help from anywhere because he already knew that no one could help and he was sure that people cared little about him. Kate also had terrible experiences that made her to cry in her room and left her unable to sleep. Her experiences, as she said, filled her with worries, and she could not find anyone to console her (see 5.5.2). These findings suggest a strong feeling of participants not finding a relational home in which to share their emotions. This relates to Stolorow's (2007, p.10) findings on trauma, as he says that "trauma is constituted in an intersubjective context in which severe emotional pain cannot find a relational home in which it can be held".

The feeling of helplessness discovered in this study, which characterised the experiences of the narrators, occurred due to experiences they had that threatened their lives and left them with worries. This resonates with the studies of Rees and Smith (2007), who note that a person's life is under threat in conditions of trauma and this is characterised by a feeling of helplessness. This was the case with the experience of Amina, who stated that her life had become unbearable as she could not find help because she had no one in the UK to support her as she faced various difficulties. Amina also said that she had been unable to sleep because her life was full of threats from both academic experiences and from her encounters with people in her place of work (see 5.5.2). As trivial as academic difficulties may be considered, they may lead a person into experiencing trauma. For example, a study by Lang and Meaney (2011) revealed that even difficulties with doing mathematics homework could cause emotional trauma.

Onyeowo also had similar experiences because her life was changed as she faced financial challenges, felt lonely and helpless and was not herself anymore because she could not find a friend to trust. James lived a life that was full of restlessness and

sleeplessness because he was encountering difficulties and could not get help from anyone, which made coping very difficult for him (see 5.5.2). The experiences of Ahmedu were also full of helpless feelings and he said that he trusted no one to help him in the UK unless the help was divine. He lived a life full of challenges and worry that led to sleepless nights. Ekene's experiences were also emotionally difficult for him because he felt he was being treated like an outcast in the UK and this left him feeling worried, unable to sleep, lost and helpless (see 5.5.2).

Feeling helpless and an inability to sleep, which were experienced by the participants, as the findings in this study revealed, have long been seen as characteristics of trauma. For example, Jones and Wessely (2007) found that difficulty sleeping and mental disorientation are major evidence of trauma. Another researcher also found that people who experience traumatic events often have profound feelings of helplessness, continue to dissociate in the face of threat and have difficulties with planning effective actions (Kolk, 2000). The participants in this study, who have experienced profound states of helplessness, as their narrative accounts revealed, have not been able to plan effective actions. This can be seen in terms of not confronting their experiences actively as many felt that there was nothing they could do to remedy their situation. The only options left for many of them were to worry and suppress their emotions. Feeling powerless and overwhelmed by their experiences is known to be the most immediate impacts of trauma (Stolorow, 2007).

6.1.2.3 Fears and worries

The findings from this study also show evidence of living in fear and worry being among the experiences of the participants. Many participants made references to being afraid and worried. Amina's experience made her feel insecure in the UK because she was afraid of the police as she had an issue in her place of work. She also recounted being afraid because her host university might report her to the embassy, which will send her back to Nigeria. Her life was full of worries and fear about what might happen next to her, and she could not find peace living and studying in the UK. She was also afraid of going back to Nigeria because she was worried about the shame she will face if she does not complete her studies before

going back. Onyeowo was also seen to be living with fears and worries about her academic work in the UK, which she felt was difficult for her (see 5.5.3).

Another experience of fear and worry was evident in Kate's narrative as she was afraid of answering phone calls from her workplace. Kate had encounters in her workplace that made her experience an increased heartbeat, panic and fear each time a phone call came from her place of work. This was because she felt she was being discriminated against, which made her worry a lot (see 5.5.3). Overwhelming and threatening experiences like those experienced by the participants in this study, and which lead to a life of fear and worries, are argued to be related to the experience of trauma. As Lopez (2011) has said, this is because trauma is damage to the psyche that impacts on the day-to-day functioning of a person and arises from events that are overwhelming and threatening.

Other participants also conveyed feelings of fear and worry. For example, Ahmedu described living in fear in the UK because of laws that do not give him the freedom to live life as he would want. His fear is that he is a stranger in a foreign land who has nobody to speak for him or protect him. His experiences also cause worries as he cannot focus on his studies because of difficulties ranging from finance, loneliness, feeling lost and helpless to a feeling of being racially discriminated against. Ekene had similar fears as news of people being racially attacked in the UK made him live in fear of the unknown as he did not feel safe in the UK. Nnanna, through his own experience, lived in fear about how his journey would end because of the difficulties he was facing with his studies, which also worried him as he did not know how to cope with them (see 5.5.3).

Fearful situations such as those revealed in this study parallel some of the understandings in the trauma literature, which sees trauma as evolving from held energy in the body arising from a fearful situation that threatens the normal functioning of a person (Levine, 1997; Suvak and Barrett, 2011). The overwhelming situations that occupied the experiences of the participants suggested that their coping skills were affected by those experiences, leaving them with fears and worries as the only options available to them. This was the case when James said that the only option left for him was to go back to his room and continue thinking and

worrying. His fears and worries about surviving in the UK in terms of his studies and not being able to support his family back in Nigeria devastated him. Similarly, Oyagiri also had fears about his studies because it was difficult for him to cope with the academic system in the UK, leaving him unsettled and unhappy (see 5.5.3).

The participants did not expect the difficulties they encountered in the UK, which impacted on their functioning and wellbeing. This further parallels and echoes the findings of Terr (1990) on emotional trauma occurrences, which reveals that emotional or psychic trauma occurs when there are intense emotional blows to psychological functioning from outside that are unexpected and overwhelming. As evident in the narrative accounts of the participants referred above, there are resemblance between their experiences and the conditions of trauma, with intense fear and worries as visible elements.

6.1.2.4 Depressive feelings and suppressed emotions

Some of the participants had experiences that related to feeling of being depressed, and many suppressed their experiences because, as seen in 6.1.2.2, there was no relational home for their experiences to be heard. The participants referred to being depressed and not finding help or trusting anyone to help them and so suppressing their difficulties. Most of the participants made references to encountering events both in their various universities and outside that depressed them and which they could do nothing about except suppress them.

Onyeowo's narrative revealed that she had experiences of feeling that there was no one to help her, saying that she cried, and longed for companionship and relief but could not get any. She also said that she had to bury her emotions and felt depressed about that experience (see 5.5.5). This experience relates to the fight, flight or freeze response to trauma, whereby the person experiencing trauma is left frozen when driven down the defence cascade to the point where flight or fight become impossible (Levine, 1997; Thomas and Maggie, 2002). Onyeowo could not fight the situation and neither was she able to run away from it. Rather, she was left with sole option of freezing. In his own experience, Ahmedu was depressed when he could not get anybody to support him. His experience led him to live in isolation for over 7 months as he also shut down his social networking sites and cut off

communication with others. His emotional disturbances were suppressed and he detested himself, seeing his life as not worth living (see 5.5.5).

A feeling that life is not worth living anymore may suggest trauma. This is because, as Bromberg (2000, p. 689) has stated, trauma involves the "...precipitous disruption of self-continuity through the invalidation of the patterns of meaning that define the experience of 'who one is'". Ahmedu's experiences relate to this definition of trauma because his sense of self and life meaning was disrupted by difficulties including having no finances with which to sustain himself, feeling lonely, feeling discriminated against, facing academic struggles and feeling insecure in his daily encounters in the UK.

James also felt that he could not do anything but live a life of isolation since he felt he was surrounded by people but could not be helped by them. This experience made him feel depressed. Onyinye was also depressed and afraid, knowing that she had no father, mother or even a trusted friend that she could rely on. Her only choice was to suffer her experiences without letting them out. In her own experience, Amina lost weight and lost interest in caring about herself because she worried a lot about her life and what she was going through (see, 5.5.5). According to the work of Freud (1926), as Stolorow (2007) explains, the most immediate impact of trauma is that the individual feels powerless and overwhelmed. Clear evidence of feeling powerless and overwhelmed by their experiences was common in the narratives of the participants. This was because they did not know how to fight their situation but suppressed them. For example, Onyinye said that she could not let her overwhelming emotions out because she did not feel that any help would come from anywhere, and James felt the same way.

6.1.2.5 Concentration difficulties and flashbacks

The participants' stories revealed problems with concentration for many, while some had flashback memories while studying in the UK. Evidence of lacking in concentration was seen to weave around the narratives of the participants. Nnanna's studies were affected because he was losing concentration and he was disorganised by the difficulties he had. His narrative account also revealed that he experienced flashback memories of his late brother which were brought to awareness by the

uncomfortable experiences he had as he was studying in the UK. Kate also experienced not being able to concentrate on her studies because, as her story revealed, her mind was always absent even when her body was physically present due to fears and worries about what life has thrown at her in the UK. Onyinye similarly experienced losing concentration as her overwhelming problems prevented her from knowing what she was doing most of the time (see 5.5.6).

As the results from the accounts of the participants above have revealed, there were experiences that intruded previous adversities in the lives of the narrators into consciousness. As Brewin and Holmes (2003) found in their studies, trauma memories break into consciousness and intrude in different forms like flashbacks and nightmares. What amplified Nnanna's past experience of losing his brother was his experience of difficult situations in the UK, which further suggests that it could be an intrusion of past trauma he may have experienced before coming to study in the UK. The sojourn experiences of the participants were full of painful emotional experiences, as their narratives revealed. As Stolorow (2011) has said, these could become enduringly traumatic in the absence of an intersubjective context within which they can be held and integrated.

The outcome of the above was a feeling of being struck by forces they could not fight, as their stories conveyed. Intrusions from their past experiences, some of which were positive but intrusive, contributed more to their feelings of sadness, as was recounted in their narratives. For example, Amadi revealed that the good memories he had of being with his family in Nigeria kept intruding because he could not find a channel through which to relieve his stress and the emotional pain of his experiences within the UK. These experiences endorse Herman's (1992) statement that traumatic stress disorders may take the form of ruminative preoccupation.

In his own experience, Ahmedu underwent a great loss of concentration and disconnection within his self. Thus, as his narrative revealed, he did not know what he was doing, which became evident when he mixed the wrong chemicals in the laboratory because his mind was elsewhere and scattered. He was unable to articulate and integrate his thoughts and, as Levine (1997) has found, during trauma,

articulation and having a felt sense of self become disconnected. Ahmedu also had intrusive flashback memories of losing his father at an early age in his life and the suffering he had gone through growing up. It was revealed in his narrative that his experience of this had come to awareness because he was experiencing suffering under conditions that reminded him of his past (see 5.5.6). In the same way, Oyagiri could not concentrate on his studies because of how difficult it was for him to cope in the UK. James was confused about himself as he kept wondering if he was the same person. As their narratives revealed, all of these participants faced difficult experiences which were significant to them as they robbed them of their happiness and integrated functioning. There was a strong feeling of discrimination and being insulted in the findings of this study. This which relates to a study by Seides (2010) which found that trauma can develop even from a series of relatively minor emotional insults over time due to having a stressful life or poor coping skills.

6.2 An in-depth understanding of the student's experiences: relating trauma, individuation, the spiritual emergency concept and initiation to the participants' experiences

In Chapter Three of this study (see 3.4.8, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7) there was a review of previous studies to see how trauma, individuation, spiritual emergency and initiation are related and how they can be useful in understanding the difficult experiences of international students. The findings from this study have suggested that there are individual trajectories in the participants' experiences which relate to how each participant has experienced life in the UK as an international student. Meanwhile, as the ongoing discussion of the findings based on the narrative accounts of the participants' experiences has shown, there are experiences that suggest experiences of psychological and emotional trauma. On the other hand, experiences of individuation and spiritual emergencies, which are psychological and spiritual process of growth out of adversity, were not evident in the participants' narratives. However, one of the participants has gone through an initiation process and related this to his experiences of studying in the UK, something which is discussed in the later part of this section.

People who experience overwhelming situations like those of the participants in this study may be lucky enough to grow from them through individuation and a spiritual

emergency. However, because there was no support or help available to the participants in this study, they could not experience this personal growth. The experiences of some of the participants in this study, which scattered their self-awareness by disconnecting and altering their sense of being in the world, something which is referred to as trauma (Stolorow, 2007), could have been amended through individuation to give them a sense of consciousness and connectedness. However, the participants never had the opportunity to achieve this integration because they had no relational home in which to hold their grief and distress. Otherwise they would have narrated archetypal images in their narrative accounts. Using such images is one sign of individuation as Jung notes that archetypal experiences strive towards totality and wholeness (MaryAnn, 1998).

A spiritual emergency is another source of personal growth that can be experienced during overwhelming and challenging life experiences. As the narrative accounts of the participants in this study have shown, they have experienced emotional stress and personal discomfort while studying in the UK. Their experiences parallel trauma because, as Robert (2000) has pointed out, trauma decreases the coping skills of individuals, leaving feeling that their current coping skills are not sufficient. This was evident in the stories told by the participants when some of them said that they felt helpless in their situations and that life had become unbearable. In this condition, Holden et al (2007) point out that such overwhelming experience may signal a breakthrough rather than a breakdown. This was not the case in this study though because the narrators felt they were having a breakdown rather than a breakthrough. If the latter was the case, then they would be considered to be going through spiritual emergency episodes.

Spiritual emergency experiences were not evident in the narrative accounts of the participants because they did not have the opportunity to see the positive sides of their situations. The kinds of unique individual experiences they had, if supported adequately, could have led to psychological and spiritual development and transformation. This, as Grof and Grof (1989) and Lucas (2011) point out, arises as a result of the complications inherent in our natural development as spiritual beings. The complications and challenges faced by the participants might have led to their

spiritual awakening and transformation but this did not happen because of lack of support.

African initiation processes, an example of which one of the participants, Nnanna, spoke about in his narrative, are another source of personal growth. As revealed in the narrative constructed by Nnanna about his experience of initiation in Nigeria, he appreciated the initiation process because he saw it as a source of personal development even though it was also full of pain. However, the pain of going through the initiation process in Nigeria, as Nnanna's account revealed, was transformative because he was well-guided and supported so that he could appreciate both the pains and the gains in it. Relating his experiences of initiation to this experience of difficulties in the UK, Nnanna said that he sees his experience in the UK as an unending pain because he has had no one to help him go through his experience in a constructive manner.

Just like the idea of individuation proposed by Jung, where the shattered sense of self is unified into wholeness through support, African initiation processes are seen as helping initiates to understand their calling on earth. Schooling can be very difficult but, as Herzog (1973) pointed out, non-western countries engage in initiation as an alternative to schooling where there are challenges to face but these are constructively developed to benefit the partakers' in their physical and psychological development. This was echoed by Nnanna, a participant who has gone through an initiation process, because he felt that even though it was difficult, it was worthwhile, as his narrative conveyed. This further suggests that, since it has also been noted that there are difficulties inherent in schooling and travelling to school in other cultures, the kind of support which is central to the core concept of initiation in Africa may be useful for helping international students to develop in a positive manner.

In summary, as the discussion of the findings from this study has highlighted, most of the participants' experiences of studying in the UK parallel some trauma elements in terms of participants' symptoms and their reactions to their situations. Some previous studies have also illuminated the findings of this study and have endorsed some of the reasons given to explain why the participants' experiences were overwhelming and not constructive. Studies of individuation, the spiritual emergency

concept and initiation processes have also added to our understanding of why the participants in this study did not experience positive aspects to their situations by partly relating this to a lack of adequate support, care and guidance.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions, contributions to knowledge and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

In this last chapter of the thesis conclusions relating to the findings of this study are presented. The chapter further outlines the major contributions of the study to knowledge, some recommendations are given based on the findings of the study, and finally directions for future research are presented.

7.2 Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis has been to gain in-depth understanding of the experiences of international students from Nigeria studying in UK universities and how they are affected by their individual experiences. The researcher's intention, as outlined at the beginning of this thesis, has been to understand, through personal accounts, the ways that studying in the UK has impacted on the participants. This is to enable an understanding of how they can be supported in a constructive manner that helps their personal development as they go through education in the UK. In doing this, the researcher has examined their experiences from the point of view of trauma because some of the findings in previous studies about international students' experiences did not go deep enough in terms of understanding the conditions such students face. The narrative inquiry adopted in this thesis has enabled the participants to construct their narratives in depth, which has revealed that they have experienced circumstances that resemble those of psychological and emotional trauma. As a result, the experiences of the international students studied in this thesis have been identified as having significant implications for their wellbeing. Basically, the outcomes of their experiences were not comforting to them and the mediators of these negative experiences were lack of support and their personal individual circumstances.

The study has revealed the nature of the experiences that Nigerian students have while studying in the UK and, based on the findings as discussed in Chapter Six, some of these experiences coincide with those found in psychological trauma. These were evident in the narratives and included feelings of helplessness, confusion and

loss of meaning in life, fears and worries about survival, and a disruption in their sense of wholeness. There were also other elements resembling those of trauma, such as concentration difficulties, having flashback memories, sleeplessness and experiencing depressive episodes. Feeling disoriented, disorganised and missing the love of their families and caregivers were also seen to characterise their experiences, which further endorsed the resemblance of their experiences to those of trauma.

There were resemblances and interconnectivity between trauma, individuation, the spiritual emergency concept and initiation processes, as the findings of this study revealed. The participants spoke of experiencing overwhelming challenges but due to a lack of support they could not benefit in terms of personal growth and greater life meaning (individuation and spiritual emergency). Instead, they felt disconnected from their self. Their experiences were not initiatory in that they did not understand the pains and gains in their experiences. This led them to feel that they were being used as cash-cows by their universities, who were seen as caring little about the students' wellbeing, as the findings of this study revealed. There were regrets because many of the participants saw the pains of getting a UK degree as surpassing the gains in it.

As the findings revealed, understanding international students' experiences based on their personal accounts was appreciated by the participants as many of them saw it as an opportunity to pour out their pains and emotions for the first time. Some of the participants were particularly happy about the study because they felt it would help to change the kinds of experiences they are facing while studying in the UK. However, a few felt that the UK system was designed to foster trauma in international students because they did not see any change coming forth that would make life easier for international students. This was because the degree of difficulty faced by the participants in this study altered their meaning-making and appraisal of their situation, as their narrative accounts revealed.

Most importantly, the findings of this study have shown that the participants' experiences impacted and affected their learning and knowledge development, which was the main purpose behind them being in the UK. It is important to note that the participants in this study appreciated the high standard and quality of education

in the UK. Their narratives revealed that they saw the learning facilities in the host universities as a credit to them because they aided their learning. This echoes Bramley and Karley's (2007, p.695) statement that "School resources which include quantity and quality of teaching, facilities and management...are very vital in educational attainment". These experiences have been understood in depth through individual stories, which is a major strength of this study. This because it has attended to international students' experiences from their point of view and using an approach that gave them the freedom to construct their own stories with regard to how they have experienced studying abroad.

The participants in this study made references to experiencing conditions that affected their physiological, psychological/emotional, social and spiritual functioning, which can be inferred from the meanings they made out of their everyday experiences of being foreigners in the UK. The experiences of the participants in this study, as they related in their narratives, have affected their perceptions of UK education and the kind of message they will take back home. In relation to this, Arshad and Lima (2012, p.1) point out in their research on attracting international students that "The messages that students take back to their countries about their experience of student services should be an important consideration of any HEI's internationalisation strategy". Some of the participants in this study made references of telling people back home when they returned that studying in the UK was very difficult. This was because they felt that they would never have known or imagined that they would face the kinds of difficulties they have encountered while studying in the UK, and they would not want others to have the same experiences in the future.

The narrative inquiry which captured the personal life stories of students in this study has evidenced the extent to which they drew from their previous expectations and connected them into their narratives of experiencing life in the UK. Their expectations were betrayed and this gave insight why most of the participants faced the challenges that occupied their individual stories. Their emotions were silenced because there were no avenues for them to be heard, which is undoubtedly something that happens in trauma conditions. Their sense of self-construction was altered because they could not articulate a sense of who they were and make sense of the process they were going through in their lives. It was therefore difficult for

them to connect their previous self-awareness with their present self in order to develop a new sense of self because most of them did not expect what they had experienced.

Trauma is basically a shift in consciousness and a disruption to an individual's understanding and construction of the sense of self (Levine, 1997). The narratives in this study revealed that changes were taking place in the lives of the students that disrupted their sense of self but the meaning made from this was rather self-defeating because of a lack of support. This further created a crisis between their inner and outer worlds as it was difficult for them to integrate their experiences. The conclusions made in this study are linked to the study's objectives, which have been met through the narrative accounts of studying in the UK.

The findings from this study also demonstrated that the participants experienced situations that left them in the fight, flight or freeze response mechanism, which is also something that happens during trauma. In that regard, because most of them could not fight the conditions they faced, and neither did they run away because of the stigma they would face at home, the only option left for them was to freeze by way of suppressing their feelings and emotions. This condition relates to the studies by Thomas and Maggie (2002), who point out that a traumatised individual or organism will freeze when driven down the defence cascade to the point where both flight and fight become impossible. Therefore, the freezing response, which is considered a physiological reaction to life-threatening events by Rees and Smith (2007), is seen to be the option adopted by most of the participants as they were overwhelmed by their experiences. Further, their experiences were life-threatening, causing them to experience continuous emotional problems, and such emotional traumas have been shown to be more psychologically harmful than a single catastrophic event by the studies of Seides (2010).

Although some of the participants did not perceive their universities as giving them an opportunity to bond and experience rich sociocultural experiences, which were among the reasons why their experiences were not rewarding, there were other difficulties that led to the shift in their consciousness and the self-defeating experiences they experienced. Financial difficulties were a major source of their

challenging experiences, which highlights that they had not clearly understood the UK system and neither were their plans for surviving financially feasible, which was why they felt that their expectations were betrayed. It was also clear that they experienced losing the love, care and security of home that they had enjoyed before coming to the UK. This is considered normal for sojourners but was one of the reasons why the students' lives were affected negatively. The learning experiences were also not rich as some of the students had expected, and they were not learning as they had wanted. One of the reasons for this was the teaching methods used, which were different from the methods they had previously known. However, there were other conditions and dilemmas, and this study has revealed that UK universities should not underestimate the depth of meaning learning experiences have in the sojourner's development, wellbeing and personal growth.

The findings of this study have shown that meaning-construction can be interpretive because of the ways the experiences of each participant have impacted on their views about life, which resonates with the constructive and interpretive philosophy that grounds this study. This philosophy believes that multiple realities exist and are subjectively constructed by individuals in ways that are meaningful to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore this study has shown that although other studies have found that studying abroad is difficult, what is crucial is how each individual in that situation interprets the conditions in which they find themselves. This was also based on the participants' individual assumptions before, during and after experiencing UK education.

It can be succinctly pointed out here that the findings of this study cannot be generalised to represent all international student experiences or even all Nigerian students' experiences of studying in the UK. However, the knowledge gained from the findings of this exploratory study can provide useful insight into understanding the degree of difficulties students face while studying overseas. The narrative method which has been applied to seeking the depths of the experiences the students have had, also unmask what would probably not be uncovered if a larger sample and a method that does not allow a deeper understanding of lived experiences was to be applied. Meanwhile, because there were commonalities in most of the experiences of the participants in this study, as the findings have

revealed, it can be suggested that the knowledge gained from this study may be transferable and useful for understanding other international students' experiences.

Lastly, while this study has benefited from the wide range of studies that assume that international students' experiences can be classified as culture shock, it has also demonstrated that some of the experiences of international students may have been under-researched due to the use of methods that do not give them the space and time to disgorge their experiences. These experiences can have adverse effects on their individual lives and their testimonies of studying abroad if not addressed. The unique stories told by these students and revealed by this study should not be swept under the carpet because the individuals undergoing this process of change are not being positively changed.

7.3 Contributions to knowledge

International students' experiences has never been approached as ones that affect the totality of their individual functioning. This study has used the framework of trauma, which has also never been used to analyse the experiences of international students. In the process it has produced tangible findings which reflect experiences that coincide with traumatic experiences which affect every part of integrated human functioning. This is new knowledge as there has been no previous effort to consider the possibility that there may be elements of trauma in international students' experiences.

Further, Nigeria is third after China and India in terms of sending international students to the UK (HESA, 2011) but there is no research devoted entirely to the experiences of students from Nigeria studying in the UK. This study has contributed to knowledge in this capacity as it has revealed through the individual accounts of the participants in this study the nature of their experiences of studying in the UK. In research by Denis (2012), the researcher looked at the pre-sojourn transition process of students from sub-Saharan Africa and suggested that further research exploring the outcomes of their transition and how they were affected by their transition process when they were abroad was required. This study has explored the outcomes of that transition process and has filled this gap in knowledge by revealing

the various experiences the Nigerian students, who come from a sub-Saharan African country, encounter while studying in the UK.

Additional new knowledge that has been gained by the researcher's involvement in this research is that international students can be very revealing if they trust the investigator. This was evident in some of the participants' narratives as they trusted that the researcher would be in a position to understand them more because of having a background as a Nigerian student studying in a UK university. Therefore, using an internal individual who the participants feel is in their own shoes when investigating their lived experiences could be efficacious in tapping into deep information about them.

The narrative method applied in this study has made revelations about the most threatening experiences that some international students could face while they are studying in the UK. The method also gave these students an opportunity to voice their concerns. These stories could be suppressed by question-and-answer methods that do not give participants power over the conversation. The knowledge gained in this study can help higher education institutions in the UK to develop internationalisation strategies that will see international students returning home happy customers after studying with them. Universities in the UK can also share this information and develop best strategies for recruiting and supporting international students since Adcroft, Teckman and Rob (2010,p.585) have noted that there is growing interconnectedness in taking decisions among universities, such that decisions made in one university cannot be "isolated or abstracted" from other universities in UK.

Throughout this study, findings have been produced about the depths of the difficulties an individual can face after travelling from a culture and conditioning that are strikingly different. Therefore, this study has found that this is an experience that goes beyond culture shock, thus adding to existing knowledge on international students' experiences because experiences are not always the same for every sojourner owing to varying interpersonal and intrapersonal factors.

7.4 Recommendations and critical reflection on the study

It is critical that the nature of experiences such as those experienced by the participants in this study is taken into account. Since there is a resemblance between the nature of trauma and the process of initiation, it may be that some of the elements of initiation which primarily require that a counsellor continuously explain the pains and gains in this kind of process should be attended to. In the process of educating international students, such practices will enable international students to experience growth and appreciate their participation in studying abroad.

Reflecting on the experience of doing the narrative interviews, the participants seemed relieved when they had finished telling their stories and this suggests that narrative therapy or other forms of psychotherapy could be developed for international students as a way of enabling them to tell their difficulties and get relief from them, as well as support.

Based on the findings regarding the role of UK universities in supporting international students, this research encourages them to see each international student as an individual who has unique past experiences that may be impacting on their present situation. Therefore, such students should be supported not on a generic scale but as suits the needs of the individual. Furthermore, encouraging sociocultural interaction should be considered very important in international students' overseas study experiences. This is because as findings of this study revealed seeing themselves as black or feeling that they were been discriminated against both in university and outside it contributed to the students' overarching overwhelming emotions. Therefore, promoting intercultural experiences in universities could help to change the perceptions that these international students have about the host country, even outside the university environment.

Critical reflection on the experience of doing this study and the touching stories told by the narrators has shown that when international students are seen walking by others do not necessarily understand that they are passing through a condition that is very distressing and uncomfortable because they suppress their emotions. Therefore, universities in the UK could play a role in alleviating this by coming closer

to their international students by organising events in their name from time to time and encouraging home students to be part of those events.

Based on the findings of this study, there were huge expectations among the participants before they sojourned to the UK. These unmet expectations led to circles of problematic experiences. In this light, universities in the UK can help students understand the realities of studying in the UK by giving them enough information about issues relating to finances, friendship, the weather, food and other contingent experiences they should expect. This will give them more realistic expectations of what they are likely to experience rather than them having outrageous expectations before they finally arrive in the UK. It is not feasible that a student coming from Nigeria will get a job that will earn them enough money to pay their tuition fees, pay for accommodation, provide for their food and clothing and even leave them with something to send back to their families in Nigeria. However, this was expected by some of the students and when it failed to materialise this led to personal chaos and distress.

UK educators should strive to ensure that students who come to study in the UK have a clear means of supporting themselves before they consider them for admission. This is because when conditions like those reported in this study become the outcome of their sojourning experiences it will not help in marketing the universities' names because the students will not return home fulfilled. Similarly, the kinds of experiences narrated in this study by the participants are ones that universities would surely not want their valued international students to experience. Therefore, ensuring that there is a clear path for the student's survival in the UK should be paramount in universities' recruitment prerequisites. This is not to suggest tightening the border but rather a recommendation that universities be more meticulous in ensuring that international students do not come to suffer but to develop.

Lastly, it would be constructive for universities to use both positive and negative testimonies to attract international students. In this study, some participants made reference to the university not making them understand that there were difficulties in studying in the UK while they were applying from Nigeria. It might be good practice

to shuffle feedback so that prospective students can weigh the options they have and learn vicariously from the experiences of previous international students and increase their chances of constructive rather than destructive experiences.

7.5 Areas for future research

The findings from this study have identified a need to re-examine the nature of international students' experiences and shift away from the traditional culture shock perspective that has dominated studies of international students' overseas experiences. Just as this thesis has focused on exploring these students' experiences from a different perspective using a trauma framework, this could be further developed in larger studies. It was found that understanding these experiences in depth and from the perspectives of the international students concerned has not been the focus of much attention. However, since the findings of this study have shown that the experiences of the participants in this study have resemblances to those of psychological trauma, maybe the use of a personal trauma inventory could be applied to studying a larger sample of these students. This would ensure that their experiences abroad could be clearly understood and further inform practice with regard to the nature of the support required to help make their experiences overseas rewarding.

Furthermore, narrative inquiry as the researcher has realised during this study, can be further explored with regard to studying international students' experiences as it allows them to make sense of their personal experiences if trust is built between the researcher and the narrators. Similarly, future longitudinal research is required to capture international students' experiences over time since the current study, using the narrative method, which emphasises temporality, has shown that the transition process is ever-changing. Therefore, research that captures these contextual changes over time would yield broader knowledge and deepen our understanding of these students' experiences overseas.

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Appendices

Appendix 1



Participant Consent Form

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:

Title of the project: Exploring international students experiences in UK universities: a narrative inquiry of Nigerian students.

Researcher:

Eze Ogbonnia Eze.
PhD student (LAIBS)
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PARTICIPANT CONSENT

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I agree for information to be reported verbatim where necessary as long as my name is not quoted
5. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.

6. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me*

Name of participant
(print).....Signed.....Date.....

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: Exploring international students experiences in UK universities: a narrative inquiry of Nigerian students.

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____

Date:

Appendix 2



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Section A: The Research Project

TITLE OF PROJECT: Exploring international students experiences in UK universities: a narrative inquiry of Nigerian students

PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of international students from Nigeria while they are studying in the UK and how those experiences impact on their lives.

Dear participant,

I wish to kindly seek your participation in this research with the above stated purpose. Your participation is voluntarily your choice but the need to give international students of your kind a successful study abroad experience is very important. Therefore, I crave your indulgence to kindly consider my invitation to participate in this study.

I am personally organising this research as part of my PhD research programme and the result of the study will contribute to the award of my PhD degree. This study will also benefit recruiting institutions where international students are studying in the UK and elsewhere in the world. The result of the research will benefit you as an international student because your experiences will be clearly known and will help in developing strategies to support you adequately.

I am personally going to fund the research as I do not have any funding body. For further information, please do contact me using my contact details below.

Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project

You have been invited to take part in this research because the topic is one that involves international students from Nigeria who have studied for more than one year in a UK university and because you fall in this category, it became necessary to seek your participation.

You are not under any law to participate in this research so you can refuse to take part if you are not comfortable with participating. Meanwhile, if you agree to participate, you have the right to decline or withdraw from the study without reasons and you can do this by emailing me or on phone.

Be informed that if you grant and accept this invitation to participate in this research, you will be involved in my narrative interview session which will involve you telling me your story about your experiences of studying in the UK while your responses will be audio recorded for transcription purpose only. The narrative interviewing process will last between 30minutes to 1hour. You also have the right to withdraw during the interview process and you have no case to answer in doing so. I have proposed conducting the narrative interview in your university study rooms but you can indicate otherwise if you have an alternative comfortable place for your interview.

Your pictures will not be made available to the public and I will not take pictures of you. Your voice recorded will only be used by the researcher for transcription and data analysis purposes only.

You may have the feeling of tiredness or boredom in the narrative session but don't worry there can be a break period in-between the session if you desire to have a break. You may as well have the feeling of insecurity of information you provide but I reassure you that your information will be treated with utmost confidentiality including your personal details as I have decided to use pseudonyms to represent your real names and your institutions while analysing and processing your information. I promise to protect your legal right of participation if you agree to take part in this research.

Please you are advised to be open and sincere with your information and avoid bias as it will not help me achieve the goals set out in this research. There is no monetary reward for taking part in this research, so I urge you to make a decision on taking part as a way of assisting me to complete my PhD programme.

Lastly, you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep alongside a copy of your consent form.

Thanks for your co-operation.
Sincerely,

Eze Ogbonnia Eze
PhD student
Lord Ashcroft International Business School,
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Appendix 3: Ethics approval certificate



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16th June 2011

Mr Eze Ogbonnia Eze
33 Westbury Road
St Ives
Cambridgeshire
PE27 6DN

Dear Eze,

Project Title: Managing Culture Shock among International Students in Selected UK Universities

Principle Investigator: Eze Ogbonnia Eze

Thank you for your recent application for ethics approval. This has now been considered by the Business School according to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) procedures, and we are pleased to inform you that ethics approval has been given to your research for a period of three years from 16th June 2011.

Please note that if your research has not been completed within three years, you will need to apply to UREC for an extension of ethics approval. Similarly, if your research should change significantly in any respect, or if risk or harm or breach of confidentiality becomes likely, you will be obliged to submit a new application.

We wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Armitage
For the Faculty Research Ethics Panel

cc Kimberley Lilley – Secretary of RESC

