Investigation into the Motivational and Experiential Factors Influencing International Postgraduate Students' Studies at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana

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Abstract

International education is increasingly seen by governments as a major contributor to national and international wealth and economic development. International postgraduate students undertaking studies in a country other than their own is on the increase and has become a dominant phenomenon. However, most previous research about students' motivations for having an international experience and experiences of student engagement has focused on factors identified from the staff perspective rather than that of the students. Using a descriptive survey, 24 international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana completed the questionnaires for the study.International postgraduate students reported numerous motivational factors ranging from national to institutional level. On institutional level, it include Ghana's reputation as a safe country, society that is tolerant and not discriminatory, political and social stability, the reputation of the education system in Ghana, availability of financial support (scholarships, aid) to study in Ghana, ease of getting a Ghanaian study permit, off/on-campus work opportunities in Ghana, opportunities for full-time work in Ghana, and cost of studying in Ghana is moderate in comparison to other countries. On institutional level, international postgraduate students are motivated to study at the University of Cape Coast due to its quality postgraduate education, prestige of the institution's degree, relatively moderate cost of studying, amount of financial support/scholarship offered to international postgraduate students, availability of a particular programme at the University of Cape Coast, factors associated with the location of the institution (climate, city size, proximity to my country, etc.), having faster admissions process, and position of the University of Cape Coast in national and global educational institutions ranking league tables. However, students complained about insufficient stipend which affected their cost-of-living expenses as most of these students were on scholarship. The recommendation is that stipend for international postgraduate students in the University of Cape Coast should be enhanced to meet students' cost of living.

Keywords: motivational, experiential, studying, international, postgraduate students

1. Introduction

Research in school psychology suggests that students' ability to succeed academically relies on a complex interplay of individual and social factors that extend beyond simple content knowledge (Atkinson, 2009). In particular, students' internal states of engagement, motivation, and interest all contribute to their ability to attend to, comprehend, and relay educational material (Zimmerman, 1990). Importantly, the environments in which learning takes place including both the home and classroom are thought to be especially salient in shaping students' educational attitudes and motivation (Wentzel, 1999). Understanding how these processes develop and how they relate to achievement is critical for school staff and psychological service providers to optimally promote students' engagement and success in and out of the classroom. In keeping with psychological theories of education, research from the United States and other Western contexts has revealed consistent links between different types of motivation and students' school engagement, classroom learning, and academic achievement (Lepper, Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005; Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006). Although the importance of motivation for learning in the West is well established, little work has explored how motivational processes develop and operate in areas of the world where cultural and economic circumstances differ (Marfo, Pence, LeVine, & LeVine, 2011; Salili, Chiu, & Lai, 2001; Watkins, McInerney, Akande, & Lee, 2003 for notable exceptions). The research question for the study is: what are the motivational and experiential factors influencing international postgraduate students' studies at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana?

2. Literature Review

A large body of research has examined the theoretical and empirical links between students' motivational 'profiles' (i.e. relative levels of different subtypes of motivation) and their academic achievement. Traditionally, there is distinction between students' orientation toward intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is derived from one's personal interest in learning (Pintrich, 2003). Intrinsically motivated students seek out learning opportunities and engage in behaviours that allow them to fulfil an inherent curiosity in a topic. Studies in Western

educational contexts suggest that intrinsically motivated students display greater school engagement, information seeking behaviour, and, consequently, academic achievement (Hidi, 1990; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). This positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and school outcomes holds true in research outside of North America. In particular, expressed interest in skill mastery was found to significantly predict students' use of 'deep' learning strategies (i.e. those geared toward meaning and integration rather than superficial knowledge) in South Africa (Watkins et al., 2003), and intention to complete secondary school for both white and Aboriginal Australians (McInerney & Sinclair, 1991). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is primarily driven by external factors (Pintrich, 2003). Extrinsically motivated individuals view learning as a means to an end, and are motivated by the potential for reinforcement from their environments. The direction of the relationship between extrinsic motivation and student learning is somewhat ambiguous, with associations often differing across ethnic/cultural groups. In South Africa, research has shown that among black students, the desire to escape poverty was a primary predictor of academic success and resiliency (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron, Theron, & Malindi, (2013). In addition, interdependent (rather than independent) self-concepts and positive external relationships with teachers were related to higher grades for Native American students (Brayboy & Maaka, 2012). Other work has shown that extrinsic motivation - particularly when measured relative to intrinsic motivation - predicts lower cognitive engagement, greater superficial learning, more infrequent attendance, and poorer academic test performance in both Western and non-Western cultures (Lepper et al., 2005; McInerney, Roche, McInerney, & Marsh, 1997; Walker et al., 2006). The question of how students become more intrinsically versus extrinsically motivated is paramount to understanding how best to shape their approaches to school and academic outcomes (Wentzel, 1999). In line with bioecological and social learning theories, Pintrich (2003) has theorized that individual, environmental, and situational characteristics contribute independently and additively to the development of students' profiles of motivation. Motivation, therefore, is considered neither a stable nor transitory phenomenon; rather, it relies on a complex interplay between students' individual personalities, socialization in their homes and cultures, and experiences within their classroom and schools (Atkinson, 2009; Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Watkins et al., 2003).

In particular, understanding these processes within diverse cultures is critical for helping school-based psychological service providers to best target the educational needs of their unique student populations, and for developing ways to promote optimal learning environments for all students.

2.1 Globalization and internationalization of higher education

Globalization of higher education refers to the process of introducing a multi-cultural outlook in higher education to suit the demands of a global labour market which is centered on knowledge production (Varghese, 2004). Again, Varghese argues that the best visible example of globalization of higher education is cross-border education. This means a movement of students, lecturers, teachers and academic structures across national borders. Further explanation of globalization means the movement of students across national borders has become a demand driven activity, which involves several providers who are attracting thousands of students, who can afford to buy the services of these providers at an international price (Varghese, 2004). The results of globalization include the integration of research, the use of English as the lingua franca for scientific communication, the growing international labour market for scholars and scientists, the growth of communications firms and of multinational and technology publishing. Globalization in higher education also involves identification of national cultures, the impact of Information Technology towards standardization of teaching and emergence of global research networks and culture (Scott, 2000). Information technology facilitates communication, permits efficient storage, selection and dissemination of knowledge and allows providers to offer academic programmes through electronic resources (Altbatch & Knight, 2007).

Internationalization of education is intended to address the increase in border crossing. On the other hand, globalization shows that national borders and systems of higher education have almost disappeared (Teichler, 2004). Globalization also reflects the global competitiveness processes and intensified collaboration. The globalization and internationalization of higher education has led to the implementation of a business theory into a higher education context. Chapman (1986) was amongst the first to apply consumer behaviour theory to education by suggesting that students and their parents go through a few stages and eventually select an institution or subject of study. These stages include research behaviour, search behaviour, application stage, choice decision and registration. The first stage, pre-search behaviour is when students are in their early thoughts about their future. In the search behaviour stage, students' shortlist the potential study destination, institutes and courses. Then, they submit their applications to selected institutions in the application stage. Choice decision occurs when students accept an offer, depending on the number of offers received. Finally, during the registration stage, students reflect on the right decision to register with the course and may conclude that it is a wrong decision and turn down an offer (Chapman, 1986).

The number of investigations into the processes that influence foreign students' decision for higher education abroad has increased due to globalization and a rising competition in the higher education sector (Petruzzellis &

Romanazzi, 2010). As a result of this, marketing activities in higher education have increased. In other words, from being a sector where marketing was nearly non-existent, higher education has transformed into a highly marketised sector (Soutar & Turner, 2002). Scott (2000) argues that globalization and internationalization are different and opposed. Internationalization emphasizes strategic relationships; internationalization in higher education includes recruitment of international students, staff exchanges and collaboration between universities worldwide. The Structural Adjustment Programme and its deregulation in the 1980s in developing countries around the world led to a reduction in the expenditure of governments on public educational institutions especially, those of higher education because of a shift in public policy on higher education there by making the private sector becoming a major player in the establishment of colleges and Universities in developed and developing countries across the globe (Varghese, 2004). These resulted in cross- border movements for higher education (Varghese, 2004). Internalization of education refers to the impartation of skills, values and knowledge in order to develop a human capital of global appeal and application (Varghese 2004). This means that the curricula must become cross national and intercultural in nature. According to Varghese (2004), the internalization of higher education also means students do not have to cross national borders in order to acquire certain education and skills. This therefore serves as an opportunity for domestic Universities to change the orientation of their academic programmes without the interventions of foreign providers of higher education in domestic countries (Knight, 2003).

2.2 Motivational and experiential influences of student mobility

There are diverse reasons for prospective students to study abroad and head towards particular destinations. These could be more related to positional and transformative rationales (Pyvis & Chapman, 2007). The positional rationales are more strategic and aim towards professional development. It includes the desire to develop an international career, benefit from lower university fees, learn a new language, or undertake a specific course that is not available at home (Altbach & Engbert, 2014). The transformative is more personal and includes the desire to seek knowledge, adventure, and excitement, and also to gain independence. These categorisations are overlapping and not too distinctive from each other. Whilst individuals may seek to strategically develop their international career, they may equally seek opportunities for adventure and other social engagements. Although student mobility has been historical, the recent emphasis on globalisation and associated internationalisation has made it more exponential. Most studies concerning international student's motivation to study abroad have assumed the "push-pull" paradigm (McMahon, 1992; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The "push" factors, usually involving the strength of a country's economy or educational level operate within an origin country to influence the students' decisions to study abroad, whereas the "pull" factors usually involving economic, social, and institutional considerations operate in host countries that draw students from other countries into that specific country (McMahon, 1992).

King and Sondhi (2018) engaged in a comparative analysis of the motivation factors of two streams of international students, the first stream from India to developed Anglophone countries and the second from the UK to Australia, North American, and European countries. The study which employed the mixed-method research strategy found that the decision to study abroad for both British and Indian nationals were largely influenced by the prospect of competing well in the international labour market after acquiring a foreign degree, the desire to study in a world-class university and the opportunity to engage in experiential learning of a new culture and society (King & Sondhi, 2018). Whereas the majority of Indians saw as very important the opportunity to study in a developed country as a means of starting a life in a different country, the desire to seek an adventure through a study abroad programme was more important for British respondents than their Indian counterparts.

In an exploratory study that relied on the accounts of 28 African students studying in the United Kingdom, Maringe and Carter (2007) found that economic, political and institutional challenges were some of the push factors which influenced the decisions of students. The prevailing levels of economic decline, the preference of foreign qualifications over locally acquired ones, and the limited spaces and innovations in higher educational institutions in countries like Zimbabwe and Malawi continue to inform the decisions of students (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Regarding the pull factors, considerations centred on the quality of degrees from the British universities, safe teaching, and learning environments as well as the opportunities for post-qualification progression (Maringe & Carter, 2007). Brooks and Waters (2011) conducted research on the motivations of students in the United Kingdom to study abroad and they observed that the students' motivations were influenced by social networks, friendship networks, kinship networks, and partners as well as romantic relationships. The desire to maintain close contact and be closer to family, loved ones and friends are some reasons for students to embark on international studies.

3. Methodology

The University of Cape Coast (UCC) is one of the pioneer public universities in the Central Region of Ghana. The University of Cape Coast was established in October, 1962 as a University College and placed in a special relationship with the University of Ghana, Legon. On October 1, 1971, the College attained the status of a full and

independent University, with the authority to confer its own degrees, diplomas and certificates by an Act of Parliament - The University of Cape Coast Act, 1971 (Act 390) and subsequently the University of Cape Coast Law, 1992 (PNDC Law 278). There is currently a draft Bill to amend the University of Cape Coast Law, 1992 (PNDCL 278) which repealed the University of Cape Coast, Act 1971 (Act 390), the University of Cape Coast (Amendment) Law, 1990 (P.D.C.L. 241) and the University of Cape Coast (Interim Administration Committee) Law, 1990 (P.N.D.C.L. 243) which established the University as an institution of higher learning.

The University was established out of a dire need for highly qualified and skilled manpower in education. Its original mandate was therefore to train graduate professional teachers for Ghana's second cycle institutions and the Ministry of Education in order to meet the manpower needs of the country's accelerated education programme at the time. Today, with the expansion of some of its Faculties/Schools and the diversification of programmes, the University has the capacity to meet the manpower needs of other ministries and industries in the country, besides that of the Ministry of Education.

The University started with two departments, namely: Arts and Science. These departments developed into Faculties in 1963. In order to achieve the set objectives, in 1964, the University created two more Faculties, namely: Education and Economics & Social Studies (now Faculty of Social Sciences). The fifth faculty (School of Agriculture) was established in 1975. The Faculty of Science was split into the Schools of Physical and Biological Sciences during the 2002/2003 academic year while the Department of Business Studies was also elevated to the School of Business with effect from the 2003/2004 academic year. The University over the years, positioned itself to meet the numerous challenges facing humanity worldwide as well as keep pace with demands incurred by developments in higher education environments. In connection with this, the University now trains students in a wide range of academic fields, including Medicine, Pharmacy, Law and Business Administration in addition to the Basic Sciences of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics. The University keeps evolving and currently has five (5) Colleges, 17 Faculties/Schools, 89 Academic Departments, 13 Centres, three (3) Institutes and three (3) Units as well as a Graduate School. The School of Graduate studies coordinate the activities of all graduate programmes in the departments of the University. With the objectives of ensuring that graduate programmes are relevant in the promotion of socio-economic, scientific and technological development of Africa; and to deepen graduate training on the continent, the school ensures the highest standard of quality of graduate training in the University.

The University of Cape Coast, Ghana is located within 500 metres of the Atlantic Ocean. This makes it one of the rare sea front universities in the world. The university is located in the historic city of Cape Coast which is known to be one of the popular tourists' destinations in West Africa due to its historic sites, national park and beautiful and clean beaches. The University of Cape Coast is noted for its academic rigour. In 2024, The TIMES Higher Education World Ranking, ranked the University of Cape Coast as the first University in Ghana, first in West Africa, and seventh in Africa. In 2023, the University of Cape Coast was ranked the first University in Ghana, first in West Africa, fourth in Africa, and twenty-fourth in world global research influence in the TIMES Higher Education World University Rankings. In 2022, The University's ranking by Times Higher Education World University Rankings was also very high, it was the topmost ranked University in Ghana and West Africa and was among the top 5 Universities in Africa and it was also ranked first globally for research influence.

From an initial student enrolment of 155 in 1963, the University of Cape Coast now has a total student population of 74, 720 The breakdown is as follows: 18,949 regular undergraduate students, 1,445 sandwich undergraduate students, 1,014 regular postgraduate students, 27,73 sandwich postgraduate students 48,989 distance undergraduate students and 1,540 postgraduate distance students.

Descriptive survey was used for the study. This method assists to conduct quantitative research and gather data that is statistically easy to analyze. The descriptive survey method is more appropriate for this study because it generates answers in a statistical form, which makes it easy for researchers to carry out a simple statistical analysis to interpret what the data is saying. Purposive sampling was adopted for the study and all donor-funded international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast were purposively selected for the study. Questionnaire administration was used to collect data from the respondents. The sample size of thirty (30) international donor-funded postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast were selected for the study.

The data collection method that was used in the study was questionnaire administration. The reason for using the questionnaire was its quick way of collecting data from the respondents, since they were all literates with heavy academic schedules. The questionnaire was distributed to the international donor-funded postgraduate students to complete. An instrument developed by the Canadian Bureau for International Education (2018) and used for the international students' survey in Canada was modified and used for the study. This instrument was chosen because it measured the motivational and experiential factors of the international students. The completed questionnaire was coded and tabulated using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) application software. The descriptive statistical techniques applied in the analysis were frequencies and percentages.

4. Results and discussions

The first section deals with the background characteristics of the respondents, the second section provides the

results of the findings, and the third section deals with the discussion of findings as related to the research questions. A total of twenty-four (24) international donor-funded postgraduate students completed the questionnaires, given a response rate of 80 percent. Most of these students were being fully-funded international postgraduate students by the World Bank funding under the Africa Centre of Excellence in Coastal Resilience (ACECoR) Project hosted by the Centre for Coastal Management at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. Participants for the study were from the following countries: Benin =3, Cape Verde = 1, Kenya = 4, Liberia = 1, Malawi = 2, Nigeria = 9, Tanzania = 1, The Gambia = 2, and Zambia = 1. Nigeria has the highest number of postgraduate students and this distribution confirms the literature that prospective students are motivated to choose destinations with which they share a common culture, and social relationships. The idea of "similarities" boosts the academic, cultural and socio-economic integration of international students and makes adaptation to the destination institutions easier. Language and physical proximity have therefore emerged as key determinants of student mobility. Ghana shares more of the above factors with Nigeria since colonial days to date, hence having the highest number.

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents
About fifty-four percent (13) of the postgraduate students were females while about forty-six percent (11) were males. The result indicates a higher percentage of females as compared to their male counterpart, a possible reason for the imbalance in the sex distribution could be attributed to the fact that most scholarships favours female than male. This is confirmed by research conducted at Universitat Abat Oliba CEU in Spain analyzing the role of scholarships in promoting equity and inclusion in higher education. It found that scholarships significantly improve access and academic success for students, including women.

In terms of the ages of the respondents, two of the respondents were within 21- 25 age category, four respondents were within the 26 – 30 age category, eleven of the respondents were within the 31 – 35 age category, two of the respondents were within 36 – 40 age category, one respondent was within the 41 – 45 age category, and four of the respondents were within 46 – 50 age category. Respondents within the 31 – 35 age category were the majority, indicating that most international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast are within this age bracket and are within their youthful age. This confirms the studies of Richardson (1994) that the age group of 31-35 is often associated with postgraduate education due to various factors, including career advancement, personal growth, and the pursuit of specialized knowledge. In addition, some research highlights that mature students, including those in this age range, often perform as well as or better than younger students in higher education.

About forty-six percent (11) of the respondents had married and the same number of respondents were singles, while about eight percent (2) were neither married nor singles. Marriage and postgraduate studies often intersect in fascinating ways, as balancing marital responsibilities with academic pursuits can present unique challenges and opportunities. This finding is in line with the work of   Hart (2012) that married individuals, particularly women, often pursue postgraduate studies for personal growth, career advancement, or financial stability. However, they may face challenges like time management and role conflicts. For example, a study on married female psychology students explored how marriage provided stability but also blurred boundaries between personal and academic life. Married international students often encounter additional stressors, such as cultural adjustments, financial pressures, and limited social support. These factors can impact both their academic performance and marital relationships. According to Dag-um, Guiruela, Murillo, Tadlas, and Taja-on (2024) states that married students often need to carefully manage their time and responsibilities, and also effective communication, mutual support, and strategic planning are crucial for maintaining harmony between academic and marital obligations.

About a little above half (13) of the respondents had children and about forty-eight percent (11) had no child. This reflects the proportion of the respondents who are married and those who are single. In terms of the respondents and number of children they have, the number of respondents with only one child were five (5), while those with two children were three (3). Respondents with three children were two (2) while only one respondent had more than three children. Research has shown that managing coursework, research, and parenting can be demanding. Effective time management and support systems are crucial for success. In addition, tuition fees, living expenses, and childcare costs can be significant burdens. Scholarships, grants, and dependent visas can help alleviate these pressures. However, having family members present can provide emotional stability, but international students may also experience isolation due to cultural differences and limited social networks.

Some studies have also shown that some countries offer dependent visas, allowing students to bring their children and spouses. In Ghana, international postgraduate students who are coming from Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries do not need a visa to travel to Ghana (ECOWAS Treaty, 1976), which ensures free movement of persons and goods within the ECOWAS sub-region. However, when these students arrive in Ghana, the Ghana Immigration Service gives these international postgraduate students 90 days stay in Ghana, as they take the necessary steps to acquire their non-citizens cards and study permits for their academic programmes at the University of Cape Coast. Most of the scholarships or funding for these international postgraduate students covers the cost of their non-citizen cards and study permit for the period of stay for their

academic studies.

About seventy percent (17) of the respondents were pursuing postgraduate programmes from the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences (DFAS) while about thirty percent (7) of them were pursuing programmes at the Department of Applied Economics (DAE), both at the University of Cape Coast. The reason for more respondents from Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences could be attributed to the fact that DFAS has 3 sponsored postgraduate programmes namely; M.Phil./PhD (Integrated Coastal Zone Management), M.Phil/PhD (Fisheries Science), and M.Phil/PhD (Oceanography and Limnology) while the Department of Applied Economics has only M.Phil/PhD (Blue, Economy, Governance and Social Resilience) as the sponsored programme. Almost six-tenth (14) of the respondents were pursuing Master of Philosophy programmes while four-tenth (10) were pursuing Doctor of Philosophy programmes at the University of Cape Coast. In terms of the specialty area of the respondents, seven of them were in the areas of blue economy while six were in the area of integrated coastal management, five in the area of fisheries, three in the area of oceanography and limnology, and one in climate change. These areas of specialty by the students are based on the programme of study of the respondents and their area of interest.

It was revealed that prior to the respondents coming to study in Ghana from their various institutions, a little above eighty percent (20) of them studied in their country of origin for either a bachelor programme (those pursuing masters programmes) or a master programme (those pursuing doctoral programmes). Few of the respondents studied abroad in countries such as Ivory Coast, Cape Verde, Brisil, Spain, Germany, and Portugal. Students who completed their bachelor's degree in their home country and pursue postgraduate studies abroad often experience unique academic, cultural, and social transitions. Before commencing their studies in Ghana, respondents applied to universities outside their country of origin, these countries include Algeria, United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Netherlands, United States of America. Research by Riaño (2016) affirms that many students seek international postgraduate education to access advanced facilities, specialized programmes, or global networking opportunities. In addition, the prestige of foreign institutions and the promise of better career prospects also play a significant role. However, these students may encounter difficulties such as adapting to new academic standards, cultural differences, and language barriers. Studying abroad can enhance employability, broaden perspectives, and foster personal development (Wilkins, 2024). In terms of where respondents resided or accommodated during their studies in University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about ninety-five percent (21) of the respondents indicated that they were accommodated in the University's Hall whiles about five percent (1) indicated he/she was accommodated in a Hostel around the University campus.

This next section provides the results of the findings in exploring the motivational and experiential factors influencing international postgraduate students' studies at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. The findings were in this areas; respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana, respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Respondents' indication how useful they find the following resources when choosing to attend the University of Cape Coast, respondents' actions taken before their arrival to study in Ghana, respondents level of satisfaction on their experience upon first arrival in Ghana, respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education, most positive and negative part of respondents study experience while in Ghana, among others.

4.2 Respondents' reasons for deciding to study in Ghana
In terms of Ghana's reputation as a safe country being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was an essential while about forty-six percent (11) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that Ghana's reputation as a safe country was not an important reason to them. This finding confirms the research of Frempong (2015), which peace and stability in Ghana are part of the reasons why international postgraduate students decide to study in Ghana as a result of the pull factor shaping their decision to study in Ghana.

In terms of Ghana offers a society that (in general) is tolerant and not discriminatory being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to them. This finding is confirmed by Aguzey (2021) that Ghana's conducive environment including a safe social climate is fundamental in attracting and meeting the expectations of international postgraduate students. This finding confirms the research of Lee and Rice (2007) that non-discriminatory countries attract more international students.

In terms of Ghana's political and social stability being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about twenty-nine

percent (7) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that Ghana's political and social stability was not an important reason to them. This finding supports the research of Maringe and Carter (2007) that safe teaching and learning environments are pull factors that attract international postgraduate students.

In terms of the reputation of the education system in Ghana being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about sixty-three percent (15) of the respondents indicated this reason was very important to them. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated this reason was somewhat important to them and about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated this was not an important reason to them.

In terms of availability of financial support (scholarships, aid) to study in Ghana being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; half (12) of the respondents indicated this reason was essential while about forty-six percent (11) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, one (1) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to him or her. The Government of Ghana offers scholarships to international students, particularly from developing countries, as part of its commitment to academic diplomacy and regional integration and this has attracted international postgraduate students to the country (Ghana Educate, 2024).

In terms of ease of getting a Ghanaian study permit being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to them. This finding supports the research of Ghana Student Permit (2023), that Ghana has streamlined its student visa and residence permit procedures to make them accessible and efficient. In addition, once admitted to a recognized institution, students can apply for a Ghana Study Visa from their home country and later obtain a residence permit upon arrival. Also, an online application system via the Ghana Immigration Service simplifies the process, allowing students to upload documents and track progress digitally. In terms of off/on-campus work opportunities in Ghana being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that this reason is essential while about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated this reason was somewhat important to them and about sixty-three (15) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to them.

In terms of opportunities for full-time work in Ghana following my studies being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about seventeen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about fifty-eight percent (14) of the respondent indicated that this was not an important reason to them.

In terms of the cost of studying in Ghana in comparison to other countries being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them while about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them. However, about fifty-eight percent (14) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to them.

In terms of a relative, friend, or teacher lived/studied or is living/studying in Ghana being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them while about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them. However, seventy-five percent (18) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to them. Studies show that existing student networks, especially those formed by alumni or current international students are a major influence on prospective students' decisions to study in Ghana. These networks often share experiences through social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, creating a sense of community and trust before students even arrive.

In terms of Ghana institutions gave the most attractive conditions for admission to my intended programme Ghana being the respondents' reason for deciding to study in Ghana; about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that this reason was an essential while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to them.

4.3 Respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana

In terms of the quality of education at the University of Cape Coast being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about forty-six (11) of the respondents indicated that it was an essential reason while about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that it was a very important reason.

However, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated the quality of education at the University of Cape Coast was somewhat important and one (1) of the respondents indicated this was not an important reason to him or her. This finding supports the report of the Directorate of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance of the University of Cape Coast on its quality education delivery.

In terms of the prestige of a degree from the University of Cape Coast being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important while one (1) of the respondents indicated it was essential. However, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important and about fifty-four percent (13) of the respondents indicated that the prestige of the degree from the University of Cape Coast was not an important reason. The University of Cape Coast enjoys a strong reputation both within Ghana and internationally, and the literature reflects its growing prestige in higher education and the perceived value of the University of Cape Coast degree (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Ghana Educate, 2024)

In terms of the cost of studying at the University of Cape Coast being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that it was an essential reason while about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that it was very important reason. However, about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important and one (1) of the respondents indicated that the cost of studying at the University of Cape Coast was not important to him or her. The relatively affordable tuition compared to some African and Western institutions contributes to University of Cape Coast's appeal among international students.

In terms of the amount of financial support offered by the University of Cape Coast being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that it was an essential reason while a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important. However, about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important and about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that the amount of financial support offered by the University of Cape Coast was not an important reason to them. Most of the international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast were offered scholarships by the University for their programme of study under the World Bank funded Africa Centre of Excellence in Coastal Resilience. This scholarship consists of tuition, stipend, research grant, accommodation, and conference participation fee.

In terms of respondents knowing someone who studied or is studying at the University of Cape Coast being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important and about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that knowing someone who studied or is studying at the University of Cape Coast was not an important reason to them. Studies show that existing student networks, especially those formed by alumni or current international students, are a major influence on prospective students' decisions to study at the University of Cape Coast. These networks often share experiences through social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, creating a sense of community and trust before students even arrive.

In terms of the availability of a particular programme at the University of Cape Coast being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that the availability of a particular programme at the University of Cape Coast was not an important reason to them.

In terms of the University of Cape Coast being the most effective in communicating and providing information being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this reason was an essential while a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated that this reason was not important to them at all.

In terms of the size of the University of Cape Coast being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated this reason was somewhat important and about sixty-seven percent (16) of the respondents indicated that the size of the University of Cape Coast was not important to them. In addition, in terms of factors associated with the location of the University of Cape Coast (climate, city size, proximity to my country, etc.) being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that this was an essential reason while about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated this reason was very important to them. However, about thirteen

percent (3) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated this reason was not important to them at all. Furthermore, in terms of University of Cape Coast having the fastest admissions process being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this reason was an essential while about forty-six percent (11) of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important to them. However, about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that this reason was somewhat important to them and about seventeen percent (4) indicated that this reason was not important to them.

In terms of the position of the University of Cape Coast in national and global educational institutions ranking league tables being respondents' reasons for applying to study at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana; about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this reason was essential while a quarter of the respondents indicated that this reason was very important. However, about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents indicated that this reason is somewhat important and about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that the University of Cape Coast position in national and global educational institutions ranking was not an important reason to them. According to the United States News and World Report Best Global Universities Rankings (2024/2025), the University of Cape Coast was named the best university in Ghana, based on research output, academic reputation, and global outlook. In the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2025, the University of Cape Coast placed in the 801-1000th band globally, but notably ranked first in the world for research influence, a rare and prestigious distinction.

4.4 Respondents' indication how useful they find the following resources when choosing to attend the University of Cape Coast, Ghana

In terms of someone in my home country (a friend, parent, relative, professor, etc.) being a useful resource for respondents' decision in choosing the University of Cape Coast; about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that it was somewhat useful while about twenty-one percent (5) indicated that it was very useful. However, about fifty-nine percent (14) of the respondents indicated they did not use someone from their home country as a resource (a friend, parent, relative, professor, etc.) and one (1) of the respondents indicated that it was not useful. Studies show that existing student networks, especially those formed by alumni or current international students, are a major influence on prospective students' decisions in their country of origin. These networks often share experiences through social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, creating a sense of community and trust before international students even arrive at the host country for their studies.

In terms of a government department in my home country being a resource for the respondents' decision in choosing the University of Cape Coast as a study institution; about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that this resource is somewhat useful while about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents indicated that this resource was very useful. However, about seventy-one percent (17) of the respondents indicated that they did not use this resource and about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this resource was not useful.

In terms of education fair being a resource for respondents' decision in choosing University of Cape Coast to study; about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this was a very useful resource while about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that this was somewhat useful. However, about eighty-three percent (20) of the respondents indicated that they did not use educational fairs and one (1) of the respondents indicated that it was not a useful resource. This finding does not confirm the massive effort the University of Cape Coast is putting in its educational fairs. Education fairs have proven to be influential platforms in shaping prospective students' decisions, and the University of Cape Coast has actively leveraged them to attract international and local applicants. These fairs align with University of Cape Coast's internationalisation strategy, aiming to increase its visibility and attract more international students. The University uses education fairs to highlight its global rankings, research achievements, and alumni success stories, which are often cited by students as influential in their university choice.

In terms of education agents being a resource for respondents' decision in choosing University of Cape Coast to study; about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that it was a very useful resource while about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that it was somewhat useful. However, about eighty-eight percent (21) of the respondents indicated that they did not use this resource and one (1) of the respondents indicated that this resource was not useful to him or her.   In addition, in terms of presentations at my school being a resource for respondents' decision in choosing University of Cape Coast to study; about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that this resource was very useful while about four percent (1) of the respondents indicated that this resource was somewhat useful. However, about eighty-three percent (20) of the respondents indicated that they did not use this resource.

In terms of the University/College/Centre websites being a resource for respondents' decision in choosing University of Cape Coast to study; about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that this resource was very useful while about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that this resource was somewhat useful. However, about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that they did not use this resource and about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this resource was not useful to them. This finding supports

that the University of Cape Coast has strategically developed its website as a key tool for attracting international students, and literature on digital marketing in higher education supports this approach. The University of Cape Coast has strategically developed its website as a key tool for attracting international students, and literature on digital marketing in higher education supports this approach. The University of Cape Coast's official website (ucc.edu.gh) and its Office of International Relations portal (international.ucc.edu.gh) serve as the primary digital gateways for prospective international students. These platforms provide comprehensive, up-to-date information on academic programs, admission requirements, scholarships, visa support, and campus life and key decision-making factors for international applicants.

In terms of online forums and blogs being a resource for respondents' decision in choosing University of Cape Coast to study; about thirty-three (8) of the respondents indicated that this resource was useful while about thirty-three (8) of the respondents indicated that this resource was somewhat useful. However, a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that they did not use this resource and about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that this resource was not useful.

4.5 Respondents' actions taken before their arrival to study in Ghana
In terms of respondents' actions taken before their arrival in Ghana to study; majority (14) of the respondents stated that they researched the region where they would be studying, researched Ghana's culture, and planned a personal budget. Others respondents also searched for the Ghanaian banking system, connected with other students attending University of Cape Coast, researched on health insurance providers in Ghana, telecommunications providers in Ghana, accommodation system in Ghana, Health, Safety, Security in Ghana, among others. This finding confirms the studies that most international postgraduate students typically engage in a series of pre-arrival actions that are crucial for a smooth transition into their host institutions and nation. Some of these activities are student visa application, passport, admission processes, financial or budgetary proof, medical records, and vaccination certificates, entry requirements and immigration procedures, pre-orientation, on-campus and off-campus accommodation arrangements, among others.

4.6 Respondents level of satisfaction on their experience upon first arrival in Ghana
In terms of respondents' experience with Ghanaian immigration officials; about sixty-seven percent (16) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while twenty-five percent (6) of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with their experience with Ghanaian immigration officials. This finding supports insightful pieces of literature and reports that explore international postgraduate students' experiences with Ghana's Immigration Service, particularly in relation to satisfaction and service quality. Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in Public Service Organizations. Research by Suzette Baiden-Assan from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) examines the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) and its service delivery and GIS provides a strong foundation for understanding how GIS is perceived in terms of efficiency, responsiveness, and professionalism. Another research on International Students' Mobility to Ghana - Expectations and Experiences from the University of Ghana explores the broader experiences of international students, including their interactions with immigration services. It highlights that while many students had positive experiences, challenges such as permit renewals and bureaucratic delays were also noted. Nonetheless, most students found their expectations closely matched their actual experiences. Ghana Immigration Service Visit to some tertiary institution in Ghana to educate them on immigration procedures and offer support. International students expressed appreciation for the approachability of officers and the clarity provided during the session. However, some concerns were raised about difficulties in renewing student permits and gaining permanent residency. Overall, the tone of the interaction was positive, and students felt heard and supported.

With regards to institutional (University of Cape Coast) orientation programmes; half (12) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the University of Cape Coast orientation programmes. The Office of the Dean of Students of the University of Cape Coast organise orientation for all fresh students who are admitted into the University each academic year, fresh international postgraduate students for part of this University-Wide orientation. This orientation cover issue such as academic matters (registration of courses, attendance to lectures, mode of lectures, mode of assessment, grading system, library facilities, etc), residential matters (accommodation, sanitation in the halls/hostels, orientation on fire safety in the halls/hostels, etc), social matters (clubs and association, sports and recreational activities and venues, entertainment programmes, excursions etc) and general issues such as health and safety. In addition to the general orientation, the Office of International Relations which is in-charge of all international students also organises special orientation for these international postgraduate students and register them and ensure that all international students are accommodated in the University Hall/Hostel. Furthermore, the School of Graduate Studies also organises orientation for all postgraduate students, which international postgraduate students are part of.

In terms of assistance to locate accommodation and areas of interest in the city; a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about fifty-nine percent (14) indicated that they were satisfied with the assistance received by the University of Cape Coast to allocate accommodation and areas of interest in the city. However, one (1) of the respondents indicated that he or she was dissatisfied with this assistance.

With regards to the welcome of international postgraduate students by the University of Cape Coast; a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about eighty percent (15) of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the warm welcome received by the University of Cape Coast when they arrived at Ghana. However, one (1) of the respondents indicated that he or she was dissatisfied with the welcome received.

4.7 Respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education
Respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of preparing them for employment in Ghana; a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about forty-two percent (10) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied. However, about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied at all. This finding supports research on how well Ghana's education system prepares students, especially graduates for the job market. However, another research on "Education, Skills, and Duration of Unemployment in Ghana" refutes this finding that there is a mismatch between education and industry needs, which contributes to prolonged unemployment and even though education levels are rising, many graduates lack the practical skills employers seek. In terms of respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of preparing them for employment in my home country; about seventy-one percent (17) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied. However, one (1) of the respondents was a little satisfied in this area. Furthermore, in terms of respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of acquiring job-or work-related knowledge and skills (e.g. presentation skills, writing skills, critical thinking/analytical skills); about seventy-nine (19) percent of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied.

In terms of respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of preparing them for further study; about seventy-one percent (17) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents were somewhat satisfied. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents were not satisfied in this area at all. This finding supports the research on how well Ghanaian higher education equips international students for further academic pursuits, such as postgraduate studies or research careers. In addition to another research on "Indicators of Students' Satisfaction of Quality Education Services in Ghana", this study surveyed 1,500 students across three public universities in Ghana and found that instructional quality, technological infrastructure, and psychological support were strong predictors of student satisfaction. These factors are crucial for students planning to pursue further studies, as they influence academic preparedness and confidence. Other research highlights that many international students are drawn to Ghana for its English-medium instruction, academic reputation, and affordability. While it focuses more on motivations than outcomes, it suggests that students perceive Ghanaian education as a stepping stone to global academic opportunities.

Respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of discovering my career interests; about seventy-nine percent (19) of the respondents were very satisfied while about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents were somewhat satisfied. However, one (1) of the respondents was not satisfied at all in discovering his or her career interest. This finding supports the research of Allen (2010) that Ghanaian universities are increasingly aligning academic programmes with international development goals, which helps students explore career paths in major sectors of the global economy. In terms of respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of contribution to the advancement of their country; about sixty-seven percent (16) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while a quarter (6) of the respondents were somewhat satisfied. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents were not satisfied at all in this area. Furthermore, in terms of respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of increasing the chances for making money during their working years; about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents were very satisfied while about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents were somewhat satisfied. However, about seventeen percent (4) of the respondents were not satisfied at all in this area.

Respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of contributing to their family's well-being; about thirty-three percent (8) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about thirty-eight percent (9) of the respondents were somewhat satisfied. However, about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied at all in this area. According to Carvalho, Fonseca, Francisco, Bacigalupe, and Relvas (2016) found that modern information communication technology has ensured communication of international students and their families even when they are studying in their host country. Most international students rely heavily on tools like WhatsApp, Zoom, FaceTime, and social media to maintain close ties with family. These platforms help students feel emotionally supported, reduce homesickness, and ease their

transition into new environments. Furthermore, in terms of respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics; about fifty-four percent (13) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about twenty-nine percent (7) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents were not satisfied at all in this area. Respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of being an informed and active citizen; about sixty-three percent (15) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about twenty-nine (7) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied. However, two (2) of the respondents were not satisfied at all in this area

Respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of working effectively with others (i.e. teamwork); about seventy-nine percent (19) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about twenty-one percent (5) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied. Studies by Findlay and King (2012) found that while international students faced initial challenges in team-based activities due to cultural differences, many developed effective coping strategies such as problem-focused engagement and religious coping, which helped them integrate into group work settings. In addition, in terms of respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of solving complex real-world problems; about seventy-one percent (17) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while a quarter (6) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied. However, one (1) of the respondents was not satisfied at all in this area. Furthermore, respondents' level of satisfaction on benefits of Ghanaian education in terms of understanding people of other backgrounds (economic, racial/ethnic, political, religious, nationality, etc.); about seventy-nine percent (19) of the respondents indicated that they were very satisfied while about thirteen percent (3) of the respondents indicated that they were somewhat satisfied. However, about eight percent (2) of the respondents were not satisfied at all in this area.

4.8 Respondents' experiences on some services and facilities during their studies
With regards to other main financial support that are currently assisting to pay for students' educational needs at the University of Cape Coast; A little above four-tenth (10) of the respondents indicated University scholarship, and a little below three-tenth (14) of the respondents indicated other financial aids. Others responses were financial support from parents, relatives, guardians, loans, personal savings, and off-campus work income.

Some of the positive experience enjoyed by these international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast were; some felt welcomed and integrated as if they were in their home country, some had similar culture like the host country, enjoyed enabled environment, some easily adapted to the Ghanaian Culture, opportunity to have encounter with other students from other African countries, some upgraded their knowledge and skills, enjoyed good relationship with staff and other students and members of the host community in Cape Coast, networking and improved knowledge of other cultures, getting to meet people from different cultural background, invaluable support from my Academic Advisors (guidance and encouragement have helped some students navigate their academic journey effectively that always provided insights and resources that enhanced their learning experience and contributed significantly to their personal and academic growth while immersing our in the vibrant culture of Ghana), interaction with other Ghanaian daily who constantly inspire them to do better, availability of well-equipped library facilities (both electronic and hard resources), enjoyed international exposure and connection, and early completion of study programme, experienced well research work, cultural exchange, some attained clarity of mind on the career path to follow, enjoyed high quality education system, and enjoyed professional and academic networking, among others.

However, some of the negative experience of the international postgraduate students during their studies at the University of Cape Coast were as follows: some missed their family back home, the Ghanaian people in general were a bit closed off when it came to understanding our culture, some experienced theft cases, sorting issues with immigration on study permits, services such as access to internet in campus and health care could be improved, the residences are too noisy (including some religious activities), language barrier (especially the native languages), most of the Ghanaian students in my class often created an atmosphere that felt competitive (which was something some students found unappealing), occasional power fluctuations and irregular water supply in the halls, high living costs, the high cost of living and insufficient financial support (stipend) to support living expenses, and some lost relationships that they thought it could had led to marriage.

In addition, whether respondents would recommend Ghana as a study destination to other international students; a little above sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated "definitely yes" while almost thirty-five percent of the respondents indicated "probably yes". These positive indication were supported by the following reasons: the country is somewhat peaceful and accommodative, the Ghanaian culture is welcoming and the country is extremely safe, Ghana is a beautiful country to study in, it's safe and affordable, Ghanaian university education incorporates a lot of practicals into its teaching, welcoming country, sense of safety, rich culture, there is plenty to love in Ghana, because of the reputation, Ghana shows greater Commitment to excellence, the peaceful nature of the country and the friendly nature of Ghanaians, it's a country that values education and is welcoming to all

cultures, it's very peaceful and its people are friendly and welcoming, among others. Some literature and resources that explore recommendations made by international students to prospective students, particularly in the context of studying in Ghana or similar destinations include formal academic studies specifically documenting international students' recommendations to future students are limited, many universities in Ghana (like some Universities in Ghana collect student testimonials and experience surveys. These often include advice and endorsements from current or former international students, touching on academics, cultural adaptation, and navigating immigration or housing. In addition, some social media and Alumni Networks also confirm many international students sharing their experiences and recommendations through YouTube vlogs, LinkedIn posts, Facebook, WhatsApp, alumni forums, among others.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the findings reported in this study, the motivational factors influencing international postgraduate students' studies in Ghana are Ghana's reputation as a safe country, Ghana offers a society that (in general) is tolerant and not discriminatory, Ghana's political and social stability, the reputation of the education system in Ghana, availability of financial support (scholarships, aid) to study in Ghana, ease of getting a Ghanaian study permit, off/on-campus work opportunities in Ghana, opportunities for full-time work in Ghana, cost of studying in Ghana in comparison to other countries, and relative, friend, or teacher lived/studied or is living/studying in Ghana. International postgraduate students are motivated to study at the University of Cape Coast due to its quality postgraduate education, prestige of the institution's degree, relatively moderate cost of studying, amount of financial support/scholarship offered to international postgraduate students, availability of a particular programme at the University of Cape Coast, factors associated with the location of the institution (climate, city size, proximity to my country, etc.), having faster admissions process, and position of the University of Cape Coast in national and global educational institutions ranking league tables.

In addition, the experiential factors influencing international postgraduate students' studies in Ghana and the University of Cape Coast have good experience in terms of their studies in Ghana and at the University of Cape Coast. These students enjoyed good services from Ghana immigration officials. The students also had good institutional orientation programmes that helped them to settle and integrate into the Ghanaian community. In addition, these students acquired knowledge and skills to improve their career or to advance further studies, had good relationships with staff, students and members of the host community in Cape Coast, networked and improved knowledge of other cultures. However, some students missed their family back home, occasional power outages and irregular water supply in the hall, the cost-of-living expenses, the high cost of living and insufficient financial support (stipend) for my living expenses, they do not like the way Ghanaians assume everybody speaks their local language and they will be communicating in your presence without caring about your presence, and some also lost potential life partner relationships on campus.

In summary, international postgraduate students at the University of Cape Coast were motivated to study at this reputable institution based on numerous motivational factors both at the institutional and national level. These students have had good experience as they arrived in Ghana and at the University of Cape Coast campus. The recommendation is that, in future scholarships to international postgraduate students, the amount of stipend should be increased to support and improve their living expenses.

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