Title: The Psychological, Social and Cultural experiences of Undergraduate International Students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus): An Afrocentric perspective.

Joy Katlego Hlokwe

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Psychology

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

School of Social Sciences

Department of Psychology

at the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

SUPERVISOR: Prof K Nel

CO-SUPERVISOR: Prof S Govender

2019

Declaration

With the submission of this dissertation, I declare that the entirety of this work is my original work. I am the sole author thereof, unless otherwise stated. I have referenced all sources, and to my knowledge, have not plagiarised.

Signature_____Date_____

Acknowledgements

I will like to thank my supervisor Professor Kathryn Nel and co-supervisor Prof Saraswathie Govender for all the guidance and advice I received in order to complete this research.

Thank you to my mother Sethakgale Elizabeth Hlokwe and family for the unlimited support throughout the study.

Abstract

This research investigated the psychological, social and cultural experiences of undergraduate international students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). The study was qualitative in nature with an exploratory research design. The research made use of purposive sampling. Data was collected through focus groups as it was an appropriate tool for collecting the in-depth experiences of international students registered at the University. There were four focus groups with six participants in each so the overall sample was twenty-four. The researcher sampled twelve females and twelve males to ensure gender representivity. Afrocentricity was used as theoretical framework underpinning the study. The data were analysed using Thematic content analysis (TCA). The following themes emerged out of an interpretation of data: Motivation; Discrimination; academic challenges; language barriers; sense of belonging; homesickness; avoidance, acculturation and shared African culture. International students experienced many challenges which resulted in loneliness and isolation. They also used negative defence mechanisms in order to cope in the new environment. Results indicated that there are divisions in terms of culture (both social and academic) in the University environment caused, in part, by the colonial partition of Africa. Conversely, elements of African culture that have survived the onslaught of colonialism (and in South Africa, apartheid) help bind international and peer host country students (and outside communities) together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of tables

Glossary

ANC: African National Congress

DHA: Department of Home Affairs

DSM-5:   Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - 5

HEI: Higher Educational Institutions

NAFSA: National Association of Foreign Students Advisors

TCA: Thematic Content Analysis

TREC: Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee

USA;   United States of America

WHO: World Health Organisation

UK: United Kingdom

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the research

Every year students decide to continue their education at institutions of higher learning. They have to deal with new methods of learning and also have to adapt to a new socio-educational environment (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). For international students, it is not just a change in environment but a new country and culture. These students, who are in the minority at South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), are faced with challenges which might be different to those of indigenous student populations. For this reason, the researcher decided to conduct a study using international students as the target population. This study seeks to explore the challenges these students face in terms of their social, psychological and cultural challenges (if any) in an in-depth qualitative study.

1.2 Background to the study

Globally, students complete secondary school and many are accepted into tertiary institutions (Almurideef, 2016). Studying at this level comes with many challenges for instance, loss of peer friendships, different cultural contexts, new social environments, as well as more challenging academic work (MacGregor, 2014). According to Sicat (2011), there is an increased rate of students dropping out of HEIs as they were not prepared for the challenges in terms of their psychological, social and, in some instances, cultural changes in their new environment.

MacGregor (2014) conducted a study on international students and found that they not only have to deal with fitting in at the new institution but also worry about the outside community. Jibreel (2015) suggests that the history of xenophobia in South Africa contributes to the list of challenges that international students have to face. He further states that the cultural, social and psychological transition that they have to go through can cause anxiety and depression, or other maladjustment problems.

Researchers in different countries have studied the challenges that international students face, but little research has been carried out in Africa (Mudhovozi, 2012). The researcher further suggests that much research on the African continent is required in this regard as there is a high attrition rate for international students.

1.3 Research problem

International researchers have looked into the migration processes of students who study abroad, and the challenges they face, but there is very little information on the topic in South Africa and other African institutions (Mudhovozi, 2012). According to Almurideef (2016), many studies have been carried out in countries like China and the United States of America (USA) however; challenges faced by international students in those countries are not the same as those faced by African students studying within the African institution away from their home country.

Students have to adapt to a broad range of challenges when leaving home and learning in a foreign country (Sicat, 2011). International students have personal (psychological), environmental, social and academic changes that often cause them problems. These problems or challenges often make it difficult for them to adapt to new situations and new environments. According to Valka (2015), international students not only worry about the new ways of learning and thinking they are exposed to, but also experience anxiety about cultural and communication problems, loss of social support networks, lack of friends and xenophobic attitudes they encounter. These problems co-exist with academic and financial problems that they may encounter (MacGregor, 2014).

Research suggests that international students attempt to assimilate into their new peer group but often find this difficult because of cultural and social differences (MacGregor, 2014). According to Egnatios, Mielke, Trinh and Young (2014), it is easier for these students to relate to people or things that they are familiar with and, as a result, they find unfamiliar situations difficult to manage. Several studies illustrate the challenges faced by international students which are summarised by Thurber and Walton (2012, p. 212), as follows:

(1) Living adjustment, which includes adjustment to water, food, climate, environment and transportation; (2) Academic difficulties, which includes lack of proficiency in English as a language of teaching, new ways of learning which may differ from their

countries; (3) Socio-cultural difficulties, such as cultural (ways of doing things in a certain place: for example, dressing) and communication difficulties; (4) Personal psychological adjustment, such as lack of support from the family, loss of sense of belonging and homesickness.

International students have to employ various strategies in order to cope with adapting to life in a foreign country for instance, appearing to understand their context (when they do not), working hard and not taking time off and trying to make peer group friends from the host country (Malau-Aduli, 2011). These students are the ones who face up to their adjustment challenges and, if they have problems, are likely to approach counsellors for help (Wu, Garza & Guzman, 2015). International students who find adapting to context more difficult are more likely to employ negative coping strategies such as alcohol and/or drug abuse, isolating themselves from their peers which often results in them dropping out of their programmes because of poor academic performance (Borg & Cefai, 2014).

The aforementioned are some of the many challenges faced by international students in different life-areas (Thunder & Walton, 2012). It must be noted that the psychological, social and cultural aspects of life are all intertwined and cannot be separated (Alavi & Mansor, 2011). Many studies have been carried out in this area (internationally) but most are quantitative in nature not qualitative (Somer & Dumont, 2011). In this regard there is a gap in the literature as there is little in-depth research on the topic in an African and South African context (Mudhovozi, 2012).

1.4 Purpose of the study

1.4.1 Study aim

The aim of this study is to explore the psychological, social and cultural challenges of international undergraduate students registered at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) from an Afrocentric perspective.

1.4.2 Study Objectives

- To ascertain the psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).

- To identify the social challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).
- To determine the cultural challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).

1.4.3 Research questions

- To ascertain what the nature of psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) will be?
- To identify what the nature of social challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) will be?
- To determine what the nature of cultural challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) will be?

1.5 Operational definitions

1.5.1 Culture

In the context, culture is defined as shared perceptions, attitudes, and predisposition that allow people to organise experiences in certain ways (Asante, 1990).

1.5.2 Psychological challenge

In the research psychological challenges is defined as substantial exposure to stressful life events experienced before, during and after migration process (Dimotriva, 2009).

1.5.3 An international student

In the study an international student is defined as a person who only studies and lives in a country that is not his or her country of origin (Zar, 2009).

1.5.4 Social challenge

In this investigation a social challenge is defined as the environmental incongruence, with the host country (Dimotriva, 2009).

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of the study is that it fills the gap in terms of Afrocentricity being used as a framework for a study of this kind. Recommendations that arise out of the investigation will be provided to the International Affairs Division of Students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). The study findings will also be taken to the Centre of Student Counselling and Development at the University of Limpopo so that it may assist them in compiling psychological interventions for international students who have psychological, social and cultural challenges.

A journal article (or articles) will be formulated, which will add to existing international and local literature on the topic. It is hoped that the findings of the research will contribute to policy development for international students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).

1.7 Overview of chapters

The organisation of the chapters throughout the dissertation are as follows.

Chapter 1:   Introduces and provides background to the study.

Chapter 2:   Reviews relevant literature pertaining to the research.

Chapter 3:   Gives the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 4:   Provides the methodology for the research.

Chapter 5:   Presents the results and analysis thereof and gives limitations, strengths and recommendations arising out of the investigation.

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduced the reader to the study by giving an overview of the research problem. The following chapter presents the literature review for the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The following literature review gives an overview of research on the demarcated topic. Literature is taken from current and older journals, books and other academic works using EBSCO host, Google Scholar, Pub Med, Science Direct and other internet resources.

2.2 Psychological challenges

According to the World Health Organisation [WHO], (2003), the age in which some mental illnesses (anxiety and depression) are likely to occur is around 19-24 years. Most post-secondary students are between these ages. Mental illness such as anxiety and depression has been reported to have been increasing drastically. According to a study conducted by Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016), there is a major rise in both international and host students presenting with mental health problems particularly, depression. Additionally, it is reported that many international students suffer from both anxiety, stress and depression (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016).

According to McBeath (2015), international students facing psychological challenges usually opt for 'bunking' (missing) classes. The difficulties in balancing their academic work and social life has led to a continuous increase of both international and host students reporting mental illnesses and, in some cases, trying to commit suicide. Jones (2007) cited in McBeath (2015) stated that most students who suffer from mental illness prefer to isolate themselves from their peers and end up dropping out of tertiary education because of their inability to find an equilibrium between social life and academic life.

Every year, new international students register with the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Some international students adjust relatively well to their new environment (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). Conversely, other international students find that the transition from their home country to a new one entails a greater degree of personal stress and they suffer

psychological and social maladjustment (Beyers & Goossens, 2003). According to Steinberg, Bornstein, Vandell, & Rook (2011), people attempt to fit new information into their existing way of thinking (assimilation). They do this and adapt the new information into their everyday lives. The way they adapt this new information into their existing cognitions results in a new way of thinking (accommodation). This accommodation allows them to blend in to their new environment. In this regard it must be noted that an individual's identity is built up from what they know, and/or what they have learned in their lives through assimilation and this knowledge has to be integrated into new situations (Anton & Lawrence, 2014).

> "New experiences tend to be worked into existing cognitive frameworks even if the new information has to be reinterpreted or distorted to make it fit" (Butcher, Hooley, & Mineka, 2014, p. 214).

This process takes place through infancy and childhood thus there is a long period of adaptation. However, international students need to assimilate and accommodate to new environments in a short space of time which can cause intra and interpersonal conflict (Alavi & Mansor, 2011).

The process of being separated from family and the environment that the students are used to can actually be stressful. The transition means that there is a detachment from loved ones (family, friends and their home community). Some international students find it easy to adjust to a new environment as personalities differ. At the same time, there are students who have never travelled before and being away from their families leads them to experience psychological challenges. The unknowns that international students perceive that they will face in a foreign country can make them stressed and anxious. Psychological challenges such as isolation, homesickness, depression, stress, anxiety and academic difficulties are faced at different times by all international students (Butcher et al., 2014).

Psychological challenges are developed through the multiple difficulties an individual experience at any point in time. Sue and Sue (2015) describe the psyche or mind as being composed of numerous compartments. In each compartment, there is an important function that contributes to the well-being of the individual. Any problem in one of the compartments may culminate in a psychological problem such as stress and anxiety through to mental illnesses like depression. Aspects such as home sickness, peer pressure, no sense of belonging

and secondary to post-secondary learning transitions are all stress initiators that negatively impact international students (Brunwasser, 2012). Furthermore, scholarships are often offered to excellent (international and local) students who consistently have to perform well in order to keep the scholarship. This adds to the pressure, stress and anxiety they already face (Butcher et al., 2014).

According to a study conducted by Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016), there is a significant rise in the numbers of international students who are suffering anxiety and stress and who are also diagnosed with mental health problems. In the authors study, international students were found to have mental health problems that were worsened by the stress that comes with being far away from home, in a foreign country. It was concluded that the make-up of students in institutions was more diverse than in past decades which led to greater problems in their day-to-day living experiences.   In this study mental health problems were broadly demarcated and include emotionality and stress related problems as well as serious psychiatric conditions.

2.3 Academic work and the international student

International students who are registered in a tertiary institution straight out of secondary school have the same difficulties as host students in terms of facing different teaching methods and lack of supervision for educational tasks. However, international students tend to find these more difficult as they are away from their home country and support structures. For example, Liu (2011) found that Chinese students' performance averages and standardised test scores were not consistent with their American university peers.

Liu (2011) reports that the resources available for education also differ from one country to another. For example, In China, technology as a subject, is a practical application. Chinese students are taught to make cell-phones whereas in other countries (such as England or France) students are taught technological theories. The same author reports that Chinese students in America face a variety of difficulties in their education socially and academically. Furthermore, students who perform very well in Chinese high schools struggle in American institutions of higher learning. This is supported by Wu et al. (2015) who report that Asian students struggle to perform well in American tertiary institutions because of the language barrier. They may have been taught English and speak it relatively well, but reading academic books and writing the language causes problems.

Globalisation has encouraged students to study abroad and the number of international students has been increasing every year (Valka, 2015). The numbers have dramatically increased in places such as Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. Farago (2018) reports that that countries benefit economically from international students for example, between the year 2016 and 2017, the United States of America (USA) made $6.9 billion with 450 000 Americans in employment because of international students. According to Valka (2015), the mobility of international students is good for the host economy but he also stated that the feelings of international students are neglected which can be problematic. In agreement with Valka (2015), Farago (2018) viewed the whole international student programme as a business to the host country rather than the sharing of knowledge globally.

According to Project Atlas (2017), there has been a significant increase in international students registering at instituions across the globe. It was found that the number of international students in host countries has doubled from 2001 to 2017. In 2001, the number of international students from the USA, UK, Germany, France, Australia, Japan, Spain, Belgium and other European countries studying in countries other than their own was 2.1 million by 2017 the number had increased to 4.6 million.

Out of the 2.1 million international students in 2001, 588 000 (28%) were registered in the USA that number increased to 1104000 in 2017. The UK international student intake increased from 231 000 in 2001 to 506 000 in 2017. France also increased its international student intake from 147 000 in 2001 to 322 000 in 2017. Other countries such as those mentioned in the previous paragraph also had dramatic increases in the number of international students studying at their tertiary institutions over the same time period (Project Atlas, 2017).

Academic adjustment refers to the ability to cope with educational demands such as motivation, application, performance and satisfaction with the academic environment (Baker & Siryk, 1999 in Valka, 2015). International students must find a balance between their new social and academic environment which involves both psychological and behavioural adjustment (Valka, 2015). In order for international students to succeed they also need to learn the requirements of the host university and the culture of the surrounding community (Oluwafunmilola, 2012).

Other challenges such as stereotyping, discrimination, culture shock and homesickness are experienced when moving to a new country as well as integrating into the new academic environment (Sarmadi, Nouri, Zandi, & Lavasani 2017). International students are assessed according to the host institutions educational policies which means they need to adapt quickly to their new academic environment (McLean & Ranson, 2005 in Valka, 2015). Other concerns that international students have in terms of academic adjustment are difficulty in understanding oral communication because of language barriers and changes in the way they are (Oluwafunmilola, 2012).

Sarmadi et al. (2017) indicate that tertiary education institutions have their own academic culture including how to interact with staff and peers and how to come to terms with different teaching methods (for instance, lectures with no additional notes that cover several chapters in a book). The scheduling of classes also differs for example, in secondary schools teaching often stops early in the afternoon and sport is offered whereas at tertiary institutions lectures begin early in the morning and sometimes continue into the evening (for instance, tutorials in the late evening). In tertiary education students also have to adopt time-management skills to ensure that they attend all the classes, hand in the assignments in time and participate in group work with peers they do not know and are often in classes of 500 or more students. International students have to adjust to a new environment; new people, new cultures and a high workload thus are often stressed and anxious.

2.4 Anxiety, stress and the international student

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5, 2013, p.189), "anxiety is anticipation of future threat." Major transitions in life can be overwhelming leading to feelings of anxiety and stress (Mental Health America, 2018). Although some anxiety is usual it becomes a problem if the individual, when facing a new environment or situation, cannot cope with every-day living (DSM 5, 2013). According to Mental Health America (2018), being overwhelmed as an international student is usual especially for first time entering undergraduates. This new challenge in the individual's life comes with both positive and negative energy which allows feelings of excitement as well as nervousness. If anxiety, stress and nervousness become the prominent feelings then the student is unable to concentrate and function properly in their new academic environment (Wu et al., 2015).

Anxiety is often dealt with through defence mechanisms based on the characteristics related to the psychoanalytic view of personality (Corey, 2013). The psychoanalytic view is that personality has three components namely, the id (basic instinctual drives which can be in conflict with societal norms), ego (seeks to please the id in a manner that will bring long term satisfaction) and superego (reflects the internalisation of cultural rules and norms). The ego is the managerial component that governs, control and regulates the personality. The superego (conscience) functions in a regulatory manner for the id while the ego is ruled by the reality principle. In this regard, the ego is realistic, rational and logical and formulates actions to satisfy an individual's needs.

The ego has several defence mechanisms that assist it in dealing with anxiety and which prevent the ego from being overwhelmed. The use of defence mechanisms is normal behaviour that are often used to avoid reality (McLeod, 2008). The developmental level an individual is at, plus the level of anxiety they experience, dictates the use of defence mechanisms. Denial and distortion of reality are the two major attributes of defence mechanisms which operate at an unconscious level (Grohol, 2013).

> "Repression is an unconscious mechanism employed by the ego to keep disturbing or threatening thoughts from becoming conscious" (McLeod, 2008, p1).

Repression is a type of defence mechanism that removes some things from an individual's awareness (Corey, 2013). The central idea of repression as a defense mechanism is that it is carried out unconsciously and individuals have very little control over it (Grohol, 2013). The process of repression involves forcing memories, wishes or ideas into the unconscious which, at a conscious level, creates anxiety (McLeod, 2008). International students develop defence mechanisms in order be able to cope in the host country (Sarita & Sonia, 2015). However, they do try to forget about their bad experiences in the host country and focus on studying nonetheless, they often develop repression because of undue anxiety (McGarvey et al., 2015).

Sublimation, a type of defence mechanism, is similar to displacement (and more constructive than repression) and it takes place when individuals displace their emotions in a constructive, rather than a destructive way (McLeod, 2008). According to Corey (2013, p. 2), sublimation is described as:

> "Diverting sexual or aggressive energy into other channels, ones that are usually socially acceptable and sometimes even admirable."

An example of this is an individual believing in his or her career goals when temporary setbacks in academic achievement occur which can offset adjustment difficulties (Grohol, 2013). In this regard, sublimation can be seen as a sign of maturity that allows people to function normally in socially acceptable ways (Cherry, 2015). It is very important that international students are properly briefed about what they can expect during their registration process and are advised, if they experience difficulties, to consult the institutions counsellors or academic advisors (Tom, 2013).

Acting out is a defence mechanism where the individual struggles through the stress and anxiety by engaging in actions (and carrying out behaviours that are often counter-productive or negative) rather than reflecting upon internal feelings (Cherry, 2015). They can act out in different ways for instance, showing they are angry by throwing things around and/or dropping out of school or university because of an inability to cope with academic or social pressures (Grohol, 2013; Sarma, 2014).

Sarma (2014) defines stress as being unable to meet the requirements, demands or expectations of an individual's environment. The author states that stress is different for everyone however, too much stress and anxiety usually results in an individual developing anxiety related disorders if not managed effectively. According to Sarita and Sonia (2015), students experience both social (for instance, family and peers) and academic stressors therefore their sources of stress are divergent.

> "Stressors are demands made by the internal or external environment that upset balance, thus affecting physical and psychological well-being and requiring action to restore balance" (Sarita & Sonia, 2015, p. 386).

2.4.1 Academic factors

Ganaprakasam (2016) states that the main imperative of education is to create a community of critical thinkers which is diverse hence the need for international students. According to Kosheleva, Amarnor and Chemobilsky (2015), although all factors contribute to academic stress, academic factors are direct stressors for students. These factors include assignments, presentations, tests and examinations in tertiary institutions. University differs from high school thus there are academic adjustments that an individual has to adhere to in order to succeed academically. Each university has a system of its own, in terms of qualifying to sit in an examination. For example, according to section 32 of the Higher Education Act, the

University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) requires a full-time student to have a minimum overall mark of 40% (continuous assessment) to be granted permission to write an examination in any one semester (General Academic rules of the University of Limpopo [Turfloop Campus], n.d). The qualifying mark, which is the overall total of assessments in a module therefore has to be above 40% which in itself pressurises students. These assessments can be tests, assignments and/or oral presentations. Another stressor for international students is often when they present orally as they often have accents which differ from local students.

Much has been researched about the negative attitudes of local students towards international students but less has been investigated about the attitudes of lecturing staff (Ata, 2015). According to Sarma (2014), some lecturers develop negative attitudes towards international students. In a study that was conducted in Australia using a sample of Arab, Indian and Chinese international students, the negative attitudes of peers and lecturers affected the samples ability to perform well and discouraged them from thinking critically (Ata, 2015d every issue brought up in society which makes for a better future for the community at large.

2.4.2 Family factors

Africa as a continent comprises of many countries which different ethnicities and divergent cultural traditions (Idang, 2015). Although the continent has different cultures, values and norms, respect given to all, especially the elderly, is a common denominator (Wiens, 2018). The author notes that obeying parents is a way of life for Africans. To please parents there is a priority for African children to performing well academically particularly, if they are sent to study in another country. African parents want to see their children succeed academically (Sarma, 2014). These parents have high expectations for their child academically and make monetary and emotional investments in them which creates much pressure for their children. The degree and intenseness of pressure experienced by international students from their families varies but it exists, to some degree, for each student (Sarita & Sonia, 2015).

International students are vulnerable to developing mental disorders due to the many (sometimes unrealistic) academic expectations which their families have. Many international students do not have scholarships due to the minimal availability of scholarships (NAFSA, 2017). This means that parents or guardians must invest money in tuition fees and other expenses which includes accommodation, groceries, textbooks, stationery and extramural activities. This results in pressure on the international student to do well without any thought

for difficulties that might be experienced in adjusting to a new environment (Haber & Griffiths, 2017). According to Sarma (2014), an individual can outwardly decide which demands are most important,

> "Meeting the expectations of significant others is a critical aspect of fulfilling one's duty to one's family, maintaining family honour, and showing respect" (Sarma, 2014, p. 1).

2.4.3   Social factors

Social factors are stressors within the environment (Sarita & Sonia, 2015). According to Kosheleva et al. (2015), studying in a HEI can be nerve-racking, especially for international students who leave home to study in a foreign country. Developing socio-cultural competence as well as upholding individual values, morals and culture is a critical aspect for these students. They also need to establish stability in interpersonal, emotional and social challenges which they face in their host country (Kosheleva et al., 2015). Sarma (2014) reports that unlike prejudice and discrimination, factors such as the climate and food are usually not emphasised as major stressors faced by international students. In a study that was conducted by Kosheleva et al. (2015), which composed of 60 international students from China, Vietnam, Mongolia, Nigeria, Kazakhstan and the Ivory coast, who studied in Russia it was found that differences in climate scored high as a factor that contributed to high levels of stress.

According to the DSM - 5 (2013), anxiety is defined as the anticipation of future threat. Most international students in a study conducted by Sarita and Sonia (2015) showed a high level of anxiety due to differences in environment and culture as well as the anticipation of not knowing how things would turn out.

2.5 Depression in foreign or international students

Depression is a psychological illness that anyone can suffer from. It is usually characterised by a feeling of sadness but it is not the only symptom or sign therefore there is no one cause of depression (Oluwafunmilola, 2012). According to the DSM 5 (2013), depression includes symptoms such as:

- persistent sad, anxious, or 'empty' mood;

- feelings of hopelessness, pessimism;

- feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness;

- loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities;

- decreased energy, fatigue, being 'slowed down';

- difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions.

According to Chua (2015), depression covers profound issues such as feelings of disconnect and overall unhappiness. These feelings of disconnect usually emerge when an individual's reality and ideals are not consistent. Depression is a common mental disorder amongst young people (DSM 5, 2013) and students who experience depression may have poor levels of concentration, feel guilty, feel intensive sadness and hopelessness. Depression is understood and known as an internalising problem which is classified by its symptoms for example, depressed mood or excessive sadness, loss of interest in activities, sleeping problems (it is either sleeping too much or sleeping inadequately), difficulty in thinking, loss of concentration and loss of weight is also associated with depression (Oluwafunmilola, 2012). In this case, international students may experience depression which could be:

> "caused through different ways [of doing] and these causes might be language barriers, cultural shock, loneliness, discrimination and many more" (Oluwafunmilola, 2012, p. 4).

Failure to adjust and adapting to the culture in a new environment may lead to loss of cultural identity (The Daily Press, 2010). Students start to question who they are and may become insular and self-absorbed. After some introspection and self-analyses some of these international students discover themselves and grow, others are not able to do this and become anxious and depressed (Oluwafunmilola, 2012). Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016) suggest that international students deal with their challenges differently, some find it very difficult to adjust and may even experience depressive feelings and suicidal thoughts. However, others thrive in their new environment. The authors report that depression is one of the leading mental illnesses amongst young people globally many of whom are students. Studies conducted by Oluwafunmilola (2012) and Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2016) were

based on first entering students as participants between the ages of eighteen to twenty-one. The approaches adopted by both these studies were qualitative in nature, hence could not specify whether age contributed to the process anyway.

2.6 Loneliness and isolation experienced by international students

"Such [terrible] loneliness or stress is derived from not only the lack of familiar cultural and linguistic environments, but also the missing presence of familiar friends and social networks" (Liu, 2016, p. 4).

Newsome and Cooper (2016) suggest that the loneliness international students sometimes face is caused by the fact that they experience a 'culture shock.' According to the University of Saskatchewan (n.d), culture shock is defined as the adjustment process to a country or culture that is challenging. Cupsa (2018) defines culture shock as the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.

There are four types of culture shock namely; culture shock for tourists (six months and less), sojourners (more than six months and up to five years), immigrants (who want to stay in a foreign culture forever) and refugees (forced out of their home culture). All international students who study for degrees are sojouners (Tanim, 2016). At first, being in a new country and experiencing new things for instance, food, climate, language and new social customs is exciting but later stress and anxiety set in (Cupsa, 2018). Culture shock emerges from what is suggested as the misinterpretation of cultural values, beliefs, behaviours and norms found in the host society (Marwick, 2005). International students go through different phases and their experiences are diverse (Tanim, 2016). The following stages of culture shock, adapted from Tanim (2016), are presented as follows.

- The honeymoon phase, this occurs during the first period in the host country (1 – 4 weeks). The student is happy to be in the new environment and feels a sense of adventure. They are curious about the country and culture and eager to ben their studies.

- Phase 2 is the increasing participation phase which takes place 5 – 8 weeks after the student has entered the host country. In this phase the student feels somewhat restless, bewildered and anxious. They begin to take part in everyday life, attend classes but

begin to find out there are many responsibilities and sometimes it becomes 'too much' for them. In this phase students often begin to question the new culture and may begin drinking (alcohol) as a coping mechanism.

- The next phase is the crisis or adjustment phase. This takes place 9 – 12 weeks after entry into the new environment. Students become irritated and may feel hostile and aggressive. Their studies suffer and they feel discouraged, tired and depressed. This leads to their withdrawal from host nationals and often conflict with others. They feel depressed often present with illnesses such as headaches. At this point international students feel homesick and isolated. During this phase many students start to adjust to the new situation and develop positive coping mechanisms (for instance, making friends, joining university societies). These students adapt and start to appreciate their new environment. Those who do not adapt are likely to be extremely homesick, unable to work properly and become depressed.

- The final phase is the adaptation phase which occurs from 13 – 20 weeks after entry into the new environment. In this phase true adaptation takes place and the international student's work improves, cultural adaptation is heightened and the student feels comfortable in the new environment. Those who do not adapt struggle and some may 'go home' while other using negative coping mechanisms such as alcohol (and if help is not found run the risk of failing their studies).

Integration into a culture is the only way that 'culture shock' can be destroyed (Hommadova & Mita, 2016). Many host countries have hundreds of international students and have orientation programmes that are impersonal which does not make integration for international students easy (Tivagarisi & Mugambiwa, 2016). For example, countries such as France, Germany and South Africa experience xenophobic attacks on a regular basis which impacts on international students in a negative manner as they fear doing every-day things such as going shopping or going out to eat (Kufandererwa, 2017). According to Newsome and Cooper (2016), the more international students experience loneliness the more likely they are to experience extreme isolation. This results in international students not being able to integrate with indigenous students leading to an inability to adjust to their new environment (Borg & Cefai, 2014).

2.7 The social challenges of international students

Humans not only have an emotional bonds or relationships with one another but also to objects, animals and their direct environment (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). According to Borg and Cefai (2014), international students come to South Africa with what they learned and were attached to from infancy, and do not think about how they will adjust socially in a foreign country. For instance, they may experience ordinary activities such as banking, shopping, transportation and making friends as challenges which may frustrate them as everything is different (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). These challenges often cause homesickness and/or social isolation which can result in mental illnesses such as depression (Borg & Cefai, 2014).

Being away from home without any social support or family support may lead to major difficulties in adjusting to a new environment (Hommodova & Mita, 2016). According to Wang (2016), social connection is an important predictor in terms of adjusting positively to a surrounding. Kosheleva et al. (2015) suggest that lack of social support scored high as one of the factors that contributed to high stress levels of international students in terms of adjusting socially. Wang (2016) found out that if there is social connection or interaction between international students and the indigenous students, there is a better positive process of adjusting to the social, academic and cultural challenges faced which is also consistent to what has been found in other studies conducted by other scholars.

It is not all individuals who find it easy to make friends, in this regard introverted international students find it difficult to form relationships with other students (Sarma, 2014). Interpersonal problems also contribute to adjusting to a new surrounding to help alleviate these international students are usually encouraged to take every opportunity to interact with host students (Akanwa, 2015). Playing sports such as football, netball, and volleyball is perceived as a good way to integrate athletic students and chess clubs and poetry clubs are useful for those who prefer more intellectual pursuits (Baba & Hosoda, 2014).

Being involved, at different levels, helps international students gain self-confidence which makes it easier for them to adjust (Akanwa, 2015). According to Mesidor and Sly (2016), it is easier to adjust and develop multicultural skills and awareness when international students engage with students from the host country. Host country students can also benefit by

accumulating knowledge of the international student's country (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011). Students from the host country and international students benefit from each other as they will improve their multicultural competencies (Akanwa, 2015).

Mesidor and Sly (2016) report that the better the international student's level of spoken English in an English medium institution the better they integrate. This is supported by a study conducted among Turkish international students in the USA. It was found that international students with higher levels of English language proficiency had lower levels of adjustment difficulties, whereas international students with lower levels of English language proficiency reported to have high levels of adjustment difficulties (Duru & Poyrazli, 2011).

According to McGarvey et al. (2015), social alienation is a common behaviour for international students who are struggling to deal with social challenges. In a study conducted by these authors amongst Irish international students in the USA, it was discovered that 75% scored high in terms of social alienation when facing social challenges. This led to loneliness and lack of a sense of belonging amongst this group. The authors concluded that it is vital for international students to have a successful process of adjustment to the new environment for them to function fully in their new social and cultural setting.

2.8 Acceptance and adjustment of international students from the host countries

One of the major contributing factors to international students' positive adjustment experiences in their host country is their social interaction with the local population (Hommadova & Mita, 2016). Social interaction is a key element which helps individuals adjust and integrate into new environments (Jean, 2010). This author suggests that if international students are to fit in to a new environment they need to feel accepted and not judged because of any cultural or ethnic differences. International students only move to another country because they want the best education available to them and are thus open to new ideas but are often not aware of challenges that exist in new environments (Hommadova & Mita, 2016).

Attitudes to 'difference' which students from the host countries possess is what determines their behaviour towards international students. There are elements that are beyond the international students' control which directly affect their adjustment process in a foreign

country (Sarma, 2014). For instance, South Africa has experienced social challenges which were built into law during apartheid which has resulted in communities being apart from each other (for instance, townships and middle class urban areas). It is also true that South Africa is a multicultural country and issues like tribalism still exist in the country. According to Moloi (2017), tribalism is the new apartheid in South Africa which also affects interactions between people. This can affect international students who have not been brought up in the environment and find it difficult to adjust to the different cultures and languages in the host country.

The challenges that usually occur for international students are social challenges which are frequently created by the host students (Akanwa, 2015). The anxiety that the students from the host country feel when making contact with international students can be referred to as 'fear of the other.' According to a study conducted by Hommadova and Mita (2016), social engagement is needed in order to allow the host country student and the international student to better understand each other. Furthermore, most international students who are faced with rejection from the host country are likely to distance themselves as a way of dealing with the rejection. Akanwa (2015) found that international students usually prefer to socialise and interact amongst themselves, as a result of this, rather than integrating with students from the host country. This leads to distrust of the 'other' amongst host country students making integration difficult.

2.9 Stereotyping and discrimination of international students

Koppel (2016) reports that the internationalisation of education has been a goal for student movements for decades. This suggests that over the last few decades much money and time has been invested into international student exchange programmes. These programmes promote international educational growth. However, in the last decade there has been growing discrimination towards international students in many countries. Moreover, more attention has been given towards the process of recruiting international students and less attention has been given to understanding foreign students' experiences, which is problematic (Lee, 2015). According to Okechukwu, Souza, Davis and De Castro (2014, pg. 3), discrimination refers to:

> "Actions of institutions and/or individuals within them, setting unfair terms and conditions that systematically impair the ability of members of a group to work."

Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing (2015) suggest that international students face poor treatment and unfairness given out by peers and academic staff because of cultural and ethnic differences. The different aspects of discrimination range from financial difficulties to housing and social events. McGarvey et al. (2015) state that the higher fees paid by international students is a discriminatory factor within itself as there is nothing that can justify the imposition of higher fees. International students know they are charged more and the resent it and begin to feel distant from local students.

Discrimination itself is rooted in negative feelings or thoughts about the 'other,' which is something or someone unknown that individuals fear leading to extreme unfairness or bias towards that person or object (Kufandererwa, 2017). Discrimination towards the 'other' occurs in South Africa amongst Black, White, Indian and Coloured members of the population which becomes heightened when foreign cultures are involved (Tirivangasi & Mugambiwa, 2016). The history of apartheid as a system that enforced segregation amongst Blacks and Whites has wounded the South African nation. Not only were Blacks separated from Whites but Blacks also segregated from Blacks according to their ethnicity. This caused many psychological barriers (Kufandererwa, 2017). The author indicates for example, that Sepedi (a dialect of Northern Sotho) speaking people were separated from the Tsonga speaking people. This has resulted in fear of the 'other' in this society which has resulted in more discrimination against not only other cultures in South Africa but other African cultures.

International students are perceived as individuals who study at a foreign country to gain permanent residence in the host country rather than getting an education (Tran & Gomes, 2015). The authors note that his kind of statement is one of an examples of stereotyping experienced by international students in Australia. This occurs in South Africa as well, where international students experience many challenges because of the negative treatment they receive (Akanwa, 2015). According to Mashapo (2013), most South African citizens look down on African black foreigners and expect the worst from them. Tran and Gomes (2015) highlighted the fact that international students feel like they are not valued and the contributions they make are not recognised (in their host country), which damages them emotionally.

However, there are positive and negative stereotypes. Most host country students believe that all international students are very bright intellectually and assume that they study courses or degrees in medicine or engineering that require high entry requirements. Although this could be called a positive stereotype, it does not apply to every international student and such beliefs encourage segregation between international students and host students. As a result of this type of belief, host students do not see why they should help international students even when they ask for help (Study Abroad Corner, 2014).

2.10 Xenophobia

Xenophobia is defined as the fear or hatred of foreigners (Writer, 2016). He reports that there was a sharp increase in immigrants to South Africa between the years 2000 to 2016. Many Black South African citizens felt that foreigners took away jobs that belonged to them. As a result, they discriminated against them in a violent manner which resulted in xenophobic attacks countrywide. This wave of xenophobia included attacks on foreign students (Tirivangasi & Mugambiwa, 2016). Black South Africans (male and female) attacked immigrants indiscriminately in 2008 and again in 2015 (Writer, 2016). International students had to find ways of surviving this onslaught which often spilled over onto tertiary education campuses.

Lee (2015) reports that written policies often do not protect foreign students and that there is a need for proper orientation programmes introducing international students to their peers, academic and administrative staff. The causes of xenophobia are numerous and are particularly predominant in countries undergoing transition, such as developing countries which have problems such as unemployment and poverty (Kufandererwa, 2017; Tirivangasi & Mugambiwa, 2016). Additionally, stereotypical ideas about immigrants which are rife in African countries lead to discrimination which results in xenophobia (Writer, 2016).

According to Mhauli (2015), South Africa is the most xenophobic nation in the world. There are various reasons that triggered xenophobic attacks in South Africa (Moshapo, 2013). Tirivangasi and Mugambiwa (2016) suggest that fear of crime, the spreading of disease and shortage of social resources were some of the causes of xenophobic attacks in the country. Local Black citizens blamed Black foreigners (legal or illegal) for taking jobs and this, with the aforementioned reasons, led to an outburst of violence in the country (Mashapo, 2013).

According to Mwilu (2010), apartheid was the core root of all these problems as people were separated and learnt not to trust each other. Mhlauli et al. (2015) defined apartheid not only as an arrangement of racial inequity or unfairness but also as a system of:

> "separation or segregation of Blacks and Whites in the areas of government, labour markets and residency" (Mhlauli et al., 2015, p. 205).

This changed when the African National Congress (ANC), under the leadership of Nelson Mandela in 1994, brokered democracy in order to bring justice to all. However, changes in how people think about each other did not occur simultaneously (Barbali, 2009).

Mhlauli (2015) reported that there are countries within the African continent for instance, Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe where academic programmes are limited therefore students moves to countries where they can further their studies (such as South Africa). Consequently, it is important for institutions of higher learning in Africa, to formulate policies which protect foreign national students from xenophobia and resultant discrimination, stigmatisation and even violence, in terms of the purpose and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

To adjust to a new environment is a challenge (Hommodova & Mita, 2014). Difficulties are not always easily controlled by for instance, international students. Individuals can more-easily confront academic challenges but the challenge of xenophobia is enormous (a social challenge). Mashapo (2013) further explains that xenophobic attacks are scapegoats as South Africans, of all colours, do not want to engage in introspection and confront their fear of the 'other' Mashapo (2013, p. 23) defined a scapegoat as:

> "The idea of identifying a weaker individual or phenomena which is used to escape responsibility for an idea, usually one that is not socially acceptable."

Foreigners were killed for just being themselves in 2008 (Mhlauli, 2015). The safety of international students is not secure as xenophobic attacks emerged again in 2018 (Mngadi, 2018).

2.11 International students access to services

International students who are underprivileged may not be able to obtain social benefits from their host country as they are not citizens and, what is available to them is different to that of

their home country (NAFSA, 2017). In the USA undocumented immigrants have an especially difficult time accessing services, largely because they are afraid of being deported (Lee, 2015). Consequently, people will avoid seeing the doctor or reaching out for services like legal guidance even if they are really needed. Although international students have the necessary documentation, it is still difficult to access the best services as those offering the services can treat them poorly (Khanlou et al., 2014). For those who are able to successfully obtain the services they need, the experience is usually negative. A documented example of this is that in Utah (a state in the USA), there was a misunderstanding of a victim's statement by law enforcement professionals, due to language barriers. This resulted in the victim being imprisoned and the perpetrator being let go (Khanlou et al., 2014). This is very likely to have happened in South Africa. Accessing mental health clinics is especially problematic. Many times, refugees and immigrants have been exposed to violence, rape, even torture- but they may not know how to seek help (Lee, 2015).

According to the visa regulations for study in South Africa, Act No. 13 of 2002, all international students who wish to study in any tertiary institutions in South Africa must be covered by a South African registered medical scheme or aid (Medical Aid Cover Guide, 2017). Some medical insurances do not cover certain items such as full dental care which add on the financial burden carried by international students. Before academic registration at universities, all international students must pre-register with their international office. In terms of pre-registration, the HEIs need proof of a valid study permit, proof of payment of fees for the academic year and full medical aid cover which needs to be renewed as long as the student is studying in South Africa. This results in the student and his or her family incurring high expenses.

According to Mhlauli et al. (2015), the service of the Department of Home Affairs is a challenge, as most international students do not get the help they need. Getting their documents corrected and/or sorted out takes time and as a result, students often miss events such as orientation, and even the first several weeks of lectures. As a result, they miss out on opportunities to interact with their host country peers.

2.12 Cultural challenges of international students

Anton and Lawrence (2014) suggest that individuals function properly (unless there are underlying problems) without any difficulties when they live in a known environment. Some international students do not function well when they are away from home, as they lose

familial and/or social support and their environment is unknown (Somer & Dumont, 2011). According to Lui (2011), this can be resolved through what they term high social connectedness (getting to know people) which makes international students' lives easier and lessens their psychological stress. International students learn different things in their new environment through interacting with peers and the surrounding community this contributes to their identity for example different values, morals, beliefs, culture and language (Somer & Dumont, 2011).

Cultural differences are challenging due to misunderstandings that may occur in the process of cultural integration or assimilation (Jibreel, 2015). International students go through the process of assimilation and have to try and find a cultural balance in order to adapt to their new environment which ultimately becomes part of their new self- identity (Alavi & Mansor, 2011). Some of the misconceptions that arise about cultures are rooted in misunderstanding about that culture, which results in xenophobia, discrimination and stigmatisation (Kubota & Lin, 2009). International students sometimes find that their cultural behaviours are not practiced in their new environment which makes it difficult for them to adapt. Alavi and Mansor (2011) state that learning new cultural mores can be problematic as they may be very different to what international students are used to.

Akanwa (2015) reports that all students want to get the best quality in education thus often the process of studying in other countries gives them that advantage. The author reported that international students shared experiences (from their home country) with them. However, students from the host country did not make the platform of integration easy because of their cultural differences. This eventually leads to international students feeling isolated and even rejected.

Webb and Read (2001) in Akanwa (2015) state that culture involves factors such as obtained knowledge and patterns of behaviour learned from birth as well as attitudes towards phenomena, values, morals and beliefs. International students mix with host students, and through interaction they influence one and other if optimal integration occurs. According to Khabutdinova and Bayanova (2013), Berry's (1997) model of acculturation states that cultural interaction occurs four ways namely through: 1) interaction- also known as bi-culturalism. This can be described as a strategy employed by people who value their own culture and who want to maintain their culture though are open to learning about other

peoples culture by integrating the two culture; 2) assimilation - this strategy is usually employed by people who perceive their original culture as not important therefore interact and identify with their new culture or; 3) separation - this is a strategy where people perceive their own culture as the most important culture thus they separate themselves from identifying with other cultures and 4) marginalisation - people who neither identify with their own heritage or culture and the new culture they live in (Adapted from Berry (1997) in Truong, 2016,).

Khabutdinova and Bayanova (2013) report that the process of moving from one place to another is challenging as it requires an individual to be exposed to a new culture, new values, beliefs, norms, behaviours and habits. Additionally, being exposed to the new environment leads an individual to question his or her self-identity in the host country. Moreover, emotional reactions towards how people from the host country perceive immigrants may lead to cultural change. As a result, positive (when the person is enjoying the changes though worrying about the adaption) or negative (when an individual is overwhelmed by the changes occurring) stress emerges for adjustment purposes.

2.13 Attire and new environments related to international students

According to Larsson (2014), the dress codes of an individual are linked to their personality thus extroverts wear clothes which everyone can see and introverts dress more demurely. Garments also give some idea of culture as people often wear clothes associated with their ethnicity for instance, Indian women who wear saris (Larsson, 2014). Ghebard (2012), in a qualitative study undertaken in the USA about international students and their host culture, found that Asian students were subject to culture shock (because of dress codes and different sense of style in the host country). In South Africa Xhosas, Zulus and other ethnic groups have their own way of dressing traditionally according to the norms and values within that culture (Siyabona Africa, n.d). Clothes are important when it comes to an individual's identity (Larsson, 2014). When International students interact with other students, they observe how students in the host country dress, sometimes they emulate their way of dressing in order to fit in.

In Bandura's theory of social learning (1977), there are four principles that an individual must adhere to in terms of learning new things namely: a) attention, in this principle, an individual must be very interested by something in order to pay attention thus the more eye-catching a phenomenon is, the more likely they are to give attention to it: (b) retention - in

this principle, a person remembers what he or she has observed. A way of increasing retention is through rehearsal of what has been observed: c) reproduction- the principle emphasises the ability of an individual to reproduce what has been observed from the model and d) motivation- the final principle stresses the individual's willingness to repeat the modelled behaviour (Nabavi, 2012). The more the individual is ready and willing to perform what has been modelled, the higher the chances of the behaviour to "be learned and repeated" (McLeod, 2016, p.2). People discard what is seen as not suitable and absorb what they feel is necessary. The same process applies when making friends and interacting with people and changing for instance, dress codes (Larsson, 2014; McLeod, 2016).

International students sometimes feel pressured to adapt to change in order to fit in to the new environment (Wu et al., 2015). This can lead to a drastic change in their way of dressing in order to fit in with their new peer group. In the USA for instance, female students often wear shorts and cropped tops which is not acceptable to female international students who belong to the Islamic faith (Payton, 2014). In India, some women in specific ethnic groups have to cover their head and body until married (Bisolli, 2014; Sharma, Pandit, Pathak, & Sharma, 2013).

South Africa's culture is one of the most diverse culturally in the world (Siamonga, 2015). The country itself has different ethnic groups that have their symbolic attire for instance, Xhosas, Zulus, Tsongas, Ndebeles and Vendas (Siyabona Africa, n.d). In each piece of clothing there are meanings that are represented in different ethnic groups attire. For example, a Zulu virgin wears different attire from a woman who is not a virgin. The Xhosa wear white as a colour that represents purity (Siyabona Africa, n.d). Today dressing virgins differently to married women may not always be practised as it can be considered sexist and discriminatory (Neel, 2017). White as a colour of purity was also adopted from Eurocentric culture as brides wore white to signify purity (today, it is a tradition in that culture but does not signify bodily purity as this is sexist and discriminatory).

It is not every country that has a 'national dress' or traditional clothes (Siamanga, 2015). Zimbabwe reportedly does not have a specific national dress culture which represents the culture of ethnic Zimbabweans. However, Siamanga (2015) states that that Zimbabwean elders wear what is perceived as traditional attire. Moreover, the abovementioned author also reported that in the year 2005, there was an invitation for Zimbabwean designers to create a

'national dress' that represented ethnic cultural groups in the country but this did not end in an actual product.

South Africa is a diverse country that embraces different customs and culture. Dressing or attire is one of the elements that help to distinguish where individuals belong, in terms of the ethnic groups within the country (Collison, 2017). Zimbabweans believe that a young woman (not married, with no children) should cover her body which should not be exposed. However, groups within South Africa for instance, the Zulus, Xhosas and Swatis encourage young woman to embrace their bodies thus in cultural ceremonies they are encouraged not to cover their breasts and only wear short skirts (Collison, 2017).

2.14 Values and norms and international students

"Norms refers to the group shared expectations" (Young & Mack, in Farooq, 2012, p.1). A tertiary environment, like any other environment, has its own way of operating academically, socially and culturally. Institutions carry their own norms and values which all students have to adapt to. Institutional culture has rules for example, first year students or undergraduates are not treated the same way as post- graduate students who are considered more mature and conscientious in their work ethic. International students have to learn the new institutional environment as well as the local social norms and values which is difficult, and can impact negatively on their mental health if they are unable to integrate into these environments successfully (Mental Health America, 2018).

Norms are not the formal laws in a society but play an important role in social control through gestures and patterns of speech which allow people to socialise in that culture. Individuals who make errors in terms of for instance, greeting people incorrectly are often ignored (Farooq, 2012). When individuals have adopted social norms from another country it is sometimes difficult to understand and adopt to the new norms (Little, 2013). Students who are exposed to a new international environment often do not know how to behave properly in terms of acceptable cultural norms which makes it difficult for them to integrate fully (Wardhaugh, 2014). Societal norms must be learnt and introduced to individuals who are new to that society this helps them in terms of acceptance and integration into the new community (Idang, 2015). Signs and symbols inherent to a new environment illustrate the new social

context and can help foreigners adapt to, and understand, the values and norms of the community (Little, 2013).

According to Faroq (2012, p. 1), "social norms clearly define the roles of the individuals or people in different situations hence these social norms are the codes of mutual relationship." These norms clearly distinguish between what is right and what is wrong in the social context. Young and Mack in Farooq (2012) posit that norms and values channel our interaction patterns and are reproduced during the process of interacting with the environment and the people within it. International students bring their own social norms and values which may differ from the local or host context which causes the student anxiety as they want to fit in thus usually adopt the local norms. However, when they return home they have integrated these norms into their own behaviours and often have trouble fitting into to their home environment (as their new learned norms clash with their old ones) which can cause familial and other social problems (Wardhaugh, 2014).

According to Mzileni (2017), there are cultural barriers that affect international students in terms of adjusting to their new environment. Additionally, the aforementioned author reported that in South Africa, the main challenge faced by international students are more socio-cultural aspects of identity, norms, values and language than the cognitive part of learning HEIs. It can be argued that the values and norms which shape an individual's identity are predicated on their home environment thus overcoming cultural barriers is key to integrating international students into their host environment (Wardhaugh, 2014). Newsome and Cooper (2016) state that international students have their own embedded identity and, to some extent, they all experience culture shock. Culturally, the 'shock' relates to what was valued in their own communities is no longer of value in their host environment (Idang, 2015). The adjustment process is therefore always complex in terms of settling into a host country.

2.15 Language barriers and international students

Language can be defined as a mode of communication between individuals, which is either written or spoken (Bates, 2014). In this study, language implies the ability of students to get their thoughts and ideas 'across' to other people (Medved, Franco, Gao, & Yang, 2013). According to Bates (2014), understanding language heads the list of challenges facing

foreigners in any country. Furthermore, the author states that being able to communicate (or not) affects every area of life in which people have to interact with others.

Kim and Mattila (2011) suggest that a language barrier is a symbolic concept which is used to express or to demonstrate problems that students experience when attempting to communicate with each other, in the absence of a common language. Although South Africa has eleven official languages (Northern Sotho, Tsonga, Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Venda, Tswana, English, Southern Sotho and now Sign Language) English is the medium most used in tertiary education. This is because it is the most used language in the world for commerce and education (Medved et al., 2013). The aforementioned authors state that good quality English skills cause a decrease of anxiety in the first exchange of words between international students and host country students which alleviates stress and anxiety. However, the incorrect pronunciation of words can cause bullying and discrimination (Kim & Mattila, 2011). On the African continent each country has its own way of pronouncing English words as it a second language in many countries. In the upper regions of Africa, the people have different accents to those in the lower region. This gives a unique aspect to spoken English but can cause difficulties when entering a new environment (Krauss & Chiu, 2014).

Language does not just imply that which is spoken but also the body language that accompanies it. For example, in the Pedi culture, when an individual greets an elderly person, one knee has to be bent whenever a young person greets an old person as a sign of respect. The Venda speaking people also have different ways of communicating, for example, instead of bending one knee, a young person actually lies on the floor as a sign of respect (Personal Communication with a person embedded in the culture, Ms M S Magondoni, 17.06.2018)

Another challenge, in terms of language, between international students and the host country students, is an inability to understand the language (or the idiomatic use of language) in the host country. According to (McBeath, 2015), China is a country where people prefer to speak their own language even if a non-Chinese speaking person is with them. As a result, it is difficult for international students to interact with people as the process of adjustment cannot take place. This happens in many countries even when the language of education is English (Brock, 2014).

2.16 Social support and connectedness relating to international students

"A feeling of belonging to or having affinity with a particular person or group" is what is defined as connectedness (Hall, 2014, p.1). Every individual needs a sense of belonging as it makes them connected to a place or person (Hall, 2014). The aforementioned author argues that to belong to a structure is a way of illustrating acceptance in a particular organisation. Gaines (2017) suggests that everyone has different traits (characteristics) and genes that make them unique which makes adapting also unique to that individual. It must also be remembered that individuals are also connected to the environment in which they live, as underpinned by the following quote from Gaines (2017, p.1).

> "As people we maintain our individuality no matter where or when we are: whether at a family gathering, surrounded by people connected to us by blood, or a school classroom, connected to others in the room by generation and purpose. However, every individual is in some way connected to every other individual also. Connectedness speaks of those things that bind people together, whether at a moment in time or specific place, or more deeply in a way that is not dependent on external variables."

Being connected to an individual culture gives a sense of belonging which is perceived as a something that everyone needs which entails being accepted into a group, social or family setting (Hall, 2014). There are different types of connectedness that people experience namely, emotional, physical and cognitive. According to Gaines (2017), being physically connected means to be attached to the environment and everything that falls within that environment. The process of settling in to a new environment comes with different experiences that help or hinder acceptance and accommodation (McLeod, 2016). A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Hall (2014, p.1) further reports the following.

> "Feeling that one belongs is most important in seeing value in life and in coping with intensely painful emotions. Some find belonging in a church, some with friends, some with family and others in social media. Some see themselves as connected only to one or two people. Others believe and feel a connection to all people the world over, to humanity. Some struggle to find a sense of belonging and their loneliness is physically painful for them."

Some individual think they can handle isolation however, this is not the case and students who become isolated suffer inner-conflict and pain (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). International students who do not interact with peers in their host country seem to have as their mind-set: "the idea that there must be those who don't belong in order for there to be those who do" (Hall, 2014, p.3). This notion is a reflection of their isolation and loneliness.

According to McBeath (2015), in a study conducted on international students at the University of Waterloo (Canada), social support from peers especially from the host country gives international students a sense of belonging and a feeling of being acceptance. It was also reported that the higher the level of social support the host students showed towards international students, the more confidence international students had and their level of emotional stability was high. International students who get a high level of support from host country peers are thus better adjusted and perform better academically.

Interacting amongst people physically has decreased with evolving of technology, especially social networks, according to Bursal (2016). Instead of connecting by interacting face-to-face in class, on campus or off campus international students tend to use online communications such as Facebook (McBeath, 2015). For example, there are different groups created on social networks where people join and talk about the thing that bother them. International students using these however, often find difficulties when they have to interact with their host country peers directly. Although social networks do have advantages a phone or a computer cannot take the place of face-to- face interactions. They cannot give hugs or comfort if someone is distressed.

According to Bursal (2016), gender also contributes in terms of social support. In a study conducted in Turkey female international students showed high levels of social support and peer support when facing challenges as compared to male international students. The author found that males make friends faster than females but find difficulties in dealing with cultural challenges. The study concluded that social support is critically important when moving to a new social setting as it contributes to an individual's overall functionality in their new environment.

2.17 A brief overview of some of the effects of colonialism on Africa

The effect of colonialism on Africa is beyond the scope of this research however, elements of language, food and dress code are touched on briefly to contextualise the study. According to Ocheni and Nkwankwo (2012), one of the purposes of the colonisation of African countries was to improve the social, economic, religious, health states of the countries (as well as the obvious economic gains to the colonisers). This included introducing different foods, clothes and other social structures such as medical care facilities. The manner of imposing colonisation in Africa had a negative impact on the continent as Africans were forced to assimilate colonial cultures for instance, the English, Portuguese and French languages. There was resistance but as the Europeans has superior 'fire-power' this resistance ultimately failed (African age, n.d).

Pambazuka (2012) reports that colonisation brought invasive cultures into Africa. Additionally, colonisation in Africa was not only about land dispossession but about creating identities that echoed the colonisers own which almost demolished African knowledge or identity. Countries within the African continent have been colonised by different nations thus the common Eurocentric language in colonised countries differs (Handerson & Whatley, 2013). For example, South Africa was colonised by the Dutch and the British thus Afrikaans (a Dutch derivative) and English prevailed (Kwesi, 2018). Countries such as Algeria, Mali or Cameroon were colonised by the French therefore, they speak French (Answers Africa, n.d). Colonisation led to globalisation in terms of education, clothing and to an extent food consumption (Ocheni & Nkwankwo, 2012).

Colonisation introduced another way of living by introducing technologies to better the economy of South African (and the colonial powers) at the same time demolishing the identity of African people (Kwesi, 2018). Although English is a common language the world over (due to the British Empire particularly strong in the 19th Century, and its colonisation imperative) not all international students speak it and read it fluently (Wang, 2016). This is problematic in Africa as French, Portuguese and/or ex-German speaking countries have young people fluent in those languages but not in English, this impacts on their progression when they enrol at a tertiary institution in South Africa. This has promoted 'fear of the other' (Powell, 2017) and, to an extent, xenophobia on the continent (Tirivangasi & Mugambiwa, 2016).

It is clear that to counter the effect of colonialism in South Africa there is a need for curricula transformation throughout the country which embeds modules firmly within its historical

context. It has already begun but it will take several decades to entrench learning content with the South African education system (Van Wyk & Higgs, 2012).

2.18 Studies conducted in other South African Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs)

There is a paucity of research on the adjustment challenges which are faced by international students in the African continent using an African perspective (Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018). In contrast to that, there are more studies about black African international students' adjustment experiences in the European countries (Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016). Although there are more international students enrolling in South Africa with an increase in number every year, their adjustment challenges are not explored in most universities (Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018). A study which was conducted in the University of Witswatersrand, South Africa indicates that most adjustment difficulties faced by international students are similar throughout the world (Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018). According to MacGregor (2014), Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa are aware of the number of international students who are enrolled each year. Difficulties in settling in, which may be of results to issues such as financial pressure, language barrier challenges, difficulties in making friends or adapting to the new environment have not being fully explored in South Africa which was one of the motive behind the research.

2.19 Summary

This chapter presented an overview of literature related to the topic which included social support and connectedness, relating to international students, values and norms and international students and language. Chapter 3, which follows, presents the theoretical framework which underpins the study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework which underpins this study is Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity. As the study researches the experiences of African international students it was considered appropriate contextually.

3.2 Afrocentricity

The Afrocentric perspective is premised on centering Africa as the foundation of Black Diaspora epistemology (Adeleke, 2015). The Afrocentric perspective was created and expanded on because of what was viewed as an essential need for an ideological response to Eurocentric historiography (Akpan & Odohoedi, 2016). Eurocentrism is seen as major threat to Blacks in Africa and those who were taken as slaves from Africa. However, there are still vestiges of culture left (more so in Africa than in America), intractable from the early years of Black history (Adeleke, 2015). In Asante's view:

> "Eurocentrism has destroyed African culture; de-Africanised the consciousness of Blacks, and arrested their economic and cultural developments. It represents a potent threat to the cultural, social, economic and political development of Blacks. To combat this, Asante and his ideological cohorts propose Afrocentrism, which he defines as "a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person (and which) seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person" (Adeleke, 2015. P. 204).

The main purpose of Afrocentric approach is to create an awareness of African history that is not diluted or interfered in order to strengthen Black American knowledge, Africa being the source or the groundwork of the knowledge (Adeleke, 2015). Asante's (1990) main goal was to create a tool to fight against a continuous high-handed knowledge of Black people within the Eurocentric worldview (Chawane, 2016). The research has made use of Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity to underpin the study as it emphasises: "a manner of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate" (Chawane, 2016, p.6). It also uncovers and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, and a circle of discussion that reinforces the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for obtaining and investigating data (Asante, 1990). The researcher will use the basic characteristics adopted from Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity as listed below:

1. An intense interest in psychological location as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals, and signs

Each location or place has its own symbols, motifs, rituals and signs. Looking at the history of Africans, Asante (1990) developed Afrocentricity philosophical theory based on the fact that there is no one who can better interpret or write about Africans and their way of living better than an African (Adeleke, 2015). He also emphasised that an individual must be in a particular place of study to understand it rather than looking at a phenomenon with binoculars (or from a distance) which is how Eurocentric theory is premised (Reviere, 2001)

A Symbol is something used for, or regarded as representing, something else for instance, a material object representing something which is an emblem, token or a sign. Shepherd (2014, p.105) defines a ritual as:

> "an established or prescribed procedure for a religious or other rite, a system or collection of religious or other rites, observance of set forms in public worship, a book of rites or ceremonies or a book containing the offices to be used by priests in administering the sacraments and for visitation of the sick, burial of the dead, etc., a prescribed or established rite, ceremony, proceeding, or service, prescribed, established, or ceremonial acts or features collectively, as in religious services."

To understand why people, behave in a certain manner, Asante (1990) argued that one has to understand not only their location but also the symbols and rituals they believe in or perform.

A psychological location simply means the mind-set of an individual (Chawane, 2016). It refers to how the mind is set in the location or environment in which the individual lives, in other words how the individual perceives his or own environment psychologically (Akpan & Odohoedi, 2016). Asante (1991) argues that an African cannot think like an American or European while groomed in an African state. Furthermore, the idea that Africans have been moved from being in 'dark continent' to a more liberal state of the continent in terms of politics, economy, socially and philosophically has led an intensive examination of all information from the perspective of Africans. Asante (1991) argues that the abovementioned idea is from the European perspective and the true explanation of the African continent can only be described by the people divested in the African continent. The researcher is at the right location with the correct tools and skill required to collect data and interpret the data too. The topic under study's location is the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) and

the researcher is currently a student at the University of Limpopo. The researcher is an African who has the basic knowledge about Africa and its way of operating, including the ability to interpret the meanings of the symbols, sign or rituals that may surface in the process of the investigation. Therefore, the researcher's interest is to bring the African perspective into a narrative which she as a Black female interprets through an African lens.

2. A commitment to finding the subject-place of Africans in any social, political, economic, or religious phenomenon with implications for questions of sex, gender, and class.

According to Mazama (2001), Afrocentricity is described as a theory of social change. Africa is perceived as a continent that has changed to adopting the western way of life therefore "Africans do not exist on its own terms but on borrowed European terms" (Mazama, 2001, p. 387). According to Pellerin (2012) Afrocentricity is a phenomenon that entails to focal point the cultural concept that originated in Africa. Asante (1991) emphasises that Afrocentricity is not a theory that is conscious of the colour or race of a person but it is about the culture in the point of reference of centeredness. Pellerin (2012) further highlights the importance of a researcher being grounded in the culture and history of the subject-place as well the Africans community.

According to Mazama (2001), the notion of political freedom has been questioned in terms of the transgression that occurred throughout the continent in terms of democracy. Political liberation is expressed differently from the Eurocentric approach therefore:

"Afrocentricity contends and rests upon our ability to systematically displace European way of thinking, being, feeling, and so forth and consciously replace them with ways that are germane to our own African cultural experiences" (Mazama, 2001, p.388).

Asante (1990) further describes culture as the "shared perception, attitudes, and pre-dispositions that allow people to organize experiences in certain ways" (Asante, 1990, p. 9). Hwang, Bennett and Beauchemini (2012) argue that the culture of western societies are cultures that were introduced to Africans who were forced to adopt them, with the so-called

goal of modernising the continent. In addition, the enforcement of the western way of living has brought confusion and oppression in many African countries such as South Africa. As a result, Africans had to depart from their traditional ways of existing and surviving economically, religiously and politically. Consequently, the researcher analysed the study with an African lens focusing on how international students adjusted socially within the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).

Asante (1991) emphasised the subject-place matter because the Afrocentric perspective entails that the researcher be part of the research itself where he or she understand the background and the foundation of the participants under study in a first - hand experience (Chukwuokolo, 2009). According to Asante and Karenga (2006, p.265):

> "a clear definition of place is the central distinguishing characteristic. That is, an Afrocentric inquiry must be executed from a clearly defined Afrocentric place and must include a clear of this location. This definition of place is, in essence, an argument against the need for objectivity and for the inclusion of what can amount to autobiographical approach and rejection of the personal-theoretical dichotomy."

In this study, research was carried out within the environment of University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) where international students experience the prevalent culture. This is the Bapedi ethnic groups culture which is a part of the Northern Sotho cultural group. The University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) thus has a unique institutional culture.

The University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) which was formerly known as University of the North, was established in 1959 when South Africa was still under the apartheid (a system of white oppression of the majority) regime. The curricula were linked to apartheid ideologies thus did not encourage critical thinking (McKay, 2015).

> "The extension of University Education Act of 1959 made provision for the establishment of racially exclusive universities for black South Africans. Under the provisions of the Act, the University College of the North was established about thirty kilometres from the Limpopo Province town of Polokwane on 01 August 1959. The College was placed under the academic trusteeship of the University of South Africa. This formative relationship was maintained until the South African Parliament

promulgated the University of the North Act (Act No. 47 of 1969) thus bringing to an end the College status as of 01 January 1970" (University of Limpopo, n.d).

3. A defence of African cultural elements as historically valid in the context of language, values, and norms.

According to Asante (1991), Eurocentrism only carries contradictions in terms of African history and the perspectives produced when studying African Phenomena. The African continent has never been the same since the advent of European colonisation. According to Chukwuokolo (2009), the continent of Africa has been raped by the West who acted as if they were bringing civilisation to the continent in a paternalistic manner (Chawane, 2016). There has been a total misrepresentation and deformation in terms of values, norms, culture, ways of interacting, ways of gathering food and ways of solving problems in terms of the African mind-set which Eurocentric did not historically (and still does not) understand (Adeleke, 2015). Asante (1991) argues that Eurocentric and American ways of interpreting things that occur in Africa have caused injustice to the continent which results in stressors that only people living in Africa understand.

The majority of the international students (from: Zimbabwe, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Botswana, India, Zambia, Swaziland, Sudan, Congo, Cameroon, Tanzania, Mozambique and Namibia) registered at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) come from sub-Saharan Africa which means they can be empathised with, and understood by the researcher, who understands their experiences as she has shared knowledge of their values, culture and the norms that play a role in their adaptation to their new environment.

There are studies globally which articulate the experiences of international students but often these studies use European or American theories to understand the findings, which can be considered inappropriate. Findings from this research are looked at through an Afrocentric lens as the geographical location and environment play an important role in terms of the people who live there (Reviere, 2001). Asante (1991) reports that using a Eurocentric approach and theory are not appropriate when studying Africans as their problems cannot be solved using a Eurocentric or American lens (Adeleke, 2015).

Culture like religion, influences an individual's behaviour in every aspect of their lives (Akapan & Odohoedi, 2016). Respect is one of the elements that Africans use in all situations related to their day-to-day lives. How Africans speaks to an elder differs from to how they speak to their fellow peers therefore international students' mode of communication with lecturers at tertiary institutions will differ from western ways of communicating. What is seen as 'speaking your mind' in western cultures is often interpreted as disrespectful in African cultures. As international students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) were all African at the time of the research their manner of communicating was better interpreted when underpinned by an Afrocentric lens. The values, norms that each international student has were acknowledged and taken into consideration when data was analysed.

Africans must be at the centre of Africa for improvement that eradicates negatives about Africans is Asante's (1991) main focus. Afrocentricity aims to maintain the African identity (Chawane, 2016). Although there were arguments concerning the development of Afrocentricity in the early 1980s, the theory was finally accepted by different scholars in Africa (Adeleke, 2015; Akapan & Odohoedi, 2016; Chawane, 2016).

> "We are seriously in battle for the future of our culture; Afrocentric vigilance is demanded to preserve our culture. To Africans who have lived amidst Europeans on the land of the ancestors of the Native Americans," and have been in consequence exploited materially and psychologically, and whose historical heritage has been misrepresented and maligned (Asante, 1988, p. 49)."

The misinterpretation that is often carried out by Eurocentric or American researchers, in terms of trying to analyse African knowledge or information will not occur in this research as the researcher applied a truly African theoretical framework. The aim of the researcher was to eliminate any misunderstandings in terms of cultural references within the study interpretations. Eurocentric frameworks are based on the views of the Europeans rather that Africans thus it was inappropriate to study the thoughts and beliefs of Africans using a European perspective (Reviere, 2001). The researcher's interest was to bring justice, truthfulness and openness to the culture, race, beliefs and any components that influence the knowledge of participants in this study (Reviere, 2001)

4. A powerful imperative from historical sources to revise the collective text of African people.

The importance of centeredness of culture is crucial in Asante's (1991) theory of Afrocentricity. The researcher made use of any literature that she found that had already been published and incorporated it into the literature review. This was carried out to ensure that literature from the African continent was integrated into the literature review of this study which grounded it in an African environment (Adeleke, 2015; Asante, 1988; Asante, 1991; Asante, 2009; Chawane, 2016; Chukwuokolo, 2009; Mazama, 2001; Pellerin, 2012; Reviere, 2001) study. The research that was already available helped the researcher to revise the text and be able to analyse data and discover any differences or misunderstandings.

"The Afrocentric movement is a series of activities by concerned African and African-American scholars and educators and directed towards achieving the particular end of ensuring that the African heritage and culture, its history and contribution to world civilization and scholarship are reflected in the curricula on every level of academic instruction. Advocates of Afrocentrism demand a reconstruction and rewriting of the whole panorama of human history in its account of the origin of mankind, the origin of philosophy, science, medicine, agriculture and architecture" (Chukwuokolo, 2009, p.32).

According to Pellerin (2012), interpretive frameworks used to study Africana phenomenon have focused on perceptions which are derived from Eurocentric approaches. The above mentioned approach helped the researcher give a realistic interpretation of African phenomena. A number of authors and academics strive to confer a proper and understandable explanation of Afrocentricity since Asante (1988) introduced the framework (Mazama, 2001) which the researcher has also attempted.

3.3 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher outlined the five basic tenets of Asante's (1988; 1990; 1991) Afrocentricity theory and narrated how it underpinned the present study. Chapter 4 gives the research process (methodology) for the current study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The basic underpinning of any study is a logical and methodological process (it follows) thus procedure for this research is given in detail. It includes the research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, data tool (collection instrument), ethical procedures and the study research questions.

4.2 Research design

The study approach was qualitative in nature using an exploratory research design. In qualitative studies the researcher aims to understand the subjective reality of the phenomena under investigation (Elmusharaf, 2012). Qualitative research looks for in-depth answers to a specific set of questions. In this regard the researcher used a predefined set of procedures to answer the question, collect evidence and produce findings which are not determined in advance. This type of study can produce results which are sometimes beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Elmusharaf, 2012).

4.3 Population and sampling method

4.3.1 Population and sampling

International students registered at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) was the population relevant to the study therefore sampling was made from the population. These international undergraduates come from countries such as Zimbabwe (73.88%), Ghana (1.22%) Lesotho (2.04%), Nigeria (6.12%), Botswana (4.49%), Zambia (1.23%), Sudan (0.4%), India (0.4%), Zambia (1.23%) Swaziland (6.93%), Congo (0.4%), Cameroon (0.82%), Tanzania (0.82%), Mozambique (0.4%) and Namibia (0.82%). The majority of all international students came from the African continent (99.59%). The population of the study was all undergraduate international students registered at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Participants were drawn from a population, which amounted to two hundred and forty-five students (Personal Communication with the Office of the Registrar, University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus, 2018).

4.3.2 Area of the study

The study was conducted at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus), Sovenga, Polokwane, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

4.3.3 Sampling Method

The researcher made use of a non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling. This type of sampling was adopted because the population was selected purposively. This means the sample was drawn in order to meet the needs of the study (Kruenger & Cassey, 2015). In this case registered undergraduate international students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) were sampled.

As this was a qualitative study the sample needed could be small as in-depth, or broad information was required (Elmusharaf, 2012). A sample of twenty-four participants was used in four focus groups that were used to collect the data. Each focus group had six participants. Four focus groups were decided on, as qualitative research does not require large numbers and this was considered appropriate (in consultation with the researcher's supervisor). In total twelve females and twelve male international students (to ensure gender representation) made up the sample that is twenty-four participants in total.

4.4 Data collection

Focus groups in the social sciences are used as a method of collecting data in research where participants are purposively chosen to be part of the group because of mutual characteristics, or shared interest, in order to discuss or give an insight into a specific topic (Moore, McKee, & McLoughin, 2015). According to Marczyk, DeMateeo and Festinger (2005), participants for one focus group should not be less than 6, as if smaller there will be restrictions in terms of diversity and opinions. In this study focus groups were used for data collection because they involve gaining insights into people's shared understandings of everyday life (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups were also chosen for the research because they provided an open, unrestricting platform for individuals in which they could discuss and share ideas and opinions. Focus groups not only provided a platform for participants that was unrestricted but also empowered them in terms of sharing views and experiences through group conversations (Moore et al., 2015). Participants in focus groups are often people who share particular characteristics (in this case, they were undergraduate international students) or interests that are relevant to the topic under investigation

In the study, data was gathered from four different focus groups which consisted of six participants in each group. For gender equity purposes there were three females and three males in each group. Focus groups are defined as a carefully planned discussions designed to obtain in-depth knowledge on a defined area of interest in a non-threatening environment (Kruenger & Cassey, 2015). The data collection was therefore conducted in a non-threatening environment where participants would feel safe and participate without any worries regarding their safety or protection. The researcher, at the beginning of each session, established rapport, in order to allow a smooth focus group process. The researcher introduced herself to the participants and explained the reasons for the study. She also gave an insight into why the study was being conducted so that the participants could make up their mind if they wanted to participate. This helped establish rapport with the participants. Rapport is a characteristic of a relationship which leads to a high degree of empathy, attention and shared understanding and expectations (Bhana, 2009).

Everything concerning the research was explained to the participants before the interviews began. Participants were given pseudonyms so confidentiality could be maintained. Each participant was given a number which avoided the use of their real names. They did use their names in the groups as all were introduced to one and other (badges with their names were provided). A semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix A) was used in the focus group sessions. According to Blanford (2013, p.2), the semi-structured interview can be defined as:

> "a qualitative approach, typically involving interviews and observations, that have some explicit structure to them, in terms of theory or method, but are not completely structured. Such Studies typically involve systematic, iterative coding of verbal data, often supplemented by data in other modalities".

The semi-structured interview played an important role in making the focus group more flexible as "it allows depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses" (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p.40). This type of data collection method kept the interviewer focused and prepared during the session (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & Mckibbon 2015). The researcher selected a quiet, comfortable and non-threatening environment, namely a room in the psychology department, where the

focus group sessions took place. With the participants' permission an audio recorder was used to record sessions.

The importance of this type of data collection method is that the researcher was able to collect data from the participants physically, giving them a platform that was advantageous to them as they were able to share their social, cultural and psychological experiences. Participants also did not feel alone as the focus group gave them a feeling of belonging as they were able to share and express their feelings and experiences of being undergraduate, international students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Each focus group session took approximately an hour and 30 minutes. The first 15 minutes was used for an ice breaker session in order to build, or establish rapport with the participants. This enabled them feel comfortable and able to participate actively in the discussion (see Appendix A for semi-structured questionnaire). The researcher established a good working relationship with participants at the beginning of each session. She asked for demographic data first, in order to help participants, get comfortable. According to Bhana (2009), a high degree of empathy, attention and understanding leads to a successful focus group discussion which was the case in this research.

The researcher also selected focus groups as an appropriate method for data collection purposes because the technique allows participants to share their opinions without hesitating as they have a common subject matter. In this study, one of the advantages that decided the researcher on making use of focus groups, was the fact that they allow participants to give each other emotional, moral support as rapport would have been established. Furthermore, the method can be used as a therapeutic process for participants (Nagle & Williams, 2013).

Govender (2015) further states that the qualitative interview, used in focus groups, is the best tool with which to accumulate information from the participants because it gives a platform to the researcher where they interact with the participants and acquire information. These groups also allow probing to take place as different answers, thoughts and perceptions are given. In this research, as the international students shared their experiences, the researcher asked follow up questions for clarity and better understanding of the information provided.

Another advantage of focus groups in collecting information is it allows participants freedom of expression (Alshenqeeti, 2014). This type of data collection method allows free flowing

thoughts and allows each participant to make comments (Ryan, Gandha, Cuberston, & Carlson, 2014). In this study the researcher allowed participants to speak whatever they had on their minds without rushing any of them. They were given enough time and chances to speak about the cultural, social and academic adjustment challenges they faced at the University of Limpopo. Focus group discussions gave each of the international students a platform to share their perceptions without interruption. The process of sharing their feelings also allowed them to 'see' any similar (or dissimilar) experiences they had with other group members. Issues such as discrimination, xenophobia, stereotyping and other relevant issues can be discussed in a 'safe' and 'confidential' environment which encouraged the participants to take part in discussions (Dilshad & Latif, 2013).

> "This method [focus group] is suitable for examining sensitive issues e.g. AIDS and for getting information from very sensitive population. Fourthly, use of focus groups is common to give opportunity to marginalized segments of society e.g. minorities, women etc. for exposing their feelings about their needs and problems" (Dilshad & Latif, 2013, p. 193).

Ryan et al. (2014) state that a focus group is a certain form of 'group interview' where the facilitator poses questions to the group (participants). These questions are tailored to the topic and are designed to elicit views and opinions held by the participants in terms of the topic. In other words, a focus group is perceived as a 'collective conversation' between the participants which is controlled by the researcher.

Focus group discussions are extensively used in qualitative research (Gentles et al., 2015). They have the ability to draw data from participants in a practical, cost-effective and effective way of sharing information. The researcher chose this type of data collection method so that she could connect with participants as they shared their experiences. Participants in this study were international students thus the focus group created a sense of belonging for them.

This type of data collection instrument operates like a one – on - one interview type of collection, as it shares most of the qualities. However, focus groups are group interviews. One on one interviews use visual cues and the detection of social cues and body language which also applies to focus group interviews (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The researcher was able to read body language communicated when participants' answered questions. Using focus group

sessions, the researcher gained a deeper insight into specific answers (Bhana, 2009). The researcher was able to make follow ups through the process of probing so that every answer was better understood, and insight and knowledge about the experiences of international students was gained (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The researcher felt that focus groups were an appropriate method for this research an opinion shared by her supervisors.

After the focus group sessions, the researcher set up another appointment with participants and gave them feedback. During this session the participants validated the transcripts. This validated the interpretation of the transcripts and thus it authenticated the research. The language used in the sessions was English as it is the medium of learning at the institution and all participants did not speak the same African language. As the focus group sessions could have elicited feelings that made participants uncomfortable they were informed that they could be referred to counselling on campus. No participants felt they needed this option.

It was thus apparent that the focus group interviews collect high-quality data which aids in understanding a specific problem from the viewpoint of the research participants (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Focus groups also empower participants as they gain new insights into the subject they are discussing. At times, negative feelings can be brought to the surface so those who experiences discomfort were referred to relevant professionals based on campus. In this study, participants did not require counselling hence none where referred to professionals. The last 15 minutes was used for debriefing of participants.

4.5 Data analysis

Thematic content analysis (TCA) underpinned by the Afrocentric theoretical perspective (Asante, 1990) was used to analyse data gleaned from participants. It is a process that allows themes to be drawn from the data. According to Alhojailan (2012), TCA is a flexible approach used in a qualitative study to extract patterns or codes from data collected. The process of analyses requires several steps in order to make sure that the analysis is valid and reliable (Alhojailan, 2012). The researcher read the data collected which was transcribed and she actively sought out themes and codes. These were acquired through organising the data into categories (Sunday, 2015). According to Alhojailan (2012, p. 41), categorisation is the process of:

"grouping or classifying people, objects, events, and experiences based on common characteristics which members share in a class and distinct features which distinguish these members from those of other classes".

The process of categorisation was significant as the researcher grouped experiences that the participants shared in the focus group according to similarities they responded. Themes were extracted from the categorised data (Govender, 2015). According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), the term theme is used for describing the fact that the data are grouped around a main issue and it is a structural meaningful unit of data which is necessary for providing qualitative findings. It can be stated that:

"a theme emerges when several categories are joined or when a general idea that is found across many categories begins to form and is noted" (Govender, 2015, p.80).

In this research themes are supported by statements from the pool of raw data which was gathered in the focus groups. The process of TCA has 6 phases (adapted from Guest, 2012). These phases, followed in this research, are as follows.

4.5.1 Familiarisation with the data

This is the first phase and it was essential as the researcher was able to get an overall understanding of the data by transcribing each and every word that had been recorded in the focus groups (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). The researcher, during this phase, wrote what had been shared by the international students from each group. The researcher read and re-read the data before coding, as this reading gave preliminary patterns (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). According to Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove (2016), this phase is the most time consuming stage of the process. The researcher went through the data in order to acquire as much understanding and familiarisation with the data as possible. Therefore, the researcher made sure that enough time was spent on understanding what was transcribed. According to Vaismoradi et al. (2016) the researcher should be able to draw patterns from reading the transcripts. This was the case during the TCA process in this investigation. The researcher read the transcribed information and took notes that which also gave her help in her search for patterns among the data.

According to Asante (1991), Afrocentric theory emphases the importance of being present at the location where the study was conducted when data was collected so that the researcher obtained first-hand experience. The researcher, in this regard, read and re-read the transcripts

with an understanding of the participant's setting. In summary, in this phase the researcher transcribed data, read and re-read the data in order to become familiar with what was written (Sunday, 2015).

4.5.2 Generating initial codes

This is the second phase of TCA (Guest, 2012). The phase intensively focused on giving the raw information codes by using different colours to code the data (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). This process helped the researcher to reduce or eliminate the information that was not relevant to the researcher (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). This process of categorisation was carried out in order to put information that was similar into one group (Sunday, 2015. This helped to break down data into manageable sections (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The researcher labelled the groups to make analysing more efficient (Guest, 20012). This phase dealt with initialising codes by documenting where, and how, patterns occur through the reduction of data whereby the researcher broke data into categories and labelled them which resulted in more efficiency of analysis. In summary, the researcher coded "interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code" (Govender, 2015, p. 81).

4.5.3 Searching for themes

This is the third phase of TCA (Guest, 2012). At this phase, the researcher was expected to extract themes from the initial codes. The researcher brought together similar codes in order to make one set which she then gave a name or label (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). That process of gathering similar codes is called extraction of themes (Vaismoradi et al, 2016). The researcher sorted out the different codes into potential themes and assembled all relevant coded data extracts (in this research they were colour-coded) within the identified potential themes and sub themes (Guest, 2012). After extracting themes, the researcher was also able to give an explanation of the themes extracted from the initial codes (Javadi & Zerea, 2016). In summary, the phase dealt with the collating of codes into potential themes and the gathering of all data relevant to each potential theme (Sunday, 2015).

4.5.4 Reviewing themes

This is the fourth phase of TCA (Guest, 2012). This phase required the perfecting of the themes extracted from the previous phase. According to Javadi and Zarea (2016), this phase consists of two process whereby: (1) the researcher had to re-visit initial codes to make sure that the patterns of the codes were consistent with the theme and (2) a repetition of phase three which was the process of reviewing and validating the themes. The researcher read all collated extracts for each theme, and considered whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern and if the themes supported the data and the overarching theoretical perspective (Guest, 2012). If the analysis seemed incomplete, the researcher went back and found what was missing. In summary, the phase involved: "checking if the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis" (Govender, 2015, p.81).

4.5.5 Defining and naming themes

This is the fifth phase of TCA (Guest, 2012). This process of defining and naming themes is a process whereby the researcher gives a full definition of the each and every theme of about two sentences (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Themes were named in relation to the supporting statements which were the initial codes of the data and at the same time, when defining themes, they were also made clear and accurate. This is where the researcher defined all the themes that were captured and noted what was interesting and novel about the themes (Guest, 2012; Sunday, 2015). In summary, a continuous analysis was used to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis told, generated clear definitions and names for each theme.

According to Reviere (2001), themes which are drawn from the data collected should be the highlights of the problem of the community under investigation, in this case international students registered at the University of Limpopo. It can also highlight solutions which participants discuss, as is apparent in the results produced from this study. A research study, according to one of the Reviere's (2001) priniciples, Ujama or family-hood which supports unity and togetherness, should always lead to solutions derived from themes out of the data.

4.5.6 Producing the report

This is the final phase where the analyst/researcher writes the final report (in this case a Masters dissertation) and, in this case, ensured that all the research questions were answered, underpinned by the theoretical framework (Guest, 2012). According Javari and Zarea (2016),

the last phase began when the researcher extracted a good set of themes and did her final analysis by writing and reporting them. It is important to note that the story of themes is expressed accurately, consistently, logically, without repetition throughout the presentation of results section. The provided essence, of the themes, should be identifiable easily. According to Sunday (2015), this phase is the final opportunity for analysis. It involves selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to the analysis and the research questions and literature. In this case a final dissertation was produced and a journal article (sent off for review).

4.6 Quality criteria

The study was conducted in Africa, South Africa, Limpopo, Polokwane at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). The researcher utilised the Afrocentric approach instead of a Eurocentric approach in order to ensure the objectivity, reliability and validity of the study. According to Chawane (2016), the development of the canons derived from Asante's (1991) Afrocentricity is the right method and was used in order to judge the accuracy and the representativeness of all the experiences lived by the participants. According to Reviere (2001), the canons derived from Asante's (1990) basic principles refer to the quest for justice, truth, and harmony and result in truthful narrative being produced.

Reliability refers to the consistency of the measure. The Afrocentric approach in terms of reliability and validity is recommended as the canons recognise the population under study (African) as being different from the Eurocentric. It was therefore an appropriate method as it is rules out subjectivity (Reviere, 2001). To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, the five canons derived from Asante's Afrocentricity were implemented. The canons are as follows.

4.6.1 *Ukweli* (Truth)

The word *Ukweli* means 'Truth'. The researcher was truthful in order for the study to be recognised as reliable or valid (Reviere, 2001). The research was completed in a place where, what was being researched, was well represented. To ensure that the truthfulness of the study was acquired, the researcher conducted the study at the University of Limpopo as there are international students registered at the University of Limpopo. It was thus thought important to record their experiences through focus groups which the researcher did. *Ukweli* looked at how the research was grounded in the experiences of the community being researched

(Chawane, 2016), in this case the community of international students registered for degrees at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). This ensured that knowledge was verified in the context of that specific community. According to Asante (1991), Afrocentricity stresses the vitality of accuracy in terms of knowledge provided. Furthermore, the researcher's focal point of the study was embedded from an African background with the researcher and participants invested in the study.

4.6.2   *Kujitoa* (Devoted)

This canon required the researcher to look at how knowledge is structured in a more subjective manner than Eurocentric research methodologies, which in itself can be called a sort of European subjectivity (Reverie, 2001). To ensure that the work was objective and reliability and validity achieved, the researcher mentioned her assumptions and limitations in order to avoid subjectivity and limit her own bias in the study. The researcher highlighted her research questions within the context of the research (Reverie, 2001). The abovementioned author emphasised that since a researcher cannot be separated from the study, he or she should lay down all the assumptions she or he has to avoid making biased decisions. In the study, the researcher discussed all the assumptions or hypothetical theories that she had with her supervisors, in order to be fair as a way of showing devotion to the study and the participants.

4.6.3   *Utilivu* (Justice)

This is the canon of justice thus the researcher actively engages in exaggerating divisions between, in this case, the community under investigation (for instance, divisions between international students from different countries and differences between all international students and students from South Africa, particularly Limpopo Province). The researcher made sure that the interaction amongst the international students did not result in any injustice to participants and also that the research did not harm any participant. The atmosphere in which the data was collected was one of mutual respect. The researcher made sure that each participant was given a chance to express how they felt and they were able to share their experiences at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Additionally, the interaction, sharing of experiences was fair and brought to light the perceptions and knowledge of the participants.

4.6.4 *Ujamaa* (Family-hood)

This is stated as the "need for the recognition and maintenance of the community" (Reverie, 2001, p. 17). Fundamentally, this means that the researcher recognised that the all theory and practice (research) was informed by the needs of the community under investigation. Reverie (2001) emphasised the importance of studying a phenomenon that help brings solutions so the research should help give solutions to the research problem which is the answer to the community needs (see recommendations arising out of the research).

4.6.5 *Uhaki* (Literacy criticism)

This means that the research process must be a fair one. Essentially, the researcher ensured that the participants' well-being was foremost and that harmony, in conducting the focus groups, led the process. In this case the students in the focus groups were not encouraged to see negatives in their situation but encouraged to see positives that exist. This did not mean negatives were ignored but rather that students were asked how they felt and how any negatives could be resolved. Although there were bad experiences that the participants experienced, the researcher encouraged the participants to acknowledge good experiences too. The aim of the study was not to create injury but harmony and report what was found in the experiences of the students.

4.7 Ethical considerations

Application for ethical clearance was made for the study to be conducted to the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC). Permission for ethical clearance was granted by the relevant University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) ethics committee (TREC/105/2018: PG) on the Fifteenth of May 2018.

4.7.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is very important because participants must know what the research is about and what it entails. The researcher had an agreement (consent form) with the participants which outlined what the research entailed. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point (Frambach et al., 2013). International students were given consent forms before each focus group session.

Informed consent in this study delineated the agreement between the researcher and participants in the form of a written consent form which was given to them to read and properly explained to them (verbally). This assured mutual respect (Halai, 2006). It meant that people approached, and asked to participate in this research study, knew what they are getting involved in. The research was properly explained to them. Participants were not coerced or manipulated in any way in order to take part in the study (Frambach et al., 2013).

4.7.2 Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality

When a qualitative study is being conducted the researcher is given an opportunity to experience the participants' perceptions and knowledge about sensitive issues. The researcher, in this case, assured the participants that information shared during discussion was confidential in terms of not being discussed with peers or with the general public. They were informed a dissertation and an article or articles would be written out of the research (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). Any demographic information that was gathered in this research was used solely for the purpose of the study and participants' identities have been kept anonymous (Frambach et al., 2013

The researcher made use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants which avoided violating their right to keep information about themselves private (Halai, 2006). The researcher also preserved the participants' privacy during the recruitment and data collection process.

4.7.3 No harm to participants

According to the Research Ethics Review Committee (2015) in South Africa, research must protect participants from harm. A researcher is compelled to protect participants (Halai, 2006) from any physical or emotional unease which may result from questions that are asked (de Vos et al., 2011). Any participant who felt uncomfortable or anxious during, or after, the focus group sessions was referred to a counsellor or psychologist (at no charge). In this study, there were no referrals as participant did not feel any negative feeling which required psychological interventions.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher delineated how the data was collected, analysed and sampled as well as giving the research design, reliability and bias and ethical implications for the study. Chapter 5 presents and discusses the results, as well as the limitations, strengths and recommendations arising out of the study

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data and a discussion of the results. It presents the themes that became apparent or were revealed to the researcher. The breakdown of data in this study interpreted meanings from the original transcripts. Results are underpinned by the theoretical framework as a mode for better understanding and contextualising the results. A transcript of the original interviews can be found in appendix D.

5.2 Demographic information

Demographic information will be presented first in a tabular format, for ease of reading and comprehension, followed by a textual summary of this data.

Table 1: Demographic information of focus groups participants

Participant and Focus Group (FG) (P)	Gender	Age	Country	Programme of study	Level of study
Participant 1 FG =1	Female	22	Zimbabwe	LLB	2nd year
Participant 2 FG = 1	Female	23	Zimbabwe	LLB	3rd year
Participant 3 FG =1	Female	21	Zimbabwe	BA (Political science)	2nd year
Participant 4 FG=1	Male	23	Zimbabwe	BA Sociology and Psychology	2nd year

Participant 5 FG =1	Male	22	Zimbabwe	B Admin	3rd year
Participant 6 FG =1	Male	23	Zimbabwe	B Admin	3rd year
Participant 7 FG =2	Male	30	Zimbabwe	Education (Mathematics)	3rd year
Participant 8 FG =2	Female	24	Nigeria	B Admin	3rd year
Participant 9 FG =2	Female	20	Nigeria	B Comt (Accounting)	1st year
Participant 10 FG =2	Male	24	Zimbabwe	LLB	2nd year
Participant 11 FG =2	Female	20	Zimbabwe	Education (Economics)	1st year
Participant 12 FG =2	Male	21	Nigeria	Education (Mathematics)	1st year
Participant 13 FG =3	Female	21	Zimbabwe	BA (Communications)	1st year
Participant 14 FG =3	Female	20	Zimbabwe	BA Psychology and Criminology	1st year
Participant 15 FG =3	Female	20	Zimbabwe	BA in Political science	1st year
Participant 16 FG =3	Male	21	Nigeria	BA (Political science)	1st year
Participant 17 FG =3	Male	20	Nigeria	LLB	1st year
Participant 18 FG =3	Male	20	Zimbabwe	BA (Sociology and Anthropology)	1st year
Participant 19 FG=4	Male	24	Nigeria	B Admin	2nd year
Participant 20 FG=4	Female	23	Swaziland	BA (Psychology and Criminology)	3rd year
Participant 21 FG=4	Male	23	Zimbabwe	LLB	2nd year
Participant 22 FG=4	Female	20	Botswana	BA (Psychology and Criminology)	2nd year
Participant 23 FG=4	Male	25	Zimbabwe	Education (Economics)	3rd year
Participant 24 FG=4	Female	24	Zambia	LLB	2nd year

A written description of the table is now given and reflects the ages and study level of participants at the time the research took place.

- **Focus group 1 (FG=1)**

Focus group 1 consisted of 6 participants. In the group, participants 1 to 6 came from Zimbabwe. Participants 1 to 3 were females and 4 to 6 were males. Participants ages were between 21 and 23 years of age. Participant 1 was a 22-year-old female, studying her second level in LLB degree. Participant 2 was a 23-year-old studying her third level in LLB degree. Participant 3 was a 21-year-old studying her second level in BA in Political Science. Participant 4 was a 23-year-old male studying his second level in Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Psychology). Participant 5 was a 22-year-old male, studying his third level in Bachelor of Administration (B Admin). Participant 6 was a 23-year-old male, studying his third level in B Admin.

- **Focus group 2 (FG=2)**

Focus group 2 consisted of 6 participants. Participant 7 was a 30-year-old male from Zimbabwe, studying his third level in Education (Mathematics). Participant 8 was a 24-year-old female from Nigeria who was studying her third level in Bachelor of Administration (B Admin). Participant 9 was a 20-year-old female from Nigeria who was studying her first year is B Comt Accounting. Participant 10 was a 24-year-old male from Zimbabwe who was studying his second level in LLB degree. Participant 11 was a 20-year-old female from Zimbabwe who was studying her first level in Education (Economics). Participant 12 was a 21-year-old male from Nigeria studying his first level in Education (Mathematics).

- **Focus group 3 (FG=3)**

Focus group 3 consisted of 6 participants. Participant 13 was a 21-year-old female from Zimbabwe studying her first level in BA in Communication. Participant 14 was also a female from Zimbabwe aged of 20 years doing her first level in BA (Psychology and Criminology). Participant 15 was a 20-year-old female from Zimbabwe who was doing her first year in BA (Political studies). Participant 16 was a 21-year-old male from Nigeria who was studying his first year in BA (Political Science). Participant 17 was a 20-year-old male from Nigeria who was doing his first year in LLB degree. Participant 18 was a 20-year-old male from Zimbabwe, studying his first level in BA (Sociology and Anthropology).

- **Focus group 4 (FG=4)**

The group also consisted of 6 participants. In this group participants 19, 21 and 23 were males and 20, 22 and 24 were females. In this focus group, participant 19 was a 24-year-old, from Nigeria doing his second level in B Admin. Participant 20 was 23-year-old from Swaziland doing her final level (3rd level) in Bachelor of Psychology and Criminology. Participant 21 was a 23-year-old from Zimbabwe doing his second level in LLB degree. Participant 22 was a 20-year-old female from Botswana studying her second level in Bachelor of Psychology and Criminology. Participant 23 was a 25-year-old male from Zimbabwe doing his third level in Education (Economics). The last participant (24), was a 24-year-old from Zambia doing her second level in LLB degree.

Table 2: International students home-country

Ethnicity	Botswana	Nigeria	Swaziland	Zambia	Zimbabwe
Percentage of students (%)	4.16%	25%	4.16%	4.16%	62.5%
Number of students	1	6	1	1	15

The majority (15) of the participants (62.5%) were international students from Zimbabwe. Nigeria was second and was represented by 6 participants (25%). One participant (4.16%) came from each of the following countries: Botswana, Swaziland and Zambia.

5.3 Presentation of themes arising out of data

Themes that emerged out of the data are presented in this section. The responses are colour coded in terms of the themes they are categorised in. The data gleaned from responses to the questions were analysed using thematic content analysis (TCA). The researcher read and re-read the data which is how she familiarised and engaged with the process of TCA. Themes were induced and primary themes were found, each theme was coded to ensure it was appropriate and until no more themes could be found (until saturation of themes was reached). The researcher, at each part of the coding reflected on the themes and refined them. The themes are presented with an appropriate discussion.

Each theme is discussed in terms of relevant literature followed by a summary of how the theme is underpinned by Afrocentricity. The researcher based her interpretations on the four canons of Asante's (1990) approach fundamentally, the quality criteria for the research:

Ukweli (truth), *Kujitoa* (Devotion), *Utilivu* (Justice), *Ujamaa* (Family-hood), *Uhaki (Literary criticism).*

The themes are also reported in terms of the study objectives and how they relate to the different themes.

- To ascertain the psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).
- To identify the social and academic challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).
- To determine the cultural challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric Perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).

The key for participants' responses is presented in table 1 for instance, FG1 F (Focus group 1 Female). Responses are reported as given (verbatim) and not edited. In this study as social, academic and environmental issues are often difficult to separate there is some overlap between the themes.

5.3.1 Theme 1: Adjustment

International students come from various countries where their behaviours developed through cultural modelling. Their behaviour(s) reflect the norms, values, religion and language of their respective communities (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016). Most international students reported to using coping mechanism such as regression and avoidance in terms of adjusting to the social, financial and academic environment they found at the University of Limpopo. These behaviours are inherent to an individual's successful academic and/or social adjustment (Sarita & Sonia, 2015.

> *"I just have to adjust to noise every weekend, it's like this side people will have parties from Friday."* **Participant 3, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**
>
> *"Yaah… I would say there have been few changes like you know trying to fit in. At one point you have to learn the language just to fit in, even the way we dress, this is*

not the way how we used to dress when we were back home. You have to try and fit in." **Participant 5, FG=1; Male: Zimbabwe.**

"I had to accept the differences in perceptions of people from different backgrounds and bring myself to their social way of thinking." **Participant 8, FG=2; Female: Nigeria.**

"I had to adjust, I no longer use my home language like I do when at home. Like I had to start to adjust to speaking English so that I can communicate with other people since we are from different countries with different cultures." **Participant 14, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"I don't know…maybe I adjusted in terms of clothes and had to learn a common language which is Sepedi." **Participant 24, FG=4, Female: Zambia.**

"I had to learn not to associate myself with everyone because of who I am and where I come from. Some people don't like us so I had to choose friend wisely" **Participant 17, FG=3, Male: Nigeria.**

"Like now I am trying to learn the language… so I had to start learning a new language, especially the greetings so that at least I can say hello. I don't think I have made any major adjustments yet." **Participant 23, FG=4, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"I had to learn the basics of Pedi because the majority are BaPedi here. I learnt how to greet people, Le kae? (How are you?) Re gona? (I am fine)." **Participant 19, FG=4, Male: Nigeria.**

"We have a strong sense of identity at tribal level. Shona culture is closely related to Venda and even words in our languages. Here, there are many cultural norms we share." **Participant 21, FG=4, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"I think like I have said before I can also attest to what the other participant said, maybe at first there might be friction like once they realise that you are from another country, but as time moves on there is more acceptance as we are Africans." **Participant 4, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

The four concepts of Asante's (1990) Afrocentric theory can all be used to understand the analysis of this theme. The study took place in an African context but it is not located within the specific symbols, rituals and signs of the participants own culture. There may be some overlap but dress for instance, is important and some individuals found it difficult to fit in. This is an important finding that has been documented and need to be explored for further studies. Participants must find their social and academic place in their new environment and adjust to it which they find challenging because of different social and academic customs. Afrocentricity wants to displace Eurocentric thinking and replace it with an African cultural worldview. Participants do recognise their African culture and appreciate it but also find it different in their new environment however, their cultures do have some level of mutuality thus they are able to recognise elements of their own African values and norms. This understanding, as seen through the participants' statements, gives a collective textual narrative of their understandings of the new environment and any challenges they may have. The first objective namely: to ascertain the psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) is addressed in this theme. It is apparent that the theme which incorporates adjustment to both the new social and academic world of the participants' new environment does include some psychological challenges. These include adapting to different ways of dressing, high noise levels and behaviours that are different to the participants own cultural norms.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Culture shock

International students have cultural differences which can be challenging due to misunderstandings that may occur in the process of cultural integration or assimilation (Jibreel, 2015). The misunderstandings international students have towards the culture of the host students can lead to 'culture shock'. Some cultures emphasise on the importance of looking decent (covering up the body) as being respectful (McBeath, 2015), while others do not. While struggling with adapting to the host country culture international students go through the process of assimilation. They have to try and find a cultural balance in order to adapt to their new environment, which ultimately becomes part of their new self- identity (Alavi & Mansor, 2011). Most international students reported differences in terms of the dress codes of host students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Some of the cultural differences were also found difficult such as differences in food preparation.

"Yes, the food especially. You guys are always boiling. I still remember one student who I was sharing the kitchen with at the residence was surprised when I added cooking oil in the 'morogo', she said I should not put it in. I said we eat greasy food." **Participant 11, FG=2, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"It's different because …. like students are allowed to go to high school being pregnant. In our culture there is no such thing. I was shocked" **Participant 2, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"Yes it did, I don't know which culture, the one that does [Zulu] the reed dance, where girls walk around without bras. When I first saw it I was like really! No, I will never do that… but you know its culture, so we have to get used to it" **Participant 24, FG=4, Female: Zambia.**

"I was shocked to see how girls dress here but I can't complain about it, also how most girls prefer to be staying with a boyfriend without being married. In my country that is a serious taboo". **Participant 18, FG=3, Male: Zimbabwe**

"I always heard about how South African women dress, revealing more skin and everything, I would say I was shocked when I heard about this… but when I came here I wanted to see for sure that whatever I was hearing was true…and it was." **Participant 12, FG=2, Male: Nigeria.**

"As for me, in our culture in Zimbabwe we don't wear short skirts. Yes, there are people who wear them sometimes but you don't walk around like that, other people might think they are selling themselves. You know so why don't they just remove their clothes!" **Participant 15, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"As for me I had a cultural shock when I came here because people…. the way they dress…. we don't dress likes that at home. If you walk to the taxi rank like that they will strip you naked because they say you want to walk naked so just walk without anything because you are revealing parts of your body. Yes, so it was a cultural shock to me but I find it strange that the guys here accept that their fellow country women dress like that." **Participant 14, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

Asante's (1990) Afrocentric theory is very important in understanding the cultural context of Africans. A powerful imperative from historical sources to revise the collective text of African people were look. Though the study is not located within the symbols, rituals and signs of the participants own culture, the importance of what they valued and norms was significant. This theme showed how dressing is part of self-identity therefore what they observed as not part of their identity (modern dressing) brought up the cultural shock factors. For adjustment purposes, participants must find their social and cultural position and in their new environment due to the difference in social and cultural customs. The cultural shock experienced by international student was evident of a defence of African cultural elements as historically valid in the context of social customs for instance values and norms (which includes the way people dress).

The patriarchal context in which women find themselves in African countries (Moloi, 2017) is well defined in the responses which relate to short skirts and baring too much skin. The fact that a female participant from Zimbabwe stated that wearing revealing clothes in a taxi rank (in that country) would render a women likely to be stripped naked is evidence of this. Another female from the same country reported that scantily clad females are likely to be thought of as 'selling themselves' which indicates that she has (and probably many more women have) internalised patriarchy and see themselves through that lens. In South Africa women appear more liberated and less likely to have internalised patriarchal norms certainly in terms of dress (Mashapo, 2013). It is also true that Eurocentricity, in which education and social systems are steeped throughout Africa, has an impact (Pambazuka, 2012). This is because the lens through which students are seen, and how they see themselves, is not wholly African.

The third objective namely: to determine the cultural challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric Perspective at the University of Limpopo addressed in this theme. It is evident that the theme presents how participants were shocked to both the new social and cultural world of the participants' new environment which leads to cultural challenges. Cultural shock is results in difficulties in assimilating or learning new culture which also incorporate the psyche and social challenges in terms of fitting in. These include astonishment to different ways of dressing, food eaten that are different to the one of the participants' cultural.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Motivation

There are multiple reasons that encourage people to make specific decisions in life. In terms of international students each of them has a motive behind their choice of where to study (Mudhovozi, 2012). Although most of the students responded to having relatives or family in South Africa, factors such as financial capacity contributed to some students' final decisions on an appropriate international study environment. Afrocentricity also considers economic factors and backgrounds and also multiple aspects such as political conditions and the economy of the host country. Moreover, international students reported that they are studying at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) because of the affordability of fees as compared to other Higher Educational Institution (HEI) in South Africa.

"My parents moved here a while ago so I had no choice. I would probably have wanted to come here anyway." **Participant 8, FG=2, Female: Nigeria.**

"The situation at home just motivated me to further my studies because if you come here [SA] the fees are not as high as back home" **Participant 2, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"Due to economic hardships back home you have to look for a university where you can get a bursary and do a degree. This University allows 15 international students to do the degree I am enrolled for. This motivated me to come this side because getting the degree I want is much easier than getting it at home." **Participant 3, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"As for me, our economy in Zimbabwe is not that good so I think we need to work hard in this foreign land [to get a degree] so that we can to support our families at home." **Participant 13, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"I came to South Africa because my Dad was here and he was also working here so that's why we all came here. We were staying in the Eastern Cape so I came from Eastern Cape to Limpopo because for international students it actually the cheapest university. When we applied it was easier than going to other universities as they don't ask for so much stuff...others ask for things like medical aids. I mean it's hard for an international student to get a medical aid .... other universities, they ask for medical aid before registration. It's easier to get used to the environment here because I know others who are registered." **Participant 23, FG=4, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"I think what participant 3 said, applies to me too. The requirements that I needed in another country for the degree I wanted to do were too high. It's a bit tough because many people will be applying for the same degree with better results and aah… here it's quite easy to get a place as compared to my country, so yaah… I wanted to do accounting and I applied here and I go didn't get a place at home." **Participant 4, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"I also agree about that and also about how you pay fees here. You pay them as time goes by until end of the year but in Zimbabwe you have to pay every semester and you have to make sure that you finish each payment. Here we can run up our balance to 200 000 and they don't chase use." **Participant 15, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

In terms of Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity there may be some common characteristics between international students and the host students but financial freedom for instance, illustrates a more secure way of living and some students found it difficult to settle in because they were unsure of how much money they would need in their new setting. Participants must discover their economic and religious balance and place in their new environment and adjust to it which they find challenging because of different backgrounds. Afrocentricity wants to lessen the perspective of Eurocentricity replacing it with an African perspective of the world. Participants do recognise their identity as African and their position economically in the world. The participant also acknowledges that some social problems such as poverty is a global factor experienced by almost all. A commitment to finding the subject-place of Africans in any social, political, economic, or religious phenomenon with implications for questions of sex, gender, and class.

An interesting observation is that many of the international students could not finance themselves in their own countries and came here because it was cheaper. They also reported that the requirements to get accepted for a degree were not as high at the University of Limpopo. One student even reported he did not gain a place in his home country but got one here. Another observation made by a participant was that international students could run up debts of up to R200 000 and were not 'chased.' These comments have serious implications for the University and need further research.

The second objective namely: to identify the social challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of

Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) is implicit in this theme. The reasons behind the motivation to study at foreign University (International University institution) are mostly the social challenges international students faced at their host countries such as financial freedom. The theme 'Motivation' integrates both adjustment to the new social and cultural world of the participants' new environment and also includes some of their psychological challenges. These include adapting to different social strata or class, standard of living dependent on monetary that are different to the participants own perspective in terms of creating a better life.

5.3.4 Theme 4: Discrimination

According to Tiravangasi and Mugambiwa (2016), discrimination occurs amongst international students due to influences such as ethnic or cultural differences between them and the host students. Elements such as language barriers are evident which contributes towards the perceived unfair treatment experienced by international students (Sarmadi et al., 2017). A large number of international students, in this study, experienced discrimination in various forms which supports earlier research (Koppel, 2017). International students reported to experiencing discrimination because of their ethnicity in this study, fundamentally xenophobia. This has been reported in other studies (Mashapo, 2013). International students also report being called by derogatory names and being stared at by many of their host environment peers, they also found they experienced negative attitudes from their peers (Tirivangasi & Mugambiwa, 2016)

"It was difficult because in my first year eish (shaking head), there was a girl who used to call me a 'lekwerekwere' (A foreigner). She used to tell me that she will never date or marry a 'lekwerekwere'" **Participant 7, FG=2, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"You get people who stare at you like you are naked or you should be ashamed of yourself. They are always nice until they hear me speak and then they are not nice. I can say they are discriminating me in terms of my ethnicity. Some will say we sell drugs because everyone out there thinks that if you are a Nigerian it means you sell drugs. They think we all sell drugs, steal and are involved with human trafficking or rape. For example, foreigners were attacked because people here think we are in South Africa to steal their jobs. That was the reason for xenophobic attacks." **Participant 12, FG=2, Male: Nigeria.**

"People will look at me funny and, like they didn't want to be associated with someone from Zimbabwe." **Participant 11, FG=2, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"Every day, even in class sometimes the lecturers say some bad things about a particular country or a certain race they say bad stuff about international students. For example, one lecturer said these people (from other countries) they are nothing, they are not wanted here. Or something that would make you feel uncomfortable in class...but you can't say anything." **Participant 5, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"Eeh (yes) I have encountered negative attitudes from lectures and students. The lecturer even told me to go back to my home country (Zimbabwe)." **Participant 6, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"It's like we do some other stuff differently in our home countries and people don't like that. They let you know that they won't tolerate that sort of thing here. At the end of the day being in a foreign country is the worst thing ever." **Participant 3, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"People might not like us and there is nothing we can do because we don't even know why they don't like us. I wish they could just come to us, talk and we could hear their concerns and get to the bottom of them. It's unfortunate that the only thing we get from most of the students here is negative attitudes and attacks. The only way to survive is to avoid them [SA students]. I am here to study and that is what I will focus on." **Participant 19, FG=4, Male: Nigeria.**

Asante's (1990) theory stresses the importance of belonging to a culture. International students reported to be discriminated against because of their ethnicity which although African was not South African. They developed a sense of defensiveness towards their own culture. There has been much stereotyping about African immigrants in South Africa which causes this type of discrimination to occur (Writer, 2016). What the students hold collectively is the culture and norms that each possess in an African setting. However, the social customs in each African country have been influenced by the Eurocentric colonials from different

countries (for instance, Britain, France and Germany) (Handerson & Whatley, 2013; Kwesi, 2018; Ocheni & Nkwankwo, 2013). This has facilitated the division of the African continent and, it seems how students adapt to different environments.

Discrimination against international students has been reported by other researchers (Kufandererwa, 2017; McGarvey et al., 2015). Derogatory name calling and general negativity by the host students is reported in this research. For instance, names such as 'lekwerekwere' (a demeaning name for a foreigner) was reported indicating the lack of tolerance for those from other countries. One participant reported that Nigerians were thought of drug dealers and human traffickers which resonates in how students from this country are treated. Furthermore, some international students reported to have experienced negativity by subtle discrimination such as being 'looked at' in a way that made them feel discriminated against. This points to how Africans have internalised colonial viewpoints and Eurocentricity into their ways of thinking (Pambazuka, 2012).

The second objective namely: to identify the social challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Most psychological and cultural challenges emerged due to the social challenges such as discrimination and stereotyping. Negative attitudes which lecturers hold towards international students as well as non-acceptance by host peers and the local community facilitates academic problems with psychological outcomes (McGarvey et al., 2015). Derogatory name calling indicates that international students are not fully accepted by host students which leads to social problems such as isolation (Mesidor & Sly, 2016).

5.3.5 Theme 5: Academic challenges

International students reported having difficulties in their academic work at the university. Beside the problems in adjusting to the HEI curriculum, there are also direct (exams, assignments, presentations) and indirect (pressure from parents, difficulties in adjusting to the environment) stressors which contribute to their academic challenges (McBeath, 2015). A large number of international students reported to being stressed in both these areas albeit this is the case for host students but many of them have accessible support structures. In this study international students reported to having problems in comprehending what is taught in

classes because of lecturers who speak in vernacular languages (Kim & Mattila, 2011). This should not happen as the medium of education at the institution is English. It may point to a) lecturing staff who have a poor command of English or b) those who are displaying xenophobia to international students. A further study is needed to explore this worrying finding. This language barrier affected their freedom to participate in class and their understanding of the module. Additionally, the pressure that parents put on international students has been reported to create deficits in focus (Wang, 2016). The following responses from students support this theme.

"When I feel challenged, I usually call home and talk to my family. They always remind me of the reason why I am at university so that I don't give up on my studies or drop out. I also understand that my family has spent a lot of money to put me here (University of Limpopo). I can't disappoint them after the sacrifices they made for me to further my studies" **Participant 17, FG=3, Male: Nigeria.**

"As for me I was too stressed when I just enrolled at the university because of the paperwork that I had to attend to. I started attending my classes late so I had a lot of challenges. I had to write tests, I was left behind because sometimes I couldn't go to class [because of attending to paperwork and going to Home Affairs]. The way we are taught is hectic too…so much in a short time. I felt like I was going to fail and for some time I did not know what to do and would just go and cry." **Participant 2, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"At the beginning it was very stressful, also the people around me didn't make it easy. Even the lectures because they sometime teach in their own language and I don't understand any of it." **Participant 16, FG=3, Male: Nigeria.**

"Well, the stress I experienced was having to meet deadlines for assignments, study for tests and exams…but nothing else." **Participant 18, FG=3, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"The stress that I get is when I have to complete things as part of group assignment or because the structure of the assignments is difficult ….and I don't get included in the group properly." **Participant 21, FG=4, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"Yes, I experience challenges academically due to lecturers speaking in their own language. I asked one of my classmates what the lecturer said and I was given the wrong information. It affected my work badly." **Participant 10, FG=2, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"I think I would not have survived if I was here alone [there were no other international students] because of all the academic difficulties I have experienced. I would have given up and just dropped out because it not likes home…but like, I do have friends from Zim[babwe] so I talk to them and we just remind each other why we are here…. life goes on." **Participant 13, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

According to Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity an intense interest in psychological location as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals, and signs in that environment is important. The manner in which international students are taught differs from what they were used to in their home countries. In a South African environment international students were required to understand how signs and motifs are expressed in the country (in both the social and academic environment). This is important as misunderstanding ques related to them can be embarrassing or cause misunderstandings which illustrates a changed psychological environment. For instance, some international students reported crying when unable to cope with differences that they perceive on a psychological level and felt they lacked support in their new environment.

The first objective namely: to ascertain the psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo is underpinned by this theme. Being away from home led some international students in the study to experience anxiety, which is underpinned by previous research (McBeath, 2015). The change in the educational system and manner of teaching, which they were familiar with in their home countries, is difficult for many international students to adapt to (it must be noted this happens in South Africa when local students experience different modes of teaching as well however, they are culturally and socially acclimatised). Adjusting to social and cultural differences, as well as a new curriculum and teaching methods, is difficult for some of these students and challenges such as teaching in a vernacular language also causes distress (Thurber & Walton, 2012).

5.3.5.1 Sub-theme: Language barrier

Language is important in terms of communication and interaction socially (Kim & Mattila, 2011). The University of Limpopo is based in Limpopo Province which has many ethnic groups and languages. The majority of international students reported to have problems in interacting with their peers and the community at large because of their inability to speak at least one of the dominant languages (Sepedi, Venda or Tsonga). This slows the process of interaction and adjustment of these students (Kosheleva et al., 2015)**.** Although English is the medium of instruction lecturers often use a vernacular language as reported. There are some international students where English is a second language (those who speak French for instance) and these students have difficulties in taking instructions, interacting and communicating at the institution.

> *"The languages in South Africa compared to ours in Nigeria...it's like Greek and French."* **Participant 9, FG=2, Female: Nigeria.**

> *"I think the issue of language is the biggest problem. It seems like some of the students don't want to use English and when I try to communicate with them they use their own language. This is an issue when doing group work in class. They communicate in their own language and when I tell them that I don't understand the language that they use they just carry on or say learn it. That in itself becomes an issue. Another thing is that the moment they realise you are from another country they begin to treat you differently."* **Participant 5, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

> *"In terms of communicating, sometimes some students will stick with their Pedi language knowing that I can't communicate back."* **Participant 12, FG=2, Male: Nigeria.**

> *"Socialising is a bit hard because for some reason I kept meeting people that only want to speak in their home language and weren't accommodative. For instance, the cleaners on campus pretend they don't understand English and I know they do…but that I can understand because they are old. Other students though…I mean classes are supposed to be in English…they just don't care."* **Participant 8, FG=2, Female: Nigeria.**

> *"I am staying off campus and I can tell you that it can be tough out there. Actually, where I'm staying, the landlord there she doesn't speak English, not a word. She will*

come and speak for maybe 15 minutes and I say I don't understand but she won't stop and she will say a lot of things and they may be important but I don't understand. All the other tenants will make the changes or do what she asks but they don't tell me…that is really tough." **Participant 4: FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"The [host students] have bad attitudes they don't speak in English when you are with them they just ignore you. Sometimes you find a cleaner cleaning and she will be just trying maybe telling you to wait but because you don't understand and you go where you are not supposed to you end up getting shouted at." **Participant 3, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"It is like when you are doing a group discussion, there are those students who will always speak in their own language that you don't understand, so you just have to get used to those people and whenever they are talking you just switch off." **"Participant 1, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"I wanted to get service from this particular place [company] and then the moment they realised that I am from another country they gave me an attitude. They didn't help me get the service I needed because they wouldn't answer me in English only their own language. They even started laughing and I knew it was at me." **Participant 5, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

In terms of language barriers, Afrocentricity (1990) stresses the inability to fit in or adjust into a new environment as a misunderstanding of what 'other' students present to the host individuals. There is a distortion in terms of learning and understanding the culture which may include food, norms, attire and in this theme is language. The barrier of the languages creates challenges that are rigid and firm to international students leading to adjustment problems to the new environment. Participants are then forced to create equilibrium in terms of the new culture which is in the new environment and their own culture. This theme also speaks to the fact that the internalisation of colonialism (Pambazuka, 2012) and Eurocentric cultures makes it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for host students to accept and accommodate international students and see them through an African lens. This illustrates the reason why Asante (1990) promoted an Afrocentric philosophy for use in Africa however, African psychologies (grounded in Africa) are needed as well as the transformation of curricula at all levels. This will help heal rifts and also allow upcoming generations to understand why black on black xenophobia exists in Africa.

The third objective namely: to determine the cultural challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric Perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Culture is compromised by certain elements such as norms, values and language which form part of self-identity. Language is a tool for communication which can hinder social integration if there are barriers (Jibreel, 2015). These barriers exist due to the different languages ethnic groups speak. The inability to hear, understand and comprehend the spoken languages inherent to the host culture is one of the many challenges faced by international students.

5.3.6 Theme 6: Sense of belonging

Afrocentricity centres the individual's location as vital factor in terms of understanding a phenomenon (Mazama, 2001). A sense of belonging is accompanied by being accepted in an environment, community and/or setting (McBeath, 2015). People need to feel connected to their environment in order to function to their maximum capacity (Wang, 2016). A sense of not-belonging has been reported in literature about international students (Liu, 2016). The cultural, academic and social adjustment challenges are seen as problems that provoke feelings of home sickness as a result of struggling to fit in as seen (Newsome & Cooper, 2016). This research supports previous research in that there were many misunderstandings between host country and international students which are seen in the following responses.

> *"Yes, people will just look at me like I don't belong here, like I said, they looked at me funny and treated me differently."* **Participant 11, FG=2, Female: Zimbabwe.**

> *"As for me, they just look at me like I'm not from this planet"* **Participant 7, FG=2, Male: Zimbabwe.**

> *"I sometimes feel lonely and as if I don't belong here"* **Participant 18, FG=3, Male: Zimbabwe.**

> "*Maybe you find the lecturer cracking a joke and everyone laughs. It makes me feel excluded like I don't belong here, as if I am lost.*" **Participant 19, FG=4, Male: Nigeria.**

"I think some of them have accepted us even though some of them up until now find it difficult to accept us or to interact with us. It makes me feel like I don't belong here, but basically I want to say that it depends with the kind of people you associate with." **Participant 5, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"There are some challenges. You feel like you just want to go home or you think that if only you were home none of these thigs would be happening to you. You just… you just don't feel you belong and you just want to pack everything up and go home." **Participant 16, FG=4, Male: Nigeria.**

"We are voiceless, like we don't belong. Here, when other students[host], if they have a problem or something you will see the EFF [SRC] marching. We don't have a group to stand up for us so we have to try and solve the problems ourselves…sometimes it just isn't possible so you say nothing you know that no one will help." **Participant 3, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

Asante's (1990) theory emphasises the study of a phenomenon in Africa through an African lens which includes the psychological mind-set or position towards a subject. In this theme, the feeling of been included in activities such as discussions, or making jokes in class in a vernacular language that international students don't understand, has resulted in students feeling that they do not belong (non-belonging). Aspects such as not being heard or their issues not being understood by the SRC (Student Representative Council) adds to their social and academic problems. They often feel excluded from SRC issues and have no sense of belonging which adds to their unhappiness (Hall, 2014).

The first objective namely: to ascertain the psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) is represented in this theme. Difficulties that emerged psychologically were a result of not being part of activities both academic and social. Being excluded gives rise to anxiety and stress which can pressurise an individual into feel lost and being unable to adjust to the environment (Wu et al., 2015). International students felt they were not welcome for instance, being told to go back to their home countries by other students and/or lecturers. This kind of treatment made them anxious and worried which also contributes to their psychological distress.

5.3.7 Theme 7: Homesickness

According to Zhang and Mi (2010), homesickness is derived from multiple sources and affect an individual both psychologically and socially. Problems that occur affect both social and academic life for instance, language barriers, cultural shock and inability to understand and comprehend what is taught in the lecture rooms (Omodona, 2012). The pressure and/or anxiety international students experience in a new environment can be challenging and for many returning home feels like the only option (Hall, 2014). The following responses make it evident that some of the international students' experienced homesickness in their new environment.

"I agree with participant 4. It is definitely not what I expected. I actually miss home a lot." **Participant 20, FG=4, Female: Swaziland.**

"It feels okay. Although, I sometimes miss home too. The sad part is that I cannot just go home because it is too far. South Africa is a good country but at the same time there is no place like home." **Participant 19, FG=4, Male: Nigeria.**

"It feels so good sometimes to be here. You explore, you learn other cultures what they do and you learn to respect their cultures and their beliefs but on the other side it can be bad when they [students and community in SA] don't respect yours [culture]. Sometimes I feel homesick when they exclude me from activities or they speak in their languages and sometimes I feel offended by the way these people act." **Participant 14, FG=3: Female, Zimbabwe.**

"At first it felt odd. I came here when I was 14 years old. The dynamics of having a neighbourhood changed from business, education and culture is difficult you feel homesick and excluded. When I started at UL I was treated like a 'freak show,' I felt weird. Where I come from, everyone minded their own business ...here it is different...they gossip a lot this makes me miss home a lot ...even today." **Participant 9, FG=2, Female: Nigeria.**

"I get homesick and then I feel depressed. I stress too much. My worry is when I have to work with people who already don't like me and I don't speak their language...what can I do. It takes time to learn a new language. How do I change

that? I think it would have been better if I had done something wrong [to them] but I didn't. How do I change their negative attitudes?" **Participant 15, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"My experiences of being here? Well, it is like you are interacting with a new system and you see how people in other countries work but the other part is just being treated differently which is not good. Sometimes being asked for your passport if you travel makes you feel as if you are not wanted…. they only ask because they hear your accent or see you don't speak their language…that makes you feel homesick because there you can move around freely." **Participant 5, FG=1; Male: Zimbabwe.**

Asante's (1990) Afrocentricity emphasises understanding how individuals position themselves in an environment. The challenges which are evident in the international students' responses illustrate that economic factors play a major role in homesickness (McBeath, 2015). The students cannot access their home-country food or comforts which makes them feel lonely. Being away from home and unable to move around without being questioned or being requested to provide the legal documentation required to be in the country contributes to their missing home. The process of adapting to a new culture can be challenging and the misunderstandings that arise out of cultural differences also contributes to their homesickness. Many report (especially at first) to not feeling a part of the University. This, again, talks to the impact of colonialism and its impact on the cultural make-up of Africans. As previously noted (under 5.3.5) education, which emphasises African contexts, philosophies and psychologies are needed so that the internalised Eurocentricity which promotes xenophobia and fear of the 'other' (Powell, 2017) can be replaced with true Afrocentrism.

The first, second and third objective namely; to ascertain the psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo, to identify the social challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students in an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus), to determine the cultural challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students in an Afrocentric Perspective at the University of Limpopo have been answered in this theme. The challenges which some of the international students experienced have occurred socially, psychologically and cultural which led them to feeling homesick. These

include feelings of being excluded from other host students, being able to move freely in the environment without being questioned and being depressed by the surrounding.

5.3.8 Theme 8: Avoidance

Avoidance is a defence mechanism that, according to their responses, many international students adopted in terms of trying to deal with their social challenges (Omodona, 2012). Avoidance is a defence mechanism which is employed in order to avoid anything that can trigger bad experiences or thought which might affect an individual negatively. For instance, international students might avoid discussing or even thinking about xenophobia which negatively affected the safety of many foreigners in South Africa (Lee, 2915; Tirivangisi & Mugambiwa, 2016). International students face challenges such as negative stereotypes and discrimination from host students which they tend to ignore which further fuels xenophobia (Writer, 2016). International students are aware of xenophobia but they avoid or distance themselves from thinking about it (or discussing it with others). They use avoidance, in this respect, to protect themselves psychologically as if they do think about it they become fearful. In this regard avoidance is used in a negative manner as facing issues such as xenophobia is necessary if it is to be dealt with.

> *"Sometimes I just distance myself from my Zim[babwean] friends when people are getting attacked here. I keep my mouth shut and say nothing because I don't want to be attacked just for being in South Africa. I just have to ignore because I can't intervene because if I do I will get hurt. I just distance myself and leave myself out of that."* **Participant 13, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

> *"As for me if I could I would ban everyone who ill-treats other people, whether is bullying or discrimination or xenophobic attacks…. The truth is I just avoid it [trouble or where there is trouble related to xenophobia]. My family always says I must avoid it."* **Participant 24. FG=4, Female: Zambia.**

> *"I also agree with them, the only way to survive is to avoid all the mistreatment you get because there is no one who can help you. The same people who attack you are the same people who are your neighbours. I ignore everything, I ignore it."* **Participant 15, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

> *"I walk away, from discriminatory behaviours and pretend like they never occurred."* **Participant 16, FG=3, Male: Nigeria.**

"I remember I was walking from an academic area to my room and some guys [who are South African] where coming my way. This other guy said, (making signs with his hands) …. It is obvious that she is not South African and you can tell by the way she is dressed and her facial parts…… Instead of just being fine with it, I felt hurt because of the manner he said it. But I spoke with my friend after that and I just let it go and avoid them." **Participant 10, FG=2, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"Sometimes people will treat you differently when they realise that you are from another country. You will be excluded, but I just avoid them." **Participant 4, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"I think the best solution is to avoid anything that brings trouble" **Participant 19, FG=4, Male: Nigeria.**

According to Asante's (1990) theory the social factors within an environmental setting are perceived as influential in terms of behaviour, habit and religion. According to Akapan and Odohoedi (2016), the influences from any environment associated with immigrants are both negative and positive. The researcher explored the experiences of international students, focusing on the habits, norms and values that each international student has. The ability to adjust to the new environment and habits, values and norms differ and often results in psychological challenges. Many international students use defence mechanisms as coping strategies. In the responses of the four focus groups the majority of the sample reported to have developed an avoidant pattern of interaction. Asante's Afrocentricity (1990), emphasises that the psychological location of individuals, in terms of motifs, symbols or signs is important. The state of mind of some of the international students, in terms of adjusting to their new environment, is problematic as they fight their unwelcome memories by repressing them and avoid interacting with anything that can re-surface them, and as a result, they become isolated. Defence mechanisms that are employed by international students are many. Avoidance has been recorded as well as repression which includes pushing bad memories, such as discriminative acts, into their sub-conscious (Sarita & Sonia, 2015). `

The first objective namely: to ascertain the psychological challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric perspective at the University of Limpopo. A defence mechanism, acts as a way of assisting the mind to cope with a bad

situation experienced by an individual. Avoidance and repression are, defence mechanisms used by international students as coping strategies in a negative manner as they do not face their challenges in a manner which will help them adjust. They do not face these challenges and emphasise their Africanism and are scared to do so. These mechanisms were likely inherent to colonialism, and in South Africa apartheid, where keeping quiet and avoiding trouble were ways of escaping the notice of any aggressors. Fundamentally, the way they use these defence mechanisms is likely to isolate them and make them more anxious and stressed.

5.3.9 Theme 9: Acculturation

Cultural differences are challenging due to misunderstandings that may occur in the process of cultural integration or assimilation (Jibreel, 2015). For the purpose of fitting in, international students tried to learn as much as they can process which makes adjusting much simpler. According to Alavi & Mansor (2011), learning new culture and understanding it creates a cultural balance which helps international student to adapt. International students are often not bi-cultural however through interaction with students from the host country they gain an understanding of the new culture which although different is African in origin (Khabutdinova & Bayanova, 2013). The process of learning means taking what one likes and discarding what one does not like. There are some international students insist on staying true to their culture and avoid adapting, or assimilating, other people's culture which is problematic as some acculturation is always necessary (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). The following quotes are evident of acculturation experienced by international students:

> *"As for me I think we have different cultures, I find it easy to blend in because we have common things in our cultures and we share our different cultures…for me I found it easy to blend in with people."* **Participant 14, FG=3, Female: Zimbabwe.**

> *"I can't complain about it but it was strange how most girls prefer to be staying with a boyfriend without being married. In my country that is a serious taboo."*
> **Participant 18, FG=3, Male: Zimbabwe.**

> *"I am an open minded person and I accept things as they come. I also try my best to adjust but still be me. I am from a fast paced environment from Lagos so being at Turf which is very quiet ...it took a little bit for me to get used to it but eventually I did."*
> **Participant 9, FG=2, Female: Nigeria.**

"Okay, I just think that it was difficult at first like the first time you get here when you see the difference. I think that's the moment you find it difficult to adapt. When I got here I saw girls walking half naked. I was shocked but now I am not even shocked. I think when it's time to go back to my own country I won't be shocked if they do it there. Perhaps we are moving towards that [how women dress]. It is a process, maybe a bit intense at first, but with time I'm getting used to it [the culture in SA]." **Participant 5, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.**

"It was easy in a way to change to this culture. I think in my case like, I adopted what I wanted to adopt and I left what I didn't want. That was easy for me to just adopt to the things that I maybe saw on television and around. So like now I dress like I want to and fit in here, so it was basically easy for me." **Participant 1, FG=1, Female: Zimbabwe.**

"The food also was interesting, I would say I was shocked to eat some of it but it didn't take long time to adapt to the kind of food here, how people dress… the languages are so many so I at least try to learn the basics of some of them. The university is full of diverse people." **Participant 8, FG=2, Female: Nigeria.**

Asante's (1990) theory stresses the importance of studying a phenomena using an African lens. International students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) come from different countries within the borders of Africa thus all must be seen through an African lens albeit through one from their own environment. Each of the international students possess different motifs and values depending on the country they come from. The researcher used an African perspective to understand their opinions and perspectives in terms of acculturation. This is a process of learning other people's culture but it is limited to what international students want to absorb, in terms of adjusting to, and blending in to, their new environment (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). Understanding the different customs and cultures of Africans (in this case international students) in terms of Asante's (1990) theory helps ground the research in an African context.

The third objective namely: to determine the cultural challenges faced by registered international undergraduate students using an Afrocentric Perspective at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). International students by necessity have to integrate into their new environment as part of the socialisation process. The process of adaption requires learning and gaining a proper understanding of a new environment without discriminating the other cultures values, norms and/or religion (Butcher, Hooley, & Mineka, 2014). In the process of adjusting to fit in to a new environment challenges arise for instance, misconceptions and misunderstandings about the other cultures day-to-day living regimes and practices. However, to integrate into a new environment and culture international students must be flexible and make an effort to understand the new environment and culture. Equally, the host students must make an effort to help international students integrate and also understand their cultural traditions.

What participants iterated in this theme was the fact that they were experiencing acculturation essentially, they had begun to adapt to their new environment and became accepting of different language and cultures. They did this in spite of difficulties in adjusting, experiencing challenges such as xenophobia and homesickness. It seems that they were beginning to accept that being African has similarities and differences dependent on the cultural norms in the host country.

5.3.10 Theme 10: Shared African Culture

There are some elements which are common and define Africans who live on the African continent (Akanwa, 2015). As much as there are differences in terms of norms, values, languages and culture, certain practices are similar to each other (Anton & Lawrence, 2014). In the process of adjusting to the new environment, international students also discover what is familiar and similar to their own culture. According to Wang (2016), social connection or interaction with a common element results in a positive adjustment process. When international students are familiar to what is practised in other cultures or countries in Africa they feel more comfortable and are able to interact with what is known as a shared collective or 'commonality.' This helps them in their adjustment process.

> *"Yaah… I think there are similarities in the food yaah… I have not seen much change, like yaah.. there might be some differences but I think it depends on maybe the level of income at home… because like there are some [other] needs at home. I don't think some of the meals are international [referring to countries or other*

*continents]. It's something that you might just consume in your country." **Participant 4, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.***

*"There are somethings like food that are the same. We have the same kind of food at home and also in terms of being spiritual person. We share the same kind of thing that we do, like going to church." **Participant 5, FG=1, Male: Zimbabwe.***

*"The issue of bridal price... lobola.... the fact that before you marry someone, you need to pay something to the family of the person you are going to marry. In Africa we share this – it is a bit different in this country [the process of lobola] but it means the same thing." **Participant 7, FG=2, Male: Zimbabwe.***

*"I also agree, also the way we should respect older people, I think that's a similarity [with other African countries] too." **Participant 16, FG=3, Male: Nigeria.***

*"I don't think there is much of difference between my country (Botswana) and South Africa. What Tswana's do in South Africa, we also do back home. **Participant 22, FG=4, Female: Botswana.***

*"I don't mind. We also have the reed dance as Swatis back at home [Swaziland] and I embrace my culture. There is nothing wrong with it." **Participant 20, FG=4, Female, Swaziland.***

Asante's (1990) philosophy emphasises the importance of collectiveness in terms of culture. Although the languages may differ in terms of the tribes embedded in each country there are many similar cultural practices (lobola), everyday activities (similar food) and shared social practices for instance, attending church. This speaks to Asante's (1990) premise about psychological location (which determines how people understand and feel about each other) as determined by symbols, motifs, rituals, and signs. Eurocentrism has destroyed many African cultural practices and 'de-Africanised' their consciousness however, some cultural practices remain and are collectively found in Africa (Asante, 1990). This theme points to the fact that colonialism, although having a devastating impact on the African continent, has not destroyed all cultural artefacts. Collectively, culture is a strong binding factor amongst international students and host students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).

The themes found in this study are presented as emergent themes in table 3. The tabular format is used so that the reader can refer to the themes quickly and conveniently and have an accessible point of reference.

Table 3: Emergent themes

Number	Theme	Meaning
1.	Adjustment	Things done to help in terms of blending in at the University of Limpopo.
2.	Cultural shock	A surprised feeling in terms of how the people from the host country dress and eat.
3.	**Motivation**	The reason behind the decision of studying in South Africa at the University of Limpopo.
4.	**Discrimination**	Use of derogatory names towards international students, inappropriate looks and/or staring, negative attitudes from peers.
5.	**Academic challenges**	Indifferent attitudes from lecturers and incapability to cope with assessments.
5.1	Sub theme: **Language barrier**	Difficulties in communication with peers and the community at large.

6	Sense of belonging	A feeling of not wanted in a place and exclusion from others.
7	Homesickness	The feeling of missing home excessively due to difficulty in adjusting in an environment.
8.	Avoidance	As a mechanism to disregard the negative treatment experienced.
9.	Acculturation	The effect of psychological, social and cultural changes developed from blending with the other culture.
10.	Shared African culture	The cultural elements which are common in African countries.

5.4 Summary of results

This research aimed to find out the cultural, psychological and social challenges experienced by international students registered at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). Culture, as a concept, includes the norms, values, attire and languages from the different countries that international students come from. In this study international students came from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Swaziland and Botswana. It was found that challenges such as culture shock and xenophobia were experienced by the majority of the international students who participated in the study. However, it was also evident that acculturation, as a process, was also experienced by the sample. The research was also underpinned by Asante's (1990) theory which noted the importance of studying African phenomena in an African context by not overlooking cultural symbols, motifs and values, which this study attempted to do.

The majority of the participants were motivated to study in South Africa as fees were lower and education of a good standard although one participant had no option but to do so (as her family moved here). They, as is apparent from the themes gleaned from an analysis of data, were not well prepared for any differences they experienced.

Cultural shock was experienced and adaptation occurred (to a greater or lesser degree) by all participants. Adaption, in terms of culture, to the new environment happened when assimilation and accommodation took place. The international students, through learning the host countries culture experienced some degree of acculturation. Feelings of homesickness were experienced by most of the sample but some of international students adapted more positively than others. More westernised ways of dressing in South Africa were also found 'shocking' at first but were accepted more as the process of acculturation progressed. It was evident that in this regard patriarchy, in terms of dress codes, is seen more in the African countries represented in the study. It is more 'blatant' as opposed to being 'subtle' as women who dress and show flesh are more likely to be jeered or 'stripped.'

Discrimination was experienced by international students in different ways for instance, by lecturers giving presentations in the vernacular, being called names and/or ridiculed by host country students. This which culminated in international students feeling that they did not belong or were not wanted on the campus which they associated with xenophobia. Language barriers also made socialisation with peers and community members difficult adding to international students' feelings of isolation. The majority tended to use avoidance and repression as coping mechanisms which was not helpful.

Generally, although there were many challenges the international students did manage to integrate however, it was a difficult process through which they appeared to lack support. Language barriers and social and academic integration challenges should be urgently addressed by the institution particularly those where lecturers teach in the vernacular and host country students use discriminatory language towards their international peers.

It was also apparent that colonialism has been strongly internalised by the younger generation in terms of 'fear of the other,' and 'xenophobia.' This can only be rectified by ensuring that educational systems are grounded in Africa and knowledge imparted to communities about diversity and how it is a positive thing for everyone. Nonetheless, shared cultural practices do exist in Africa which have not been completely destroyed by colonialism. These are seen as a binding force between international students their host peers and community.

5.5 Strengths and limitations of the study

5.5.1 Study strengths

The study used a qualitative approach and an exploratory research method which is appropriate when looking at the in-depth experiences of specific groups (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Additionally, the experiences, thoughts and behaviour shared by all participants (international students) were closely related to those reported in the available literature.

5.5.2 Study limitations

The study did not use semi-structured individual interviews which may have gleaned more in-depth material.

The study sample did not involve all the countries international students come from and was heavily influenced by those from Zimbabwe which could impact on overall findings. Although the University of Limpopo do host events such as gala dinners for international students to welcome them it also disadvantages them as the events excludes integration between the host students and international students. Unlike some Universities in the United States whereby each international student has a mentor who is from the US, the University does not have such a support structure (Tom, 2013).

5.6 Recommendations arising out of the research

The following recommendations, arising out of the research are made.

- The University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus) needs to ensure both staff and students are sensitive to the challenges of international students using presentations and workshops.

- A workshop discussing local culture and institutional culture should be given to the international students after registration.

- Lecturers must only teach in the language of instruction at the University, that is English (unless teaching a vernacular or foreign language).

- A large quantitative study should be undertaken over all institutions that register international students to find out more about the adjustment challenges or adaption process of international students in South African's Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).

- Research on the impact of colonialism on higher education as it exists in the 21st century and its impact on students on the African continent should also be undertaken.

5.7 Researcher's experience (reflexivity)

I am a South African so it was quite difficult hearing that my fellow students and lecturers at the University could be discriminatory. I was not aware that the community also discriminated against international students. I had to write what they said and remain objective while I was carrying out the research. I had many meetings with my supervisors who were able to de-brief me. It helped me understand and empathise with those who are African but who, in an African country are treated as 'the other.' I did not appreciate the impact colonialism has had on Africa and the history behind it and I know that I need to investigate this, and reflect on it further. However, I now understand the need for transformation, particularly in terms of how to 'Africanise' educational curricula. The research has helped me grow as a person and also to understand the world which I live in. I hope this is reflected in the research as I found it very challenging to 'see' through an African lens at first which is why I found Asante's (1990) philosophy so powerful.

5.8 Overall conclusion

International students experience many challenges which are not dealt with properly through counselling or workshops. The study results indicated that loneliness, isolation are reported by international students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus). These students also use defence mechanisms in a negative manner in order to cope in the new environment. Social and academic challenges experienced by international students were xenophobia, discrimination and stereotyping. Afrocentricity which views issues through an African as compared to a Eurocentric lens underpinned the study. Even so results indicated that there is some division in terms of culture (includes social and academic aspects) in African contexts caused by the colonial partition of Africa. Conversely, shared cultural practices for instance, lobola and cultural preparations of food do help international students acculturate as they recognise those similarities.

References

Adeleke, T. (2015). Africa and Afrocentric historicism: a critique. *Advances in Historical Studies*, *4*, 200-215.

Africana age. (n.d). *The colonization of Africa*. Retrieved from http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-colonization-of-africa.html

Akanwa, E. E. (2015). International students in western developed countries: history, challenges, and prospects. *Journal of International students*, *5*(3), 271-284.

Akpan, B.S., & Odohoedi, C.C. (2016). Eurocentric and Afrocentric views on the origin of

    philosophy. *International Journal of Modern Research and Review*, *4*(12), 1431-1434.

Alavi M., & Mansor, S.M.S. (2011). Categories of problems among international students in

    University Teknologi Malaysia. *Procedia-social and behavioural science, 30*, 1581-

    1587.

Alhojailan, M.I. (2012). Thematic analysis: a critical review of its process and evaluation.

    West East Journal of Social Science, *1*(1), 39-47.

Almurideef, R. (2016). *The challenges that International students face when integrating into*

    higher education in the United States. Retrieved from

    https://rdw.rowan.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3338&context=etd

Alshenqeeti, H. (2016). Interviewing as a data collection method: a critical review. *English*

    Linguistics Research, *3*(1), 39-45.

Answers Africa. (n.d). *List of French-speaking African countries*. Retrieved from

    https://answersafrica.com/french-speaking-african-countries.html

Anton, C.E., & Lawrence, C. (2014). Home is where the heart is: The effect of place of

    residence on place attachment and community participation. *Journal of*

    Environmental Psychology, *40*(2014), 451-461.

Asante, M.K. (1988). *Afrocentricity.* Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press.

Asante, M.K. (1990). *Kemet, Afrocentricity and knowledge*. Trenton, NJ. Africa World Press,

    Inc.

Asante, M.K. (1991). The Afrocentric idea in education. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60,

    170-179.

Asante, M.K., Karenga, M. (2006). *Handbook of black studies*. Thousand Oaks, London:

    Sage Publication.

Ata, A.W. (2015). Knowledge, education, and attitudes of international students: the case of

    Australia. *IELTS,* 5(4), 488-500.

Baba Y., & Hosoda, M. (2014). Home away home: Better understanding of the role of social support in predicting cross-cultural adjustment among international students. *College Student Journal*, *48*(1), 1-15.

Barbali, A. (2009). *Coping with xenophobia: Senegalese migrants in Port Elizabeth*. (Unpublished Master of Arts dissertation). Rhodes University, Grahamstown. SA.

Barker & Siryk 1991 in Valka, S. (2015). Management of international students' academic adjustment: challenges and solutions. *European Scientific Journal*, *3*, 161-168

Bates, S.E. (2014). *The language of pharmoco-dynamics*. Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nlh.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4635626.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Berry, J.W. (1997) in Truong, H.T. (2016). *Acculturation: 4 ways to adjust to a new culture*. Retrieved from https: www.drhttruong.com/acculturation-4-ways-to-adjust-to-a-new-culture/

Beyers, W., & Goossens, L. (2003). Psychological separation and adjustment to university: moderating effects of gender, age, and perceived parental style. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 18*(4), 363-382.

Bhana, D. (2009). AIDS is rape! Gender and sexuality in children's responses to HIV and AIDS. *Social Science and Medicine*, *69*(4), 596-603.

Bisolli, M.F. (2014). Development of children's personality: the role of early childhood education. *Journal of Scielo*, 19 (4).

Blanford, A.E. (2013). *Semi-structured qualitative studies*. Retrieved from http://www.interactiondesign.org/encyclopedia/semi-structured_qualitative_studies.html

Borg, C., & Cefai, C. (2014). *Stress, health and coping among International students (2nd Ed.)*. Malta, MT: University of Malta.

Brock, A. (2014). *Will Chinese replace English as the global language?* Retrieved from https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/will-chinese-replace-english-as-international-language/2554910.html

Brunwasser, S. M. (2012). *Depressive symptoms during the transition to college: evaluating trajectories and predictors among freshmen and transfer students. Retrieved from* https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/93919

Bursal, M. (2013). Longitudinal investigation of elementary students' science academic achievement in 4-8th grades. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, *13*(2), 1141–1156.

Butcher, J.N., Hooley, J.M., & Mineka, S. (2014). *Abnormal psychology.* Harlow, England: Pearson Education.

Caldwell, E.F., & Hyams-Ssekasi, D. (2016). Leaving home: the challenges of black-African international student prior studying overseas. *Journal of the International Students*, *6*(2), 588-613.

Chawane, M. (2016). The development of Afrocentricity: A historical survey. *Yesterday &Today*, *16*, 78-99.

Cherry, K. (2015). *Defence mechanisms*. Retrieved from http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/ss/defensemech_12.htm

Chua, L. (2014). *Depression: a hidden risk among international students*. Retrieved from https://acrstherapy.org/2014/01/25/depression-a-hidden-risk-among-international-students/.

Chukwuokolo, J.C. (2009). *Afrocentrism or eurocentrism: the dilemma of African development*. Retrieved from https://www.ajol.info/index.php/og/article/viewFile/52333/40958.

Cohen, G.L., & Sherman, D.K. (2014). The psychology of change, self-affirmation and social psychological intervention. *The Annual Review of Psychology*, *65*, 333-371.

Collison, L. (2017). *An introduction to South African traditional dress*. Retrieved from htpps://www.theculturetrip.com/Africa/south-africa/articles/an-introduction-to-south-african-traditional-dress

Corey, G. (2013). *Theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy*. 9th ed. New York, NY: Brooks/Coles.

Cupsa, I. (2018). Culture and identity. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, *48* (2), 181-191.

De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche C.B., & Delport, C.L.S (2005). *Research at grass roots.* Pretoria, PTA: Van Schaik Publishers.

Dilshad, R.M., & Latif, M.I. (2013). Focus group interview as a tool for qualitative research: an analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, *33*(1), 191-198.

Dimitrova, R. (2009). *Psychological and socio-cultural adaption in cross-cultural transition: theory and findings*. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). University of Witwatersrand: Johannesburg.

Dominguez-Whitehead, Y., & Sing, N. (2015*). International students in the South African higher education system: A review of pressing challenges.* Retrieved from http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/20486

DSM – 5. (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th edition).* New York: NY: APA.

Duru, E., & Poyrazli, S. (2011). Perceived discrimination, social connectedness, and other predictors of adjustment difficulties among Turkish international students. *International Journal of Psychology*, *46*(6), 446-454.

Egnatios, L.M., Mielke, G., Trinh, J., & Young, M. (2014). *The International student journey in the United States and the Netherlands: A comparative analysis.* Retrieved from https://www.american.edu/sis/practica/upload/Mueller-International-Student-House-Report.pdf.

Elmusharaf, K. (2012). *Introduction to qualitative research, training course in sexual and reproductive health research Geneva 2012*. Retrieved from https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2012/research-methodology/Introduction-qualitative%20research-Elmusharaf-2012.htm

Farago, A. (2018). *International students' economic impact on their host countries.* Retrieved from http://www.globaledge.msn.edu/blog/post/55543/international-students%27-economic-impact-on-their-host-countries

Farooq, U. (2012). *Social norms definition and functions & types of social norms*. Retrieved from https://studylecturenotes.com/social-sciences/sociology/355-social-norms-definition-and-functions-of-social-norms

Forbes-Mewett, H., & Sawyer, A.M. (2016). International students and mental health. *Journal of international students*, *6*(3), 661-677.

Frambach, J.M., Van Der Vleuten, C.P.M., & Durning, S.J. (2013). Quality criteria in qualitative and quantitative research. *Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, *88*(4), 552-560.

Gaines, A. (2017). *Connectedness in psychology: definition and theory.* Retrieved from https://study.com/academy/lesson/connectedness-in-psychology-definition-theory.html.

Ganaprakasam, C. (2016). *The importance of critical thinking in our children*. Retrieved from https://www.mahysiakini.com/letters/329985.

Gebhard, J., G. (2012). International students' adjustment problems and behaviors. *Journal of International Students, 2*(2), 184-193.

Gentles, S.J., Charles, C., Ploeg, J., & Mckibbon, K.A. (2015). Sampling in qualitative research: insights from an overview of the methods literature. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(11), 1772-1789.

Govender, R. (2015). *The making of a volunteer: a qualitative study*. (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of South Africa: Pretoria.

Grohol, J. (2013). *15 Common Defense Mechanisms*. *Psych Central*. Retrieved from http://psychcentral.com/lib/15-common-defense-mechanisms/0001251

Guest, G. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Gibbs, A. (1997). Focus groups. *Social Research Update*, *99*(1), 191-198.

Haber, F., & Griffiths, S. (2017). *5 unique mental health stressors faced by international students*. Retrieved from https://www.aeie.org/blog/5-mental-health-stressors-international-students.html

Halai, A. (2006). *Ethics in qualitative research: issues and challenges*. Retrieved from
www.edqual.org/publications/workingpaper/edqualwp4.pdf/at_download/file.pdf

Hall, K. (2014*). Create a sense of belonging: finding ways to belong can help ease the pain
of loneliness.* Retrieved from https:www.psychologytoday.com/blog/pieces-
mind/201403/create-sense-belonging

Handerson, M., & Whatley, W.C. (2013). *The impact of colonialism on African development:
evidence from ethnographic report*. Retrieved from http://eh.net/eha/wp-
content/uploads/2013/11/Whatley.pdf.

Hommadova, A. & Mita, T. (2016). Academic and social challenges of Japanese students
during cultural adjustment to the rural U.S. *Journal of International and Advanced
Japanese Studies, 8*, 241-255.

Hwang, B.J., Bennett, R., & Beauchemin, J. (2014). International students' utilization of
counseling services. *College Student Journal*, 48 (3), 347-354.

Idang, G.E. (2015). African culture and values. *South African Society for Greek Philosophy
and the Humanities*, *16*(2), 97-111.

Javadi, M., & Zarea, K. (2016). Understanding thematic analysis and its pitfalls. *Journal of
Client Care*, *1*(1), 34-40.

Jean, D. (2010). *The academic and social adjustment of first generation college students*.
(Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Seton Hall: New Jersey.

Jibreel, Z. (2015, July 10). C*ultural Identity and the Challenges International Students
Encounter.* Retrieved from http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds/23

Jones, J. (2007) in McBeath, M.L. (2015). *Sense of belonging, peer support, and social
media: examining the mental health, well-being and school to work transitions of co-
operative and non-co-operative education students*. (Unpublished masters
dissertation). University of Waterloo: Canada.

Khabutdinova, M.M., & Bayanova, L. (2013). Norms and values characteristics of students in
a foreign cultural environment. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, *16*(11),
1527-1531.

Khanlou, N., Haque, N., Sheehan, S., & Jones, G. (2015). "It is an issue of not knowing where to go": service providers' perspective on challenges in accessing social supportand services by immigrant mothers of children with disabilities. *J. Immigrant Minority Health*, *17*, 1840-1847.

Kim, E.K.K., & Mattila, A.S. (2011). *The impact of language barrier & cultural differences on restaurant experiences: a grounded theory approach*. (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania.

Koppel, K. (2016). *International students face discrimination*. Retrieved from http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20160518141230910

Kosheleva, E.Y., Amarnor, A.J., & Chemobilsky, E. (2015). Stress factors among international and domestic students in Russia. *Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 200, 460-466

Krauss, R.M., & Chiu, C.C. (2014). Language and social behaviour. *Social Psychology. 4*, 41-88.

Kruenger, R.A., & Casey, M.A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Minnesota, USA: Sage

Kubota, R., & Lin, A. (2009*)*. Race, culture, and identities in second language education*: Exploring Critically Engaged Practice. Journal of the Academics. 1,* 1-17.

Kufandererwa, R.T.M. (2017). *Xenophobia, immigrants and SA*. Retrieved from https://www.news24.com/mynews24/xenophobia-immigrantion-and-sa-20170101

Kwesi, K.P. (2018). *The challenge of language in post-apartheid in South Africa*. Retrieved from https://www.litnet.co.za/challenge-language-post-apartheid-south-africa/

Larsson, S.P. (2014). *Do you see what I see? A cross-cultural study on interpretation of clothing as a non-verbal signal*. (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of Gothenburg: Sweden.

Lee, M. (2015). The manipulation and role of stereotypes in the rush hour trilogy. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications, 7*(2), 5-12.

Little, W. (2013). *Introduction to sociology*. Houston: Texas, Openstax college organisation.

Liu, W. M. (2011). Social class and classism in the helping professions. *Research, theory, and practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Press.

MacGregor, K. (2014, September 6). *Major survey of International students in South Africa. University world news*. Retrieved from www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140905134914811.

Malau-Aduli, B.S. (2011). Exploring the experiences and coping strategies of International medical students. *BMC Medical Education*, *11*(1), 40-52.

Marczyk, G., DeMateeo, D., & Festinger, D. (2005). *Essentials of research design and methodology.* New Jersey, NJ: Wiley & Sons.

Marwick, B. (2005). *Culture shock*. Retrieved from http://www.scootmoinscher.fr/culture-shock775925feb39a7328dccc3600d844f21467162.html

Mashapo, S. (2013). *16 days of activism launched in Waterpoort*. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/zoutnet/docs/29_november_2013_mirror_digital

Mazama, M. (2001). The Afrocentric paradigm. *Journal of Black Studies, 1,* 390-405.

McBeath, M.L. (2015). *Sense of belonging, peer support, and social media: examining the mental health, well-being and school to work transitions of co-operative and non-co-operative education students*. (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of Waterloo: Canada.

McGarvey, A., Brugha, R., Conroy, R.M., Clarke, E., & Byrne, E. (2015*).* International student's experience of a western medical school: a mixed methods study exploring the early years in the context of cultural and social adjustment compared to students from the host country. *BMC Medical Education, 15*(11), 1-13.

McKay, C.E.A. (2015). A *history of the national union of South African students (NUSAS), 1756-1970*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of South Africa: Pretoria.

McLean, P., & Ranson, L. (2005) in Valka, S. (2015). Management of international students' academic adjustment: challenges and solutions. *European Scientific Journal*, *3*, 161-168.

McLeod, S. (2008). *Defense Mechanism. Simply psychology.* Retrieved from http://simplypsychology.org/defense-mechanism.html

McLeod, S. (2016). *Bandura-social learning theory*. Retrieved from https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html

Medical aid cover guide. (2017). *Medical aid cover guide*. Retrieved from https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/international/documents/internatio nalstudents/MEDICAL%20AID%20COVER%20GUIDE%202017%20FINAL.docx

Medved, D., Franco, A., Gao, X., & Yang, F. (2013). *Challenges in teaching international students: group separation, language barriers and culture differences*. Retrieved from http://portal.research.lu.se/ws/files/5561296/4216001.pdf

Mental Health America (2018). *Anxiety disorders.* Retrieved from http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/anxiety-disorders

Mesidor, J. K., Sly, K. F. (2014). Mental health help-seeking intentions among international and African American college students: An application of the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of International Students, 4*(2), 137-149.

Mhlauli, M.B., Salani, E., & Mokotedi, R. (2015). Understanding apartheid in South Africa through the racial contract. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, *5*(4), 2013-219.

Mngadi, M. (2018). *Police on high alert as deadline looms for foreign shop owners to close unlicensed shops in Durban*. Retrieved from https://www.news24.com/southafrica/news/police-on-high-alert-as-deadline-looms-for-foreign-shop-owners-to-close-unlicensed-shops-in-durban.

Moloi, T. (2017). *Tribalism is new apartheid.* Retrieved from
https://www.news24.com/southafrica/Local/Epress-News?tribalism-is-new-apartheid-
20160705.

Mokhothu, T.M.,& Callaghan, C.N.(2018). The management of the international student
experience in the South African context: the role of sociocultural adaption and
cultural intelligence. *Acta Commerci*, *18*(1), 1-11

Moore, T., McKee, K., & McLoughin, P. (2015). Online focus groups and qualitative
research in the social sciences: their merits, limitations in a study of housing and
youth. *People, Place and Policy*, *9*(1), 17-28.

Mudhovozi, P. (2012). Social and academic adjustment at first year University students.
Kamla-Raj, 33(2), 251-259.

Mwilu, L.R. (2010). *Framing the foreigner: A close reading of readers' comments on
thought leader blogs on xenophobia published between May and June, 2008.*
(Unpublished Master of Arts dissertation). Rhodes University. Grahamstown. SA.

Mzileni, A. (2017*). Cultural barriers must fall.* Retrieved from https://mg.co.za/article/2017-
09-00-cultural-barriers-must-fall.

Nabavi, R. (2012*). Bandura's social learning theory & social cognitive learning theory.*
Retrieved from
https://researchgate.net/publication/267750204_Social_Learning_Theory_cognitive_
Learning_Theory.

NAFSA (2017). *Financial aid for undergraduate international students.* Retrieved from
https://www.nafsa.org/about_us/aboutinternationaleducation/for
students/financila_aid_for_undergraduate_international_students/scholarships.com

Nagle, B., & Williams, N. (2013). Methodology brief: Introduction to focus groups.
Assessment, Planning and Accountability, *1,1-12.*

Neel, B.M.D. (2017). *A feminist critique of marriage: at a time of unparalleled social
freedom, can we imagine a better way of living?* Retrieved from

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201708/feminist-critique-marriage

Newsome, L.K., & Cooper, P. (2016). International students' cultural and social experiences in a British university: "such a hard life (it) is here". *Journal of international students, 6*(1), 195-215.

Ocheni, S., & Nwankwo, B. C. (2012). Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, *8*(3), 46-54.

Okechukwu, C.A., Souza, K., Davis, K.D., & De Castro. (2014). Discrimination, harrasmeent, abuse and bullying in the workplace: contribution of workplace injustice to occupational health disparities. *Am Jo Ind Med, 57*(5), 573-586.

Oluwafunmilola, O.O. (2012). *Depression among international students*. (Unpublished masters dissertation). Central Ostrobothnia, University of Applied Science: Ostrobothnia.

Pamabazuka News. (2012). *Effects of colonialism on Africa's past and present*. Retrieved from https://www.pambazuka.org/global-south/effects-colonialism-africas-past-and-present

Payton, M. (2014). Half-*naked model walks around New York streets- but why does nobody notice.* Retrieved from http://metro.co.uk/2014/11/14/half-naked-model-walks-around-new-york-streets-but-why-does-nobody-notice-4948480/.

Pellerin, M. (2012). Benefits of Afrocentricity in exploring social phenomena: understanding afrocentricity a social science methodology. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *5*(4), 149-153.

Project Atlas. (2017). *Top host destinations, 2001 & 2017.* Retrieved from www.iie.org/projectatlas.

Powell, J. (2017. *Us vs them: the sinister techniques of othering*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/nov/08/us-vs-them-the-sinister-techniques-of-othering-and-how-to-avoid-them

Research Ethics Review Committee. (2015). *Ethics in health research; principles, processes and structure*. (2nd ed). Cape Town, CT. UCT.

Reviere, R. (2001). Toward an Afrocentric research methodology. *Journal of Black Studies*, *31*(6), 709-728.

Ryan, K. E., Gandha, T., Culberston, M. J., & Carlson, C. (2014). Focus group evidence: implications for design and analysis. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *35* (3), 328-345.

Sarita., & Sonia, (2015). Academic stress among student: role and responsibilities of parents. *International Journal of Applied Research, 1*(10), 385-388.

Sarma, A. (2014). *Parental pressure for academic success in India*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Arizona state University: Phoenix.

Sarmadi, M. R., Nouri, Z., Zandi, B., & Lavasani, M.G. (2017). Academic culture and its role in knowledge management in higher education system. *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*. *12*(5), 1427-1434.

Sharma, I., Pandit, B., Pathak, A. & Sharma, R. (2013). Hinduism, marriage and mental-illness. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, *55*(2), 243-249.

Shepherd, S.H. (2014). *Pharos III: esoterica.* Wisconsin, US: Silas H Shepherd Publishers.

Siamonga, E. (2015). *Zimbabwe national dress and identity crisis.* Retrieved from https://www.thepatriot.cp.zw/old-posts/zimbabwe-national-dress-and-identity-crisis/.

Sicat, R.M. (2011). Foreign students' cultural adjustment and coping strategies. *International Conference and Social Science and Humanity*. London (September, 2011).

Siyabona Africa. (2017). *Xhosa.* Retrieved from https://www.krugerpark.co.za/africa-xhosa.html.

Somer, M.M., & Dumont, K. (2011). Psychosocial factors predicting academic performance of students at a historically disadvantaged university. *Psychological Society of South Africa, 41*(3), 386-395.

Steinberg, L., Bornstein, M.H., Vandell, D.L., & Rook, K.S. (2011). *Lifespan development: infancy through adulthood.* Brazil, South America: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

Study abroad corner. (2018). *15 common stereotypes for Asian international students*. Retrieved from https://www.studyabroadcorner.com/stereotypes-for-asia-international-students/

Sue, D.W., & Sue, D. (2015). *Counselling the culturally diverse: theory and practice* (5th ed). Hoboken: New Jersey; John Wiley and Sons Publishers.

Sunday, C.E. (2015). *Qualitative data analysis*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Western Cape: Western Cape.

Tanim, M.M.Z. (2016). *Cultural shock and reverse cultural shock*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313649983.

The daily press. (2010). *Perspective: easing depression for international students*. Retrieved from https://dailyfreepress.com/blog/2010/10/28/perspective-easing-depression-for international-students.

Thurber, C.A., & Walton, E.A. (2012). Homesickness and adjustment in university students. *Journal of American College Health, 60*(5), 1-5.

Tirivangasi, H. & Mugambiwa, S.S. (2016). Citizenship crisis or xenophobia? A critical analysis of service delivery protest in South Africa. *South African Association for Public Administration and Management Journal*, *5*, 41-48.

Tom, F.R. (2013). *Adjustment experiences and coping strategies of first year students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus).* (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus), South Africa: Polokwane.

Tran, L., &Gomes, C. (2015). *Stereotyping international students in unjust*. Retrieved from https://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20150428141315340.

Truong, H.T. (2016). *Acculturation: 4 ways to adjust to a new culture.* Retrieved from https: www.drhttruong.com/acculturation-4-ways-to-adjust-to-a-new-culture/

University of Limpopo. (n.d). *General academic rules of the University of Limpopo*. Retrieved from

https://www.ul.ac.za/.../General%20Academic%20Rules%20of%20the%20University%20Limpopo.pdf.

University of Limpopo. (n.d). *UL historical background*. Retrieved from https://www.ul.ac.za/index.php?Entity=UL%20Historical%20Background.

University of Saskatchewan. (n.d). *Dealing with culture shock*. Retrieved from https://students.usask.ca/articles/dealing-with-culture-shock.php

Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H., & Nelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, *6*(5), 100-110.

Valka, S. (2015). Management of international students' academic adjustment: challenges and solutions. *European Scientific Journal*, *3*, 161-168.

Van Wyk, B., & Higgs, P. (2012). *The curriculum in an African context*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272571996_THE_CURRICULUM_IN_AN_AFRICAN_CONTEXT

Visa regulation for study in South Africa in Medical aid cover guide. (2017). *Medical aid cover guide*. Retrieved from https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/international/documents/internationalstudents/MEDICAL%20AID%20COVER%20GUIDE%202017%20FINAL.docx

Wang, K.T, Wei, M., Zhoa, R., Chuang, C. & Li, F. (2015). Cross-cultural loss: development and psychometric evaluation. *Psychological Assessment*, *27*(1), 42-53.

Wang, Y. (2016). *The adjustment journey of international students.* (Unpublished masters dissertation). University of Victoria: Canada.

Wardhaugh, R. (2014). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Cowley, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Webb and Read (2001) in Akanwa, E. E. (2015). International students in western developed countries: history, challenges, and prospects. *Journal of International students*, *5*(3), 271-284.

Wiens, M. (2018). *17 African cultural values (to know before you travel to Africa).* Retrieved from https://www.magrationology.com/africa-cultural-values-travel-africa17/

World Health Organisation. (2003). *International migration, health and human rights*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/hhr/activities/en/intl_migration_hhr.pdf

Writer, S. (2016). *This is who is emigrating from South Africa-and where they are going*. Retrieved from https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/151802/this-is-who-is-emigrating-from-south-africa-where-they-are-going/

Wu, H., Garza, E., & Guzman, N. (2015). *International students challenge and adjustment to college*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2015/202753

Young and Mack in Farooq, U. (2012). *Social norms definition and functions & types of social norms.* Retrieved from https://studylecturenotes.com/social-sciences/sociology/355-social-norms-definition-and-functions-of-social-norms

Zar, D. (2009). *International students from Africa*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Witwatersrand: Johannesburg.

APPENDIX A – Focus group questions

The following is the questions that will be asked in the focus group discussion to the participants, for data collection purposes.

1. Demographic data; Name (pseudonym will be given); age; level of study; country of origin; ethnicity.

2. The researcher will state what the research is about and its aims and objectives and ask the participants to sign the consent form.

Questions: Probing may be required thus appropriate probes may be asked which may not be the same for each group.

1. Can you tell me what your experience with your South African peers (at the University of Limpopo) is like?

2. Do you feel your fellow students treat you differently (the South African ones) because you are an international student?

3. How does it feel to be in a foreign country?

4. How does South African culture differ with that of your country?

5. Do you find it easy to blend in with the culture of the community you are currently living in?

6. What are the similarities that you share with your South African peers, in terms of culture?

7. Have you ever experienced negative attitudes or treatment from your peers (or if living off campus from people not registered at the University)?

8. What has motivated you to further your studies in a foreign country?

9. How do you deal with any social challenges here? (Researcher will outline what she means by social challenges if necessary for instance, xenophobia, discrimination, etc.).

10. What kind of social adjustments have you had to make (if any)?

11. Do you feel any stress or anxiety or have any other psychological issues (an explanation for this will be given?

12. Do you feel that you have had any cultural challenges (an explanation will be provided if necessary for instance, different traditions, language, etc.).

13. Have you anything further you would like to add?

Appendix B – Ethics forms (Turfloop Research Ethics Committee)

FORM B – PART I

PROJECT TITLE: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO (TURFLOOP CAMPUS): AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

PROJECT LEADER: Ms Joy Katlego Hlokwe

DECLARATION
I, the signatory, hereby apply for approval to conduct research described in the attached research proposal and declare that:

1. I am fully aware of the guidelines and regulations for ethical research and that I will abide by these guidelines and regulations as set out in documents (available from the Secretary of the Ethics Committee); and

2. I undertake to provide every person who participates in this research project with the relevant information in Part III. Every participant will be requested to sign Part IV.

Name of Researcher: Ms Joy Katlego Hlokwe

Signature:…………………………………

Date:

For Official use by the Ethics Committee:

Approved/Not approved

Remarks:…………………………………………………………………………………………...

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

…………………………………………………………………………………………………..

Signature of Chairperson:…………………………………………

Date:………………………

FORM B – PART 11

PROJECT TITLE:

PROJECT LEADER: Ms Joy Katlego Hlokwe

Protocol for conducting research using human participants

1.   Department: Psychology

2.   Title of project: **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO (TURFLOOP CAMPUS): AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE**

3.   Full name, surname and qualifications of project leader:
        Joy katlego Hlokwe
        B.A. Sociology and Psychology
        B.A. Honours in Psychology

4.   List the name(s) of all persons (Researchers and Technical Staff) involved with the project and identify their role(s) in the conduct of the experiment:

Name:	Qualifications:	Responsible for:
Joy Katlego Hlokwe	B.A	Research
	B.A. Honours in Psychology	
	M.A. in Psychology	

5.   Name and address of principal researcher: Joy Katlego Hlokwe: P.O. Box 415; Lenyenye; 0857
6.   Procedures to be followed:
        Focus group interviews will be conducted using a schedule constructed from a combination of guide questions derived from a reading of relevant literature underpinned by Afrocentricity.
Informed consent will be sought from each participant.
7.   Nature of discomfort:
The interview could trigger unpleasant memories that could cause flashbacks with depression,
anxiety and anger. Affected participants will be referred to clinical psychologist for intervention.
8.   Description of the advantages that may be expected from the results of the study:
        a. The study will help international students to voice their difficulties while sharing their experiences
        b. It will also help with the University's international offices to employ better procedures of helping international students.
        c. At the same time, international students might be able to deal with the unpleasant memories (if any) experienced.

Signature of Project Leader:……………………………………………

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

PROJECT TITLE:

PROJECT LEADER: Ms Joy Katlego Hlokwe

You are invited to participate in the following research project: **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO (TURFLOOP CAMPUS): AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE**

1. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project, without providing any reasons, at any time.

2. It is possible that you might not personally experience any advantages during the project, although the knowledge that may be accumulated through the project might prove advantageous to others.

3. You are encouraged to ask any questions that you might have in connection with this project at any stage. The project leader and the researcher will gladly answer your questions. They will also discuss the project in detail with you.

4. It may be that you feel discomfort when discussing stigmatisation and/or discrimination. However, I will ensure that this is discussed properly with you and if you do find that you have any problems (such as feeling traumatised or depressed) after our interview I will ensure that you have proper referral to a professional counsellor/psychologist.

5. Should you at any stage feel unhappy, uncomfortable or concerned about the research please contact Ms Noko Shai-Ragoboya at the University of Limpopo, Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, tel: 015 268 2401

PART IV - CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO (TURFLOOP CAMPUS): AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

PROJECT LEADER: Joy Katlego Hlokwe

I,_____, hereby voluntarily consent to participate in the following project: **THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF UNDERGRADUATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO (TURFLOOP CAMPUS): AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE**

I realise that:

1. The study deals with the cultural, social and psychological adjustment challenges faced by the international students

2. The research may hold some psychological risk for me that cannot be foreseen at this stage.

3. The Ethics Committee has approved that individuals may be approached to participate in the study.

4. The research project (that is, the extent, aims and methods of the research) have been explained to me.

5. The project sets out the risks that can be reasonably expected as well as possible discomfort for persons participating in the research. It also sets out an explanation of the anticipated advantages, for myself or others, that are reasonably expected from the research and alternative procedures that may be to my advantage.

6. I will be informed of any new information that may become available during the research that may influence my willingness to continue my participation.

7. Access to the records that pertain to my participation in the study will be restricted to persons directly involved in the research.

8. Any questions that I may have regarding the research, or related matters, will be answered by the researcher and her promoter.

9. If I have any questions about, or problems regarding the study, or experience any undesirable effects, I may contact Ms J.K Hlokwe (katlego072@gmail.com) or Prof K.A. Nel (Kathryn.Nel@ul.ac.za)

10. Participation in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any stage.

11. If any medical/psychological problem is identified at any stage during the research, or when I am vetted for participation, such condition will be discussed with me in confidence by a qualified person and/or I will be referred to my doctor.

12. I indemnify the University of Limpopo and all persons involved with the above project from any liability that may arise from my participation in the above project or that may be related to it, for whatever reasons, including negligence on the part of the mentioned persons.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT_____

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS_____

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT_____

Signed at_____ **this _____ day of _____ 2013**

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING:	15 May 2018
PROJECT NUMBER:	TREC/105/2018: PG

PROJECT:

Title:	The Psychological, Social and Cultural experiences of Undergraduate International Students at the University of Limpopo (Turfloop Campus): An Afrocentric perspective.
Researcher:	Ms JK Hlokwe
Supervisor:	Prof KA Nel
Co-Supervisors:	N/A
School:	Social Sciences
Degree:	Master of Arts Psychology

PROF TAB MASHEGO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: **REC-0310111-031**

Note:
i)   Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.
     PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

FOCUS GROUP 1

Interviewer: First question...can you tell me what your experience with your South African peers at the University of Limpopo is like

Participant 2: Can you say it again....

Interviewer: Your experience, can you tell me what your experience with your South African peers is like...here at the University of Limpopo

Participant 1

Interviewer: Can you just speak louder?

Participant 1: ooh my experience with the peers in South Africa is not really good, like there are soma barrier like communication, some south Africans finds it difficult to speak with us in the common language, English, and they like to talk in their own language

Interviewer: Anybody can answer, you don't have to go like, I need to hear the comments.....{Okay}

Participant 4: Sometimes like people will treat you differently when they realize that you are from another country and you will be excluded sometimes but like I said, it differs with people, some don't see you that way they just treat you the same, everything will be like okay sometimes like yaah… for instance, last year my…….was secluded because people know you are from another country, so yaah… sometimes it can be tough but at the same time yaah… it can be good, I mean staying with people who will accept you, who doesn't see that as an issue, I don't think there will be a problem.

Participant 3: We are voiceless, like we don't belong. Here, when other students[host], if they have a problem or something you will see the EFF [SRC] marching. We don't have a group to stand up for us so we have to try and solve the problems ourselves…sometimes it just isn't possible so you say nothing you know that no one will help

Participant 5: I think the issue of language is the biggest problem. It seems like some of the students don't want to use English and when I try to communicate with them they use their own language. This is an issue when doing group work in class. They communicate in their own language and when I tell them that I don't understand the language that they use they

just carry on or say learn it. That in itself becomes an issue. Another thing is that the moment they realise you are from another country they begin to treat you differently

Participant 6: In the beginning it will be hard but to those who take time to get to know you, you actually feel at home depending on the type of people that you are surrounded with but the main challenge usually it's the language, because the medium of communication aaah! You know African languages are not common to each and every country or ethnic groups to be specific, so you end up finding it hard to respond when someone is saying something and later on if you try to go deeper, when you understand its authentic about it, you might find out that somebody was trying to talk about were actually important

Participant 2: **Aah! As for me aaah. I never found any challenges because I know how to speak South African languages so it was easy for me to fit in, it was easy for me to make friends and everything.**

Interviewer: Question 2, Do you feel your fellow students treat you differently because you are international student?

Participant 3: **At first is like that because they will be like uuhh…. This one is coming from another country and all that, they will be having that other different prospective about you, but there is time they also realize you are the same, they will start coping very well with you**

Participant 6:No, they don't

Interviewer: okay…..any other Participant ?

Participant 4: **I think like I have said before I can also attest to what the other participant said, maybe at first there might be friction like once they realise that you are from another country but as time moves on there is more acceptance as we are Africans. because we find that it was a bit tougher we were doing group assignments last year in our first year, yaah. It was a little bit tough during that time but now it's a bit easier you just know that aah… that's how it is and not that day they will not be accepting us but I think with time it gets easier, first time you will be here like it will not be that easy but there is time also I think it will get easier and you will see that actually you might not have been right in thinking that they are not accepting you.**

Participant 1: **I think the treatment will depend with time, as time moves on you will get to be treated just like other students, they will have to accept us as who we are.**

Participant 5: I think some of them have accepted us even though some of them up until now find it difficult to accept us or to interact with us. It makes me feel like I don't belong here, but basically I want to say that it depends with the kind of people you associate with

Participant 2: I think they differ like uuhhh… yah…what…said

Question 3 (How does it feel to be in a foreign country?)

Participant 3: Its mixed, at times its nice, at times its not yaah… but the nice part is that of meeting new people new things yaah…It's like we do some other stuff differently in our home countries and people don't like that. They let you know that they won't tolerate that sort of thing here. At the end of the day being in a foreign country is the worst thing ever

Participant 2: As for me being in a foreign country is the worst thing ever, because like here most of the bursaries they are awarded to only south African citizens, so you will find out that if you are from outside, you won't get the opportunity and then it's so heart-breaking.

Participant 1: Being in a foreign country it's great, to be in foreign country, it will be exposing, meeting new people, different things however the bad part is communication, that will only be the disadvantage but it's great being in a foreign country.

Participant 5: For me personally it's great to be in a foreign country because of the new exposures, just being in a new environment, it has been great aahh. although to the next extent I will say it's a bit tough like when you go outside just in general just going outside you meet the police they ask for your passport each and every time, so you feel like you have been separated or they are treating you like something that is not like them, so the nice part is that you are in a new environment, you are seeing new things, you are interacting with new system and you see how people in other countries work, and the other part is just being treated different, and sometime being asked for your passport if you move around, there is a lot of stuff, some of the benefit you can't get them because you are an international student, so that's it.

Participant 4: **Yaah, for me personally the experience has been great, has been wonderful because like aah. That feeling of being independent or like responsibility, I think being here has taught me to be responsible, something that I have never done but yaah. I**

came up to be responsible and like aah, the only short-coming that are faced by international students that might have needs like maybe you have depleted all your funds and then the people are back there at home, it's not easy to get some of the essential stuff that you might need at that particular time, it will take time yaah, it also has to do with how responsible you are, so I think yaah, for me I can say it has been a great experience.

Participant 6: **Eeh, for me I feel like am still at home, I don't see any challenge or any difference, it's just different location, different people same feeling, basically am at home, even if am not from around here.**

Interviewer: Okay. Question 4 (how does south African culture differ with that of your country?)

Participant 3: It **differs a lot, people in this country they are too much of their culture like, it differs from how we move on with ours, here they really embrace their culture like if you are what they like to be really seen yaah and its different from us, we just move as if we are the same like always, we don't have, you find out that times that people they need to talk according to their culture at times but it's not like it always.**

Participant 6: **Aaaah, I think there are different ways in which we do things like example the way we dress, the way we talk to our elders, the way we behave, naturally it's like you will be shocked that some of the things which like aaah, are considered as cultural taboos, you know in your own country, this side its actually viewed as something which is tolerable to some extent, so I just think to those things can be a real hectic when you look at it from another angle**

Participant 5 : It differs, it's totally different from where we are coming from, so some of us we have travelled to adjust how people behave here like for example the way people dress here, the way people interact with each other its totally different . it's a shock some of this stuff that happens here doesn't happen where we come from.

Participant 2: It's different because …. like students are allowed to go to high school being pregnant. In our culture there is no such thing. I was shocked

Participant 4: Yaaa… I think aaah… the cultures are a bit different, they might be similar in some instances but…. like aaah…. I certainly feel that am in a different place, like it's different like when at home you can actually feel it if you have been in Zimbabwe for a long

time, if you have been in another country for a long time and you come here, you will see that the way things are done here and like participant 6 said aaahh… what they tolerate or what is tolerated in this country cannot be tolerated when you come to our country, and some of it is actually illegal so yaah… there some differences in the cultures

Interviewer: do you mind telling me what are some of the things that you said is illegal or whatever you feel like is tolerable?

Participant 1: Aaah… the cultures, our own culture and the south African culture they are different, like the way south Africans behave and the way we behave its just a way different and also like what Participant 2 said, it's not our culture like falling pregnant or getting married with a guy different from our culture can't complain about it but it was strange how most girls prefer to be staying with a boyfriend without being married. In my country that is a serious taboo

5. Did you find it easy to blend in with the culture of the community you came to live in?

Participant 6: **I found it very easy because most of the things this side, I found it easy to adopt to them like they were already in me before I got here, so it was a lateral transfer, just different place, the same person.**

Participant 4: I personally think it depends with the people you interact with, like people you socialize with because the people you talk to introduce the culture to you like the local culture, you see it from the people who are surrounding you, the people you talk to, the people who you interact with, so I think like the moment you can…..**i think you can tell that this person is this, this person is like that, like maybe the maturity and stuff, but the that person like personally am spiritual person, if I interact with people that I have met at church it will be easy for me because it's like above the cultures we have something in common or something which we say it's above even the cultures which is common, which we all answer to, so I think it depends with the people that you interact with, they will introduce the culture to you, so it will be easy for you if you interact with people who are maybe.**

like you to some extent

Participant 3: yaah it's just a choice, you can even do your own its just, we are free to do what we feel like doing.

Participant 5: I agree with what participant 4 says

Participant 1: I think it just depend who you are, you can easily adapt if you wish to, if don't, you won't adapt.

Participant 2: I agree with what Participant 1 said

Interviewer: Question number 6(What are the similarities that you share with your South African peers in terms of culture?)

Participant 2: **What I have experienced is that it depends on where you come from, as for me we share like the sense of dressing.**

Participant 3: **Yaah…like, practicing like when it comes to elders, we both have to respect our elders be it that side and this side, so it's really something nice, we just remind each other like we have to do this, these are our elders, we just have to do them.**

Participant 4: **Yaah… I think there are similarities in the food yaah… I have not seen much change, like yaah.. there might be some differences but I think it depends on maybe the level of income at home… because like there are some [other] needs at home. I don't think some of the meals are international [referring to countries or other continents]. It's something that you might just consume in your country**

Participant 1: **I thnk aah… the thing of going to church yaah… it's just the same, we also like going to church.**

Participant 6: **Eeeh..there are similarities in mostly in the entertainment sector yaaah… we do things that is linked, also the food, pap is pap even if we call it something different it remain pap.**

Participant 5: **There are somethings like food that are the same. We have the same kind of food at home and also in terms of being spiritual person. We share the same kind of thing that we do, like going to church**

Interviewer: Question 7 (have ever experienced negative attitude from your peers?)

Participant 1: (yes) yaah… I did experience, like some will talk to you in their own language then you tell the person I can't understand the language like to rephrase in the common language.

Participant 3: We face those challenges everyday whether, anytime they just face the, be it in class you find out the [host students] have bad attitudes they don't speak in English when you are with them they just ignore you. Sometimes you find a cleaner cleaning and she will be just trying maybe telling you to wait but because you don't understand and you go where you are not supposed to you end up getting shouted at

Participant 6: Eeh (yes) I have encountered negative attitudes from lectures and students. The lecturer even told me to go back to my home country (Zimbabwe)

Participant 5: Yes, we have experienced negative reactions from the outside even on the compus like the moment people realize that you are international, you try to communicate with them like I had an incident where I wanted to get service from this particular place [company] and then the moment they realised that I am from another country they gave me an attitude. They didn't help me get the service I needed because they wouldn't answer me in English only their own language. They even started laughing and I knew it was at me.so this is the kind of things that we experience each and every day, even in class sometimes the lecturers say some bad things about a particular country or a certain race they say bad stuff about international students. For example, one lecturer said these people (from other countries) they are nothing, they are not wanted here. Or something that would make you feel uncomfortable in class…but you can't say anything to say because now they have created this atmosphere that these people are bad people.

Participant 6: Definitely aah.. I have experienced negative attitude aah… both on campus and off campus yaah… like, I think most of us have said it before, it differs with the people, definitely you are bound to meet people who are like that, who are not aah.. open or people who are not going to accept you because you are international, definitely at some point you will meet someone who is like that so yaah… I can say that I faced aah.. I have encountered people who had negative attitudes towards us as international students.

Participant 2: As for me no!

Interviewer: Question 8 (What has motivated you to go and study in a foreign country?)

Participant 6: I was forced to come here due to certain effects, I had no choice.

Participant 2: The situation at home just motivated me to further my studies because if you come here [SA] the fees are not as high as back home

Participant 3: Due to economic hardships back home you have to look for a university where you can get a bursary and do a degree. This University allows 15 international students to do the degree I am enrolled for. This motivated me to come this side because getting the degree I want is much easier than getting it at home

Participant 1: As I said, I was motivated to come and study here but under the pressure

Participant 4: I think what participant 3 said, applies to me too. The requirements that I needed in another country for the degree I wanted to do were too high. It's a bit tough because many people will be applying for the same degree with better results and aah… here it's quite easy to get a place as compared to my country, so yaah… I wanted to do accounting and I applied here and I go didn't get a place at home

Participant 5: I agree with what Participant 3 said, and also to add on, just a need for a new environment motivated me to come here.

Interviewer: Question 9 (How do you deal with social challenges here)

Participant 6: If I face such situation in class I will go straight to the vice chancellor and at the mall I will just call the manager same time to deal with that issue or the owner of the shop

Participant 4: I have just accepted that some people are just like that and it no longer affect me that much, I just know that some people are like that and the fact that they are local citizens that do not care either you are from any other country, they just treat you the same with any other people. I think it has made me to see that it's a person not a country, it's the person with the problem so yaah… I have just accepted that some people just have that problem and when such a thing happen to me it no longer moves me.

Participant 1: I think you just have to get used to it is like when you are doing a group discussion, there are those students who will always speak in their own language that you don't understand, so you just have to get used to those people and whenever they are talking you just switch off

Participant 2: As they said, I think you just have to accept, to know what kind of people they are and in most of cases just that people differ, some doesn't see you like that and some does.

Interviewer: Question 10 (what kind of social adjustment have you had to make if any?)

Participant 3: I just have to adjust to noise every weekend, it's like this side people will have parties from Friday

Participant 4: Personally none, I have not made any social adjustment, I have not adjusted to anything am still the same person I was back home.

Interviewer: so are you saying that even if they are taking you a picture and you picture of today like now you are still the same person?.do you have any activities that you find that are interesting here and you do them but back home you don't do them?

Partcipant 4: Actually I was more active back home, now am indoor type of a person, that I stay in my room, am not engaged in many activities, am not saying that there none here that am interested in but just that they are, because it's much more difficult than I expected, so yaah… I don't have the luxury to engage in some other activities yaah…

Participant 5: Yaah… I would say there have been few changes like you know trying to fit in. At one point you have to learn the language just to fit in, even the way we dress, this is not the way how we used to dress when we were back home. You have to try and fit in

Participant 6: I don't have to change anything.

Participant 2: I don't have to change anything

Participant 1: I will say, I never changed.

11.Do you feel any stress or anxiety or have any other psychological issues?

Participant 3: I had too much work to do that I didn't have time to stress, because I had a lot to do, I couldn't afford just stressing or even thinking of fitting in because I could feel am behind and I need to push up so that I can fit in with time ..I just ignore things.

Interviewer: so it was okay with you to……

Partcipant 3: yaah… too much of it because I could see even entering into a class or something, to me it was just……I was just myself alone and yaah.. that was it.

Participant 5: Aah.. I think it was okay because when I got here some other international students immediately accepted me, so I felt like I was still back home, so it didn't feel like a change and besides like separating myself from the family it was not for the first time, I have been doing that for a lot of times, so it was not bad.

Participant 4: Yaah… it was not bad like aah… I went to boarding schools like I got used to situation where I will be far from home and am just focusing on my studies so to me its like am just at school so I just have to focus on my studies and then when am done I will go back home, so I can say like what participant 5 said, when I got here even when I was registering I met other international students from my country so like immediately had a concise of comfortability that am at home, I felt at home, I couldn't be stressed, I did not.

Participant 6: I wasn't stressed at all, most of the times I was always busy and when am not busy I was around a lot of friends so you could see that most the times, the only time which I will be alone it will be time when I will be sleeping, so they wouldn't be any time to think.

Participant 2: As for me I was too stressed when I just enrolled at the university because of the paperwork that I had to attend to. I started attending my classes late so I had a lot of challenges. I had to write tests, I was left behind because sometimes I couldn't go to class [because of attending to paperwork and going to Home Affairs]. The way we are taught is hectic too…so much in a short time. I felt like I was going to fail and for some time I did not know what to do and would just go and cry

Participant 1: as for me it was two sided, the first side it wasn't bad like…. away from home and I just hide, I was……… like I had a lot of papers to process my payment, I had to write, I was missing classes and everything, so it was stressing me.

12 Do you feel that you have had cultural challenges?

Participant 2: **I think it differs from where you come from a specific country, because as for me where I grow up things are just the same, the way they dress, the way they do things it's just the same**

Participant 3: Uuuh… am enjoying the freedom of wear what you want yaah… no one asks you, it's normal even if you walk half naked yaah…. So am liking that freedom because am cool with it,

Interviewer: Didn't you find it a bit wild though?

Participant 3: It was a bit wild but now am really fitting in because its normal.

Interviewer: would you wear half naked as you said?

Participant 3: No as for me I can't even walk half naked but I no longer have issues seeing someone walking half naked like before.

Participant 1: I think uuh… to me about dressing, I think the dress it's cool, like I also love the dressing so yaaah… am adapting.

Participant 5: It was easy in a way to change a culture because I think in my case like, I adopted what I wanted to adopt and I left what I didn't want, so it was easy to just adopt to the things that I maybe saw on TV like I want to dress like this, I want to do like this so I just quickly adopted into that stuff and left what I didn't want, so it was basically easy for me.

Interviewer: Do you feel that you have had any cultural changes from language to dressing, to everything that has to do with culture from food?

Participant 5: Okay, yaah… I just think that I will maybe be difficult at first like the first time you get here and seeing those change, I think that's the moment like you will be finding it a bit difficult to adapt to those changes, but with time like the first days that I got here, like when I was seeing the girls walking half naked I was shocked but now am not even shocked, but I think it's due to time, unlike when I go back to my country, like when I see, like should there be differences but you can see that even our country its, we are moving towards that half naked kind of dressing yaah… we are moving towards that, so like yaah… It was, maybe a bit intense at first but I think with time am getting used to that culture.

Interviewer: Do you have anything that you want to add?

Participant 1: I don't have anything to add

Participant 2: I don't have anything to add also

Participant 3: The university tried to do a lot of things like just to make some of the things easier for international students, I could imagine like international student staying somewhere like off camp, it won't be something easy, it will be very difficult for such person to call bits, the place you will be renting, be it even travelling to that place, just a lot of things.

Participant 5: I think the university; I will give you an example like the way they supposed to for international students the process of coming here, you apply you get the place, but then the issue of getting a permit wouldn't help you on that, you do it by yourself of which the process is very difficult process, so if they could maybe have

someone to help the student, first year students that are coming at the university to make that process easy because when you are back home like at the campus you would see that some of the universities coming with some people from their school representatives and the process will flow very easy but if you are alone the process will be so difficult so if the university could have some that represents the students there at the embassy so that the process of having that permit easier, I think Its fine and the issue of staying off campus like if you get 90% you are then taken off campus that should be like international students should be excluded from that, because it's hard to stay off campus because like what we are saying, the issue of language how would you be able to stay off campus like everyone there they are speaking, and now you cannot speak, it will be difficult for you to stay of campus.

Participant 4: Yaah… this guy was speaking about staying off campus, like they are just imagining how it could be like I am staying off campus and I can tell you that it can be tough out there. Actually, where I'm staying, the landlord there she doesn't speak English, not a word. She will come and speak for maybe 15 minutes and I say I don't understand but she won't stop and she will say a lot of things and they may be important but I don't understand. All the other tenants will make the changes or do what she asks but they don't tell me…that is really tough. and you tell her I don't understand the language, she doesn't care. So yaah… it can be really tough to stay off campus, so I think yaah… if the university could find a way to maybe reserve a place for international student on the campus, I think it will be much easier and also to add on what Participant 5 said, the issue of registering aah… it can be really hard for first years because like aah… in my own personal experience, there is this other certificate that they need………………that one you don't get it at the moment you apply and everything and you will get it later on so like they told me when I registered that if you don't get that certificate in these number of day we'll de-register you and like when I went to; for you to get that certificate you need to go to Pretoria like when I went there, they were saying like they were close and so on and so on, they were giving me a lot of excuses so it was a bit tough because I was always been called to the office, so as a first year student that experience is horrific, I can tell you because you will be in another country having to travel and do all that, it's a bit too hard for a first year student so I think yaah..if they could find a way to help us maybe even aah… with tha…….certificate and all, I think it will be much easier for international students in the coming years.

Interviewer: Did you know well Pretoria?

Participant 4: Yaah… personally I had gone there but someone might apply and might not know the places where and where to get the taxi and all that yaah…. So yaah.. I think it might be more problematic for someone who has never been there.

Participant 6: Aah… I believe that the university must stop the attitude of registering first year, recruiting then accepting then registering international students when they know that they have no intention to cater for them whilst they are here because you see that this …… you became a doormat to them the moment you became a student and for most of people you becomes hash, the conditions becomes hash when you are away from home, two, you do not know anything which is going on, if you look at some local students who do not; we are not covered by NSFAS there were plans which were made for them to acquire meal cards and those type of stuff, and those things they neglected international students when they are putting that process into play and it becomes has again for someone who is far away from home, who has to worry about; okay the person has to worry about studies and the same is operating in an empty stomach, it has become a mission impossible on its own because, you know when you are hungry you can't do anything, also on the issue of residents, ques. When we are registering the ques are so long and fast and they neglect that process that someone has travelled the whole night to leave their own country and they had to deal with the boarder, the boarder processes it's annoying on its own then you have to come here again and you have to stand in a que, you might find out that some other people won't even register by the end of the day and they have to look for somewhere to sleep, where are they going to sleep, you are far from home. They don't know anyone especially for first entering, they don't know anyone, they are far from home you don't have any food, they have to buy food, already that money, that little which was supposed to cover groceries and other essential stuff is now going to cover them; is now going to cover the process of buying takeaways and stuff, by the time they get to be registered and to be students you will see that they won't be having all the essential stuff that they need for them to register and that process on its own already the stress is coming in, hence they will be hindered by the dramatically outcomes from the university while you don't have food, two, you don't have all the essential needs, three, you are far from home, some of them eve wish they can go back home and you don't know anyone, it is the first time. For example, you are coming from somewhere down there in Zimbabwe and you are meeting people from Harare you don't know them personally like you are newbie's in an area, you don't know each other so it becomes a process on its own now you can't tell someone who have met for the first time that I don't have food, you see, on its

own it's a mission, on its own. The university must change the way its dealing with international students, the way they are processing their stuff, at least the least they can do is late they register early, same time they mustn't que also make sure they carter for them, they carter for their accommodation on campus regales of the pass rate

FOCUS GROUP 2

1. Can you tell me what your experience with your South African peers (at the University of Limpopo) is like?

Participant 10: **Here in South Africa or my relationship or my relationship with South African folks is great, it has been adventurous mmm around here we have a lot of tribes coming together, Tsongas, Pedi, Venda and Swati...these are the major ones so throughout my stay I have been able to analyse and I have been able to find uhmmm friends you know just people, I recite my comment and like I said it has been wonderful.**

Participant 7: **My experiences with South African peers are varied...I have peers who are open minded to the fact that I am not from South Africa and they want to learn more from me whereas others shy away from me and do not seem to take interest.**

Participant 9: The people I talk to usually end up being my friends or acquaintances

Participant 11: At first it was difficult but it was easy going on.

Interviewer: What was difficult?

Participant 11: People will look at me funny and, like they didn't want to be associated with someone from Zimbabwe

Participant 8: My first year in 2015 was horrid for me ... Socialising is a bit hard because for some reason I kept meeting people that only want to speak in their home language and weren't accommodative. For instance, the cleaners on campus pretend they don't understand English and I know they do…but that I can understand because they are old. Other students though…I mean classes are supposed to be in English…they just don't care, but I go used to it though and met awesome people so its ok.

Participant 12: **Mine was good. The people I always meet seem interested in where I was coming from and my language. I remember in class, a girl I was sitting next to asked me what 'Chineke' means because she always watched Nigerians movies at home and the actors always use the word.**

2. Do you feel your fellow students treat you differently (the South African ones) because you are an International student?

Participant 8: **Hehehe (Laughing) hmm people love Nigerians (smile). Some people wanted to be my friend just because I am an international student so in this aspect, being an international student works in my favour.**

Participant 10: Yes, yes, yes, they treat me different because that is what they have been made to do they have been given the power to treat me different because they are also treated differently so hence they have no choice but to do the same.

Participant 11: Yes, people will just look at me like I don't belong here, like I said, they looked at me funny and treated me differently

Participant 7: Yes, I do.

Participant 9: Definitely...sometimes they like wait she is Nigerian? Say something in Nigerian (roll eyes)

Interviewer: Participant 1, How so?

Participant 7: As for me, they used to look at me like im not from this planet but things got better

Participant 12: Different in terms of what?

Interviewer: The way of communicating, behaving, associating?

Participant 12: In terms of communicating, sometimes some students will stick with their Pedi language knowing that I can't communicate back. Some will even act like you stole something from them, and others don't have a problem. I guess it differs with a person.

3. How does it feel to be in a foreign country?

Participant 12: South Africa is a beautiful country and I love it here.

Participant 10: It is lovely, it is a good country, it is a good state compared to where am from...it is lovely

Participant 9: At first it felt odd. I came here when I was 14 years old. The dynamics of having a neighbourhood changed from business, education and culture is difficult you feel homesick and excluded. When I started at UL I was treated like a 'freak show,' I felt weird. Where I come from, everyone minded their own business …here it is different…they gossip a lot this makes me miss home a lot …even today

Participant 11: Uhm, it is a nice country, I mean South Africa and so far I can't complain about anything. I feel good.

Participant 7: It used to feel foreign at first in my earlier years but now it has become my second home because the people I live with are welcoming

126

Participant 8: I have been in South Africa since 2006, so it grows on you

4. How does South African culture differ with that of your country?

Participant 10: **Uhmmm It differs in a lot of ways because around here culture is celebrated to the core... of which I think is quiet interesting and quiet nice it is very good... the way civilisation is taking its way into different countries. you guys have heritage day whereby you celebrate your culture so compared to Nigeria...we are English speaking and colonised by the British to the core so we grew up not having a culture of our own so we tend to be like an English man but here no matter what civilisation or education, there is still a culture element I mean I could say, the tongues, there is Venda, there is Tsonga**

Participant 8: I'm not sure how to answer this (silence), our cultures are totally different...really not sure how to answer this

Participant 11: yooooo (laughs), a lot differs. I was shocked when I got here and I saw people wearing almost nothing and their clothes don't cover a lot of skin, I mean where I come from, older women will cover you and in my village, women wear skirts and not pens. A lot differs between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Participant 7: **In some sense they are similar but also differs here and there....mmmm the issue of many South Africans believing in ancestors is really what strikes most as where am from I do not know of such practices.**

Participant 12: South Africa 'laughs', I was amazed when I saw girls moving around half naked and people around here even old people are fine with it and it's like no one is saying anything.

Participant 9: The languages in South Africa compared to ours in Nigeria...it's like Greek and French

Number 2: We are always covered up and imagine my surprise and shock when I saw girls in just skirts and their boobs hanging out (shaking head), to guys going to mountains to get circumcised and to girls doing virginity tests. All those were definitely a culture shock. To the pronunciations of some words and the traditional dances and different kind of music and the food, It's totally different from my culture

5. Do you find it easy to blend in with the culture of the community you are currently living in?

Participant 8: It took me some time but yes.

Participant 7: yes, it is okay.

Participant 12: Well I heard about it before and when I got to experience it in first hand, it was shocking but I kind of expected it to happen.

Participant 9: I am an open minded person and I accept things as they come. I also try my best to adjust but still be me. I am from a fast paced environment from Lagos so being at Turf which is very quiet ...it took a little bit for me to get used to it but eventually I did

Participant 11: It took me sometime but I got to accept it.

Participant 10: No I didn't find it easy getting to accustom myself with the people around here though when I came in the country so I came to the city and I met very civilised folks and it was easy for me to talk but when I relocated to Turfloop

6. What are the similarities that you share with your South African peers, in terms of culture?

Participant 7**: The issue of bridal price... lobola.... the fact that before you marry someone, you need to pay something to the family of the person you are going to marry. In Africa we share this – it is a bit different in this country [the process of lobola] but it means the same thing**

Participant 11: **I agree with participant 1, the bridal price is something that we also practice.**

Participant 8: Hahaha Nigerians are loud ass niggas and so are Tsongas...that is the only similarities I see...Pedi's are not really cultured to me so I don't see similarities here.

Participant 10: South Africa...eeeeeh,

Participant 9: Respect. **We respect our elders...I feel like it is an African thing in general...and the concept of lobola as well...we also have that in my country.**

Participant 12: **yaaaaaaa, the lobola and respect of elders**.

7. Have you ever experienced negative attitudes or treatment from your peers (or if living off campus from people not registered at the University)?

Participant 7: Besides being called by different names, there is nothing

Participant 9: On campus actually...from someone during the xenophobia period after Mandela passed away...someone tried to spark a xenophobic thing on camp...I spoke out and was attacked but I also got support from other students in the group.

Participant 8: Not really...the only thing that annoys me is that since I'm African and I am in UL, people automatically expect me to know their language especially Pedi and sometimes some people don't even stop speaking Pedi after I told them I don't understand.

8. What has motivated you to further your studies in a foreign country?

Participant 9: **My family is here. I am "home."**

Participant 7: I wanted to have a wider perspective on life as I believe life doesn't start and end within one's comfort zone.

Participant 8: My parents moved here a while ago so I had no choice. I would probably have wanted to come here anyway

Participant 10: My family encouraged me to study here and I wanted to explore too.

Participant 11: Same here

Participant 12: My friends are here and they were always advising me to come and on top of that I didn't want to study at home.

9. How do you deal with any social challenges here? (Researcher will outline what she means by social challenges if necessary for instance, xenophobia, discrimination, etc.).

Participant 8: ha ha ha ha, I don't, I am an introvert.

Participant 7: It was difficult because in my first year eish (shaking head), there was a girl who used to call me a 'lekwerekwere' (A foreigner). She used to tell me that she will never date or marry a 'lekwerekwere'

Participant 9: I am a friendly person and I like to talk and laugh...but if I find that Im getting attitude I simply move on.

Interviewer: Move on as in avoiding them

Participant 9: Yes

Participant 11. When I feel challenged, I usually call home and talk to my family. They always remind me of the reason why I am at university so that I don't give up on my studies or drop out. I also understand that my family has spent a lot of money to put me here (University of Limpopo). I can't disappoint them after the sacrifices they made for me to further my studies So I avoid everything

Participant 10: I remember I was walking from academic area to my room and some guys who are South African where coming my way also and the other guy said, (showing sign of inverted commas) "it is obvious that she is not South African and you can tell by the way she is dressed and her facial parts". Instead of just being fine with it, I felt hurt because of the manner he said it. But I spoke with my friend after that and I just let it go

Interviewer: Participant 4, Do you understand why he said your "facial parts"

Participant 10: Uhmmmm

Participant 12: Can I answer for you?

Participant 10: (she laughs), yes you can

Partcipant 12: The thing is, you see with South African people, they have this thing I don't how to put it....uhhmmmmmm, they have this mentality that all foreigners have certain parts on their face that are way too big , it can be your nose or lips, or ears, head, so they say that foreigners have that and they can identify us by that. But then we also come across South African people who have big heads, nose, ears and other parts so I don't know if it means they are also not from South Africa. To answer your question, on campus, I have not experienced bad treatment but that doesn't mean that it is not happening, the discrimination, it is happening to most of the international students that I know. I don't know if I will say I am lucky or maybe is the people that I am usually associating with, but off campus when one pass, and they here you talk maybe when you go to town and in a taxi, You get people who stare at you like you are naked or you should be ashamed of yourself. They are always nice until they hear me speak and then they are not nice. I can say they are discriminating me in terms of my ethnicity. Some will say we sell drugs because everyone out there thinks that if you are a Nigerian it means you sell drugs. They think we all sell drugs, steal and are involved with human trafficking or rape. For example, foreigners were attacked because people here think we are in South Africa to steal their jobs. That was the reason for xenophobic attacks

What kind of social adjustments have you had to make (if any)?

Participant 7: I had to accept the differences in perceptions of people from different backgrounds and bring myself to their social way of thinking

Interviewer: What way of thinking? Can you please elaborate?

Participant 12: Not really...eeeeeh, no.

Participant 7: The fact that others will look at me as lekwerekwere and there is nothing I can do about it.

Participant 10: I accepted that we can never be equal with South African students, It's not only them, it starts economically, our fees is not the same as theirs. Academically, lectures sometimes forget about us in the class and they speak their language and our peers also look at us as if we are deliberately stealing their jobs, the community attacks us, God knows their reasons why. So I accepted that I can never be like them

Participant 8: Nah, no adjustment, in the right crowd I'm okay.

Participant 9: Not to always talk in my pidgin English or my language especially when I get too excited...I always have to adjust every time I get back to campus from home, like I said my family is here so am always talking in my language whenever am home...hardly any English because I miss it.

Participant 11: Adjustment? I just had to learn to stay away from people who are xenophobic and I will survive. I also agree with participant 2 that in the right crowd, no need to change but at the same time it is rare to find the right crowd unless if you mean the right crowd is our fellow peers from the same country. Participant 6 seems not to have any challenges at all, maybe he fitted in perfectly because of his personality.

Participant 12: I will say personality counts and also knew people and they introduce me to their South African friends who are cool but I also get weird looks when I am off campus. So I would not say I am safe because I will sometimes need to go to town to the home affairs to fix my study permits and find people within the community who wouldn't like me.

10. Do you feel any stress or anxiety or have any other psychological issues (an explanation for this will be given?

Participant 7: No

Participant 10: At the beginning it was very stressful, also the people around me didn't make it easy. Even the lectures because they sometime teach in their own language and I don't understand any of it

Participant 11: True, I agree with participant 4, they sometimes forget about us

Participant 10: Yes, I experience challenges academically due to lecturers speaking in their own language. I asked one of my classmates what the lecturer said and I was given the wrong information. It affected my work badly

Interviewer: Have you ever tried to raise it?

Participant 11: To who? We stress about school work and also stress about how we are treated. But it is not always the case. And like I said, I accepted how things are, some people will always be mean and some people are nice.

Interviewer: Participant 6? Do you have anything you will like to share?

Participant 12: Well, I the stress I experienced was having to meet deadlines for assignments, study for tests and exams…but nothing else

Participant 8: No

Participant 9: Just normal school stress

11. Do you feel that you have had any cultural challenges (an explanation will be provided if necessary for instance, different traditions, language, etc.)?

Participant 7: I haven't had cultural shock

Participant 12: I always heard about how South African women dress, revealing more skin and everything, I would say I was shocked when I heard about the news but when I was

coming here I wanted to see for sure that whatever I was hearing was true. The food also was interesting, I would say I was shocked but it didn't take a long time to adapt to the kind of food, dressing but the languages are so many too. The university is full of diverse people.

Participant 9: All the time, Like I said in some cases South Africa is Greek, Nigeria is French

Participant 8: Nope

Participant 11: I was shocked that South Africa has so many official languages, and we have the Northern Sotho, is it right?

Interviewer: Yes

Participant 10: ...and there are types of Sotho speaking, Sepedi from another place and Sepedi from another place and recently I just learned that there is another language from Tzaneen, and is also Pedi but not Pedi, aaaaaai, it is confusing, and the food, most of our food, we fry them, and you guys boil them.

Participant 11: Yes, the food especially. You guys are always boiling. I still remember one student who I was sharing the kitchen with at the residence was surprised when I added cooking oil in the 'morogo', she said I should not put it in. I said we eat greasy food

Have you anything further you would like to add?

Participant 8: No I don't

Participant 7: Nothing, that's all.

Participant 9: No

Participant 11: Uhmmm noooo

Interviewer: Participant 10 and 12

Participant 12: No (shaking head)

Participant 10: No

FOCUS GROUP 3

Can you tell me what your experience with your South African peers (at the University of Limpopo) is like?

Participant 13: As for me Participant 1 they are not that bad yaah!

Interviewer: What do you mean by "not bad"?

Participant 13: I have good and bad experiences

Participant 17: As for me. The experience has been challenging but not as challenging as I expected.

Interviewer: What where your expectation?

Participant 17: I expected to be hated for just coming from Nigeria. I was warned back at home about the xenophobic attacks and that people when they here Nigeria, all they think of is drugs, human trafficking and for that I won't be liked that much.

Interviewer: okay

Participant 16: The experience is great. There good times and bad times. It is mmmmmmm fascinating. Well it has its ups and downs.... the culture, the language, the country itself. Some students are interested in where I come from, they will ask me about my country and some..., I guess one can never be liked by all.

Participant 15: Since I came here when I was doing grade 9 until now they treated me very good, they teach me their language, they have been so nice to me, even until now they still are.

Participant 14: As for me Participant 14, they are nice people yaah, we really get along quite well.

Participant 18: My experiences with my South African is okay. Uhmmmmm, we get along though it was not always like this. At first it was difficult but now its fine.

4.7 Do you feel your fellow students treat you differently (the South African ones) because you are an International student?

Participant 13: Ooh yes as for me Participant 1 yaah, like ya, I was offended especially in philosophy group.

Interviewer: do you mind sharing?

Participant 13: There was this other pic that they were sending on the group, they were like, are you Zimbabwean or what? They just think that it's us foreigners when it goes wrong, something like that.

Participant 17: well yesssss. People will look at me as if I just stole millions of dollars and as if like me being in the same room as them is offensive.

Participant 18: To add on what participant uhmmmmm, participant 5 (pointing finger) said. On campus or off campus, you get people who still look at me as if I am lost and do not belong here. Immediately when you start talking and when they ask you where you come from and you say Zim, all they think about is witchcraft. Witchcraft is everywhere but they act as if people from other African countries are the inventors.

Participant 14: As for me Participant 2 , ooh yes we had an incident, like this other time they were cleaning the bathrooms and there were these ladies, they said the toilets and the bathrooms they blocked because its Zimbabwean girls, because what they eat they are malnourished and they are constipated so they blocked the bathrooms and sometimes when they are there they can speak their language to you and you don't understand, you ask them to translate they will just say, when you are in Rome do what Romans do, yet they don't teach you their language.

Participant 15: Sometimes when I tell them am an international student they don't believe because they say how do you speak Sepedi fluently but then I was like no, it's not like when you an international you have to show yourself that you are international.

Participant 16: **In my side, I always get groups that will side-line me in class, and they don't want to work with me.**

Participant 17: **True, I agree with participant 4 but with me it is not always like that. Some students think that because I'm an international student, it means I'm probably smarter than them, and they will just automatically nominate me to be a group leader and thinks that i know all the answer.**

Interviewer: Don't you think that maybe the reason why they choose you as their leader is because it is their way of showing you that they accept you and you are part of them?

Participant 17: ha ha ha ha.... maybe.

4.8   How does it feel to be in a foreign country?

Participant 13: It feels so good, experience, you get to know different people, different cultures.

Participant 14: It feels so good sometimes to be here. You explore, you learn other cultures what they do and you learn to respect their cultures and their beliefs but on the other side it can be bad when they [students and community in SA] don't respect yours [culture]. Sometimes I feel homesick when they exclude me from activities or they speak in their languages and sometimes I feel offended by the way these people act

Participant 15: It feels good. I have been here for a long time now and it is good.

Participant 16: I can't complain. It is what it is.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Participant 16: Some days are good and some days are bad, in good days I get to enjoy to be in South Africa. For example, we get to go to gala dinners for international students. We eat and enjoy ourselves. There are some challenges. You feel like you just want to go home or you think that if only you were home none of these thigs would be happening to you. You just… you just don't feel you belong and you just want to pack everything up and go home

Participant 17: It feels just fine.

Participant 18: I like the sense of fashion here, the food and I got to know different cultures.

4.9   How does South African culture differ with that of your country?

Participant 13: The culture differs a lot because in our culture we were told many things they are many rules that you have to do, those rules you have to obey them no matter what, but

here sometimes you find out that……. you will find out that here they will be like here we do this we do this but then when you in your country sometimes you are not allowed to do the things that you do here.

Interviewer: (Can you give me an example)

Participant 15: I think I will add onto that participant 1, like the strike, normally in our country we don't just strike like what they do, it's not our culture to strike.

Participant 17: But that is not culture, most people in different countries strike. Just that in our culture we were told that when an older person speaks, it is final. In our country, there was no way you can oppose rules. Even the president. You obey.

Participant 14: **As for me I find it amazing how here in South Africa their fees is paid, everything, it's done for them, they have bursaries they have what, but in Zim as for us our parents work hard for us to go to school and you don't strike for anyone, if you can't pay, that's your own problem, and there is no one to assist you, we don't have bursaries or what. So it amazes me that people are given allowances and some they abuse their allowances as for us, if we get the allowances we use them wisely like you add onto the fees and what**.

Participant 16: I think the people of South Africa have a beautiful culture but as for me I think that our peers are not cultural because they don't obey their rules. But that is how I see it. Maybe they like to wear their clothes. The difference is that here; ladies go to.... the mountain initiation schools and we don't.

Participant 18: I was shocked by the mountain school too. We don't do that.

4.10 Do you find it easy to blend in with the culture of the community you are currently living in?

Participant 15: Yaah, kind like I did because sometimes how do you get along with South African, where I was staying there were Pedis only but then here I have to deal with Tsongas, Vendas, its all of them we get along, we talk, its fine.

Participant 16: It got easy with time.

Participant 18: South Africa has so many tribes, as participant 3 mentioned a few of them and to learn and try to understand each and every culture, will take forever but I feel like when we are at school, there is a certain culture that the university have and we all have to adhere to it.

Interviewer: Like?

Participant 18: I can't think of any now. Uhmmmmmm let me think

Participant 17: The way we dress as students. I remember, one of the girls that I know, she always said when she is here at school she has a way of dressing and at home she does not get to wear the clothes at home.

Participant 18: yaaaa. The campus is a community on its own.

Participant 14: As for me I think we have different cultures, I find it easy to blend in like, maybe we can have common things in our cultures and share our different cultures so I found it easy to blend in with people.

Participant 17: It was not easy to blend but what choice do I have.

Participant 13: Yaah, it's not that easy but then I will have to a way to adjust to their culture and stuff.

4.11 What are the similarities that you share with your South African peers, in terms of culture?

Participant 14: can't complain about it but it was strange how most girls prefer to be staying with a boyfriend without being married. In my country that is a serious taboo

Participant 15: I have to agree

Participant 13: Agreeing (nodding head)

Participant 16: **I also agree, also the way we should respect older people, I think that's a similarity [with other African countries] too**

Interviewer: People have different ways of expressing their respects, would you agree? With us Africans, what do we mean by respect?

Participant 17: Respect means you cannot talk when older people talk to you. You wait for your turn. You don't argue with them...aaannnd you don't question their decisions.

Participant 18: Yes, lobola and respect.

4.12 Have you ever experienced negative attitudes or treatment from your peers (or if living off campus from people not registered at the University)?

Participant 18: Yees... like I already mentioned before. Some people don't like because of where I come from.

Participant 15: I haven't.

Participant 16: That one is obvious. I remember when I went to home affairs to try to organise my study permit, I didn't even know where the home affairs was. But I asked around and I finally got there. The trip itself to go to town was stressful and some people would look at me and you will see their face like (demonstrating a frowning face).

Participant 13: I did, it's not like always, it just happens here and there……

Participant 14: As for me I haven't.

Participant 17: Yes but not all the time.

4.13 What has motivated you to further your studies in a foreign country?

Participant 13: As for me, our economy in Zimbabwe is not that good so I think we need to work hard in this foreign land [to get a degree] so that we can to support our families at home

Participant 15: I also agree about that and also about how you pay fees here. You pay them as time goes by until end of the year but in Zimbabwe you have to pay every semester and you have to make sure that you finish each payment. Here we can run up our balance to 200 000 and they don't chase use.

Participant 14: As for me I had an uncle who studied here in South Africa, so it just motivated me that if he can I can also do it.

Participant 18: I have always wanted to study in a foreign country. I don't know why but ever since it was me, I just wanted to study in a foreign country.

Participant 17: My parents suggested it and I said yes

Participant 16: Same as participant 3

4.14 How do you deal with any social challenges here? (Researcher will outline what she means by social challenges if necessary for instance, xenophobia, discrimination, etc.).

Participant 13: Sometimes I just distance myself, when its …..time I just have to ignore because I can't intervene what I know it's not good at all so I just distance myself and leave out of that.

Participant 14: Like these strikes they don't concern me, they affect me but I don't benefit from what they are striking for, so I just stay away and not being part of it.

Participant 15: I also agree with them, I ignore it

Participant 16: I walk away

Participant 17: Same here

Participant 18: Me too

4.15 What kind of social adjustments have you had to make (if any)?

Participant 14: I had to adjust, I no longer use my home language like I do when at home. Like I had to start to adjust to speaking English so that I can communicate with other people since we are from different countries with different cultures

Participant 13: Yaah I think I agree with her

Participant 15: I have nothing to add.

Participant 16: I agree with participant 2

Participant 17: I had to learn not to associate myself with everyone because of who I am and where I come from. Some people don't like us so I had to choose friend wisely

Participant 18: Same here

4.16 Do you feel that you have had any cultural challenges (an explanation will be provided if necessary for instance, different traditions, language, etc.)?

Participant 15: As for me, in our culture in Zimbabwe we don't wear short skirts. Yes, there are people who wear them sometimes but you don't walk around like that, other people might think they are selling themselves. You know so why don't they just remove their clothes

Participant 14: As for me I had a cultural shock when I came here because people…. the way they dress…. we don't dress likes that at home. If you walk to the taxi rank like that they will strip you naked because they say you want to walk naked so just walk without anything because you are revealing parts of your body. Yes, so it was a cultural shock to me but I find it strange that the guys here accept that their fellow country women dress like that.

Participant 13: As for me I feel like it's a bit awkward but then its sometimes okay for the m to see that way, at least there are chances of reducing those crimes like rape and stuff at least they know now rather than going and stripping someone's clothes just to see.

Participant 18: I was shocked to see how girls dress here but I can't complain about it, also how most girls prefer to be staying with a boyfriend without being married. In my country that is a serious taboo

Participant 16: Me too

Participant 17: I was shocked but I also I can't complain.

4.17 Do you feel any stress or anxiety or have any other psychological issues (an explanation for this will be given?

Participant 13: School stress

Participant 14: Mostly school work

Interviewer: How do you cope with school stress and the social change at the same time?

Participant 13: I think I would not have survived if I was here alone [there were no other international students] because of all the academic difficulties I have experienced. I would have given up and just dropped out because it not likes home…but like, I do have friends from Zim[babwe] so I talk to them and we just remind each other why we are here…. life goes on

Participant 15: The stress that I get is when I have to complete things as part of group assignment or because the structure of the assignments is difficult ….and I don't get included in the group properly

Participant 17: The struggle of working in a group is real I sometimes can't hear what they will say and they like using their own language when they talk, sometimes is difficult to interact with them because they just talk amongst themselves. I get stressed and I feel like there is nothing I can do.

Participant 16: I get homesick and then I feel depressed. I stress too much. My worry is when I have to work with people who already don't like me and I don't speak their language…what can I do. It takes time to learn a new language. How do I change that? I think it would have been better if I had done something wrong [to them] but I didn't. How do I change their negative attitudes?

Participant 6: I sometimes feel lonely and as if I don't belong here

4.18 Have you anything further you would like to add?

Participant 13: No

Participant 14: For me that's true, because that's also what happened to me I had to wait for my study permit from January up to march and I was not seeing lectures all along then I came in march the university didn't even assist or anything, they don't answer the phones or emails they don't reply so you will be confused what's happening am I still registered or what, so they really need to communicate or help if they can't help maybe they can just communicate, it better that way. Reply our emails and assist student with their study permit and yaah!

Participant 18: I agree

Participant 15: No

Participant 16: No

Participant 17: No

FOCUS GROUP 4

1. Can you tell me what your experience with your South African peers (at the University of Limpopo) is like?

Participant 23: Well it differs because they are different people, same have been nice and same have been like okay, but you know some are happy to see an international student they like asking question about where am from they actually ask me stuff in my language but so far it has been good because I met different people and interesting people yaah!

Participant 19: Uhmmmmm, my experience with my South African peers has been great and you know with guys, we don't take time to make friends unlike girls, although there were bad vibes there and there...but not anything hectic

Participant 21: It's been fine, I have stayed in black community and white communities and somehow the black communities are networked and privacy is not so respected. White communities seem to be safe, private but traumatic if profiled. I had good and bad times from both black and white communities.

Interviewer: what do you mean when you say traumatic if profiled?

Participant 20: It is just fine. It was not what I expected but it was just fine.

Participant 24: So far the experience is okay. It started a little bit shaky and rough as we were first years and we did not know the place and around the campus and I got lost few times but overall it is fine.

Participant 22: **My experience is fine. Making friends was just a scary thing for me but I guess its because I was new. Now I have friends. UL is my second home.**

2. Do you feel your fellow students treat you differently (the South African ones) because you are an International student?

Participant 19: Ha Ha Ha ha, Uhm yes. Like I said, there are good moments where you find people so interested in my country and what it looks like, and if the Nigerian movies they watch visualise the real country...and you also get those people who just don't like you because of what they think Nigerian do....let me give an example, there was a text on WhatsApp that was circulating about a Nigerian man who slept with a South African woman and gave her some sort of a disease or STI and that made the women's private part to develop some worms or something in the name of being rich, so imagine if I were to say hi to a lady after the text. Ha ha ha ha ha.

Participant 20: Not really. I don't know. I think it's because my language is one of the languages in South Africa.

Participant 22: Honestly, No.

Participant 24: Yes, I don't know how to explain it but it is tense around South African pupils. I don't know if you understand me but that is how it feels.

Participant 23: Yes, yes I do, sometimes like in a good way/Bad way, sometimes girls treat me like as if am too special in class since am a class Rep. so sometimes I feel like it's getting too much and sometimes I feel like they just don't want me around.

Participant 21: No I fit in now, especially after being in South Africa for a longer period. Also I have moved less, so my neighbours have known me a long time. However, I have seen foreigners or international students get treated good and bad because of their citizenship

3. How does it feel to be in a foreign country?

Participant 23: Okay, I just think that it was difficult at first like the first time you get here when you see the difference. I think that's the moment you find it difficult to adapt. When I got here I saw girls walking half naked. I was shocked but now I am not even shocked. I think when it's time to go back to my own country I won't be shocked if they do it there. Perhaps we are moving towards that [how women dress]. It is a process, maybe a bit intense at first, but with time I'm getting used to it [the culture in SA

Participant 21: It differs from country to country. I have been to four SADC countries and exciting at times especially early days. It could be stressful, trying to get a piece job or get to school, fit in. Later as you stay long in a foreign country you fit in and it becomes your new home.

Participant 22: No

Participant 20: I don't feel like I am in a foreign country. I feel home.

Participant 24: It has moments. You know sometimes you enjoy like when I'm with friends and we get to socialise and go to events here at school and sometimes it is bad when you see people not liking you for no reason.

Participant 19: It feels okay. Although, I sometimes miss home. South Africa is a good country but at the same time, there is no place like home.

4. How does South African culture differ with that of your country?

Participant 23: It differs a lot because there are things that we do in my country that it's so different from where, like in terms of education, we don't use age in our country to go to school like grade 1 learner can start at 6, but there we can go to school whenever the child is ready, so it's like our ……. it's too fast and there it goes with age so that the child is able to accommodate the class, but there as long as your brain or you have the capacity for that class you can go to that class

Participant 22: It does not differ.

Participant 24: It differs but not that much. In our country,

Participant 19: South Africa and Nigeria differs a lot.

Participant 21: South Africans are mostly urban by people and this has impacted a lot on the culture. However, Zimbabwe has no national dress or attire like South African tribes and we also don't have tribe gatherings for most events as in South Africa. I am Shona of Karanga dialect, Ndebele tribe in Zimbabwe is related to the South African Zulu culture. In Zimbabwe Christianity.

Participant 20: It does not. Like I said, Swatis are here in South Africa.

5. Do you find it easy to blend in with the culture of the community you are currently living in?

Participant 23: Aah, not really, am trying but not really because I have met different cultures and am not sure which is which, am still trying to get used to all those and so, but am trying you know, some are similar to each other so it's like easier to remember some of the things and all those stuff but am trying.

Participant 19: **I will say it was not bad, with guys it doesn't take time. First day it was stressful but as time passed by, things started to be easy to do and got the hang of the place.**

Participant 21: I **speak Zulu and English, I also understand Sotho and Xhosa therefore it helps me to fit in many set ups.**

Participant 22: **Yes. In terms of language, Sepedi is not far-fetched from Setswana**

Participant 20: I met my fellow Swatis. And I just blended.

6. What are the similarities that you share with your South African peers, in terms of culture?

Participant 23: Aah! Am not sure

Participant 21: **We have a strong sense of identity at tribal level. Shona culture is closely related to Venda and even words in our languages. Here, there are many cultural norms we share.**

Participant 19: **The Lobola practice is common in our culture.**

Participant 24: Me too

Participant 22**: I don't think there is much of difference between my country (Botswana) and South Africa. What Tswana's do in South Africa, we also do back home.**

Participant 20: **In my country we practice Lobola too**.

7. Have you ever experienced negative attitudes or treatment from your peers (or if living off campus from people not registered at the University)?

Participant 23: On campus yaah, but I assume that its normal because you know we don't always like everybody so I assume that it's part of what it is, and off campus, I have been off campus few times, okay, when am going to Shoprite but really that time I go with my friend or my cousin, and the, the other time I went off campus it's when I went to visit my friend that was then, it was okay.

Participant 19: I don't know how to answer that question, okay let me tell you what happened, I was with my friends, walking to the complex and when we got to the shops, my friends were talking and I was quiet and everyone around was just minding their own

business, and my phone rang, and it was my mom, and I answered, speaking my own language, and everyone started to give me some looks. I don't know if it counts as a negative attitude or what?

Participant 24: Yes, it is a negative attitude, if it was not, they wouldn't have given you that kind of a look. Why didn't they look at your friends that way when they were talking?

Participant 19: ha ha ha ha-ha..but you are right.

Interviewer: Okay participant 6, have you ever experienced negative treatment?

Participant 24: Most of the times yes. I don't know when this thing is going to end. My brother said the time he was working in Joburg, he got attacked when he was walking and nobody bothered to help him and when I got here, some men were just threatening me, I didn't hear them but I could just tell whatever they were saying was not good at all.

8. What has motivated you to further your studies in a foreign country?

Participant 23: I came to South Africa because my Dad was here and he was also working here so that's why we all came here. We were staying in the Eastern Cape so I came from Eastern Cape to Limpopo because for international students it actually the cheapest university. When we applied it was easier than going to other universities as they don't ask for so much stuff…others ask for things like medical aids. I mean it's hard for an international student to get a medical aid …. other universities, they ask for medical aid before registration. It's easier to get used to the environment here because I know others who are registered

Participant 21: Totally economic reasons. I visited Botswana first then moved to South Africa. Zimbabwe was collapsing at that time and South Africa was a world ahead of Zimbabw.e

Participant 20: Me too, I agree with Participant 21.

Participant 24: Most of my siblings are in South Africa, so that is why I came here. But I chose UL because my brother thought it was not as hectic as that side of Johannesburg and also its cheaper compared to University of Johannesburg or Wits or UP.

Participant 19: My parents thought it will be good to do my undergraduate in a country that is not fair and reasonable in expenses because I always wanted to study in France, so they said I should first study here my undergraduate and my postgraduate, maybe France.

Participant 22: My family encouraged me to study here.

9. How do you deal with any social challenges here? (Researcher will outline what she means by social challenges if necessary for instance, xenophobia, discrimination, etc.)

Participant 21: I deal with the discrimination by not going off campus alone or late. I usually stay on campus. I know I am safe in my room.

Participant 23: In terms of discrimination and xenophobia, I haven't really even faced it head on but I just heard that people do talk about me like they don't like me and other stuff, but I have not faced it like head on, so am not sure but I don't, if in terms of communication maybe when someone is talking to me and I don't understand what they are saying I just ask the person nicely, can you please speak English, I don't understand.

Participant 19: I think the best solution here is to avoid anything that brings trouble, People might not like us and there is nothing we can do because we don't even know why they don't like us. I wish they could just come to us, talk and we could hear their concerns and get to the bottom of them. It's unfortunate that the only thing we get from most of the students here is negative attitudes and attacks. The only way to survive is to avoid them [SA students]. I am here to study and that is what I will focus on.

Participant 20: I didn't have any problems.

Participant 22: Me too (smiles)

Participant 24: As for me if it was my way, I would ban everyone who ill-treat other people, whether is bullying or discriminating or xenophobic attacks, but it is not. So I just avoid it since my family always say I must avoid it

10. What kind of social adjustments have you had to make (if any)?

Participant 23: Like now I am trying to learn the language… so I had to start learning a new language, especially the greetings so that at least I can say hello. I don't think I have made any major adjustments yet

Participant 21: To add on, I realised that most women here don't like their hair to be blown out. (laughs).

Participant 22: I don't know, there is nothing I guess

Participant 20: (Laughing while shaking head), nothing

Participant 24: I don't know, maybe adjust in terms of clothes and learn a common language which is Sepedi.

Participant 19: I had to learn the basics of Pedi because the majority are BaPedi here. I learnt how to greet people, Le kae? (How are you?) Re gona? (I am fine).

11. Do you feel any stress or anxiety or have any other psychological issues (an explanation for this will be given?

Participant 23: **I don't really feel much of that because my cousin is here so, almost every day we are together, so I have less of home sickness and if its home sickness just sometimes I will be like aah, if I was at home I will be doing this and this and that, but not really, not much yaah**.

Participant 19: I sometimes get frustrated when people as well as the lecturer and students speaks in their language in class and maybe you find the lecturer cracking a joke and everyone laughs, it makes me feel excluded like I don't belong here, as if I am lost.

Participant 21: I agree with participant 1 because I stress sometimes when you can't hear anything in class

12. Do you feel that you have had any cultural challenges (an explanation will be provided if necessary for instance, different traditions, language, etc.)?

Participant 23: Yes it did, I don't know which culture, the one that does [Zulu] the reed dance, where girls walk around without bras. When I first saw it I was like really! No, I will never do that… but you know its culture, so we have to get used to it

Interviewer: Xibelani?

Participant 23: yaah, I was like wow! Everything is changing out there, we are kids or we are teenagers, we are young adults, we are trying to do whatever that is there, ….me, I don't have Bok shorts but I have crop top, I don't mind wearing it as long as it doesn't reveal everything

Interviewer: would you wear it at home?

Participant 23: **I don't know, not really, because am usually like inside, inside am like I don't really like this stuff..but if it is done here it can be done there (culturally).**

Interviewer: is it because of the culture there?

Participant 20: **I don't mind. We also have the reed dance as Swatis back at home [Swaziland] and I embrace my culture. There is nothing wrong with it.**

Participant 22: I have nothing to say.

Participant 24: Yes, it did, I don't know which culture, the one that does [Zulu] the reed dance, where girls walk around without bras. When I first saw it I was like really! No, I will never do that… but you know its culture, so we have to get used to it

Participant 21**: In Zimbabwe we have a vegetable garden at almost every home. Here the market is efficient, and no agriculture in urban homes. However, it is the same diet, just you pay for everything. Culture is not too different**

13. Have you anything further you would like to add?

Participant 23: Not really because I feel like the school is really trying for us international students, yaah, they are so far, they have tried and I feel like we still need to do more, am not sure if this will affect you because , its, am not sure, there is this thing that they always do for international students like outing and they have been taken to the same over and over again and they spend more money on alcohol, sorry, because I don't drink and if I want to go somewhere you have to be able to provide for me so I didn't go there last time because I was at my sisters show, so my roommate was saying that there was more alcohol than drinks so they won't be able to accommodate those that don't drink and I have noticed everywhere, I don't mind people drinking as long as am able to be comfortable around you but there is nothing much.

 Participant 21: No

Interviewer: anyone?

Participant 19: No

Participant 20: No

Participant 22: No

Participant 24: No