



Reasons, Expectations and Reality: Why Postgraduate Students in Ireland

Choose to Migrate for Educational Purposes.

by

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ABSTRACT

Title: "Reasons, Expectations and Reality: Why Postgraduate Students in Ireland choose to Migrate for Educational Purposes."

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Postgraduate students migrate between countries and continents. The reasons, expectations, and reality experienced by migrant postgraduate students are complex and multifaceted, often shaped by a combination of personal, cultural, and systemic factors. The reasons for migration include but are not limited to better educational opportunity, career advancement, quality of life and escape from adversity. On arrival, these students often harbour high expectations, anticipating personal growth, academic excellence, enhanced career prospects, career enrichment and integration. This study seeks to explore the route taken by the migrant post graduate students in Ireland in meeting their expectations. It delves into the complex interplay between expectations and realities experienced by migrant postgraduate students, shedding light on the emotional landscape they navigate during their academic journeys. The 'biographical encounters' approach was used in the study to explore postgraduate migrant recounts, with the aim of uncovering the various economic, social, political, and environmental factors influencing their decisions to move to Ireland. Also, Migrant profiles were assigned based on participants narratives. The actual experiences of these students using qualitative interviews and deductive analysis revealed push and pull factors. By shedding light on the lived experiences of migrant postgraduate students, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the emotional dimensions of international education. It offers insights that can guide policymakers and educators in enhancing support, for this group in their migratory pursuits. The study also hints at areas for further investigation such, as the lasting effect of migration on postgraduate migrants and accommodation challenges.

Keywords – Migration, Postgraduate student migrants, reasons, expectations, push and pull, migrant profiles, migrant experiences.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU – European Union

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

NPV - Net Present Value

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PPP- Purchasing Power Parity

US- United States

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Migration has become a modern-day phenomenon reshaping countries worldwide in terms of population, economy, and culture. The increase in migration is fuelled by factors like political instability, economic gaps, and the appeal of better educational and career prospects. A noteworthy trend is the movement of students seeking higher education opportunities across borders, which has a profound impact on both the home country and the host country. Irelands reputable education system and stable economy have made it a preferred choice for students. This study delves into the experiences of migrant post graduate student in Ireland exploring their diverse migration journeys from deciding to move to settling in and planning for their future in the new country.

While existing studies extensively cover reasons driving global migration such as job opportunities or escaping poverty there is less insight, into why migrants chose to use education as a migration route. Research often overlooks the mix of economic, social, cultural, and personal factors that influence these students (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou 2022; De Haas *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, although there is data on the general trends of migration and student movement there is a lack of in-depth exploration into the personal journeys obstacles faced and adjustment strategies employed by postgraduate student migrants. Detailed accounts concerning their pursuits, social assimilation, and day to day life as students in Ireland are not thoroughly covered in existing studies (Simpson, 2022; Eleperuma and Wickramasinghe 2022).

Gaining insights into the motivations and experiences of postgraduate student migrants aids educational institutions and policymakers in host nations like Ireland to better understand the requirements and hurdles faced by this distinct group. This knowledge enables the creation of specific assistance programs and policies that improve their experiences and quality of life. Understanding the socio-economic effects of migration on these students can

enhance recruitment tactics, retention rates, as well as contribute to cultural diversity and economic prosperity in host countries. Additionally, this research contributes to the field of migration studies by highlighting student mobility dimensions often overshadowed by labour migration concerns (Sabater and Graham 2019; Laskiene *et al.*, 2020).

The main objective of this research is to explore the motivations behind expectations, and real-life experiences of postgraduate student migrants residing in Dublin, offering a comprehensive view of their migratory journey. The research aims to achieve this objective by utilizing the following research questions; What are the main factors that motivate postgraduate students to migrate to host countries for their education? How do push and pull factors such as economic opportunities, educational quality, and political stability influence their decision? What are the initial expectations of postgraduate student migrants regarding their academic experiences, career prospects, social integration, and quality of life upon arrival in the host country? What are the actual experiences of postgraduate student migrants during their study period in terms of academic adaptation, cultural adjustment, language barriers, financial issues, and availability of social support? How do the discrepancies between expected and actual experiences affect the well-being, academic success, and future migration plans of postgraduate student migrants?

This research through semi structured interviews delves into individual migration stories. By linking these narratives to migration theories and frameworks the research not only shines a light on personal accounts but also contributes to migration discourse by integrating theories on push pull factors, integration challenges and the socio-economic effects of migration, on individuals and host communities.

The research hypothesis suggests that while economic factors are important, cultural affinity, educational standards and perceived social stability significantly influence postgraduate students decisions to migrate (Erin *et al.*, 2018; Eleperuma & Wickramasinghe 2022). The research findings show the complex nature of migration, revealing how migrants are influenced by a combination of adverse conditions at home and attractive opportunities in the

intended host country. Visa types shape long-term residency intentions, with policies around visa flexibility and family reunification proving significant. Postgraduate student migrants display diverse profiles, which range from those fleeing intolerable conditions to those driven by curiosity or professional aspirations, each individual adopting unique strategies to navigate legal and employment challenges in their new environments. Moreover, non-economic motivations such as educational quality, cultural experiences, and personal development are highlighted as significant factors driving migration.

This research contributes to the existing literature on migration by providing a detailed exploration of factors that influence postgraduate student-migrant decisions, therefore enhancing our understanding of the diverse motivations behind migration. The research findings have significant policy implications, they suggest the need for more flexible visa policies that include provisions for family reunification and clearer residency pathways for postgraduate migrant students. Additionally, further improvement of non-economic factors such as educational quality and cultural opportunities can help attract more postgraduate students. The findings also illustrate that the development of comprehensive support systems and integration programs can help postgraduate student migrants navigate effectively through the legal and social frameworks of their new environments. An implementation of these policies will help create an inclusive and supportive setting for postgraduate student migrants in Ireland.

1.2 Thesis Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction - This chapter outlines the goals, purpose, and scope of the research, along with a background on the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review - This chapter reviews existing research of relevance to the topic. Starting with the general and leading to the specific. The literature review also highlights the research gaps that this study aims to fill.

Chapter 3: Research Question - This chapter defines the problem statement, lays out the objectives of the research, and lists the questions that the study seeks to answer.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology - This chapter describes the methodology used in the research to meet the study's objectives.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis - This chapter presents the data collected, along with an analysis of the findings.

Chapter 6: Discussion - This chapter discusses the connections between the collected data and the research objectives, exploring the implications of these findings.

Chapter 7: Conclusion - This chapter summarizes the research and offers recommendations for future research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

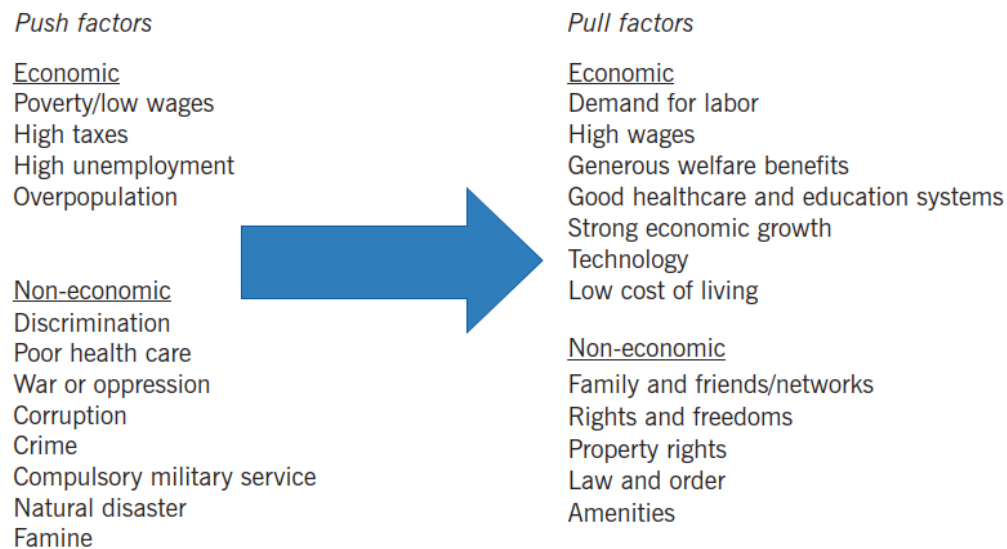
2.1 Introduction

Analysing previous research begins by examining the broad aspects of the research topic, global migration and narrowing down to more specific elements of the research such as international student mobility and migrant experiences. This approach is crucial as an understanding of the general background offers essential context for the research, during the nuanced exploration of the subject matter.

2.1 Global Migration

The world has experienced a notable rise in both migration and mobility, resulting in a significant increase in population numbers in certain countries. By 2020, the global count of international migrants stood at around 281 million people (McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2022). De Haas *et al.* (2020) suggests that we may be living in the age of migration. There are several economic and non-economic factors that affect the decision to migrate, some of these factors may 'push' migrants out of their home countries, while others may 'pull' migrants into seemingly better destinations (Simpson, 2022). Research on settlement experiences of migrant youth and refugees, found that the decision to migrate is determined by the migrant, who is an economic agent who evaluates the opportunities and losses of migration (Sabater and Graham, 2019). Individuals are seen as utility-maximizing agents who anticipate higher utility in the host country across various dimensions such as living conditions, amenities, security, social mobility, sense of belonging, and effectiveness of civic institutions (Eleperuma and Wickramasinghe, 2022).

Figure 1. Push and pull factors of migration



The above figure shows push and pull factors that establish the circumstances within which migrants assess and decide on necessary actions (Bansak, C. *et al.* 2021) This theory informs the structure of the literature review.

2.2 Factors Enhancing Migration

Income differentials and income inequality:

The benefits of migration are mainly tied to increased income often referred to as "utility " gained through moving. This increase in utility comes from the difference in income levels between the migrants country of origin and their desired destination the host country (Simpson, 2022). Global migration patterns have mostly shown movement from southern regions to northern ones (Erin, 2018), a trend often linked to the perception of economic differences between these areas. Typically, southern areas are seen as less prosperous compared to wealthier northern regions. According to the theory of relative deprivation which highlights the gap between what individuals receive and what they believe they deserve. Individuals with lower incomes are more likely to leave their home countries in search of better paying jobs. (Laskiene *et al.*, 2020). As a result, people from disadvantaged countries seek

opportunities in wealthier nations for higher paying jobs and better employment prospects. Low incomes can serve as a driving force pushing migrants to look for opportunities elsewhere. Moreover variations, in income can impact decisions regarding migration.

Instability in earnings can prompt people to seek income sources especially in areas with limited credit access. Thus, less income volatility in the destination country can amplify the advantages of migration and lower associated expenses. Income inequality can also serve as a pull factor, attracting highly educated individuals to countries where their skills command higher returns (Simpson, 2022).

Networks, Family and friends:

Contemporary studies consistently emphasize the significance of migrant networks in influencing migration patterns (De Winter *et al.*, 2021). These networks, often measured by the presence of migrants from the same origin country in the host nation, have a substantial positive impact on predicting new migrant flows. Research indicates that migrants are attracted to countries with large populations of migrants from their homeland, leading to lower psychological costs, trauma and post-traumatic stress associated with migration (Simpson, 2022) Psychological costs associated with migration are the emotional, cognitive, and mental burdens that individuals may experience when moving from one place to another. These costs can vary depending on individual circumstances, but they often include culture Shock, language barriers, social isolation, discrimination and prejudice, loss and grief, financial strain, identity struggles (du Plooy *et al.*, 2019). These networks also help reduce economic costs by facilitating employment, housing, and assimilation into the new location. However, as migrants assimilate, their reliance on these networks may diminish, reducing the overall benefits provided by the migrant community.

Taxes, transfers, and the government safety net:

Taxes, government transfers, and social insurance programs influence migration decisions, often acting as pull factors. Progressive income taxes

may deter high-skilled migrants but have little impact on low-skilled migrants. Countries with high consumption taxes and capital gains taxes may increase migration costs for low-income migrants and discourage investment-seeking migrants, respectively (Simpson, 2022).

Insurance and remittances:

Migration decisions are often made by families, who must choose whether the whole family will move or only one member will go abroad. Migration acts as insurance against uncertainty for households, with remittances serving as the primary mechanism for financial support from migrants to their families (Simpson, 2022). According to World bank (2022) remittances to low- and middle-income countries was projected to reach \$626 billion in 2022, an increase from \$597 billion in 2021, surpassing the inflow of foreign direct investment.

Financial remittances sent by emigrants to their families contribute to the reduction of income inequalities (Howell, 2017; Kusunose, & Rignall, 2018). Families may also help finance migration and overcome financial constraints.

Non-economic factors:

Non-economic factors also play a significant role in migration decisions. Studies have shown a correlation between overall well-being and migration patterns, with fewer people leaving unhappy countries as aggregate happiness levels rise (Pollenne and Vargas-Silva, 2024). Optimism may also influence migration choices, as optimistic individuals may perceive greater benefits from migrating compared to pessimistic individuals. Additionally, personal traits such as innate ability, ambition, and risk aversion likely contribute to migration decisions, although these factors can be challenging to measure directly (Simpson, 2022).

2.3 Factors Deterring Migration

Migration costs:

The direct economic costs of migration involve travel expenses, which are influenced by distance travelled, with airfare and other related costs typically increasing with distance. Migration costs also include fees for visas and resident permits, which vary significantly between origin and host countries. Additionally, migrants incur information costs as they seek information about potential host countries, although these costs have decreased over time due to technological progress (Simpson, 2022).

Demographic characteristics:

Demographic characteristics play a crucial role in understanding migration patterns. Factors such as age, gender, marital status, and education level vary among migrants and influence their reasons for migration. Labor migrants are typically young, and while historically they were mostly men, today's migration flows include more women and families seeking employment opportunities abroad. Marital status also affects migration decisions, with married individuals less likely to migrate alone. Additionally, the skill level and education of migrants impact their responses to migration incentives. Studies show that migrants are often healthier than non-migrants in their home countries and natives in host countries. Language proficiency and health can also affect migration costs and ease the transition into new cultures and workplaces. (Simpson, 2022).

Political and environmental conditions:

Differences in political and environmental conditions between countries can significantly impact migration decisions. High migration costs may arise from varying regulations and political situations, potentially reducing the net present value (NPV) of migration. Additionally, improved political conditions in the home country or deteriorating conditions abroad can influence the incentive to migrate. Environmental factors, such as air quality, may discourage migration

to certain destinations, while enhancements in the quality of life in the home country could diminish the motivation to migrate (Simpson, 2022).

An examination of migration determinants requires a categorization of push and pull factors within a structured framework, an understanding of this factors will enable us in our research to explore the nuanced multifaceted reasons behind the decisions of Migrant students to Ireland and their implications for migration policies. Many current approaches to understanding migration focuses primarily on economic motivations, neglecting non-economic factors. An expanded human capital framework to encompass the non-economic drivers of international students. This framework integrates psychic gains, such as a sense of belonging, empowerment, Identity expression, learning and growth etc. and the accumulation of personal and social capital, providing a more comprehensive perspective on ISM motivations (Tokas *et al.*, 2022).

2.4 EU and Irish Immigration Policy

We are currently in an era of significant migration trends (De Haas *et al.*, 2019). the present era might be more accurately labelled as the period of "highly skilled migration." (Parsons *et al.*, 2020). This categorization is justified by the fact that numerous nations particularly have made significant endeavours to actively draw in highly skilled immigrants by offering policy incentives (Fong and Shibuya, 2020). This strategy is partly aimed at preserving regional competitiveness and partly in response to the need for labour in aging societies (Walmsley *et al.*, 2017). Studies on the experiences of migrant youth indicate that the appeal of EU countries is associated with various factors, including linguistic and cultural aspects, environmental features, social dynamics, economic opportunities, and political stability and security (Lami *et al.*, 2023). Researchers have become more aware of the trend where individuals migrate from the Global South to the Global North with the aim of accessing high-quality education and other opportunities that are available. (Erin, 2018). The EU has a low unemployment rate at 6% (Statista, 2023c). EU member states with a civil-national principle of nationality and a long history of immigration tend to adopt liberal immigration policies. Conversely,

member states with an ethnically defined nationality and permanent minorities, particularly those without immigration experience, tend to adopt restrictive migration policies (Maksimovica and Milosavljevic, 2022). The presence of stable social welfare systems, government effectiveness, and budget allocations for welfare programs indicate a propensity for liberal immigration policies. Economic strength, higher security levels, and positive public opinion towards immigrants also correlate with liberal immigration policies.

The liberal concept of immigration emphasizes filling demographic gaps, territorial-civil nation-state concepts, immigration tradition, cultural tolerance, migrant integration efforts, open labour markets, and welfare expenditure. In contrast, the restrictive concept views immigration as a threat to demographic structure, emphasizes ethnic majorities, lacks immigration traditions, exhibits racial and ethnic duality, focuses on border protection, closed labour markets, highly formalized legal procedures for issuing residence visas and work permits and negative public opinion towards immigrants (Maksimovic and Milosavljevic, 2022).

According to Statista (2023b), Ireland stood out among European economies with the highest gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate, reaching an impressive 12.4%. Statista (2023c) also reported that the Republic of Ireland showcased a favourable labour market, as indicated by the low unemployment rate of 3.9% recorded in April 2023. However, Statista (2023a), informed that it is worth noting that the country faced some inflationary pressure, with the inflation rate standing at 7.2% in the same period, although slightly lower than the previous rate of 7.7%. Additionally, according to Statista (2022), Ireland demonstrated its position among the top 20 countries globally in terms of average monthly salaries for employees in 2021, measured in purchasing power parity, (PPP) U.S. dollars. These indicators reflect Ireland's strong economic performance, promising employment opportunities, and competitive salary levels.

Ireland has become an established destination for migrants, boasting one of the highest proportions of foreign-born residents in the European Union (McGinnity *et al.*, 2020). Central statistics office (2017), data shows that the migrant population in Ireland is diverse, consisting of individuals with different

levels of social and cultural capital. This population includes both nationals from EU countries (70%) and non-EU countries (30%). Previous research shows that economic context strongly influences public perception of immigration and work skills are considered more important than educational qualifications (Creighton *et al.*, 2022).

2.4 International Student Mobility

Students migrate across international borders in pursuit of education, encompassing the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs beyond their home country (Erin, 2018). Recent studies suggest that the phenomenon of international student migration cannot be adequately understood solely through traditional neoliberal economic frameworks, such as simple push-pull mechanisms from developing to developed nations, South to North. Instead, a more nuanced theoretical and empirical approach is needed to comprehend the intricate spatial, temporal, and emotional dynamics that drive these cross-border movements. This perspective aligns with the broader recognition of a contemporary context characterized by heightened mobility. (Cohen & Gössling, 2015),

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2023), reports that the trend of student migration is consistently increasing worldwide and there is a significant rise of enrolment at the master's level, with the proportion of incoming students increasing by at least twice the amount of bachelor level enrolments in almost two-thirds of OECD nations of which Ireland is a member. According to OECD (2023) report, the number of students enrolled in tertiary education outside their home countries exceeded five million. As an example, Chinese migrants constitute the largest non-Japanese demographic in Japan, primarily due to educational migration (Coates, 2015). Visas and Immigration policies play a crucial role in international student mobility, policy pervasion creates the distinct policy landscape that shapes numerous aspects of international students' experiences during and after their pursuit of a degree in the host country (Crumley-Effinger, 2023). Entry visa categories, current experience and future expectation of highly educated

migrants are connected to their intention to stay (Shui, 2023). If not able to stay, student migrants consider extending courses, continuing to seek skilled jobs or a new migration (Oliveira- Silva *et al.*, 2024).

This is noted as a “two-step” migration process (Grimm, 2019), or as “edugration” (Brunner, 2022), with such approaches described as “nexus policies” in countries attracting large numbers of international students (Robertson, 2013). Ultimately, policies facilitating this type of migration are establishing "education pathways as a means to residency" (Robertson, 2011) and are also facilitating the pursuit of personal and familial "migration intentions" with students' academic pursuits as the starting point (Glass *et al.*, 2021).

2.5 The Migrant Experience

The International student experience conceptualised in a limited way (Nada, *et al.*, 2023) International students can be referred to as migrants because they encounter various aspects of the migration process, including the decision to depart, transit, arrival and settlement, adaptation to a new socio-cultural setting, and the establishment of new social connections (Van Mol, 2022).

Migrant students are often perceived as a burden to their host countries and institutions (Nada & Araújo, 2019), foreign students embark on international educational migration with the purpose of investing in and acquiring both global linguistic capital and global cultural capital (Seungeun, 2019) and in this process particular experiences of precarity are produced (Thomas, 2017). These experiences can be that of wanting to be invincible like in the case of young Chinese student-migrants' in Tokyo learning to want to be “unseen.” (Coates, 2015). Or an experience of vulnerability likely to be exploited by employers and by landlords. (Gilmartin *et al.*, 2021)

Previous research shows that what constitutes migrant experience isn't straight-forward and has underlying epistemological and political dimensions. International students can be perceived either as individuals enrolled in educational institutions, thus categorized within the non-politicized realm of

education, or as foreigners, situated within the highly politicized domain of immigration (Bitschnau, 2023) the complex nature of experience shows when international students report high levels of satisfaction on surveys, while further examination through focus groups reveals a significant disparity in their perceptions of social integration and sense of belonging. (Arkoudis *et al.*, 2018). International and domestic students might face comparable difficulties, yet international students tend to be more hesitant in seeking assistance (Clarke, 2023).

There are various conceptualization of experience, mediated, unmediated and experience of strangeness (Marotta, 2023).

The mediated experience refers to experiences that are influenced by external factors such as societal norms and historical context. These factors shape and mediate individual experiences of migration, adding layers of meaning and interpretation. Unmediated Experience is direct and immediate, devoid of external influences. It represents a personal encounter with migration that is unfiltered and unaltered by external factors, allowing for a more raw and authentic experience. Experience of Strangeness pertains to encounters during migration that challenge preconceived notions and disrupt the familiar. It involves unexpected and incongruent experiences that provoke reflection and potentially lead to personal transformation and progressive change (Marotta, 2023).

These conceptualizations of mediated, unmediated, and experience of strangeness contribute to our understanding of migration experiences by acknowledging the influence of external factors, the unfiltered personal encounters, and the transformative power of encountering the unfamiliar.

A study on the diversity of international student experience reveals 6 migrant profiles. The predetermined migrant, the unwilling migrant, the gradual migrant, the incidental migrant, the runaway migrant, and the fighter migrant (Nada *et al.*, 2023)

The predetermined migrant.

The pre-determined migrant profile reflects a common trend observed among young individuals in certain contexts. Migration, particularly for educational pursuits, is deeply rooted in cultural norms due to limited local opportunities. Rather than being a deliberate choice or a burden, migration is viewed as an expected pathway. Prior exposure to the host country's culture, often through educational experiences, facilitates the transition for migrants. However, accessibility to migration is closely tied to socio-economic status, with financial limitations hindering opportunities for many. Additionally, familial background plays a significant role, with inherited mobility capital and professional aspirations influencing migration decisions. Thus, migration trajectories are shaped by a combination of structural constraints and individual and familial expectations, highlighting the complex interplay of macro-level influences and micro-level experiences in driving migration patterns. (Nada *et al.*, 2023)

The unwilling migrant.

The concept of the unwilling migrant describes individuals whose relocation is primarily driven by circumstances beyond their control or against their personal wishes. Unlike voluntary migrants who choose to move for various reasons, unwilling migrants are compelled to leave due to factors like conflict, persecution, or familial decisions. Their migration journey is marked by a lack of agency, facing challenges such as adapting to new cultures, languages, and social environments. They may struggle with feelings of displacement and uncertainty about their future, impacting their integration and sense of belonging in their new communities. (Nada *et al.*, 2023)

The gradual migrant.

The gradual migrant profile portrays an individual whose migration unfolds over time without a single decisive event prompting the move. Their transition involves incremental steps and a slow assimilation process, starting with a family move driven by economic or opportunity-seeking reasons. Over the years, they integrate into the new society, complete education, and establish a career, driven by aspirations for a better life. Despite challenges, they

develop a sense of belonging while maintaining ties to their original roots, illustrating the complex and evolving nature of migration trajectories shaped by long-term factors. (Nada *et al.*, 2023)

The Incidental migrant.

The incidental migrant is characterized by a migratory trajectory marked by serendipitous events and spontaneous decisions, rather than deliberate planning or strategic choices (Nada *et al.*, 2023). This migratory profile contrasts with conventional understandings of migration, as it unfolds alongside subjective life events and chance encounters, rather than being driven by clear motivations or objectives. Incidental migrants often embark on international moves without a specific purpose or goal in mind, allowing for flexibility and openness to new experiences. Their migration journeys may be influenced by factors such as personal relationships, wanderlust, or the pursuit of novelty, rather than structured plans or predetermined pathways.

The runaway migrant.

The runaway migrant is characterized by an impulsive and sudden decision to leave their home country due to intolerable circumstances, often in their professional or personal life (Nada *et al.*, 2023). Unlike other migrants, their move is not carefully planned but emerges as a reaction to overwhelming dissatisfaction. Their choice of destination may be influenced by factors like familiarity with the culture or language, and while education or opportunities in the new country may play a role, the primary motivation remains the need to escape unfavourable conditions.

The fighter migrant.

The fighter migrant is driven by a wish to break free from oppressive circumstances, which can sometimes be linked to their marginalized identities, such as gender or ethnicity, in their home country (Nada *et al.*, 2023). Unlike other migrants, their journey is driven by a desire for empowerment and resistance against discrimination. Education serves as a pivotal factor, offering a pathway to social mobility and personal fulfilment. Despite facing obstacles,

the fighter migrant demonstrates resilience and determination, facing challenges with a sense of independence as they carve out a new life in a more accepting environment.

2.6 Conclusion

Exploring the reasons, expectations and experiences of post graduate student migrants is crucial for understanding modern migration trends. Factors such as economic disparities, social networks, government policies, and macroeconomic conditions all play crucial roles in shaping migration decisions (Simpson, 2022; De Haas et al., 2020; McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2022). Additionally, the increasing trend of educational migration underscores the importance of visa and immigration policies, as well as the allure of residency pathways, in influencing the experiences of student migrants (OECD, 2023; Crumley-Effinger, 2023). Studying a variety of profiles can offer detailed perspectives on both the challenges and opportunities that come with the migration journey process (Nada *et al.*, 2023). Recognizing these experiences is key to developing effective policies and support measures that meet the unique needs of migrant communities. By amplifying the voices of student migrants and acknowledging their multifaceted encounters this research contributes to building a more inclusive society. (Simpson, 2022; De Haas et al., 2020). Examining the motivations, expectations and realities of student migrants provides valuable insights, into the intricate nature of migration. Considering the social and emotional aspects, in a comprehensive manner not only guides policy decisions but also fosters empathy and inclusiveness ultimately aiding in building a compassionate society.

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Research Problem

Despite the increasing mobility of postgraduate student globally, there is a gap in understanding the nuanced reasons behind their migration decisions, their expectations upon arrival in the host country, and the realities they encounter during their academic pursuits. This research aims to bring to the foreground the feelings associated with migrant postgraduate students' motivation to migrate, their experiences in the host country and their future intentions.

3.2 Research Theories

Theories and findings emerging from a review of existing literature provide a foundation upon which the research objectives and question can be built. The research objectives and questions are designed to evaluate these theories and determine they relate to personal experiences of migrant postgraduate students.

Theories:

1. Migrants can be “pushed” out of their home countries and conversely, often “pulled” into destinations (Simpson, 2022).
2. Entry visa categories, current experience and future expectation of highly educated migrants are related to their intention to stay (Shui et al., 2023).

Findings:

1. There are distinct migrant profiles, the unwilling migrant, the gradual migrant, the incidental migrant, the runaway migrant, and the fighter migrant (Nada, 2019).
2. Student migrants utilize practical approaches, leveraging the legal framework to ensure their residency rights (Maury, 2022).

3. If migrant students are unable to secure employment, individuals typically contemplate options such as extending their studies, persisting in the search for skilled employment, or embarking on another migration (Oliveira-Silva, 2023).
4. A full understanding of international student mobility also considers non-economic aspects of motivation (Tokas et al., 2022).

3.3 Research Objectives

1. To identify the primary reasons driving postgraduate student migrants to pursue education in host countries, considering both push and pull factors such as economic opportunities, educational quality, and political stability.
2. To examine the expectations of postgraduate student migrants upon arrival in the host country, including anticipated academic experiences, career prospects, social integration, and overall quality of life.
3. To investigate the realities faced by postgraduate student migrants during their academic pursuits, including challenges related to academic adaptation, cultural adjustment, language barriers, financial constraints, and social support systems.
4. To assess the impact of mismatched expectations and encountered realities on the well-being, academic performance, and future migration intentions of postgraduate student migrants.

3.4 Research Questions

The following research questions have been crafted to examine the research theories and achieve the research objectives.

1. What are the main factors that motivate postgraduate students to migrate to host countries for their education? How do push and pull factors such as economic opportunities, educational quality, and political stability influence their decision?

2. What are the initial expectations of postgraduate student migrants regarding their academic experiences, career prospects, social integration, and quality of life upon arrival in the host country?
3. What are the actual experiences of postgraduate student migrants during their study period in terms of academic adaptation, cultural adjustment, language barriers, financial issues, and availability of social support?
4. How do the discrepancies between expected and actual experiences affect the well-being, academic success, and future migration plans of postgraduate student migrants?

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to analyse the migration experiences of post-graduate students in Ireland. It includes a detailed discussion of the research philosophy, research approach, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study. Each section also explains why these choices are essential for the aims of this research.

4.2 Research Philosophy

This research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism uses qualitative research techniques, prioritizing individuals' beliefs, motivations, and thought processes rather than quantitative data, to understand social interactions (Nickerson, 2024). Interpretivists believe that our understanding of reality is shaped by social constructs such as language, consciousness, collective interpretations, and instruments (Myers, 2008). This research philosophy is selected to delve deeply into the subjective experiences, perceptions, and emotions of post-graduate student migrants, aiming to understand the complex interplay of factors that shape their migration decisions and lived realities.

Ontological Perspective.

An ontological perspective looks at the nature of reality (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988) and from this standpoint, this research embraces the idea that reality is socially constructed and subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It recognizes that individuals' experiences and interpretations of the world are influenced by their unique cultural backgrounds, societal norms, and personal histories. Therefore, the research acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, each shaped by the perspectives and narratives of the individuals involved. By adopting this perspective, the study seeks to uncover the diverse ways in

which post-graduate student migrants perceive and navigate their migration experiences in Ireland.

Epistemological Perspective.

To understand how this reality is observed or understood, the research subscribes to a constructivist stance, acknowledging that knowledge is co-constructed through interaction between researchers and participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It recognizes that understanding the lived experiences of post-graduate student migrants requires engaging with their subjective viewpoints and interpretations. Hence, the study employs qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation to gather rich, context-specific data that captures the nuances of migration experiences. Through in-depth exploration and interpretation of participants' narratives, the research aims to generate insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the migration phenomenon.

Axiological Perspective.

It is important to recognise and acknowledge values, biases, and assumptions throughout the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Transparency, reflexivity, and ethical considerations are paramount, ensuring that the research remains impartial and respectful of participants' voices and experiences. This impartiality is achieved by, acknowledging, and critically examining biases, assumptions, and perspectives that may influence the research process and findings, reflecting on methodological choices, such as data collection methods and sampling strategies, allows researchers to consider how these decisions may shape the research outcomes and participants' experiences, critically examining interpretations and considering alternative explanations or perspectives (Finlay & Gough, 2003). By embracing transparency and reflexivity, the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings are increased, thereby contributing to the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

4.3 Research Approach

The research adopts a qualitative approach, recognizing the need for flexibility, depth, and contextuality in exploring the complexities of migration experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A qualitative approach delves deeply into the lived experiences, perspectives, and emotions of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Migration narratives derived from biographical encounters will be used to test theories and findings derived from existing literature. These theories are mentioned in the research question chapter. By grounding the study in established theories and findings, this deductive approach provides a structured framework for inquiry and analysis (Trochim, 2006).

4.4 Data Collection Method

This research utilises semi- structured in-depth interviews to create migration narratives (Wengraf, 2001). Semi-structured interviews offer a flexible yet systematic approach to gathering rich qualitative data, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and emotions (Smith and Mackie, 2021). Given the specific focus of the research on postgraduate migrants in Ireland, purposeful sampling was employed. This method ensures that participants are selected based on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to provide insightful perspectives (Patton, 2002). Criteria for selection may include factors such as nationality, field of study, length of stay in Ireland, and experiences with the migration process.

Efforts were made to ensure diversity among participants to capture a wide range of experiences and viewpoints (Palinkas et al., 2015). This includes diversity in terms of gender, age, nationality, socioeconomic background, and educational discipline. Participants were recruited through various channels such as university departments, social media platforms, and community networks. Recruitment messages clearly outlined the purpose of the study, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation. To achieve the research objective of exploration through in depth semi- structured interviews, a small sample size of 7 participants was chosen.

4.5 Data Collection Procedure

A semi-structured interview guide was developed (see Appendix A), consisting of general migration related ideas that address the research objectives and explore key themes related to reasons, expectations, and realities of post-graduate student migration in Ireland.). However, to align with our research philosophy and avoid potential power imbalance between researcher and the participants, these sessions are designated as “biographical encounters” rather than interviews. (Nada *et al.*, 2023). These encounters differ significantly from interviews in that researchers do not solely rely on questions to shape a narrative; instead, they permit participants' life stories to naturally unfold (Yuen, 2008).

Biographical encounters were conducted via video conferencing using google meeting, each biological encounter began with an introduction, reiteration of informed consent, and an opportunity for participants to ask questions.

Biological encounters began with a “generative” narrative question to incite storytelling, researchers’ “interventions remain very restricted” (Wengraf, 2001). To prompt story telling a narrative sequence guide (Nada *et al.*, 2023) (see Appendix A) was preferred to using an interview schedule. This ensures a reliable account of students' migration experiences extending beyond their time abroad, while also prompting the researcher to consider various factors that may influence these narratives. Recognizing that (biographical) storytelling does not always adhere to a linear or chronological structure (Horsdal, 2012), participants had the freedom to share their experiences in a manner and pace that felt comfortable to them (Nada *et al.*, 2023).

4.6 Data analysis

A deductive approach was used to test the predefined theoretical frameworks regarding migration dynamics. In focus was the push-pull theory as it relates to the migration experiences of post-graduate students in Ireland. This approach involved a systematic analysis of biographical narratives collected through in-depth biographical encounters with participants. These encounters

were guided by existing theories and hypotheses mentioned in the research question chapter. Immersion in the data was necessary and was achieved by thoroughly reading and re-reading transcripts to gain familiarity with participants' stories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A coding framework was developed based on established theories and literature. The framework included predefined categories such as push factors, pull factors, migration experiences, and residency rights and legal framework utilization. This structured approach allowed for a focused examination of the narratives, aiming to validate or challenge the theoretical assumptions made prior to data collection. Narrative data were collected through semi-structured biographical encounters, which provided rich qualitative data. The narratives were transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity and detail of participants' accounts. These transcripts formed the basis for the subsequent coding and analysis. Each narrative was carefully examined for elements that corresponded to the predefined categories. This involved identifying mentions of factors such as economic conditions, professional stagnation, security concerns, and cultural integration that influenced the migration decisions, as described by the participants.

Narrative analysis was used to complement thematic analysis by exploring the structure, content, and meaning of participants' stories (Riessman, 2008). Attention was paid to narrative elements such as plot, characters, setting, and resolution, as well as the emotions and perspectives conveyed (Riessman, 2008). Findings were reported in a narrative format, featuring key themes, illustrative quotes, and contextual details (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The narrative was structured to engage readers and convey the complexity and richness of participants' experiences (Riessman, 2008).

4.7 Ethical Considerations

This research required careful attention to ethical considerations to ensure the well-being, dignity, and confidentiality of the participants. Prior to participation in the research study, participants were provided with clear and comprehensive information about the purpose, procedures, risks, benefits,

and potential outcomes of the study (Flick, 2018). Informed consent was obtained voluntarily, without coercion, and participants had the opportunity to ask questions and withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions (Mertens, 2014). In the context of post-graduate student migrants, language barriers and cultural differences were addressed to ensure that participants fully understood the information provided (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of participants is essential to safeguard their privacy and prevent the disclosure of sensitive information (Bryman, 2016). Data collected from participants were not stored after research. Participants' identities were anonymized to prevent the identification of individuals (Bryman, 2016).

Respect was demonstrated for the diverse backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, and identities of participants (Creswell, 2014). Cultural sensitivity was incorporated into the research design, data collection methods, and interpretation of findings to avoid stereotyping, stigmatization, or marginalization of specific groups (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Attention was paid to language use, non-verbal communication cues, and power dynamics to foster trust and rapport with participants from diverse cultural backgrounds (Flick, 2018).

The research aimed to maximize its benefits while minimizing any potential harm to participants (Flick, 2018) and the potential emotional, psychological, or social risks associated with discussing sensitive topics related to migration experiences were taken into consideration and ended appropriate support or referrals for participants experiencing distress (Creswell, 2014).

Principles of transparency, honesty, and accountability were strictly adhered to throughout the research process (Bryman, 2016). This included accurately reporting research methods, findings, and limitations in publications or presentations, as well as disclosing any conflicts of interest or biases that may influence the research outcomes (Flick, 2018). Open communication with participants, stakeholders, and the broader community fosters trust and credibility in the research process (Mertens, 2014). By upholding principles of informed consent, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, protection of vulnerable populations, beneficence, non-maleficence, and transparent research practices, we ensure that there is respect for the rights, dignity, and well-being

of participants while contributing valuable insights to the field of migration studies.

4.8 Limitations

Limitations affect the scope and the generalizability of findings. The small and potentially biased sample size, reliant on purposeful sampling, may not fully represent the broader post-graduate migrant student population, while the subjective nature of qualitative analysis could introduce interpretative biases. Cross-cultural misunderstandings and the reliance on self-reported data further complicate the accuracy and objectivity of the data, potentially leading to misinterpretations or selective reporting. Ethical constraints sometimes inhibited the depth of participant responses. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights, though it suggests a need for future research to employ broader and more diverse methodologies to enhance understanding and generalizability.

4.8 Conclusion

This research utilized qualitative approaches to deeply explore the experiences of post-graduate student migrants in Ireland. Through "biographical encounters," participants shared their migration narratives authentically. Ethical considerations guided the research process to ensure participants' rights and confidentiality were respected. Deductive and narrative analysis techniques proved or disprove migration theories while highlighting meanings within participants' stories.

CHAPTER FIVE - FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

An analysis of narratives acquired during biographical encounters, enables us to explore the experience and feelings of post- graduate student migrants. These narratives were grouped into major themes acquired from previous literature and research.

5.2 Push Factors

In analysing the narratives, several factors were discovered that agreed with the push and pull theory of migration. A student from India mentioned that her mental health in her home country was 'finished', explaining the feeling of being different from the society she found herself in, naming this feeling 'high-powered depression'. She explained that in her home country, people around you dictate how you live your life and to escape the dark situation she found herself in, her mother suggested immigration, as she put it, 'go abroad and just have fun'. This shows how mental stability acts as a push factor, encouraging individuals to explore to improve their mental state. Professional stagnation was also mentioned during the encounter, explaining the feeling of frustration stating, 'at the end of the day, you are sitting at home with degrees'. This puts professional fulfilment as a push factor encouraging migration. Her experiences resonate with that of the runaway migrant that leaves their home country due to intolerable circumstances, often in their professional or personal life. Financial support from family and friends also proved to be an important motivator to migrate as she was told by her parents 'the day you tell us you are going, we fund you'. This shows that an ability to cover immigration expenses can encourage people to leave their home countries to explore. Another factor mentioned during the encounters was political stability. A postgraduate student in Ireland explained that there is an ongoing civil war in his home country of Cameroon, and this instability pushed him away, firstly to

China where he spent 4 years and upon returning to Cameroon, the continuing war forced him to move again to Ireland, in his words 'a safer country'. He also mentioned the role his family played in encouraging his migration and explained that he felt the education system in his home country wasn't providing adequate information, and with no postgraduate level education in his chosen field, he was pushed to find countries that offered a postgraduate degree. A similar factor was mentioned by another student, who moved to Ireland from Russia. He stated that he was forced to migrate to avoid being mobilized to join Russia's war effort in Ukraine, stating, 'it's not safe for me to be there', this shows that geopolitical dynamics are a potent push factor encouraging migration. Security was also mentioned by a Nigerian postgraduate student, explaining that the deteriorating state of national security with high rates of kidnapping pushed her out of the country, stating, 'you never know what can happen to you'. She also mentioned the rapidly depreciating Naira as a factor as she felt her earnings became less and less when compared to other stronger currencies. Her statements show how macroeconomic factors act as push factors, it also reflects aspects of the unwilling migrant profile, as her migration was primarily driven by circumstances beyond her control, such as insecurity and economic challenges in Nigeria.

A business postgraduate student in Ireland explained that there were no push factors that influenced his decision to migrate from his home country India and his goal was exploration. He can be described as an Incidental migrant as he embarked on international moves without a specific purpose or goal in mind, allowing for flexibility and openness to new experiences. This shows the uniqueness of experiences and the dynamism of push and pull factors, as both factors may not always work together to influence the decision to migrate.

In another encounter, a migrant student that moved from Dubai to Ireland mentioned she didn't like the weather and stated that there was a certain discrimination that existed in Dubai stating, 'Companies will pay you a salary, depending on your passport'. In search of a less harsh climate and a society that upholds equal rights, she decided to migrate to Ireland.

An interesting factor mentioned during an encounter with a migrant student from India was the role played by consultancy firms. She explained that these companies present the benefits of migration, connect prospective student migrants to other successful migrants in the host countries, connect students with universities and colleges, and describe possible residency right attaining pathways for migrants in the host country. Consultancy firms can now be categorized as a push factor on its own.

The narratives highlight several push factors influencing migrants' decisions to leave their home countries. These factors include political instability (e.g., civil war in Cameroon), economic concerns (e.g., professional stagnation, financial instability), security issues (e.g., high rates of kidnapping), and dissatisfaction with societal norms and discrimination (e.g., experiences in Dubai). These factors were both economic and non-economic and align with the theory that individuals are "pushed" out of their home countries due to unfavourable conditions or circumstances. The narrative also highlights an exception that push factors may not always be in play in the decision to leave a home country when the desire for exploration is present.

5.3 Pull Factors

In the encounter with one participant, she explained that there is a vast difference between the Indian rupee and the Euro as one euro is equal to 90 Indian Rupees, so when euro earnings are converted to rupees, the benefit is significant. She also explained that in India, there is little or no middle class, stating, 'you are either very very rich or very very poor' and in Ireland she can sustain herself even on a part-time job, something she was not able to do in India and in her words 'this was a very big pull factor'. Another participant mentioned having discovered through research that most major companies had offices in Ireland and being from an account background she would have more job opportunities. The same sentiment was shared by another explaining that one of the main attractions of Ireland was the perceived opportunities, he stated, 'you spend a little bit more, but you earn much more', the economic

situation was good, and Ireland has a lot of big companies with their headquarters here, he said 'I hoped it would be pretty easy to find a good job here'. Another mentioned that he was pulled by the security in Ireland, stating that 'coming to Ireland I knew it was a safe country'. Another pull factor mentioned was the multicultural nature of Ireland. One participant stated that there were no economic reasons to choose Ireland as he comes from a strong economic background and was driven by the wish to explore different cultures. A pull factor that resonated with all participants that took part in biographical encounters was English being the official language in Ireland. One participant stated that after deciding on migrating to Europe she had three options of migration, Germany, the UK, or Ireland. She explained that she initially leaned towards the UK but after the UK left the European Union, Ireland was top of the list as the only English-speaking nation in the EU and traveling to an English-speaking country made her feel safer, as she stated, 'I speak English, what could happen'. Another, having previously migrated to China, explained that his parents were more relaxed with his intention to do a postgraduate degree in Ireland because it is an English-speaking country. One stated that because he could communicate well in English, he could spend quality time with people he met in the host country. He also mentioned not having to go through the stress of translating documents as all official documents he had were already in English as English is the official language in his home country. He affirmed that Ireland being an English-speaking country was the reason he chose to migrate there. Another shared similar sentiment explaining that although English isn't his first language, he understood the importance of having a strong grasp of the language and Ireland offered this opportunity. Education was another pull factor mentioned. One described having a friend who studied in Ireland and told him how helpful it was, and the idea of Ireland originated from there. Another expressed that she believed that with an education in Ireland she will be more competitive in the job market. She also explained that the Visa acquisition process was straightforward facing no difficulty in travel preparations, and this helped her in making her decision. Every participant mentioned immigration policy as being an important factor in choosing Ireland. They explained that the ability to be resident in Ireland for 2

years after a post-graduate degree was a good investment. One stated, 'the visa laws were good for me'. Ireland's cultural diversity was also named as a pull factor. One explained that the multicultural nature of Ireland gave her the sense that Ireland is welcoming to migrants. She mentioned that friends who migrated to Ireland earlier also supported this notion, as she was advised 'Come over here, the people are very welcoming and kind'. She also stated that she was a Catholic and Ireland being a Catholic nation, would help her adaptation. One stated that the sole purpose was to explore the diversity of Ireland and meet people from around the world with similar liberal world views. These narratives shed light on pull factors attracting migrants to Ireland. These factors include economic opportunities (e.g., job prospects, currency exchange rates), political stability, multiculturalism, language proficiency (English as the official language), and educational opportunities. These factors demonstrate how migrants are "pulled" into destinations offering perceived benefits and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The narrative informs that pull factors are always present in the decision-making process of choosing a destination country.

5.4 Deterrents

Several factors deterring migration were discovered during the encounters. One participant recalled that the most important preparation she had to make was her mental and emotional well-being, stating 'for me, this was my biggest mental block'. She mentioned her upbringing that affirmed the importance of family, being an only child, and her parents' hope that she would stay with them. She explained that her parents were initially reluctant stating, 'at last they took the decision of letting me go'. She also described herself being worried about leaving her family stating she always thought 'What happens to my family? What if something happens'. Another participant also mentioned experiencing a similar reluctance from his parents stating, 'At first, they didn't want to send me over there, as they felt I might stay away from them, and we might lose our emotional connection'. Another participant mentioned being

worried about the loneliness she might face in a new country, explaining it did deter her to an extent.

Another participant described how the document preparation process was the most challenging step for him. He explained that his home country is a French-speaking country, and the cost of translating documents is significantly expensive. He described himself as lucky because he had friends that were translators, which meant he didn't have to pay a fortune for the service. He also talked about collecting degree certificates from the university being an 'awkward and challenging situation' mired with long waiting times, bureaucracy, and hidden expenses. He explained that upon graduation students are issued with a slip that proves completion of studies, and a certificate is issued on request. He said slips are enough to apply for jobs and work placements within the country, but not relevant when seeking admission abroad. Another participant also faced difficulties with certain documentations, especially showing his family's financial statement, expressing not being pleased with having to declare personal liabilities and assets to the embassy, stating 'I felt declaring the financial state of my family was not necessary' but he also acknowledged that he understood why this was needed in order to make sure he was able to support his expenses in the host country. Another participant mentioned that finance was an obstacle for her, and she considered acquiring an educational loan to meet visa requirements, but dropped the idea as her uncle and parents decided to be sponsors. She also mentioned that she faced difficulties obtaining an IELTS language certificate which was one of the admission requirements in the host country, stating 'I was not so good at speaking English'.

Another participant, during her encounter mentioned inexperience and lack of knowledge as deterring factors. She explained that this was her first time leaving her home country, she had no idea of the documentation needed stating 'she was completely blank on what to do' and having to learn all information from required was quite time-consuming. She mentioned worrying about a possible communication gap as accents might be difficult to understand. Another participant also mentioned language as a deterring factor, explaining that as English isn't his first language, he was worried about not

being able to communicate and ask for help in case of an emergency and he stated, 'I had the fear I would not understand something and do it wrong'.

Socioeconomic factors were also mentioned as deterring factors to Ireland, one participant mentioned that during her research she discovered that the healthcare system was not optimal. Another participant mentioned having second thoughts after finding out there was an ongoing housing crisis in Ireland. Another participant stated he was worried about the high cost of living stating, 'I was worried I would spend everything I had in the first month'. The narrative explains that although deterrents are present, they only act as hurdles to overcome in the migration process and the accumulated effects of push and pull factors outperform the drag caused by migration deterrents.

5.5 Migration Experiences

The migration journey often begins with a myriad of logistical challenges, ranging from securing accommodation to navigating unfamiliar bureaucratic processes. Participants shared their struggles during the initial stages of relocation, highlighting the hurdles they faced in accessing essential services and adapting to new cultural norms. One recounted the arduous process of finding accommodation in a new country, stating 'I remember staying on Daft for the entire day and I would send hundreds of emails every day, and none of them would reply'. After managing to find accommodation, this participant grappled with racial abuse and unsafe living conditions. They shared a particularly harrowing experience of their first accommodation, where they were subjected to verbal and physical threats by fellow residents and describing the landlord as a 'psychotic killer'. They vividly described the ordeal, saying, "It was disastrous to say the least. It was unsafe...there was racial abuse against me...I had to lock myself in." This traumatic experience underscored that student migrants to Ireland face challenges in finding safe and suitable housing, creating a breeding ground for discrimination and hostility. They mentioned not informing anyone about the situation stating 'I was scared' which supports literature findings that student migrants are less likely to seek support. This individual also discussed the cultural differences in

food, social norms, and religious practices, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and open-mindedness. They shared moments of cultural adjustment, such as finding food prices higher and certain cultural practices unfamiliar, reflecting, "Food is one thing culturally very different..." This reflection illuminated the cultural challenges faced by migrants, underscoring the importance of flexibility and acceptance in navigating diverse cultural landscapes.

Another shared similar struggles in finding permanent accommodation and accessing healthcare services in Ireland. They recounted the challenges of navigating housing markets and the financial strain of medical expenses. The narrative shed light on the systemic barriers faced by migrants in accessing essential services, underscoring the need for improved support mechanisms and policy interventions to address housing and healthcare disparities. Another faced initial difficulties in accessing healthcare services upon arrival in Ireland. They shared the challenges of securing medical appointments and coping with exorbitant expenses for treatment, particularly during a health crisis. They recounted a distressing experience of struggling to obtain timely medical care for kidney stones, stating, "It was so difficult for me to get an appointment...it was a terrible time for me." This story shed light on the vulnerabilities faced in accessing essential healthcare services in Ireland. They also reflected on the discrepancy between their economic expectations and the reality of job opportunities in Ireland. They shared the challenges of finding employment as a student and the financial strain of managing living costs, stating, "I used to think it would be easy for me to get a job...but as a student, it's quite difficult."

Another underscored the role of resilience and introspection in overcoming traumatic experiences and maintaining a positive mindset amidst adversity. They reflected on the significance of personal growth and emotional resilience in navigating the complexities of migration, stating, "I came with a very real mindset... I have to choose my struggles. Every country has its own set of struggles so choose your struggles and stay positive." They also emphasized deciding not to share their struggles with anyone back home stating 'I don't want to put anyone through that, it's my struggle and I'll get through it' and

affirmed that they will not 'run away' and leaving Ireland will be based on logical reasoning instead of being 'mentally tired'. Their story illuminated the transformative power of resilience and self-reflection in navigating psychological challenges and cultivating inner strength amidst external pressures.

Another emphasized the need to redefine daily routines and priorities in the face of adaptation challenges. They reflected on the importance of flexibility and resourcefulness in navigating unfamiliar environments, stating, "I had to keep myself active, go to the gym, go for a walk, I would play soccer football in the evening, I would go around and visit places around Dublin. Expectations often shape individuals' migration experiences, yet the reality of settlement frequently diverges from preconceived notions. Participants reflected on the disparities between their expectations and the realities encountered, shedding light on the challenges of navigating unfamiliar systems and environments. This individual articulated the dissonance between expectations of financial independence and the reality of navigating expensive living costs and limited employment opportunities, reflecting, "Money is the first thing...it's very important to survive." Another reflected on the challenges of transportation infrastructure and housing availability, highlighting the discrepancy between expectations and realities. They recounted moments of frustration and disillusionment while navigating logistical hurdles in unfamiliar environments, stating, 'It takes you ages to get anywhere when you don't have a car'.

Participants also discussed their work experiences. While some faced racism and discrimination in the workplace, others found supportive environments conducive to personal and professional growth. One shared experiences of workplace discrimination, stating, "They treated me unfairly... used to get frustrated with me." However, another highlighted positive experiences, stating, "I really love my job, I think it was one of the best jobs that I've got so far. The colleagues were very welcoming, very supportive and it's a place to grow and I've learned a lot from my workplace."

The narratives of migrants navigating challenges in finding accommodation, accessing essential services, and adapting to new cultural norms provide insights into their current experiences in the host country. These experiences

shape their perceptions of the destination and influence their intention to stay or return to their home countries. For example, the traumatic experience of unsafe living conditions and racial abuse in initial accommodation reflects current challenges, which may impact long-term intentions to stay. Similarly, struggles with document preparation and healthcare access highlight the disparities between expectations and the realities encountered, which could influence future decisions regarding residency and career prospects.

5.6 Residency Rights and Legal Framework Utilization

Participants explored various routes to secure residency rights, including work permits and student visas. However, challenges such as limited work experience and stringent visa requirements posed barriers to alternative routes. One participant reflected on their unsuccessful attempts to secure a work permit, stating, "No one's going to take you... I might have to take the student route, which I now feel is okay." This highlights the influence of legal frameworks on migrants' pathways to residency. The same participant also expressed concerns about the limitations of residency rights, particularly regarding family reunification and long-term settlement lamenting that the inability to sponsor their parents' residency, stating, "Irish visa laws don't support bringing family, this bothers me, even if I build a home. 10 years later I can't call my parents to live with me." Another mentioned not intending to stay beyond the allocated 2 years residency he will receive after completion of his program, stating 'Laws pertaining to gaining long-term residence are not immigration-friendly'. Another described a lingering fear of what might happen after her allocated 2 years stating 'I hear the stories of my seniors and the people who have already finished their 2 years and still didn't get jobs and they have already planned to go back to their home country. I feel scared, this makes me feel like am I will be the next one but still I haven't given up yet'. Despite challenges, some participants expressed intentions to stay, citing career opportunities and quality of life. One mentioned that he would like to stay beyond the 2 years that will be allocated to him if he can secure

employment. Another stated, 'I have spent a lot of money here now and I would love to get to my goal'.

Participants emphasized the need for policy reforms to address residency rights and migration management. Suggestions included flexible visa regulations, family reunification provisions, and streamlined residency pathways. This demonstrates how student-migrants navigate the legal framework to secure residency rights. Challenges related to visa regulations, residency rights, and employment prospects reflect the influence of the legal framework on migrants' experiences and decisions regarding their future stay in the destination country. The analysis discusses how migrants utilize the legal framework to secure residency rights in the host country. Challenges related to visa regulations, employment prospects, and residency rights reflect migrants' interactions with the legal system, which shape their experiences and intentions to stay. Concerns about the future after the allocated two years of residency in the host country demonstrate how legal frameworks and policy constraints impact migrants' long-term plans and intentions to remain in the destination country.

5.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the narratives of migrants to Ireland offer a nuanced understanding of migration dynamics. Push factors, such as political instability and economic concerns, vividly illustrate the challenges prompting individuals to seek opportunities elsewhere. Additionally, personal struggles like professional stagnation or mental health issues exacerbate migration decisions. Conversely, pull factors such as economic opportunities and quality of life portray Ireland as an attractive destination. These factors underscore the country's appeal in fulfilling migrants' aspirations for a better life. Despite these attractions, migrants encounter deterrents like logistical challenges and cultural adjustment difficulties. However, their resilience and adaptability shine through as they navigate these obstacles. Migration experiences, spanning from initial relocation to cultural integration, shape migrants' perceptions and settlement intentions. The narratives highlight both the struggles and triumphs

encountered during this process, emphasizing the crucial role of support mechanisms and inclusive policies.

Moreover, residency rights and legal frameworks significantly influence migrants' long-term prospects. Flexible visa regulations and family reunification provisions emerge as vital factors in promoting migrants' well-being and social inclusion. These narratives provide invaluable insights into the intricate journey of migration to Ireland. They underscore the importance of tailored support and inclusive policies in fostering successful integration and community cohesion for migrants in their new home.

CHAPTER SIX – DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the findings from the analysis of biographical narratives, aiming to achieve the objectives outlined in this study and connect them to existing literature on migration. The diverse narratives presented reveal a spectrum of push and pull factors influencing postgraduate student migrants, underscoring the multifaceted roles and challenges they encounter. This discussion not only responds to the research questions posed in Chapter 3 but also meets the four research objectives previously established.

6.2 Discussion of Research Question 1

What are the main factors that motivate postgraduate students to migrate to host countries for their education? How do push and pull factors such as economic opportunities, educational quality, and political stability influence their decision?

Research Objective 1

To identify the primary reasons driving postgraduate student migrants to pursue education in host countries, considering both push and pull factors such as economic opportunities, educational quality, and political stability.

The analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of the myriad factors influencing postgraduate students' decisions to migrate for education. Central to these decisions are the interplay of push and pull factors (Simpson, 2022), which include economic opportunities, educational quality, political stability, and personal circumstances.

Push Factors:

Economic concerns, such as professional stagnation and limited job prospects in the home country, emerged as significant push factors. Students expressed frustration with being unable to utilize their qualifications effectively, which is encapsulated in statements like, "at the end of the day, you are sitting at home with degrees." This sentiment reflects a broader issue of underemployment or inadequate professional opportunities, pushing them to seek better prospects abroad. Political instability, as in the case of the Cameroonian student, and security concerns, as mentioned by the Nigerian student, are potent motivators. These conditions create an environment of uncertainty and danger, prompting students to seek safer, more stable environments conducive to both personal safety and academic pursuits. Issues such as mental health stigmatization, societal pressure, and discrimination (e.g., salary discrimination based on nationality in Dubai) also act as push factors. Students seek environments where they feel more accepted and less constrained by societal norms or expectations. Consultancies play a unique role by actively promoting the benefits of migration, connecting students with academic institutions abroad, and facilitating the logistical aspects of migration. Their influence effectively becomes a push factor by presenting migration as a beneficial and achievable option.

Pull Factors.

The availability of superior educational facilities and research opportunities in host countries is a significant pull factor. This is particularly relevant for fields where the home country may lack postgraduate programs, prompting students to move to countries with robust educational infrastructures. Better economic prospects, including the potential for higher earnings and the conversion rate benefits (as with the Indian rupee to Euro), attract students. The ability to sustain oneself even on a part-time job in Ireland, as opposed to the economic extremities in India, underscores the economic pull. Ireland's status as an English-speaking country within the EU becomes a pull factor, especially post-Brexit. This alleviates language barriers and cultural adjustment issues, making integration into the academic and social fabric of the host country easier. Favourable immigration policies, such as the possibility of staying in

Ireland for two years post-degree, also pull students. These policies not only facilitate the initial migration but also provide a pathway to potential residency and professional opportunities.

Interplay of Push and Pull Factors:

The decision to migrate is rarely driven by a single factor; rather, it is the result of a complex interplay between various push and pull factors. Economic, educational, and political factors often combine with personal aspirations and external influences (like consultancies). For instance, while economic and professional stagnation push students out of their home countries, the promise of better educational and job opportunities in a politically stable and culturally compatible environment pulls them to host countries like Ireland.

Moreover, each student's background and personal experiences uniquely shape their migration decision. While some are pushed more by personal safety and political stability, others are attracted by academic opportunities and potential economic gains. This dynamic interplay ensures that each migration journey is unique, though they all share common underpinnings in seeking improved quality of life and better professional prospects.

6.3 Discussion of Research Question 2

What are the initial expectations of postgraduate student migrants regarding their academic experiences, career prospects, social integration, and quality of life upon arrival in the host country?

Research Objective 2
To examine the expectations of postgraduate student migrants upon arrival in the host country, including anticipated academic experiences, career prospects, social integration, and overall quality of life.

The analysis of narratives from postgraduate student migrants provides deep insights into their initial expectations concerning their academic experiences, career prospects, social integration, and quality of life upon arrival in the host country. Each of these aspects is intertwined with the hopes and perceived

opportunities that often motivate migration, particularly under the influence of both push and pull factors as outlined in the collected narratives.

Migrants often carry expectations of superior academic opportunities when moving to a new country. From the narratives, it is clear that the students anticipated a more robust educational infrastructure that would not only provide them with advanced knowledge but also enhance their competitiveness in the global job market. For instance, the lack of postgraduate education in specific fields in their home countries (as in the case of a student from Cameroon) pushed them to seek advanced degrees abroad. The presence of established universities and structured postgraduate programs in Ireland was a significant pull factor, indicating the expectation of a high-quality education that would be recognized worldwide.

Expectations regarding career prospects were also a major consideration for these students. The narratives reflect a common expectation that migration would lead to better job opportunities. This belief is often fuelled by the presence of multinational companies and a vibrant economic environment in the host country, as was mentioned by students who moved to Ireland. The students expected that their qualifications, bolstered by a postgraduate degree from a reputed Irish university, would enable them to secure well-paying and satisfying jobs. There was also an underlying hope that such opportunities would not only cover their living expenses but also allow for a substantial improvement in their quality of life through better earnings.

Social integration is another critical expectation for postgraduate student migrants. The decision to move to an English-speaking country like Ireland reflects the importance of language familiarity in easing social integration. The students expected that speaking the language would allow them to better navigate daily interactions and integrate more smoothly into the community. Furthermore, the multicultural nature of Ireland was perceived as a welcoming environment that could foster easier adaptation and acceptance, thereby enriching their social experiences. There was also an expectation that Ireland, being seen as a culturally diverse and relatively open society, would offer a supportive environment for personal and social growth.

Quality of life is perhaps one of the most comprehensive expectations encompassing safety, economic stability, and the ability to sustain oneself comfortably. Many narratives expressed the hope that the host country would offer a safe environment free from the political instability, economic hardships, or security issues prevalent in their home countries. For instance, the stable economic situation, higher currency value, and the potential for a better lifestyle in Ireland were significant pull factors. The ability to sustain oneself even with part-time employment, as opposed to the stark economic disparities in their home countries, was a crucial expectation. Additionally, the general safety and political stability of Ireland compared to their home countries provided a reassuring backdrop for their academic and career pursuits.

6.4 Discussion of Research Question 3

What are the actual experiences of postgraduate student migrants during their study period in terms of academic adaptation, cultural adjustment, language barriers, financial issues, and availability of social support?

Research Objective 3
To investigate the realities faced by postgraduate student migrants during their academic pursuits, including challenges related to academic adaptation, cultural adjustment, language barriers, financial constraints, and social support systems.

The analysis highlights the actual experiences of post-graduate migrant students during their study period, focusing on aspects like academic adaptation, cultural adjustment, language barriers, financial issues, and the availability of social support.

Postgraduate student migrants face significant challenges in adapting academically, which can be influenced by various factors including the educational background from their home countries and the academic expectations in the host country. For instance, the student from Cameroon mentioned challenges related to the availability of postgraduate education in

his chosen field in his home country, which pushed him to migrate for better academic opportunities. This suggests that there can be a steep learning curve for students who might not have had exposure to similar educational standards or methodologies in their home countries. Furthermore, issues such as document preparation and the recognition of qualifications from home countries (e.g., the need for translations and authentication of certificates) can also hinder smooth academic transition and adaptation.

Cultural adjustment is a prominent theme among the narratives. Many students find the transition to a new cultural environment challenging. For example, one student highlighted differences in food and social norms, reflecting on how such differences can impact daily living and social interactions. The experience of staying in accommodation where they faced racial abuse and unsafe conditions also points to severe challenges in adjusting to the host culture, particularly when it involves discrimination or exclusion.

Language plays a crucial role in the adjustment process. While Ireland being an English-speaking country is a pull factor, for those whose first language isn't English, there are significant challenges. Students mentioned concerns about their English proficiency impacting their ability to communicate effectively, understand different accents, and even perform academically. One student felt unprepared and worried about potential communication gaps due to language, highlighting how essential language proficiency is for full integration into the academic and social life of the host country.

Financial challenges are repeatedly cited as a significant concern for postgraduate migrants. Despite some students coming from strong economic backgrounds, many face difficulties in managing living costs, finding part-time jobs, and dealing with unexpected expenses like medical bills. The narratives reveal that even with financial planning and support from family, the high cost of living in Ireland poses a considerable barrier, affecting their overall experience and sometimes forcing them to reconsider their stay.

The availability of social support is variable among the postgraduate students. Some students have access to networks through friends or community groups which can significantly ease their cultural and academic adaptation. However,

others feel isolated and reluctant to share their struggles either with peers in the host country or with family back home. For instance, one student chose not to inform anyone about their initial housing troubles and racial abuse, which underscores the importance of accessible support systems to help migrants cope with challenges.

Work experiences for postgraduate student migrants are crucial for their financial stability and professional development but can also pose significant challenges. From the narratives, it's clear that finding employment, particularly that aligns with their academic and professional background, is challenging. One student highlighted the discrepancy between their expectation of easily finding a job and the reality of the difficult job market in Ireland, especially for students who might have limited work rights and experience. Experiences of workplace discrimination were also noted, which can significantly impact their well-being and professional growth. However, there are positive experiences too, with some students finding supportive work environments that offer opportunities for learning and career advancement. These varied experiences show the critical role that employment plays in the overall migration and adaptation process, influencing not just their financial situation but also their social integration and personal identity.

Accommodation is another critical area impacting the experiences of postgraduate student migrants. The narratives reveal that finding suitable, safe, and affordable housing is a significant hurdle. One student described their initial accommodation as "disastrous," involving unsafe living conditions and racial abuse, which starkly highlights the vulnerabilities that migrants can face in the housing market. The struggle to secure housing can lead to severe stress and anxiety, impacting their academic performance and overall experience in the host country. The difficulty in finding accommodation is compounded by high costs and, in some cases, discrimination from landlords or agencies, making it one of the most pressing challenges faced by student migrants.

6.5 Discussion of Research Question 4

How do the discrepancies between expected and actual experiences affect the well-being, academic success, and future migration plans of postgraduate student migrants?

Research Objective 4
To assess the impact of mismatched expectations and encountered realities on the well-being, academic performance, and future migration intentions of postgraduate student migrants.

Essential themes emerging from the narratives centre on how expectations, whether met or unmet, directly influence the decision-making processes regarding whether to stay in the host country, return home, or move elsewhere. Many postgraduate students migrate with expectations of finding better job opportunities and improving their economic standing. Some post-graduates students moved to Ireland anticipating significant economic benefits due to the favourable exchange rate between the Euro and the Indian Rupee. However, the reality of job scarcity and high living costs often contrasts sharply with these expectations. Another participant noted the difficulty in finding employment, stating, "I used to think it would be easy for me to get a job...but it's quite difficult." Such economic challenges can lead to reconsideration of their decision to stay in the host country long-term, potentially prompting some to return to their home countries where the cost of living might be more manageable or familial support is readily available.

Expectations about social integration and acceptance also play a critical role. While some migrants may anticipate a welcoming and inclusive environment, the actual experiences can vary. A participant recounted initial accommodation filled with racial abuse and unsafe conditions, describing it as "disastrous to say the least." Such negative experiences can lead to social isolation and impact the mental and emotional well-being of migrants, influencing their desire to either move to a different locale or return home.

The struggle to find suitable and affordable accommodation is a significant deterrent for many. One migrant described spending entire days sending emails and receiving no replies, which not only impacts their immediate living situation but also their overall satisfaction and stability in the new country. Poor living conditions, as experienced by another migrant facing verbal and physical threats, further exacerbate this issue. These challenges can disillusion migrants and alter their perception of the host country, influencing their decisions on whether to stay or leave.

Legal and residency issues also profoundly affect migration plans. Many postgraduate students are on temporary visas and their ability to stay longer depends on securing employment or extending their study permits. For example, one participant expressed concerns about the limitations of residency rights and the inability to sponsor family, which could be a crucial factor for long-term settlement decisions. Another participant worried about what might happen after their visa expires, stating fears of being forced to return home if unable to secure employment.

The emotional and mental readiness to live abroad can also diverge from reality. Participants noted the emotional difficulty of leaving family and adjusting to a new country. One participant mentioned that her biggest mental block was preparing her mental and emotional well-being for the move. Such emotional struggles can weigh heavily on the decision to remain abroad, especially if the support systems in the host country are lacking.

6.6 Implications of the Study

The implications of this study are multifaceted, impacting policy making, higher education institutions, and broader societal understanding of migration dynamics. The analysis highlights several areas where policy interventions can significantly impact the experience and integration of migrant students. For instance, the difficulties faced by migrants in accessing housing and healthcare underscore the need for targeted support in these areas. The narrative of the participant struggling with healthcare accessibility during a kidney stone crisis shows the urgency of addressing healthcare availability for

migrants. Similarly, experiences of workplace discrimination and the difficulties in securing work permits suggest that more robust anti-discrimination laws and streamlined work permit processes could enhance migrants' experiences. Policy makers could use these insights to reform migration and residency laws, making them more accommodating for student migrants by potentially offering easier pathways to long-term residency and work opportunities.

Higher education institutions that attract international students can draw valuable lessons from the pull factors identified in this study. For example, the role of English as a deciding factor for choosing Ireland could encourage universities in non-English-speaking countries to offer more programs in English to attract international students. Additionally, knowing that students value the post-study work opportunities (as Ireland offers two years of residency post-graduation) could motivate institutions and local governments to enhance such offerings, thereby making their regions more attractive to prospective students.

The study sheds light on the social challenges faced by migrants, such as discrimination and cultural adaptation issues. The harrowing account of racial abuse in accommodation settings illustrates the need for broader societal interventions, including public awareness campaigns and community integration programs that foster a welcoming environment for migrants. Understanding these societal barriers is crucial for creating inclusive communities that support the wellbeing and integration of migrants.

Economic factors play a significant role in both attracting and deterring migrants. The analysis shows that better job prospects and favourable currency exchange rates are significant pull factors, while high living costs and economic barriers like the high cost of document processing serve as deterrents. This suggests that economic policies aimed at reducing living costs and financial barriers for students could enhance a country's attractiveness as a study destination. Additionally, ensuring that migrants have access to financial services and support can alleviate some of the economic pressures they face.

The emotional and mental challenges highlighted by the migrants, such as the stress of separation from family and the initial hardships of cultural and

systemic navigation, point to the need for enhanced mental health services tailored to the unique challenges faced by migrants. Institutions and policymakers could develop support structures that address these specific needs, helping migrants maintain their mental wellbeing as they adjust to new environments.

The study reinforces and expands existing theories of migration such as the push-pull theory, by integrating the role of consultancy firms as a new category of push factors and highlighting non-traditional pull factors like multiculturalism and societal openness. The analysis also proves the theory that entry visa categories, current experiences, and future expectations of highly educated migrants significantly influence their intention to stay in the host country.

By addressing these implications, stakeholders can better support postgraduate student migrants, ensuring their successful integration and enhancing their contributions to the host country's academic and economic life. The study thus provides a valuable framework for understanding the complex interplay of factors affecting student migrants and offers a roadmap for improving their experiences and outcomes.

CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

This research has comprehensively explored the multifaceted motivations, expectations, and experiences of postgraduate student migrants in Ireland, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of modern educational migration. Through a detailed analysis of biographical narratives, the study has not only identified significant push and pull factors influencing migration decisions but also examined the real-life challenges migrants face upon arrival and during their stay in the host country.

The motivations driving postgraduate students to migrate are complex and varied. Economic opportunities, educational quality, and political stability emerge as significant factors. However, personal circumstances such as professional stagnation, mental health concerns, and safety issues in their home countries also play critical roles. There is often a stark contrast between the migrants' expectations and the actual experiences in the host country. While many anticipate improved academic and career opportunities, the reality of cultural adjustments, language barriers, and economic challenges can be daunting and sometimes disillusioning. Cultural adjustment and social integration are pivotal to the migrant experience. Issues such as discrimination, difficulty in accessing social support, and the challenge of establishing a new social network can significantly impact their well-being and academic success.

Legal and residency issues are crucial in shaping the long-term plans of migrants. The ability to secure work permits, the clarity of immigration policies, and the potential for family reunification are significant factors influencing their decisions to stay or leave. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive support systems that address both the logistical and emotional aspects of migration. Enhance support services that address academic, financial, and social integration challenges.

Implement policies that reduce bureaucratic obstacles and provide clear pathways for residency and employment. Foster a culturally inclusive environment that minimizes discrimination and facilitates easier adaptation for postgraduate student migrants.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on migration by highlighting the less examined avenue of educational migration. It enriches the migration studies literature by detailing the socio-economic and personal factors that drive postgraduate students to migrate, offering insights into the push-pull dynamics from a nuanced perspective. Furthermore, it underscores the significance of comprehensive policy frameworks that support the complex needs of this migrant group.

This research, while comprehensive and insightful, is subject to several limitations that must be acknowledged to fully appreciate the scope and applicability of the findings. The study was conducted with a relatively small sample of postgraduate student migrants in Ireland, which may not represent the entire population of international students in the country or in similar contexts. Additionally, the diversity of the sample, while purposive, may still not capture all relevant nationalities, disciplines, or migration backgrounds that could provide varied insights into the postgraduate student migrant experience. The qualitative nature of the study, primarily based on biographical narratives and semi-structured interviews, inherently involves subjectivity in both the responses of the participants and the interpretations of the researcher. Personal biases and preconceptions of both the participants and the researcher can influence the data collection and analysis, potentially leading to skewed or partial insights. Given the cultural diversity of the participants, there is a possibility of misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the participants' experiences and expressions due to cultural nuances not being fully appreciated or understood by the researchers. Such issues could affect the accuracy and depth of the insights gathered. The experiences of migrants can evolve significantly over time, especially as they acclimate to new environments. This study provides a snapshot based on the current status and past memories of the participants, which may not fully capture ongoing or future developments in their migration journeys.

Due to the specific focus on postgraduate students in Ireland, the findings may not be directly generalizable to other types of migrants, other student groups, or to other countries with different immigration policies and socio-economic conditions. The unique political, economic, and cultural context of Ireland plays a significant role in shaping the experiences described, which might differ in another context. Migration policies and institutional practices can change rapidly, and the study's findings may become less relevant as new policies or educational frameworks are implemented. This limitation is crucial for understanding the temporal relevance of the research outcomes.

The study may not fully capture the emotional and psychological impacts of migration, as these aspects can be deeply personal and not fully expressed in an interview setting. Participants might withhold information they feel is too sensitive or personal, which could limit the depth of understanding regarding the emotional challenges involved.

Acknowledging these limitations is vital for interpreting the study's findings accurately and for designing future research that can address these gaps. Future studies should consider employing larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal designs to track changes over time, and possibly mixed methods approaches to mitigate the subjectivity inherent in qualitative research.

Future studies could also delve into assessments across various other host nations to uncover distinct obstacles and effective approaches in handling postgraduate student migration. Longitudinal studies could also offer insights into the lasting effects of migration, on postgraduate students' careers and personal growth. Additionally investigating how evolving political and economic landscapes influence migration trends may provide valuable foresight into future patterns and requirements. Another important area for investigation involves the mistreatment of student migrants by landlords. This research has addressed situations where migrants encountered difficulties related to housing, such as high rent, discrimination and living in unsafe conditions. Thorough examinations of the regulatory frameworks overseeing rental markets, the enforcement of housing rights and the obligations of landlords could provide valuable insights. This study has the potential to

enhance protections for postgraduate student migrants and ensure that they have access to safe and affordable housing.

This research underscores the complexity of educational migration, emphasizing the interplay of economic, social, and personal factors in shaping the experiences of postgraduate student migrants. By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging the insights provided, stakeholders can better facilitate the integration and success of this important group, ultimately enhancing the academic and cultural richness of host countries like Ireland.

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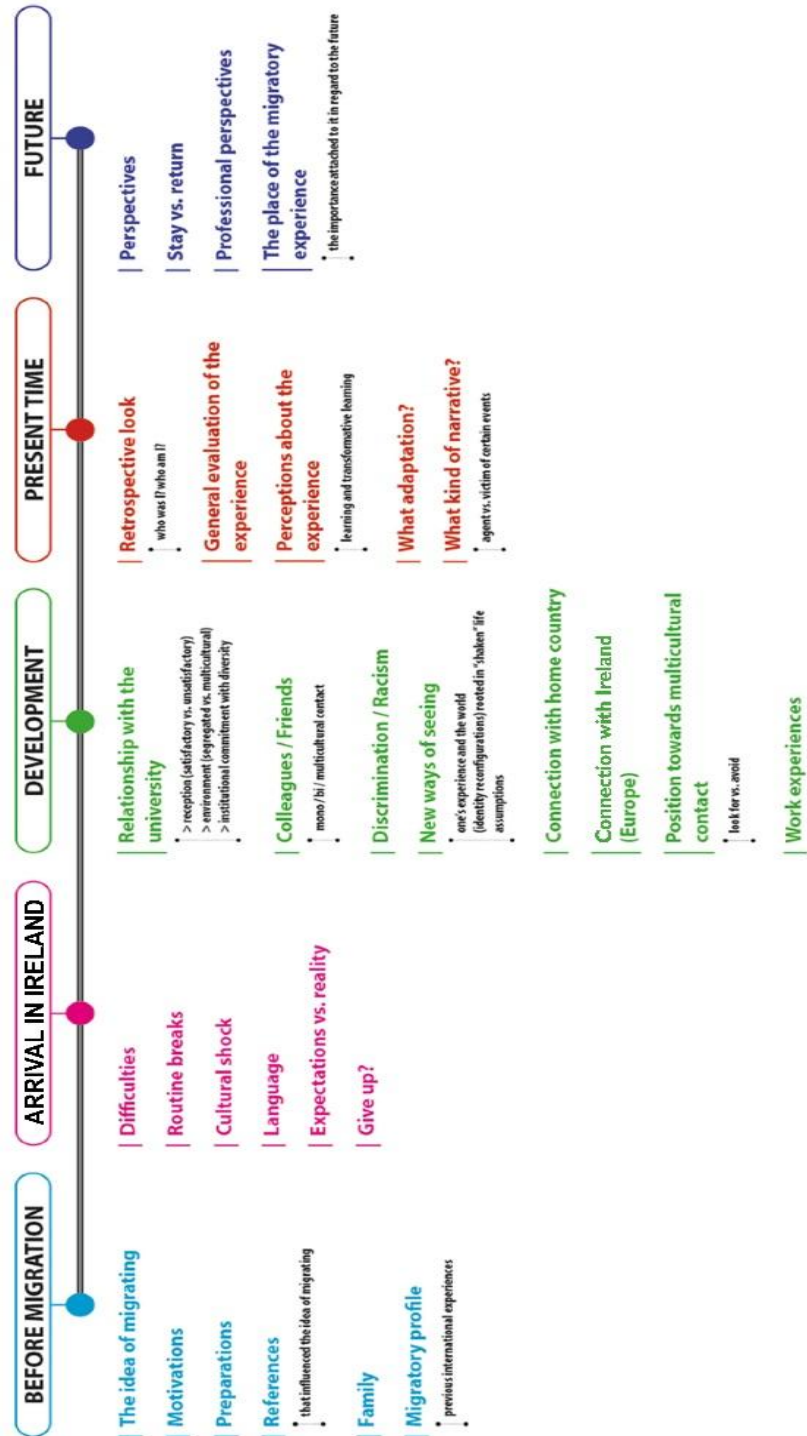
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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Narrative Sequence

NARRATIVE SEQUENCE



Appendix B: Email Sent to Participants

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Research on Postgraduate Student Migration Experiences

Dear [Potential Participant],

I am inviting you to share your unique experiences by participating in my research study focusing on the migration experiences of postgraduate students. Your valuable insights are crucial for understanding the various factors influencing migration decisions and will contribute to broader knowledge and potential policy adjustments in this field.

This study seeks to gather detailed narratives from postgraduate students like yourself, who have navigated the complexities of migrating for educational and personal growth. Please be assured that all discussions will be strictly confidential. Your identity will not be disclosed in any reports or publications resulting from this research, and all data will be destroyed after completion of the research.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any consequences. If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email with your availability for a one-on-one online interview via google meetings. The interview will take approximately 45-60. Should you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me at [Email]. I am happy to discuss any concerns or inquiries you might have.

I look forward to possibly hearing your story and gaining insights from your experiences. Thank you for considering this opportunity to contribute to important research in the field of migration studies.

Best regards,

Emmanuel Bassey